

THE ISSUE OF RADICALISM IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE QUR'AN: AN ANALYSIS OF JIHAD VERSES AND TOLERANCE IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIAN INTERPRETATION

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ABSTRACT

Religious radicalism in Indonesia is often rooted in an interpretation of Qur'anic verses that are not comprehensive and taken out of context, especially those on jihad and tolerance. This article analyzes the issue of radicalism through a study of the interpretation of these verses in contemporary Indonesian interpretation, by examining Tafsir Al-Azhar, Tafsir Al-Misbah, as well as modern hermeneutical approaches such as ma'na--maghzā. The results of the study show that Indonesian mufassir affirms the meaning of jihad as a moral and spiritual struggle, not a legitimacy of violence. Meanwhile, the verses of tolerance are understood as the theological foundation for harmonious relations between religions in a pluralistic society. Previous research has also emphasized the importance of religious moderation and the role of educational institutions in preventing radicalism through the teaching of contextual and balanced interpretations. This article concludes that a comprehensive and moderate interpretation of the Qur'an is an important instrument in efforts to deradicalize and strengthen social harmony in Indonesia.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of religious radicalism in the context of Islam, especially in Indonesia, continues to be an academic and public concern. This phenomenon arises as misunderstood religious narratives increase, especially related to Qur'anic verses that talk about jihad, war, and relationships with different groups. Interpretations that are partial, textual, and detached from historical and social contexts often trigger the

emergence of radical movements in the name of religion (Noqita et al., 2024). As a result, some groups use holy verses to justify acts of violence, even though the Qur'an as a whole promotes peace, justice, and tolerance.

In Indonesia, radicalism cannot be separated from socio-political dynamics, global interactions, and religious identity struggles. Research shows that radicalism and terrorism have a significant impact on national and regional stability, especially in

ASEAN, which faces obstacles to policy coordination and overlapping regulations in handling them (Rachminawati & Nursabila, 2024). In addition, the development of radical movements is also influenced by the dynamics of contemporary Islamic thought which experiences tensions between moderate and extreme currents (Uromo & Ibrahim, 2023).

Efforts to reduce radicalism have been widely carried out through education, da'wah, and community development models. Religious moderation is a central concept in these approaches. Moderation is not just a middle position, but a frame of mind that emphasizes balance, tolerance, and respect for diversity (Anzaikhan et al., 2023). Educational institutions, especially universities and madrasas, play a strategic role in mainstreaming the values of moderation through curriculum and learning practices (Sodikin & Ma'arif, 2021; Supriadi et al., 2021). A comprehensive, contextual, and *maqāṣid al-shari'ah*-based understanding of *tafsir* is also seen as an important foundation in preventing the birth of distorted understandings.

In the realm of interpretation, the development of contemporary Qur'an studies shows a tendency to place jihad and tolerance verses in a wider spectrum of meanings. Research on the interpretation of Al-Azhar and Al-Misbah, for example, shows that verses related to inter-religious relations are interpreted with a dialogical, humanist approach, and in accordance with Indonesia's plural social context (Khawash et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the *ma'na--maghzā* approach developed by modern *mufassir* helps to explore the ethical message of the Qur'an to remain relevant to contemporary challenges, including the issue of radicalism (Firdausiyah, 2021).

Based on this background, this article aims to analyze the issue of radicalism in the interpretation of the Qur'an by highlighting the interpretation of jihad and tolerance verses in the context of contemporary Indonesia. This analysis is expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution to

efforts to deradicalize and strengthen religious moderation through the perspective of interpretation.

2. METHODS

This research was prepared using a qualitative approach based on library research, which places textual analysis as the main framework in examining the interpretation of Qur'anic verses regarding jihad and tolerance in the treasures of contemporary Indonesian interpretation. This approach was chosen because the problem of religious radicalism in general is rooted in the process of interpreting sacred texts; Thus, literature review becomes the most relevant methodological instrument to uncover the construction of meaning and the hermeneutical dynamics that work behind the interpretation. As interpretive qualitative research, this study combines a hermeneutic framework and content analysis. Hermeneutics, as formulated by Gadamer (2004) through the concept of fusion of horizons, allows researchers to read the verses and their interpretations contextually by considering the historical, social, and ethical horizons of the revelation clues. Meanwhile, content analysis based on the perspective of Krippendorff (2019) helps the process of identifying themes, interpretation patterns, and conceptual constructs that are relevant to the discourse of radicalism and religious moderation.

