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JIHAD IN THE QUR'AN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE INTERPRETATIONS OF SAYYID QUTHB AND M. QURAISH SHIHAB

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Abstract

Jihad represents an important concept in Islamic teachings and is generally understood as struggle in the way of Allah to uphold and strengthen Islam. However, jihad is not limited to warfare; it may also involve the sacrifice of wealth and life, as well as efforts through preaching. This article examines the concept of jihad in the Qur'an by comparing the interpretations of Sayyid Quthb in *Fi Zilalil Qur'an* and M. Quraish Shihab in *Al-Misbah*. The study aims to understand how jihad is interpreted in these two exegetical works. Using a qualitative library research method, the study analyzes the views of Sayyid Quthb and M. Quraish Shihab in interpreting Qur'anic verses related to jihad, supported by relevant books, journal articles, and previous studies. The findings indicate that, according to Sayyid Quthb, jihad is a form of struggle to liberate human beings from all forms of servitude to anything other than Allah. In contrast, Quraish Shihab interprets jihad as an effort to achieve victory, sincerity in struggle, and goodness through the use of knowledge, reason, and energy. This study contributes to Qur'anic interpretation studies by highlighting the conceptual differences between two influential exegetes in understanding jihad. It also provides a broader perspective on jihad as a multidimensional concept

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that extends beyond armed struggle and includes intellectual, spiritual, and moral efforts.

Keywords: Jihad; Qur'anic Interpretation; Comparative Tafsir; *Fi Zilalil Qur'an*; *Al-Misbah*

INTRODUCTION

The history of *jihad* in Islam began with the development of Islam in Mecca and Medina in the 7th century AD. Islam was a minority religion at that time and then faced various challenges from the surrounding community. In this condition, the Prophet Muhammad SAW and his companions carried out *jihad* by sacrificing wealth and lives in strengthening the Islamic religion. Islam succeeded in spreading in Arabia and several countries, *and jihad* experienced development. During the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, *jihad* was often carried out in the form of war and conquest of territory in order to expand the territory of Islamic power, but there was also *jihad* carried out with preaching and spreading Islam to certain areas by preaching peacefully and politely (Darajat, 2016).

Jihad in general is an important aspect of the Islamic religion. From an Islamic perspective, *jihad* means fighting in the way of Allah to strengthen the Islamic religion. *Jihad* not only lead to war, but *jihad* can be carried out in various ways, such as *jihad* through the sacrifice of property and life, and *jihad* through da'wah. The position of those who strive for *jihad* is very high, both in this world and in the hereafter. The Prophet fought *jihad* in various ways; he fought *jihad* with true *jihad*, both with swords and weapons, preaching, and conveying knowledge, all of this was done to strengthen and strengthen the religion of Islam (Qardhawi, 2010).

Jihad comes from the Arabic word "jahada," meaning strength, effort, and struggle. *Jihad* involves exerting all one's physical and mental abilities, both in fighting against enemies in battle to defend Islam and in preaching, spreading Islam through various methods and strategies. According to the Arabic dictionary *Al Maany*, *jihad* is defined as effort or sincerity to achieve a specific goal, as well as a sincere struggle in the path of Allah Swt.

In the Al-Qur'an, several verses touch on *jihad*, including in Surah Al-Hajj, verse 78, which means "And strive in the way of Allah with true *jihad*. He has chosen you, and He has never made for you a narrowness in religion. Follow the religion of your parent, Abraham. He (Allah) has named you all Muslims from long ago, and (as well) in this (Al-Quran), so

that the Messenger will be a witness to you and so that you all be a witness to all mankind, then establish prayer, pay zakat and hold on to the rope of Allah. He is your Protector, so He is the best Protector and the best Helper. (QS. Al-Hajj : 78).

Some Muslims hold differing opinions regarding the meaning of *jihad*. Some emphasise that Islam must be upheld through *jihad bil harbi*, namely, war. When a country is plagued by poverty, lack of prosperity, and high unemployment, should war be considered as *jihad*? This needs to be understood wisely. *Jihad* through donating wealth should be carried out in the context of helping fellow believers and fellow countrymen who are in need or even trapped in poverty. It is important to instil in the minds of Muslims that the status of *jihad* is high in the sight of Allah (Sulaiman, 2015). Therefore, those who wage *jihad* are among the fortunate because they are on Allah's path, and they also receive guidance from Allah Swt.

