Peace and Violence in Islam: An overview of Some Muslim Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The issue of violence has always been existent in world religions including Islam. The image of Islam as a violent religion has been described in various media especially in the case of terrorism. This phenomenon leads to questions on how issues of violence are conveyed in Islamic teachings and how they have been understood differently by Muslims. This article aims to answer such questions by discussing the duty of Muslims, *jihad*, spirit of the Qur'an, and interpretation issues. The writing found that overgeneralization of a particular case in Qur'anic stories occurred; differences in interpretation are caused by the limitation of human beings in viewing their present reality and the reality of the past; issues of violence in the Qur'an are inevitable since the Qur'an was revealed at a time of extensive violence throughout human life, while the spirit of Islam is in creating peace among fellow human being; and a number of Muslims regard the prophet Muhammad's life time as the pinnacle of Islamic civilization. These findings lead to the conclusion that issues of violence in Islamic teachings are always interpreted differently in a variety of manners.

Keywords: duty, interpretation, *jihad*, spirit of the Qur'an, issue of violence

ABSTRAK

Isu kekerasan selalu ada dalam agama-agama dunia termasuk Islam. Kesan Islam sebagai agama kekerasan telah digambarkan dalam beragam media khususnya dalam kasus terorisme. Fenomena ini menimbulkan pertanyaan terkait bagaimana isu kekerasan disampaikan dalam ajaran-ajaran Islam dan bagaimana ajaran-ajaran ini dipahami secara berbeda oleh Muslim. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menjawab pertanyaan-pertanyaan tersebutdengan mendiskusikan kewajiban muslim, *jihad*, spirit Qur'an, dan persoalan-persoalan interpretasi. Temuan yang diperoleh dari diskusi tema di atas adalah adanya overgeneralisasi terhadap kasus tertentu dalam cerita-cerita al Qur'an; perbedaan-perbedaan dalam interpretasi disebabkan oleh keterbatasan manusia dalam memandang realitas mereka saat ini dan realitas di masa lalu; isu kekerasan dalam al Qur'an tidak dapat dihindari karena al Qur'an

diwahyukan pada saat kekerasan yang meluas sepanjang kehidupan manusia, sementara spirit Islam adalah menciptakan perdamaian antara sesama manusia; dan sebagian Muslim memandang masa kehidupan nabi Muhammad sebagai puncak dari peradaban Islam. Temuan-temuan ini mengarah pada kesimpulan bahwa isu kekerasan dalam ajaran-ajaran Islam selalu diinterpretasikan secara berbeda dengan cara yang beragam.

Kata kunci: kewajiban, interpretasi, *jihad*, spirit al Qur'an, kekerasan

INTRODUCTION

As other religions, Islam and violence have a complex relationship. Throughout human history, much violence occurred in the name of religions, including Islam. Numerous Islamic personalities (scholars) have often emphasized that violence in the name of Islam does not derive from Islamic teachings, yet a number of people use Islam to pursue individual or group opportunities. They emphasized that the name of Islam in itself literally means peace. Many Qur'anic verses and Muhammad's words in the hadith focus on peacebuilding and reconciliation. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore another phenomenon that arises along with human religiosity: religions including Islam increase tensions and violence in human life.

In the Islamic world, several themes relate to issues of violence, such as issues of terrorism and *jihad*, violence against woman, and violence in law. The image of Islam as a violent religion can be observed in various media especially the Western media in the aftermath of the September 11. Studies focusing on violence in Islamic teachings were undertaken. Patrick Sookhdeo, the Director of the Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity, for instance, states that strong support regarding fighting/combat in Qur'an emphasizes that Islam justifies all forms of violence and he believes that Qur'anic verses such as 9:5 do not refer to certain time and place[1]. Is it true that verses of fighting in Qur'an pertain to violence? If not, why do several Muslims incite terror and state it to be based on Islamic teachings? Is this simply a matter of misinterpretation? Finally, under what circumstances is violence allowed in Islam? This writing tries to provide answers to these questions with focus on issues of violence and *jihad*.

THE PRINCIPAL DUTY OF MUSLIMS

Throughout their lifetime, Muslims are obligated to fulfill their duties. There are two principal duties for a Muslim: the duty to God (*hablumminallah*) and to humans (*hablumminannas*). The former is described in Qur'an, such

as *sholat* (prayer), fasting, *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca), *zakat* (charity). Although the duty is aimed to worship God, Muslims believe, it bears implications concerning righteousness of human relation. The latter focuses on enjoining all that is right (*amar ma'ruf*) and prohibiting all that is wrong (*nahi mungkar*).