The research data source consists of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include two authoritative works of *tafsir* in the modern Indonesian tradition, namely Hamka's *Tafsir Al-Azhar* and M. Quraish Shihab's *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, as well as a number of verses that are directly related to the themes of jihad and tolerance, such as QS. Al-Maidah: 33, QS. Al-Hujurāt: 9 and 13, QS. Al-Kharrūn, and QS. Al-Maidah: 48. Secondary sources include cutting-edge academic articles discussing radicalism, religious moderation, and contemporary interpretive methodologies, including research by Noqita et al. (2024), Khawash et al. (2024), Firdausiyah (2021), Uromo & Ibrahim

(2023), Anzaikhan et al. (2023), Sodikin & Ma'arif (2021), and Supriadi et al. (2021). All literature was selected selectively based on its conceptual relevance and academic credibility.

The data collection process is carried out through three main steps, namely the extraction of texts from tafsir works and scientific articles, thematic coding of the interpretation of jihad and tolerance verses, and the classification of substantive themes that arise. The theme includes the meaning of jihad, the meaning of tolerance, the indication of radical narratives, the approach to religious moderation, and methodological orientations such as hermeneutics and contextual interpretation. Data collection follows a systematic procedure by prioritizing the latest literature and indexed journals as the main reference source.

Data analysis was carried out using a qualitative content analysis model as developed by Miles et al. (2014), which included the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. In the reduction stage, the researcher selects verses and interpretation sections that are relevant to the theme of the study and ignores unrelated information. The data presentation stage is carried out by comparing the interpretations of Hamka, Quraish Shihab, and other mufassir, then compiling them in a categorization framework to identify interpretation patterns. The final step in the form of drawing conclusions is carried out by interpreting the findings critically in order to understand how contemporary interpretation patterns contribute to the strengthening of religious moderation and the prevention of radical misinterpretations.

The validity of the data is guaranteed through various validation strategies, including triangulation of sources by comparing various interpretations and academic literature, as well as theoretical triangulation that involves the integration of hermeneutic viewpoints, thematic interpretations, and *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* so that the analysis is not trapped in a single bias. In addition, peer-reviewed reference checking

is carried out by focusing on references to reputable journal articles, especially those that are indexed and have gone through a rigorous peer review process, to ensure that all arguments built have a strong academic and verifiable basis.

3. DISCUSSION

Radicalism in the Context of Qur'an Interpretation

Religious radicalism is a phenomenon born from the process of interpreting sacred texts that are incomplete, uncontextual, and often influenced by socio-political factors. In the context of the Qur'an, radicalism arises when individuals or groups understand certain verses—especially those related to jihad, war, and loyalty—literally without considering *asbāb al-nuzūl*, *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, or the universal Islamic principles of peace and justice (Noqita et al., 2024). This kind of interpretation then becomes the basis for the legitimacy of violent acts.

In Indonesia, radicalism in interpretation is influenced by socio-political conditions and the dynamics of religious identity. Rachminawati and Nursabila (2024) noted that radicalism and terrorism in the ASEAN region are closely related to ineffective regional regulations and weak coordination between countries, including Indonesia. In the domestic context, the development of radical narratives is influenced by intellectual tensions between moderate and extreme groups, each of which interprets the Qur'an according to its ideological orientation (Uromo & Ibrahim, 2023). The interpretation of the Qur'an has also become an arena for the struggle for meaning and legitimacy between the two camps.

Academic studies show that radicalism is rooted not only in the inaccuracies of interpretation, but also in the factors of education, social media, and global networks that reinforce extreme narratives. Therefore, the analysis of interpretation is very important in unraveling the roots of radicalism, because the understanding of the verse in its entirety has the potential to restore

a moderate and contextual meaning of Islam. In this case, the contemporary interpretation approach—whether through tahlili, maudhu'i, or contextual hermeneutics—offers a space for criticism of the textualist meaning that gives birth to radicalism.

The *ma'na-maghzā* approach that developed in contemporary Qur'anic study also made a significant contribution. This approach places the historical meaning of the verse as a foothold, but the main focus is directed to moral messages that are relevant to the current context (Firdausiyah, 2021). In the issue of radicalism, this method helps to reveal that the seemingly harsh verses have the purpose of creating a just social order, not to legitimize unlimited violence.

Thus, radicalism in interpretation is not a problem of the text, but a problem of how to read the text. Unbalanced interpretations, taken out of context, and influenced by ideological interests are the main causes of the emergence of extreme views. Therefore, the analysis of jihad verses and tolerance in modern interpretation is an important step in understanding how interpretation can be a tool of prevention or even a trigger for radicalism.