Several previous studies have discussed *jihad* in the Qur'an through comparative studies of Sayyid Quthub's interpretations in *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* and M. Quraish Shihab's in *Tafsir al-Mishbah*. Saidun (2022) analysed the concepts of *jihad* and qital, finding agreement between the two that the Meccan *jihad* verses were not armed warfare, but differences in the Medinan verses, where Sayyid Quthub saw it as an eternal war against polytheism, while Shihab emphasised self-defence. Imam Muhajir Dwi Putra (2020) concluded that there are similarities and differences in *jihad*ist thinking due to socio-historical influences, with contemporary relevance to defending the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Other studies, such as Sapwan's study at the Central Library of Al-Qur'an Studies (2006), compared the understandings of the two to bridge deviant interpretations, while Pradikta (2023) highlighted Shihab's inclusive approach (devoting abilities without always resorting to bloodshed) versus Quthub's offensive approach against injustice. Studies from Mudrika (2017) also emphasised that both of them interpreted *jihad* as broader than war, including fighting against lust.

The author uses two main interpretations: Sayyid Qutb's *Tafsir Fi Zilalil Qur'an* and M. Quraish Shihab's *Tafsir Al-Misbah*. Both interpretations present very detailed explanations, making them easy to understand. The *Tafsir Fi Zilalil Qur'an* systematically interprets all the verses of the Qur'an according to the Mushaf, verse by verse and chapter by chapter, starting from Surah Al-Fatiha to Surah An-Nas. The language used in this interpretation is very adequate, supported by Sayyid Qutb's thoroughness in his interpretation. Meanwhile, the *Tafsir Al-Misbah* is a contemporary Indonesian-language interpretation that makes it easy for readers to understand. Quraish Shihab interprets the Qur'an in detail with lengthy

explanations and relates it to social phenomena, societal realities, and existing cultural systems (A. Fattah, 2016).

METHODS

This article uses a qualitative descriptive method approach, which focuses on explaining the research phenomenon through basic questions such as what, who, where, and how. This approach allows for an in-depth analysis of the identified problem sources. The researchers employed library research by collecting data through understanding and reviewing relevant theories from the related literature (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018; Cresswell, 2012; Rijali, 2019). The data collected is in the form of the opinions of the commentators Sayyid Quthb and Quraisy Shihab in interpreting the verses of the Qur'an that are related and associated with the theme taken, then collecting several references such as books, journals, and existing research (Nor & Dahliana, 2025; Salam et al., 2024).

RESULTS

A Short Biography of Sayyid Quthb

Sayyid Quthub's full name was Sayyid Qutb Ibrahim Husain Syadzili. He was an Egyptian scientist, writer, Islamic thinker, Islamic activist, and commentator. Sayyid Quthb was born on October 9, 1906, in Asyut, Egypt. By the age of 10, Sayyid Quthb had memorised the Quran and grew up in a devout Islamic family, a legacy of his parents' upbringing. Sayyid Quthb was a keen reader and voiced his opinions. His father, Haji Quthb, was respected for his compassion for the poor, while his mother was a devout believer and a scholar of the Quran. Sayyid Quthb had four siblings, all of whom were interested in education (Bahnasawi, 2003; Luthfy, 2014).

Sayyid Quthb received his primary education in his area for four years, then continued his studies at the junior high school in Cairo in 1921, and in 1925, he continued his studies at the Muallim Madrasah for three years. And in 1929, Sayyid Quthb continued his studies at the university level at Daar al-Ulum University and obtained a bachelor's degree (Lc). During his studies, Sayyid Quthb's intelligence emerged in the field of English literature. Sayyid Quthb became a lecturer at the university. In 1955, Sayyid Quthb was arrested, and he was accused of conspiring to overthrow the government, in 1966 Sayyid Quthb was sentenced to death, and the Egyptian government ignored protests from the Amnesty International organization which considered that the process was contrary to justice, Sayyid

Quthb will always be remembered for his struggle and the general public considers him a martyr (*shahid*) (Mohiuddin, 2025).