> *Ye are the best of people, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong and believe in God… (Ali 'Imran/3: 110)*
> *The believer, man and women, are protectors, one of another: They enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil…(at Taubah/9: 71)*
> *Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. They are the ones to attain felicity (Ali Imran/3: 104)*

The word *ma'ruf* (what is right) means all right deeds and all that God bestows. Qur'an provides examples of righteous things such as being just, being patient, having the capacity to view matters equally, to forgive others, to be tolerant and to foster peace. Meanwhile, the word *munkar* (what is wrong) is all evil deeds and all that God does not justify such as killing, stealing, and being unjust. How then do we recognize things that are right and things that are wrong unstated in the Qur'an? Throughout human history, philosophers, theologian, and scholars deal with such issues in relation to the position of reason and its ability in determining the right things in human life. In Islam, there has been a debate whether human reason has the ability to know and realize what things are right and wrong. However, we can find that certain phenomenon may be judged as a good thing as well as a wrong one.

In Islam, beside the Qur'an, Muhammad's attitudes, deeds and words, are the second source in perceiving how to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. In hadith, we can observe how Muhammad made reconciliations for daily matters among the followers. When a person asked him what the best Muslim is, for instance, Muhammad said, "Muslim is one with whom one can trust his/her own life and his/her property." Concerning prohibition of all things wrong, Muhammad said, "Whoever sees a wrong, and is able to put it with his hand, let him do so; if he cannot, then with his tongue; if he cannot, then with his heart."

Although in the Qur'an the means of prohibiting the wrong has been stated and described, it remains problematic and debatable. As Wood[2] says,

"as commanding the right can be a dangerous exercise, Muslim scholars have long debated how far the believer should go in performing this duty." Muslim scholars agree that a martyrdom is not the aim of the duty[3], but the reality seems to demonstrate a contradictory phenomenon. Countries where Muslims are the majority show violent tendencies such as Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Afghanistan, and Indonesia. The Western media, in particular, often describe that Islam and Islamic movements are intolerant to plurality and differing opinions in politics.[4]

However, for a number of Muslims, prohibiting the wrong means a call to *jihad* in terms of fighting and war. They base this belief on the following Qur'anic verses:

Only those are believers who have believed in God and His Apostle, and have never since doubted, but have striven with their belongings and their persons in the cause of God: such are the sincere ones (Al Hujurat/49:15).

Fight those who believe not in God nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by God and His apostle, Nor acknowledge the religion of truth (even if they are) of the people of the book. Until they pay the jizya[5] *with willing submission. And feel themselves subdued (At Taubah/9:29).*

The number of months, in the sight of God is twelve (in a year)—so ordained by Him the day He create the heavens and the earth; of them four are sacred: that is the straight usage so wrong not yourselves there in, and fight the Pagans all together as they fight you all together. But know that God is with those which restrain themselves (at Taubah/9:36).

Go ye forth (whether equipped) lightly or heavily, and strive and struggle with your goods and your persons, in the Cause of God. That the best for you, if ye (but) knew (At Taubah/9:41).

Permission is given to those who fight because they are wronged. Surely Allah is capable of giving them victory (Al Hajj 22: 39)

Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for God loveth not transgressors.

And slay them wherever ye catch them out from where they have turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter: but fight them not at the sacred Mosque unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith (Al Baqarah/2: 190-191).

And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression and there prevail justice and faith in God; but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression (al Baqarah/2:193).

From the verses above, can we say simply that oppression, injustice, disbelief in God, and attacking from threat of the others, are circumstances for Islam's use of violence? Would it be considered as *jihad* if the use of violence is employed under those circumstances? Why do many scholars believe that forbidding the wrong is not a call for martyrdom, as it seems to be contradictory to the verses above?

CLEAR COMMAND

All Muslims believe that jihad is the command of God, but different actions are taken in performing this obligation. There is a group called Jihad is who view *jihad* in terms of fighting as a clear command. They base their ideology in particular on the thoughts of al Banna, Mawdudi, and Qutb.

