Redeveloping Peace in Contemporary Islam

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ABSTRACT

There has been a long debate when it comes to understanding the meaning of Islam. The proponents of Islam claim Islam as a religion of peace, while on the other hand, who are mostly Westerners, would dissent this claim by addressing jihad as a violent product of Islam. The Westerners certainly fail to grasp the spirit of peace in Islam because very often their argumentations are based on material events instead of philosophical approach. This paper is an effort to shed light the true meaning of Islam by analyzing it from its philosophical aspects. Literal interpretations are specifically used as a method to analyze texts in the Quran and the Hadith to reveal the etymological, epistemological, and ontological meanings of Islam. Additionally, Max L. Stackhouse's normativity ethical approach is utilized as a framework to analyze the meaning of Islam from its textual and contextual doctrines. Three prominent concepts (true-false, good-bad, and appropriate-inappropriate) of normativity ethical approach are used in particular to reveal the spirit of peace towards the meaning of Islam. The conclusion derived from the etymological and epistemological analyses is that Islam means obedience, subjugation, and submission to God as an effort to seek safety and happiness in the world and the world after. The ontological analysis shows that Islam is a religion of peace in which its two principal teachings are believing in Allah and nurturing unity and friendship among the mankind. Islam is hoped to be comprehended as a religion that is friendly and becomes rahmatan lil alamin. The analysis using Stackhouse's normativity ethical approach focuses on the term jihad which is mean restraining from wars. When it comes to wars, jihad must be done with the spirit to erase oppression, enforce the freedom of belief, and disseminate the message of peace. Eventually, jihad itself is the manifestation of peace which is truly the spirit of Islam.

Keywords: *Islam, Peace, Rahmatan lil ʿalamin.*

ABSTRAK

Ada perdebatan panjang dalam hal memahami makna Islam. Para pendukung Islam mengklaim Islam sebagai agama damai, sementara di sisi lain, yang sebagian besar adalah orang Barat, akan membantah klaim ini dengan menyebut jihad sebagai produk kekerasan Islam. Orang-orang Barat tentu saja gagal memahami semangat perdamaian dalam Islam karena seringkali argumentasi mereka didasarkan pada peristiwa-peristiwa material alih-alih pendekatan filosofis. Makalah ini merupakan upaya untuk menjelaskan makna Islam yang sebenarnya dengan menganalisisnya dari aspek filosofisnya. Interpretasi literal secara khusus digunakan sebagai metode untuk menganalisis teks-teks dalam Quran dan Hadits untuk mengungkapkan makna etimologis, epistemologis, dan ontologis dari Islam. Selain itu, pendekatan normativitas etika Max L. Stackhouse digunakan sebagai kerangka kerja untuk menganalisis makna Islam dari doktrin tekstual dan kontekstualnya. Tiga konsep yang menonjol (benar-salah, baik-buruk, dan tepat-tidak pantas) dari pendekatan etika normatif digunakan secara khusus untuk mengungkapkan semangat perdamaian terhadap makna Islam. Kesimpulan yang diperoleh dari analisis etimologis dan epistemologis adalah bahwa Islam berarti kepatuhan, penaklukan, dan penyerahan kepada Tuhan sebagai upaya untuk mencari keselamatan dan kebahagiaan di dunia dan setelah dunia. Analisis ontologis menunjukkan bahwa Islam adalah agama damai di mana dua ajaran utamanya meyakini Allah dan memelihara persatuan dan persahabatan di antara umat manusia. Islam diharapkan bisa dipahami sebagai agama yang ramah dan menjadi rahmatan lil alamin. Analisis menggunakan pendekatan etika normativitas Stackhouse berfokus pada istilah jihad yang berarti menahan diri dari perang. Ketika terjadi perang, jihad harus dilakukan dengan semangat untuk menghapus penindasan, menegakkan kebebasan berkeyakinan, dan menyebarkan pesan perdamaian. Akhirnya, jihad itu sendiri adalah perwujudan perdamaian yang benar-benar merupakan semangat Islam.