Get to Know the Tafsir *Fi Zilalil Qur'an*

In writing this tafsir, Sayyid Qutb has spent half his life studying various fields of study and theories. Apart from that, this tafsir has characteristics and styles, in general, the interpretation of *Fi Zilalil Qur'an al-adabi al ijtima'i* (literary and social style). *Tafsir Fi Zilalil Qur'an* uses a contextual approach and connects the Qur'an with social and political issues, as well as humanity. This interpretation not only explores textual meaning but also its relevance to social, political and cultural contexts. Sayyid Qutb uses beautiful and poetic language; his interpretations can be understood by readers. Sayyid Qutb also emphasises the concept of monotheism as a source of struggle to achieve progress (Quthb, 2016).

Short Biography of Quraish Shihab

The full name of the author of the Al Misbah commentary is Muhammad Quraish Shihab, who is a contemporary Muslim scholar. Quraish Shihab was born in Rappang, South Sulawesi, on February 16, 1944. His father was named Abdurrahman Shihab, who was a cleric and professor in the field of interpretation. Quraish Shihab began his formal education in Makassar from elementary school to the 2nd grade of junior high school. Then, in 1956, he continued his education at the Darul Hadith Al-Faqihiyah Islamic boarding school. Two years later, Quraish Shihab was proficient in Arabic. Then, Quraish Shihab continued his studies in Cairo, and in 1967, Quraish Shihab received his LC degree. And two years later, Quraish Shihab succeeded in obtaining his M.A. degree in 1969 with a thesis entitled Al-*I'jaz At-Tasyri' Al-Qur'an Al-Karim* (the miracle of the Qur'an from a legal perspective) (Mahfudin & Wardani, 2018; Munandar & Amin, 2023).

In 1980, Quraish Shihab returned to Cairo to deepen his study of interpretation. He only needed two years to complete his doctorate. Then, in 1984, he continued his career and moved to his previous assignment at IAIN Makassar to IAIN Jakarta Faculty of Ushuluddin, Quraish Shihab was active in the field of interpretation and Ulum al-Qur'an. Quraish Shihab's presence in Jakarta provided a new atmosphere and was welcomed by the community; he was also known as a writer and a special speaker based on the scientific background he had pursued (Ikhwan, 2015).

Getting to Know the Interpretation of *Al Misbah*

Tafsir Al-Misbah is an interpretation of the work of M. Quraish Shihab. The interpretation is known as "grounding the Qur'an" and is a contemporary interpretation that explains the messages of the Qur'an so that it is easily understood by Muslims, especially in Indonesia. Tafsir *Al-Misbah* uses the *tahlili* approach, by interpreting the verses of the Qur'an sequentially according to the Mushaf Al-Qur'an, while the interpretation of Al-Misbah uses the *adabi ijtima'i* style which tends to em(Pradikta, 2023; Putra, 2020)phasize the literary, cultural, and social aspects. *Tafsir Al-Misbah* is an interpretation that connects the messages of the Qur'an with the realities of everyday life as well as social and humanitarian values. *Tafsir Al-Misbah* is written in simple Indonesian so that it is easily understood by various groups. Quraish Shihab wrote this work of interpretation so that Muslims, especially in Indonesia, can understand and appreciate the messages of the Qur'an in the context of everyday life (Munandar & Amin, 2023).

DISCUSSION

Al-Quran Verses About *Jihad*

1. QS. Al-Hajj, verse 78

وَجَاهِدُوْا فِى اللّٰهِ حَقَّ جِهَا دِهٖ ۗ هُوَ اجْتَبٰىكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِى الدِّيْنِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ ۗ مِلَّةَ اَبِيْكُمْ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ۗ هُوَ سَمّٰىكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ۙ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِيْ هٰذَا لِيَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ شَهِيْدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّا سِ ۚ فَاَ قِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰ تُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَا عْتَصِمُوْا بِا للّٰهِ ۗ هُوَ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ۚ فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلٰى وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيْر

Meaning: And fight in the way of Allah with true *jihad*. He has chosen you, and He has not made it difficult for you in religion. (Follow) The religion of your ancestors, Abraham. He (Allah) has named you Muslims long ago, and (so too) in this (Al-Qur'an), so that the Messenger (Muhammad) will be a witness to you and so that you all become witnesses to all mankind. So perform your prayers and pay your zakat, and hold fast to Allah. He is your protector; He is the best protector and the best helper. (QS. Al-Hajj 22: 78)

2. QS. An-Nisa', verse 94

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوْا وَلَا تَقُوْلُوْا لِمَنْ اَ لْقٰٓى اِلَيْكُمُ السَّلٰمَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا ۚ تَبْتَغُوْنَ عَرَضَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ فَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ مَغَا نِمُ كَثِيْرَةٌ ۗ كَذٰلِكَ كُنْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ فَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوْا ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَا نَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا

Meaning: O you who believe! When you go (fight) in the way of Allah, then be careful (search for information) and do not say to the person who says "salam" to you, "You are not a believer," (then you kill him) with the intention of seeking the wealth of worldly life, even though in the sight of Allah there are many treasures. This was how you were before, then Allah gave you His blessings, so be careful. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing of what you do. (QS. An-Nisa' 4:94)

Asbabun Nuzul

In the narrations of Al-Bukhari, At-Tirmidhi, and Al-Hakim from Ibn Abbas, a man from Banu Sulaym who was herding his livestock encountered a group of the Prophet's companions. The man greeted them, but the companions doubted it was merely an act of self-defence. Similarly, in the narration of Al-Bazzar from Ibn Abbas, the Prophet Muhammad sent a force that included Al-Miqdad ibn Al-Aswad. Upon arriving in enemy territory, they found the enemy had fled except for a wealthy man who said, "There is no god but Allah." Nevertheless, Al-Miqdad killed him anyway. Furthermore, in the narrations of Ahmad and At-Thabrani from Abdullah ibn Abi Hadrad al-Aslami, the Prophet Muhammad sent a group led by Muhallim ibn Jathsamah. They encountered Amir ibn al-Adhbath al-Ashja'i, who greeted them, but Muhallim attacked and killed him.

These stories became the background for the revelation of the verse of the Qur'an which ordered Muslims to be careful (*tabayyun*) of anyone they encountered in a war situation, so as not to hastily accuse them of being infidels (Mattson, 2012). The main goal is to protect the blood of fellow believers from being shed without a clear syar'i basis. This verse emphasises the principle of caution and verification before acting, especially in the context of armed conflict, to prevent fatal mistakes against fellow Muslims.

Interpretation of Sayyid Quthb

1. QS. Al-Hajj, Verse 78

In his interpretation, Sayyid Qutb interpreted Fi Zilalil Qur'an, explaining QS. Al-Hajj verse 78 states that what is meant by *jihad* in the way of Allah includes several aspects, including *jihad* against the enemy, *jihad* against oneself and *jihad* against evil; some of these aspects are a mandate given by Allah to his servants. In fact, *jihad* and several of these aspects are an honour that has been given by Allah. Islam is the surrender of all one's soul and heart

to Allah, solely for the sake of Allah, and does not associate partners with Allah. The Prophet was a witness to his people, determining what was right and what was wrong; on the other hand, the Prophet's people were also witnesses to all mankind. This ummah is the one who witnesses and judges humans based on the standards of the *Shari'a, tarbiyah*, and their thoughts on the universe and life. These people will adhere to divine *manhaj* and apply it to life (Al-Zuriqat, 2025).

2. QS. An-Nisa', Verse 94

In his interpretation, Sayyid Qutb interpreted *Fi Zilalil Qur'an*, explaining QS. An-Nisa' verse 94 states that world wealth is not a consideration for Muslims when they want to wage *jihad fisabilillah*; wealth should not be a driving force, nor should rash actions to shed blood be taken before clear evidence and information is obtained. Because it could be a Muslim whose blood must be respected and must not be shed. Allah reminds those who believe about the ignorance they have just experienced, and Allah also warns against stupidity and greed for looted wealth. Allah gives them gifts to purify their souls and elevate the goal of *jihad*, so that they do not fight *jihad* solely to seek wealth (Fuadiah et al., 2025).

Quraish Shihab's Interpretation

1. QS. Al-Hajj, Verse 78

Perspective on the interpretation of *Al-Misbah*, the book written by M. Quraish Shihab explaining QS. Al-Hajj 78 states that prayer, worship and good deeds are not easy things, because within humans there are desires that always lead to evil. *Jihad* is effort, sincerity, fatigue, and difficulty. Meanwhile, mujahid means mobilising all one's abilities and sacrificing one's life, energy, thoughts, emotions, and anything related to oneself. Humans are required to fight for *jihad* and mobilise all their energy and abilities. Keep holding fast to this religion, as He did not cause any difficulty in the religion of your parents, Abraham. The Prophet, who was very great and exalted by all followers of the heavenly religion, Prophet Ibrahim also rejected idol worship because of his strong belief in monotheism, and Allah named "Muslims", namely, people who surrender. Many blessings from Allah have been given, so carry out prayers and pay zakat perfectly and adhere to Allah's religion. And Allah is the best protector and the best helper (Harahap et al., 2024).