Jihadis stress that Islam is the one and only true religion and they aim to apply their *aqida* (theology) in all aspects of human life for religion and other aspects of human life are united and inseparable[6]. They believe that only God's laws can liberate this world from oppression, tyranny, and other deficiencies resulted by man-made laws. They delineated a clear position, as mentioned in the Muslim Unification Council of 1999, regarding the global *jihad* network:

. …whoever has put his own laws, instead of Sharia*, into the governing of man; they are committing* Shirk *(polytheism) and* Kufr *(unbelief) and have left Islam… They are at war with Allah and must be fought and killed until all* din *(religion) is for Allah alone[7]*

Based on this reasoning, they call for all Muslims to participate in the fight against evildoers and to pursue their way of life[8]. In addition, *Jihad* in their view does not translate into a defensive war as many other thinkers wrote. According to Qutb,

Defeatist and apologetic writers try to remove this 'blot' jihad in Islam by mixturing two things: Islam forbids the imposition of its belief by force: there is no compulsion in religion. And try to annihilate all those political and material powers which stand between people and Islam. Jihad has no relation to modern warfare. To establish God's rule means that His laws be enforced

and that the final decision in all affairs be according to these laws. Establishing of the dominion of God on earth, the abolishing of the dominion of man.[9]

To establish God's laws, Qutb[10] states that Muslims not only need preaching but movement as well. These aim to annihilate tyrannical forces and only once this is achieved, can Muslims establish an Islamic system in which the concept of freedom of man applies. Based on this idea, Jihadis view that fighting and killing unbelievers and any Muslim who do not agree with this particular vision of Islam are legally justified[11]. In addition, as Qutb wrote, people who view *jihad* as a defensive movement provide a confined meaning and have a lack of understanding on the nature of Islam and its primary aim. He believes that this narrowed meaning is due to the influence of orientalists who put these writers under pressure. Qutb shows that Abu Bakr and Othman's actions in spreading Islam outside of the Arabian Peninsula have proven that Jihad is not a defensive movement. Qutb views the writers to have sought and based their arguments from various literature, while an Islamic movement is established on the clear verses of the Qur'an.[12]

Beside the issue above, Jihadis do not believe in religious equality, Abrahamic faith, and interreligious dialogue.[13] Their rejection of dialogue, compromise or discussion with other religious groups is based on Qur'anic verses that discuss the betrayals and evils of People of the Book. Qutb[14] concludes that these verses are to be observed at all times whereas verses that pertain to tolerance are merely to be carried out under certain circumstances in Muhammad's ministry without any long lasting effect.

The same tone comes from al Faraq who asserts that *jihad* is not only a defensive matter as stipulated in 9:5 and 47:4. Muslims are legally allowed to fight for truth under the banner of Islam and Islamic leadership. For al Faraq, Muslims must be in a strong condition when they intend to fight and Muslims cannot attain that strength if they neglect and abolish the duty of *jihad*. This means that Muslims can utilize all means for a just end wherein under certain conditions *jihad* becomes an individual's obligation. [15]

According to Al Farag, *jihad* becomes an individual obligation under three conditions: 1. When two soldiers meet in war (8:45&15), 2. When infidel dominates the state, and 3. When the leader commands to fight (9: 38-39). He continues that when *jihad* becomes an individual obligation, the permission of one's parents to engage in it is no longer necessary. Al Faraq reminds Muslims that *jihad* is for the sake of building an Islamic State thus Muslims

must take the matter seriously.[16]

The position of *jihad* as an individual obligation, according to al Azzam, has been acquiesced by *salaf* and *khallaf* ulama when spreading and proselytizing Islam. In the present time, Afghanistan is one such example. Al Azzam provides the requirements of *jihad*, such as being fit and sound according to one's individual ability concerning one's financial and physical conditions; availability of other income for one's wife; visa; the state permission to have a passport; availability of another person to care for one's parents, and a financial guarantee for the family.[17]

Based on the description above, several circumstances such as oppression, injustice, attacking of others, and colonization are reasons to fight in order to establish an Islamic state. In the present time, the United States is considered by jihadis to be colonizing neighboring Muslims and causing several horrific massacres as in Iraq. This fact lead Bin Laden to issue the *fatwa* that Muslims possess Qur'anic legitimacy to kill Americans and their allies, and this is an individual obligation of *jihad* that can carried out in any country.[18] Another *fatwa* can be found in the covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement HAMAS. *Jihad* is the path and death for the sake of Allah wherein Muslims must fight against the wrong for the sake of justice and the establishment of an Islamic state.[19] In addition, HAMAS is convinced that their actions are true examples of Qur'anic teachings, al A'raf: 89.[20] Therefore, according to Rantisi, the leader of HAMAS simply gives permission (*fatwa*) to carry out *jihad* in terms of fighting at certain time. The suicide bombings, in Rantisi's point of view, are not suicide bombings but *istihhadi* (self-chosen martyrdom).[21]