Interpretation of Jihad Verses in Contemporary Indonesian Interpretation

The verses of jihad are one of the most often misunderstood parts of the Qur'an and are used as the basis for legitimacy of radical actions. In contemporary discourse, jihad is often reduced to physical warfare, whereas in the classical and modern interpretation traditions, this concept has a broad meaning that includes moral, spiritual, and social struggles. In the Indonesian context, contemporary mufassirs emphasize the importance of understanding jihad verses through the approach of the historical context and the larger moral purpose of the Qur'an.

Noqita et al. (2024) explain that the Qur'an contains verses that prohibit acts of terrorism and violence without a valid cause, such as surah Al-Māidah verse 33 and Al-Hujurāt verse 9. These verses show that jihad is not synonymous with extreme action, but is an effort to bring about peace and justice. The

thematic interpretation of the jihad verse in the study confirms that Islam rejects all forms of terrorism and violence that come out of the principles of sharia ethics.

In the Indonesian tradition of *tafsir*, figures such as Hamka through *Tafsir Al-Azhar* and Quraish Shihab through *Tafsir Al-Misbah* consistently interpret jihad comprehensively. Hamka emphasized that jihad has a broad spiritual and social dimension, including the struggle against lust, ignorance, and injustice. War is only a last resort when there is no longer a path to peace, and even that must be done within strict moral limits. Meanwhile, Quraish Shihab emphasized that jihad in the modern context is more meaningful as a serious effort to build a peaceful, just, and civilized society.

The tendency of contemporary Indonesian mufassir to moderate the meaning of jihad is also influenced by the plural and multicultural social reality. Indonesia is not a country in a state of religious war; Therefore, the interpretation of jihad as *qitāl* (physical war) is irrelevant as a daily religious practice. Uromo and Ibrahim (2023) note that radicalism often emerges when jihadist verses are pulled out of context and used to construct a narrative of hostility between Muslims and non-Muslims. This shows the importance of a rational, contextual, and sensitive approach to social realities.

In contemporary hermeneutical analysis, the *ma'na-maghzā* approach also plays a role in interpreting jihadic verses in a more proportionate manner. This approach does not stop at the literal meaning of the verse, but explores the moral message that is at the core of the idea of jihad, namely defending the truth, rejecting tyranny, and maintaining community harmony (Firdausiyah, 2021). Thus, jihad is understood as an ethic of struggle, not an instrument of violence.

From the overall view of the contemporary mufassir, it can be concluded that the jihad verses in the Qur'an cannot be used as the basis for radicalism. Quite the opposite, these verses contain moral messages that lead to the creation of a peaceful and

dignified society. Contextually appropriate interpretation of jihad is very important in efforts to deradicalize and strengthen religious moderation in Indonesia.

Interpretation of Verses of Tolerance in Contemporary Indonesian Interpretation

The verses of the Qur'an related to tolerance are an important foundation in the formation of harmonious relations between religious communities. In the plural Indonesian context, these verses have great social significance, as they serve as a theological basis for inclusive and peaceful religious practices. Contemporary Indonesian mufassirs, especially Hamka and Quraish Shihab, place strong emphasis on this aspect of tolerance as the main principle of social life.

The research of Khawash et al. (2024) regarding the interpretation of tolerance verses in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* and *Tafsir Al-Misbah* shows that both mufassir emphasize the importance of harmonious social relations, even in religious differences. Hamka, for example, interprets Surah Al-Kāfirūn as a declaration of freedom of religion and a rejection of the imposition of belief. Hamka sees the verse "Lakum dīnukum wa liya dīn" as an acknowledgment of the plurality of beliefs that must be respected, not as a statement of hostility. For him, tolerance is part of the universal mission of Islam.

Meanwhile, Quraish Shihab through a linguistic approach and social context, interprets verses such as QS. Al-Ḥujurāt: 13 and QS. Al-Māidah: 48 as the theological basis of human equality. He emphasized that diversity is sunnatullah, and people are commanded to know each other (*ta'āruf*), not to be suspicious or hostile to each other. This interpretation results in an understanding that tolerance is not just a passive attitude, but an active commitment to maintaining peaceful social relationships.

Firdausiyah (2021) added that the *ma'na--maghzā* approach in the interpretation of tolerance verses helps bridge the differences between the historical context of the descent of the verse and the modern social context. This approach affirms that the main message of the Qur'an is mercy for the whole

of nature (*rahmatan li al-ālamīn*), so religious diversity is not a challenge, but a reality that must be managed with the values of compassion and justice. In the Indonesian context, this approach is very relevant to reduce the intolerant narratives that develop in some societies.

On the other hand, radicalism often arises from interpretations that marginalize the verses of tolerance and highlight only confrontational verses. Uromo and Ibrahim (2023) show that radical groups tend to ignore the social context of the verse and use a literal approach to construct an exclusive narrative. This proves the importance of an integrative interpretation, which places the verses of tolerance as part of the grand framework of Islamic teachings on humanity.