Kata Kunci: Islam, Damai, Rahmatan lil 'alamin

Introduction

This paper begins with an interesting illustration based on a true event. A prominent scientist namely Hanmudah Abdel-Ati shared his experience when he was a graduate student at Columbia University, New York. Quoted by AzyumardiAzra, Abdel-Ati was once asked by an American student who knew that he was a Moslem. "Do you have a sword?" Abdel-Ati replied, "What do you mean?" The American student

then responded, "Isn't a Moslem supposed to bring a sword wherever they are in order to fight in God's favor and execute Jihad to non-Moslem?." (Azra 1996, 27) The above illustration is an indication that a stigma perceiving Islam as a violent religion has permeated amongst Westerners. This view is a stereotype that degrades the value of Islam as a religion that brings mercy to the worlds. Additionally, this view also neglects the fact that the term Islam is literally interpreted as peace by many experts.

The view of Islam as a religion that brings mercy to the worlds is stated in Quran Surah Al-A'raf [7]: 158 *"Say: O people! Surely I am the Apostle of Allah to you all."*(Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia 2015) This verse tells about the purpose of sending an Apostle, which is further emphasized by the following verse in Quran Surah Al-Anbiya' [21]: 107 *"And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds"* (Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia 2015).A critical question arises when it comes to interpreting the two verses above. If the primary goal of descending Islam through Prophet Muhammad is to bring mercy to the worlds, why do Moslems in their dynamic life choose to practice violent and radical ways that are not in line with the essence of mercy to the worlds as promoted by Islam? In other words, when Moslems are sent to bring mercy to their surroundings, Prophet Muhammad and his followers obviously are not supposed to bring destructions and miseries to them. Unfortunately, the reality is quite the opposite as violence is often addressed to Islam and this creates a bad stereotype towards Islam. Thus, this paper will analyze this particular stereotype.

To understand Islam as a religion of peace, the writer utilizes literal interpretations towards texts that support the premise that peace is the essence of Islam. Nevertheless, the writer also carefully considers the original meaning of the texts and reveals the non-literal meaning as a true message of an interpretation. In short, the literal meaning is a starting point for further interpretations. This procedure should be done to actualize the true message in an interpretation. This model of interpretation according to Sahiron Syamsudin' typology of interpretation is a part of *quasi-objectivist modernist school* (Syamsuddin 2014).

The analysis in this paper uses the normativity ethical approach proposed by Max L. Stackhouse (1972) which includes three underlying concepts. *First*, the concept of 'true' or 'false', which is based on certain principles, norms, and objective, positive, rational, and universal laws. This first concept is referred as deontological ethics. *Second*, the concept of 'good' and 'bad', which is focused on the purposes and consequences (good or bad) that are carefully predicted. This concept is known as teleological ethics. *Third*, the concept of 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate', which is determined by its contexts, situations, and conditions. This concept is called contextual ethics. These three concepts will become the main frameworks to analyze the spirit of peace towards the meaning of Islam began by analyzing the interpretations over some relevant texts.

Understanding Islam

Islam must initially be understood from its etymological and epistemological meanings, which will eventually lead to understanding its ontological meaning. The ontological meaning is critical to compare the essence of Islam with negative stereotypes about Islam perceived by the Westerners. From the etymological perspective, the word 'Islam'[1] is conjugated from an Arabic word '*salima*' which means safe, tranquil, and peaceful. Another conjugation of '*salima*' is the word '*aslama*' which means submission into a peaceful state (M. M. Ali 1980, 2).

There are also four theories about Islam. *First*, a theory that relates Islam with '*Musailima*' (Musailamah al-Kaddzab) or a counterfeit prophet. *Second*, a theory that equalizes Islam with *salam* which means safety. *Third*, a theory that tries to connect Islam to a Hebrew word '*syalom*' meaning the covenant between God and human. And *fourth*, a theory that interprets Islam as a sacrifice to death, sacrificing oneself in the favor of his God and His prophets, or ready to face the death (Baneth 1989, 3). Among the four theories above, the theory that Islam comes from the word '*salima*' that means safety is the most acceptable one. The word '*aslama*' is derived from '*salima*' which means keeping the safety, submission, obedience, and loyalty. The word '*aslama*' is then conjugated

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[1] Contained in the Quran Surah 3: 19, 3: 85, 5: 3, 6: 125, 9: 74, and 39: 22. See further explanation in Nazwar Syamsu (1982, 33).

into '*Islam*' along with all its basic meanings. Thus, a person who is submissive and obedient is called a Moslem. This person has declared his obedience, submitted himself, and pledged his loyalty to Allah. This person will then be assured his safety in this world and the world after (Razak 1977, 41).