Omar Abdul Rahman supports the idea above. He emphasizes that based on Qur'anic teachings Muslims never call for violence except for the sake of love, forgiveness, and tolerance. In the case of colonization, for instance, people who find the aggressors of their land should make a call to fighting the aggressors in order to end their aggression. Abou Halima said that to be a martyr is a job as a Muslim. "He felt that he had a mission to go wherever there is oppression and injustice and fight it." Therefore, he went to Afghanistan.[22]

FINDING THE SPIRIT OF QUR'AN

Contrary to the conviction above, some Muslim scholars emphasize that Islam is not a violent religion, as Islam even promotes peace building, recon-

ciliation and mutual understanding among human beings. They suggest Muslims to search the spirit of Qur'an by understanding Qur'anic verses comprehensively, not by looking at it verse by verse. In addition, the social, economic, political conditions in the period post and prior Muhammad's birth must be given more attention.

Muhammad lived in Mecca for 13 years and in Madinah for ten years. Throughout his life in both places, we can observe how Muhammad had continually searched for reconciliation and mutual understanding in which peace was considered as the priority.[23] During his first lifetime in Mecca, Muhammad experienced numerous repudiation and violence against him. The people of Mecca could not accept Muhammad as God's messenger. Some people of Mecca were amicable and accepting which led them to become followers of Islam. At the time, Muhammad did nothing to others who really intended to kill him, even for self-defense. He adopted the way of pacifism by avoiding issues that cause clash and confrontation.[24] This fact becomes the foundation of Muslims who support nonviolence in Islam wherein the prophet does not use force in any form, even for self-defense.[25]

In Madina, Muhammad lived in a different society. Many people of Madina became followers of Islam, enabling him to develop an "Islamic society." Under his leadership, minority rights were guaranteed by considering them as the People of the Book (60:7 and 8:61). During this period of Madina, Muhammad was not only a messenger but also a practical politician who focused on religious renewal, social justice, and the implementation of his religious and political ideas through peaceful means. *Dhimmi*, a term used for People of the Book, had a notion of security and guarantee in Madina. Nevertheless, the question of inequality still had the possibility to surface here. To find a clearer vision, Troger suggests viewing two things: 1. the actual political and economic situation of Muhammad's followers as well as old Arabic tradition, and 2. the point that Muhammad was not a pacifist and Qur'an, Sunnah and Islam do not champion the cause of pacifism. How did Muhammad apply the teaching of *Jihad*? As Troger states, armed struggle and war were not a part of Muhammad's original plan because God forbids Muslims to become the initiator of war as well as to be the attacker (22:39). Contrary to the thought of many, *Jihad* does not really focus on weapon. Muhammad stated that the best *jihad* is for a person to have the ability to control his/her emotions. In his efforts on peace, Muhammad called for a "reconciliation of hearts" meaning not to bear vengeful desire (9:60). [26]

Although Muhammad is not included in the list of religious leaders who effectively practiced nonviolence throughout their life (such as Buddha and Jesus), there is no question that he practiced nonviolence vis a vis persecution he faced.[27]

Supporters of nonviolence in Islam emphasize that Qur'an does not aim to introduce violence, but it is merely the reaction of the existing condition of Arab as a "state of war." Many verses (e.g. 2:216, 58:22, and 60:8) are focused on unwilling fighting (Jackson, 2007:396). In the state of war, Qur'an (e.g. 8:61, 2:139) shows how to react towards an aggression of non-Muslim and hostile forces.[28]

In classical juristic tradition, the discussion of *jihad* pertains to defensive and aggressive terms. *Jihad* is regarded as a mean to maintain security and freedom of the Muslim world.[29] Classical Muslim scholars conclude that God wants human beings to know each other (Hujurat 13), and war is not the meansdesired to attain this particular will of God. Nevertheless, most classical jurists regard war as purely defensive, as the last means for war that is not a superior moral virtue.[30] However, the debate among classical Muslim jurists about a sufficient and just cause for fighting non-Muslim exists.[31]

According to el Fadl, in the modern world, there is a constant shift of states condition in the world, from a state of war to a state of peace. This shift leads to different interpretations: 1. the shift from a state of war to a state of peace cannot simply assert but must be confirmed on the ground and 2. The major power, US, has the capacity to confirm or undermine the newly established and admittedly fragile "state of war". El Fadl views that modern revivalists, such as Qutb, ignore the classical tradition of the *madhhabs.* They depend almost exclusively on the Qur'an so that he insists that waging *jihad* against the People of the Book (9:29) is a permanent, communal obligation upon Muslims which consequently ignores verses (5:82 and 3:113-114) commanding to respect the others' religious figures. Through this reasoning, El Fadl believes that viewing Islam as a peaceful religion depends on non-Muslim and religious understanding of Muslim.[32]

As al Din reminds us, it is important to contemplate the fact that throughout human history, violence never leads to true political victory. Armed violence failed in providing victory to Islam. Al Din emphasizes that the fighting between Muslims, Jews, and Christians is aimed to display the problems among them at the time.[33] Besides the fighting, in regard to that matter, Faddlalah emphasizes that Qur'an provides the example of reconciliation.