2. QS. An-Nisa', Verse 94

Perspective on the interpretation of Al-Misbah, the book written by M. Quraish Shihab explaining QS. An-Nisa' verse 94 states that this warning is very firm so as not to

result in the loss of an innocent person's life, whether intentionally or unintentionally. On this basis, this verse invites believers to be careful in making decisions about taking someone's life. When going to war or anything in the way of Allah, you must be careful and know exactly who you are facing and do not act if you are in doubt. Don't treat people who say "salam" or surrender themselves to you and then kill them, with the intention of seriously seeking material possessions for worldly life. Don't do that because with Allah there are many treasures, so you don't need to expect anything else (E. S. Fattah, 2025). So be careful in your actions and be careful about who you face, indeed Allah knows best what you do.

Comparative Analysis

1. Sayyid Quthb's Thoughts

From the interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an above, it is clear that *jihad* from Sayyid Quthb's perspective includes several aspects, namely *jihad* against the enemy or war, then *jihad* against oneself, and *jihad* against evil. *Jihad* is also the spread of religion, a test of patience, and helping others, especially the weak, to gain mercy and approval from Allah. The characteristics of *jihad* from Sayyid Quthb's perspective include: *Jihad* as a revolution, fighting injustice, character building, *jihad* with wealth, and *jihad* with knowledge (Amin, 2014).

2. M. Quraish Shihab's Thoughts

M. Quraish Shihab explains that jihad is effort, sincerity, fatigue, and hardship. According to Quraish Shihab, jihad is not only interpreted as war, but also as an effort to achieve victory, a sincere struggle, and a sincere effort to achieve a certain goal. It must not stop until the struggle and goal are successful, and it must always and solely hope for the blessing of Allah. The characteristics of jihad from Quraish Shihab's perspective include: physical jihad, jihad against lust, and jihad with body and soul.

Similarities and Differences

Sayyid Qutb and M. Quraish Shihab both viewed *jihad* as a crucial concept in Islam, encompassing a spiritual struggle against desires and the pursuit of justice. They differed significantly in their emphasis and application. Sayyid Qutb tended to emphasise *jihad* as resistance to the modern system of ignorance and provided broader justification for physical struggle against rulers deemed un-Islamic. Meanwhile, Quraish Shihab emphasised *jihad* in a more peaceful and inclusive sense, as a sincere effort in various aspects of life, including

education and social development, and placed physical *jihad* only as a last resort in self-defence (Mudrika, 2017).

Comparison	Sayyid Quthb	Quraish Shihab
Understanding	Jihad is a form of struggle to free humans from all forms of servitude to anything other than Allah	Jihad is an effort to achieve victory, seriousness in struggle, and goodness by using knowledge, reason, and energy in jihad
Types of jihad	1. Jihad against lust 2. Social jihad 3. Political jihad 4. Physical jihad or war	1. Scientific jihad 2. Da'wah jihad 3. Economic jihad 4. Physical jihad or war
Elements of jihad	1. Against ignorance 2. Human liberation 3. Jihad as Total Struggle	1. Sincerity and maximum effort 2. Preaching and intellectual struggle 3. Contextual and peaceful in nature

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that *jihad*, etymologically derived from the Arabic root *jahada* meaning "striving" or "struggling," refers to the total exertion of one's physical and mental abilities. This concept encompasses two main dimensions: *jihad fi sabilillah* through defensive warfare to defend Islam, and *jihad* da'wah through various methods and strategies for spreading Islamic teachings. The views of contemporary scholars enrich this understanding; Sayyid Qutb (for example, in *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*) describes *jihad* as a spectrum that includes resistance against external enemies, *mujahadah an-nafs* (struggle against desires), overcoming social evils, spreading religion, testing patience, and helping the weak—all towards the mercy and pleasure of Allah. Meanwhile, M. Quraish Shihab emphasises *jihad* as a sincere effort involving fatigue and hardship, with the mujahid as the actor who sacrifices his life, energy, mind, emotions, and all his potential. These findings underscore the relevance of *jihad* as a multidimensional construct in contemporary Islamic studies, opening up opportunities for further research on its application in digital contexts and religious literacy.

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