According to KH. Husein Muhammad, Islam basically means submission and obedience to God the Great Unity, to whom all of His creations subjugate and submit themselves. Allah as Moslems believe in Him is God to all of His creations, thus, Islam is present to all of God's creations. In addition, Islam also means safety and peace (*salam*). Prophet Muhammad Peace be Upon Him states "*Al-Islâm man salima al-muslimûn min lisânihiwayadihi*", which means a Moslemis the one whose presence ensures safety to others through either his words or hands (Muhammad 2006, 7).

According to Nurcholis Madjid, a subjugation that is embodied in the form of total submission is the essence of Islam (Madjid 1992, 426). In line with NurcholisMadjid, Professor Ringgren states that total submission is the most basic foundation (Baneth 1989, 5). At the same time, Ibn Taimiyah asserts that converting to Islam means submitting one's body and soul to Allah as well as purifying all the acts of obedience and subjugation to Allah only. Purifying the acts of obedience and subjugation to Allah can not be done through an approval (*tashdiq*) only, but also real actions. Islam is the implementation of belief, while *tashdiq* is an act of acknowledging the belief (Munawar-Rahman 2012). It can be concluded that Islam from the etymological perspective means obedience, subjugation, and submission to God as an effort to seek safety and happiness in the world and the world after. This conclusion is congruent with what has been stated in the Quran Surah Al-Baqara [2] verse 208:

> "*O you who believe! Enter into submission one and all and do not follow the footsteps of Shaitan; surely he is your open enemy. (QS Al-Baqara [2]: 208)*"

Islam from the terminological perspective greatly varies in meaning, and it depends on which angles being used to interpret. Harun Nasution argues that Islam is a religion from God that His doctrines are revealed to humans through His messenger, Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Islam

brings lessons that encompass not only one narrowly aspect of life but also almost every aspect of life. The sources of these lessons are found in the Quran and the Hadith (Nasution 1985, 24). Islamic lessons are not limited by words and thoughts, but they are ways of life that Prophet Muhammad PBUH used to practice in daily life, as well as ways of life of his *al-khulafâ' al-râsyidûn* (the chosen disciples) and his other companions. They used to live side-by-side with people from different religions without discriminating, with the poor without ignoring, with women without humiliating, with common people without fooling, with black people without violating their rights, and et cetera (Muhammad 2006, 8).

Based on the definition above, MaulanaMuhamamd Ali asserts that Islam basically can be understood as the religion of peace in which its two principal teachings are believing in Allah as the One and nurturing unity and friendship among the mankind. These teachings are authentic proofs that Islam is in harmony with its name. Not only Islam is understood as a religion of God's apostles but also perceived as everything that bends down in submission to Allah's laws as we can see it in our universe (M. M. Ali 1980, 2). Additionally, these teachings indicate the ontological aspect of Islam in which Islam is apprehended as an entity that lives among the life of mankind. With this peaceful and calming entity, Islam is hoped to be comprehended as a religion that is friendly and becomes mercy to the worlds.

Islam as a Religion of Peace

Ethics are the primary branch of philosophy. The study of ethics deal with values and quality that measure standards and moral assessments. The study of ethics encompasses analyses and the implementation of such concepts as true, false, good, bad, and responsibility. Ethics are divided into three main parts, which are: meta-ethics (the study of ethical concept), normative ethics (the study of ethical values), and applied ethics (the study of the implementation of ethical values). This study specifically employs normative ethics as an effort to reveal the ethical values that Islam possesses as evidences that Islam is a religion of peace.

Normative ethics is a study within the framework of ethics. Normative ethics is an effort to develop guidance that does not specifically break down ethical actions yet is able to assess whether an action is considered ethical in accordance with the accepted systems. One of the accepted systems is namely deontological ethics. Deontological ethics is a study of the role of morals. It explains that ethical attitudes start with an accepted role. An action is considered ethical if it follows its role. The authority of this role is independent by nature apart from the existing situations and the consequence of the action. Three sources that can assign a duty to the authority are: natural law (general guidance of attitudes for everyone), contractual responsibility (facultative responsibility or assumed responsibility), and God (The Goddess Doctrines).