Thus, Qur'an seeks to change what we see as an enemy to be a friend. However, "God loves kindness, not violence" therefore, violence is not an Islamic *Fiqh*. Much violence that occurred in Islamic lands, according to Faddlalah is caused by different areas of Muslims the world over. Many Muslims were born in the period of violence, lack education and have a history of anarchy. These facts lead Muslims to have different understandings concerning Islamic teachings and the fact of their life. Furthermore, Faddhalah asserts that Qur'an itself is full of dialogues between Polytheists, Jews, Christians, and Hypocrites. Thus, Qur'an is indeed a book of dialogue. [34]

Aside from the many verses focusing on peace[35], most hadiths are truly concerned about peace. When a companion asked the prophet Muhammad about a real Muslim, for instance, he stated that 'A Muslim is one whose fellow brothers are safe from the harm of his tongue and hands' (Bukhari). Another hadith describes that a companion asked 'What should I do in the times of such great trials? The prophet suggested, "Keep to your house and control your tongue' (Abu Daud). In addition, Qur'an also provides the guidance for Muslims in forbidding the wrong, as mentioned in the following verses:

> *Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious. For thy Lord Knoweth best who have strayed from His Path and who receive guidance (An Nahl/16:125).*

> *"Go, both of you, to Pharaoh, for he has indeed transgressed all bounds. "But speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear (God) (Thaha/20:43-44).*

> *Say to My servants that they should (only) say those things that are best; for Satan doth sow dissensions among them: for Satan is to man as avowed enemy (al Isra/17:53).*

In addition to the verses above, we also cannot ignore other Islamic principles and values relating to nonviolence in Islam as described by Abu-Nimer. Abu-Nimer shows at least twelve Islamic principles and values supporting peace building in human life, namely: pursuit of justice,[36] social empowerment through doing good,[37] universality and human dignity,[38] equality[39], sacredness of human life,[40] peacemaking,[41] forgiveness,[42] deeds action and individual responsibility and choice,[43] patience,[44] *ummah*, collaborative action and solidarity,[45] inclusivity and participatory processes,[46] pluralism and diver-

sity.[47] Based on this exploration, Abu-Nimer stresses that Islam is conducive in promoting nonviolence and peacebuilding methods through its various rituals and traditions.[48]

The practice of nonviolence in Islam can be observed through several Muslim figures. Said Nursi, an Islamic contemporary figure in Turkey who stood up against oppressors, for instance, emphasizes that a 'victory is not through the use of force, but convincing others about one's own ideas,' what he calls as "*Musbet* Hareket," positive action. He asserts that people who consider an individual as a criminal just because of one's ethnicity, family background, nationality, or kinship to a criminal are truly mistaken as modern day terrorists who ignore the major principle of the Qur'an. From 1926 to 1960s, when religious ideas were suppressed in Turkey, Nursi had been poisoned seventeen times by his oppressor, he and his disciples were finally imprisoned and persecuted. Nevertheless, during his lifetime, Nursi often reminded his disciples not to seek revenge for his death.[49]

Another example of a lifelong champion of nonviolence is Fethullah Gulen, an influential Islamic scholar and thinker in Turkey (1970's). For the sake of preventing future clashes and violence between the adherents of differing religions, he utilizes interfaith cooperation and dialogue. He believes that theology of dialogue is indeed grounded in Islamic principles. He is not dissimilar to Nursi, as throughout his struggles for peace, he forbids his followers to become involved in the conflict even if he were killed.[50]

ISSUES IN INTERPRETING TEXT

From the description above, we will not obtain a single answer for the question: *Under what circumstances is violence permissible in Islam? The* answers even oppose each other. Some Muslims believe that oppression, injustice, disbelief in God, and attacking from others are circumstances in which Muslims are allowed the use of force. Muslims have to fight under those circumstances wherever they find them to be and carry out *jihad* in terms of fighting. On the contrary, a number of Muslims emphasize that the use of violence is not the spirit of Islam, the description of using violence in Qur'an is only to show several cases observed at certain time, place and cultures. Muslims have to focus on the numerous verses that ask human to conduct peaceful actions as the spirit of Islam.