In contemporary interpretive discourse, tolerance is seen as a universal value that cannot be separated from the mission of the Qur'an. Various Indonesian mufassir emphasized that Islam is not a religion that teaches violence or discrimination based on religion, but a religion that glorifies human dignity. This interpretation of tolerance is an important pillar in supporting religious moderation, peace education, and deradicalization strategies in Indonesia.

Religious Moderation and Interpretation-Based Deradicalization Efforts

Religious moderation is a central concept in various strategies to prevent radicalism in Indonesia. Moderation is not only understood as an attitude of being in the middle, but as a perspective that emphasizes balance, justice, respect for diversity, and rejection of extremism. In this context, the interpretation of the Qur'an plays an important role in strengthening religious moderation, because sacred texts are often used as the main reference by religious groups—both moderate and extreme.

Anzaikhan et al. (2023) emphasized that religious moderation has a strategic function as a unifier of the nation, especially in the context of a very pluralistic Indonesian society. Universities, madrasas, and Islamic educational institutions have a key role in

internalizing the values of moderation through curriculum, learning materials, and character formation of students. In this case, comprehensive interpretation education is essential so that students not only understand the text, but also understand the moral purpose behind the text.

Sodikin and Ma'arif (2021) and Supriadi et al. (2021) show that Islamic Religious Education teachers are important actors in preventing radicalism in the educational environment. By teaching *tafsir* contextually and emphasizing the value of peace, teachers can be the main agents in shaping a generation of moderate Muslims. The study confirms that the correct interpretation of jihad and tolerance verses can break the chain of misinterpretation that often leads to radicalization.

Contemporary interpretive approaches such as *ma'na--maghzā* also make a significant contribution to deradicalization efforts. This approach allows readers to understand the moral message of the Qur'an about humanity, justice, and peace without getting stuck in rigid literal meanings (Firdausiyah, 2021). Thus, interpretation serves not only as a theological understanding, but also as an instrument for the reconstruction of religious discourse that rejects violence and extremism.

In the context of national policy, religious moderation is also the foundation for strengthening religious harmony. Indonesia has developed various deradicalization programs, both through security approaches and cultural and educational approaches. An interpretation-based approach is an important part of the cultural strategy, as moderate religious narratives have proven to be able to match the radical narratives that often develop through social media and digital spaces.

Rachminawati and Nursabila (2024) emphasized that radicalism is not only a local threat, but also a regional challenge in ASEAN. Therefore, deradicalization efforts based on moderation and contextual interpretation have global relevance. Indonesia can be a model for other countries

in cultivating diversity through an inclusive religious approach.

Overall, religious moderation and comprehensive interpretation of the Qur'an form an important pillar in deradicalization efforts in Indonesia. By strengthening society's understanding of jihad verses and tolerance contextually, radical narratives can be countered through a more scientific, humanist, and universal Islamic approach. This approach is not just an academic solution, but a practical necessity for building a peaceful, inclusive, and dignified society.

4. CONCLUSION

Religious radicalism in Indonesia is a complex phenomenon that cannot be separated from the way some groups understand and interpret the verses of the Qur'an. Through an analysis of the verses of jihad and tolerance in contemporary Indonesian interpretation, it is clear that radicalism does not come from the text of the Qur'an, but from an interpretation that is not comprehensive, ahistorical, and tends to be literal. On the contrary, Indonesian *mufassir* such as Hamka and Quraish Shihab actually show that these verses carry moral messages about justice, peace, and humanity.

This study confirms that jihad in the perspective of the Qur'an has a broad meaning as an ethical and spiritual struggle, not just a physical war. Meanwhile, the verses of tolerance are an important foundation for peaceful religious life in a pluralistic society. Interpretation with a contextual, thematic, and *ma'na--maghzā* approach is able to place the Qur'an as a relevant and solutive text for contemporary humanitarian problems.

Efforts to moderate religion and deradicalization in Indonesia require the contribution of various sectors, including education, religious institutions, and state policies. The interpretation of the Qur'an holds a strategic position in this process, because moderate narratives born from *tafsir* can neutralize the extreme discourse that develops in the public sphere. By strengthening the understanding of inclusive and balanced interpretations, Indonesian

people can build a more tolerant and harmonious religious culture.

Overall, this article emphasizes that religious moderation is not only a theoretical concept, but a fundamental necessity in maintaining Indonesia's social order.

Comprehensive and contextual interpretation of the Qur'an is one of the most effective instruments in overcoming radicalism and building a peaceful and civilized future of the nation.

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