According to Abu-Nimer, a discussion of violence and nonviolence in Islam expresses 'a major gap between the Islamic basis for a peace building

approach to life in general and the interpretation of Islam as a warlike religion'. From this fact, he encourages Muslims to become a more solid "community of interpreters" in order to study Islam and peace building. Interpreters should 'attempt to contextualize Islamic religious and traditional values within peace building and nonviolent frameworks, rather than in war and conflict framework.'[51]

Albeit with a different emphasis, Mostafa shares the same objective as Abu-Nimer. Mostafa invites Muslims to understand and contemplate on Muslim reality and its main decision concerning the issue of sound legal rulings, particularly concerning *fatwa* due to its capability of crossing national borders. Mostafa views that an under pressure reality causes a gap at the scholarship level. As a result, uncommitted and unbalanced *fatwa* occurs. Therefore, Muslims are truly in need of a renewed *fiqh* that presents the middle way of Islam. Moreover, the basic principles and tenets of Islam are needed when dealing with those challenges in the ever-changing world. This fiqh 'does not kneel down under the pressure reality'.[52] Thus, *sharia* has been changed from time to time. As an Naim said, *sharia* has always been evolving. Thus, *sharia* is humans' product of intellectual development during 200-300 years. For An Naim, we are indeed guided by the holy, but Qur'an comes to us, humans, not an angel. Islam is about this world not the afterlife. Thus, intellectuals have to learn history and the development of *sharia* within history. This is the human construction: we can construct or deconstruct.[53] This thought is in line with Rahman's idea of Qur'anic interpretation. Rahman reminds us that Qur'an was revealed gradually and if we observe carefully, we will find that the major contents of Qur'anic verses do not pertain to general principles, as it is rather in the form of answers and responses to certain legal cases and within concrete historical contexts. Rahman believes that there are rationales behind the answers, which lead to general principles. [54] In other words, we who live in different eras face Qur'anic messages through a historical mirror. For Moosa, this concept is beneficial and helpful in legitimizing and delegitimizing certain aspects of the past and the present by presenting absolute Qur'anic hermeneutics as the source of the most special Islamic teachings. [55]

In order to find integrative and coherent meanings of Qur'an, Rahman offers his hermeneutical theory called the "double movements." The first movement is that one has to start from a concrete case in the Qur'an and subsequently consider social condition of that time, then find a general principle

from the teaching. The second movement is based on the first movement. One has to move it back to a certain case in the present by viewing social conditions of the present. The first step is the understanding of Qur'an case by case and as a whole. The second step is generalizing a particular answer to a general moral purpose. In other words, one has to understand cultural, political, social, and historical situations that were evident during the era of the Qur'anic revelation. In addition, the background of Muhammad and the life of the people of Arab before and after the advent of Islam must be understood. [56]

The two steps offered by Rahman are aimed to avoid a mistake in interpretation. However, as Na'im also stresses, we often make mistakes in our interpretation of Qur'anic verses and events in Muhammad's life. Hijrah, for instance, is not the symbol of Islamic victory. Hijrah is the freedom to leave the oppressive country. For Na'im, freedom is important and Sufism tradition of tolerance is more representative than legalistic or formal tradition. Sufism is more introspective and critical towards ourselves, and does not underestimate other's value. [57]

From the description above, it is clear that the problem of interpretation or hermeneutical circle takes place. The questions that arise are as follows: *Are the different convictions on the issue of violence and nonviolence in Islam merely a problem of interpretations? If they are, what is the proper answer for the question "under what circumstances is it permissible to use violence in Islam"? If it is the problem of interpretation, does it mean that violent act is truly based on Islamic teaching, as Juergensmeyer states that "to say that violence is the interpretation problem means that violent act is truly based on religious teaching"? What is the solution for this case? Can Abu-Nimer's suggestion on creating a "community of interpreters" become a solution?*

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Inclosing this discussion, I provide several concluding remarks. First, the use of force as a solution, as shown in the Qur'an, cannot be ignored as a fact that under oppressive and unjust circumstances Islam allows the use of violence, but this is not the aim of Qur'anic verses. Qur'an simply provides an example of a solution model related to a particular problem in a particular reality, time and place. People should not make overgeneralization of a particular case in Qur'anic story.

Second, as a common problem of past texts, Qur'an is interpretable differently. The problem is not in the Qur'an but in the limitation of human beings in viewing their present reality and the reality of the past. Thus, it is reasonable that cases in the Qur'an are understood differently among Muslims. Under pressure is a closed issue to the interpretation of Qur'anic verses. From the description above, the supporters of the use of force under unjust and oppressive circumstances claim that the supporters of 'apologized intellectuals' provide a narrow insight of *jihad* as purely defensive due to being under the pressure of Orientalists. Meanwhile, the supporters of nonviolence view the *jihadis* are under the pressure of their daily life reality. They were born in a period of clash and anarchic tradition and lack education. Abu-Nimer's suggestion on developing a community of interpreters is a good step since the position of *fatwa* is significant for the followers of Islam. Therefore, Islamic leaders have to be cautious in announcing their *fatwa.*

The problem of interpretation on the issue of violence in Islam does not lead to say that violent acts are truly based on Islamic teachings because the problem does not lie in the Qur'an, but in the individuals. Qur'an functions throughout all aspects of human life, and as a scripture that was revealed gradually during a time of war and terror, the discussion on violence is inevitable. In addition, people must not view Islamic teachings by exploring certain verses because the spirit of Qur'an is in the whole of the inseparable verses. Thus, individuals should be prudent and conscientious in viewing their reality in relation to historical precedents. Frequently, people claim the truth by merely seeing the "same case" of a present reality with a historical precedent without seeking deep observations and understanding on the different realities between the past and the present. As such, human limitation leads to the variety of the interpretation of past texts.

Third, Muslims must keep in mind that the use of violence throughout human history never leads to the victory of Islam. Thus, why do we take the path that has been proven unsuccessful? Why don't we learn from history, even a donkey is capable of not being trapped in the same hole? Why do we push on an unsuccessful path? Why don't we try to find and apply other real and effective paths in providing solutions in our life? Why do we talk much on violence that is just a few verses of certain cases and ignore many verses that focus on nonviolence?

Fourth, based on the explanation above, the spirit of Qur'an is nonviolence, thus under whatever circumstances, the use of violence has to be

avoided. This action is possible for the present time because as Khoury said, nowadays, peace should be the normal state of affairs in relations between men and communities, and it is not only the final condition after the victory of Islam.Therefore, in this age, there is no possible or justification of a "just war."[58]

Fifth, Muslims have to keep in mind that the time of the prophet Muhammad was not the pinnacle of Islamic civilization, on the contrary, it was indeed the beginning, and we are in a continual process of abolishing Barbaric traditions. As is the case for other religions, the changing world is a challenge for Islam. However, as Raufstates, the biggest challenge is to conduct dialogues among Muslims themselves because most Muslims think they know more while they actually do not. They have more spirit and passion toward their religion than they have understanding. They are more emotional to their religion and are lacking in understanding the meanings inherent within. This may indeed lead them to make mistakes in their actions. [59]

ENDNOTES

[1] Timothy J. Woods "Islam, Peace and the Quest for Justice" in *Theology*, Vol. 109 (2006), p.413.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid*, p.414.

[4] John L. Esposito, in *Media dan Citra Muslim: Dari Spiritualitas Untuk Berperang Menuju Spiritualitas Untuk Berdialog.* Idi Subandy Ibrahim (Ed.) (Yogyakarta: Jalasutra, 2005), p. 13.

[5] Compensation in the Middle Ages, *jizyah*functions as a payment made by non-Muslims who do not engage in military duty because non-Muslims were not acknowledged as nation soldiers (al Asymawy, 2004:111).

[6] Mary R. Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 58.

[7] *Ibid*, p.68.

[8] *Ibid*, p.163.

[9] Sayyid Qutb, "Jihad in the Cause of God" in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (Ed.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Persepective*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 409.

[10] *Ibid*, p. 410.

[11] Mary R. Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 64

[12] Sayyid Qutb, "Jihad in the Cause of God" in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (Ed.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Persepective*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 410-415.

13   Mary R. Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror,* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 79.

14   Sayyid Qutb, "Jihad in the Cause of God" in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (Ed.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Persepective,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 80)

15   Muhammad Abdel Salam Al Faraq, "The Forgotten Duty" in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (ed.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Persepective.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.417-418

16   *Ibid,* p. 422-426, see also al Abdullah Azzam, "Join the Caravan" in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (Ed.). *Islam in Transition: Muslim Persepective,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)

17   Abdullah Azzam, "Join the Caravan" in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (Ed.). *Islam in Transition: Muslim Persepective,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 425-429.

18   Osama Bin Laden, "Text of Fatwa Urging Jihad against Americans (1998)" in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (Ed.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Persepective,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 430-432.

19   *Ibid,* p. 436.

20   *Ibid,* p. 443.

21   Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: the Global Rise of Religious Violence,* (Barkerly/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2000), p. 71-72 and 77.

22   *Ibid,* p. 79 dan 66.

23   Karl-Wolfgang Troger, "Peace and Islam: in Theory and Practice" in *I.C.M.R* Vol.1 No.1 (1990), p. 12

24   Zeki Saritoprak, "An Islamic Approach to Peace and Nonviolence: A Turkish Experience" in *the Muslim World* Vol. 95 (July 2005), p. 140

25   Mohammad Abu-Nimer, "Framework for Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam"in *Contemporary Islam: Dynamic, Not Static,* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 140.

26   Karl-Wolfgang Troger, "Peace and Islam: in Theory and Practice" in *I.C.M.R* Vol.1 No.1 (1990), p. 17-18.

27   Zeki Saritoprak, "An Islamic Approach to Peace and Nonviolence: A Turkish Experience" in *the Muslim World* Vol. 95 (July 2005), p. 415.

28   Sherman Jackson, "Jihad and the Modern World" in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (Ed.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Persepective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 398-399.

29   *Ibid,* pp.399-400.

30   Khaled Abou El Fadl, "Islam and Violence: Our Forgotten Legacy" in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (Ed.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Persepective,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 461.

31   *Ibid,* p. 464.

32   *Ibid,* p. 403-405

33   Shaikh Muhammad Mahdi Shams Al Din, "On the Political Utility of Using

Armed Violence" in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (Eds.). *Islam in Transition: Muslim Persepective,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 444.

34 Sayyid Muhammad Husain Fadlalah, "We Must Think Before We Act; September 11 Was a Gift to the U.S Administration" in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (Ed.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Persepective,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 452, 455-457, 545.

35 E.g. 8:61, 8:1, 10:25, 10:10, 13:24, 15:46, 56:26, 5:28, 23:96, 42:40, 5:32.

36 E.g. 16:90, 4:58, 4:135, 5:9, 60:8, 4:135.

37 E.g. 3: 104, 2:62, 2:177, 16:90, 28:77.

38 E.g. 95:4, 7:11, 2:30.

39 E.g. 49:13.

40 E.g. 5:32, 17:33.

41 E.g. 49: 9-10, 5:2, 4:128, 4:114.

42 E.g. 42:40, 24:43, 7:199, 23:96, 42:37.

43 E.g. 6:160, 11:101, 16:97, 42:15.

44 E.g. 2:45, 16:126-128.

45 E.g. 4:1, 23:52.

46 E.g. 49:13, 30:22, 11:118, 119.

47 E.g. 49:13, 53:45, 30:22, 64:2, 6:165, 16:93, 3:113-114, 2:62, 5:69, 5:71-72, 17:70, 4:1, 6:98, 30:22, 10:99, 11:118, 119, 11:118, 42:13, 2:136, 42:15, 2:256, 18:29, 17:107, 109:4-6, 42:48, 16:124, 31:23, 88:25, 26, 5:9, 4:135, 60:8.

48 Mohammad Abu-Nimer, "Framework for Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam"in *Contemporary Islam: Dynamic, not Static,* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 142-164.

49 Zeki Saritoprak, "An Islamic Approach to Peace and Nonviolence: A Turkish Experience" in *the Muslim World* Vol. 95 (July 2005), pp. 418-421.

50 *Ibid*, pp. 423-424.

51 Mohammad Abu-Nimer, "Framework for Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam"in *Contemporary Islam: Dynamic, Not Static,* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 165.

52 Nadia Mahmoud Mostafa, "The Missing Logic in Discourses of Violence and Peace in Islam: the Necessities of a Middle View after the 11th of September 2001" in *Contemporary Islam: Dynamic, Not Static,* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p.185-186.

53 Abdullahi An Naim, "Kita Suka Menyalahkan Orang" in *Wawancara Tempo* (6-12 Augustus 2007), p. 45.

54 Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition,* (Chicago London: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 5-6.

55 *Ibid*, p. 14.

56 *Ibid*, pp. 20 and 6.

57 An Naim, Abdullahi. "Kita Suka Menyalahkan Orang" in *Wawancara Tempo* (6-12 Augustus 2007), p. 45.

58 Khoury in Karl-Wolfgang Troger, "Peace and Islam: in theory and practice" in *I.C.M.R* Vol. 1 No.1 (1990), p. 20.

59   Feisal Abdul Rauf, "Pengertian terhadap Islam Membaik" in *Wawancara Tempo,* (31 December 2007 – 6 Januari 2008, p.56.

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