A dialectic among these three sources needs to be done in order to comprehend the essence of peace in Islam viewed from normative ethics. This study is specifically employing Stackhouse's normativity ethical theory, which is based on three theoretical concepts. *First*, the concept of 'true' or 'false', which is based on certain principles, norms, and objective, positive, rational, and universal laws. This first concept is referred as deontological ethics. *Second*, the concept of 'good' and 'bad', which is focused on the purposes and consequences (good or bad) that are carefully predicted. This concept is known as teleological ethics. *Third*, the concept of 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate', which is determined by its contexts, situations, and conditions. This concept is called contextual ethics.

Reading the Logic of Violence: Is It a Perusal or an Anti-Thesis towards the Meaning of Islam?

The meaning of Islam viewed from the life of mankind which basically means a state of peace has to experience value degradation caused by radicalizations and violence that are addressed to Islam. This value degradation is specifically meant as a whole because each violence basically can be apprehended or influenced by multiple factors instead of only one, where this does happen in every aspect of human life. The most dominant factor that influences violence is politics. Various events of violence that have happened since the era of Prophet Muhammad

have been mostly caused by a political factor. This political factor in turn leads to the emergence of the word 'jihad' with its very offensive meaning, especially in the form of war and physical violence. Jihad eventually becomes a boomerang used by Westerners to discredit Islam as a religion of war or a religion of violence.

This situation gets even worse when Western media seem to compete to each other in blowing up the news that further discredits Islam with its doctrine of jihad. The role of media more or less is the key that disseminates the meaning of jihad that is mistakenly understood in the Western worlds. This false understanding of the meaning of jihad creates a negative stereotype towards Islam. Thus, it is necessary to explain comprehensively about the issue of jihad in order to clarify the true meaning of jihad from the Islamic perspective. The meaning of jihad from the Islamic perspective embraces multiple interpretations and covers various dimensions and aspects of life. Munawar Ahmad Anees argues that jihad is a continuous struggle performed by Moslems individually or collectively that directs them into better conditions, into the development and enhancement that are determined by the structure and framework of Islamic values in order to manifest ideal values stated in the Quran and the Hadith. Jihad in an individual level is a personal and sustainable struggle to improve oneself, while jihad in a collective level means a social reconstruction. Jihad is a holistic concept used to reconstruct society where all people are involved in positive actions to improve their social life (Sardar 1992, 107).

This positive meaning of jihad is consistent with several verses about jihad stated in the Quran which basically are oriented towards positive endeavors and social development. The first-revealed verses about jihad do not mean *qital* or killing what so ever, but they literally mean jihad themselves. The word *qital* appeared in the Quran after the wars started during the period of Madinah. The wars were not initially of the interest of Moslems but more were caused by the political condition at that time. The followings are the first-revealed verses about jihad in the history of Quranic revelation. The first verse about jihad revealed was Surah Al-Furqan [25]: 52: "*So do not follow the unbelievers, and strive against*

them a mighty striving with it." The word 'with it' in this verse refers to the Quran.

According to Abdullah Yusuf Ali, this verse explains that a prophet should not be afraid of critics from the unbelievers, and instead he should carry on his mighty jihad with the Quran (A. Y. Ali 1993, 925). It can be inferred that jihad in this verse means an effort to do missionary endeavor to teach and disseminate gospels to people. This interpretation of jihad is also affirmed by Hamka, in his book Tafsir Al-Azhar, who states that this verse is an encouragement for Prophet Muhammad PBUH not to be afraid of the unbelievers and a motivation for him to carry on his jihad with the Quran as his weapon (Hamka 1981, 42).

The verse above is further emphasized by the revelation of the following verse from Surah An-Nahl [16]: 110: "*Yet surely your Lord, with respect to those who fly after they are persecuted, then they struggle hard and are patient, most surely your Lord after that is Forgiving, Merciful.*"

This verse discusses about Moslems who flew after they were persecuted. In this verse, these people flew not to Madinah but to Habasyah where they were persecuted hard. They were told to do jihad and be patient. The jihad here means a struggle to do missionary endeavor and *tabligh*, as well as to bear their pains and miseries (Qardhawi 2010, 74). Abdullah Yusuf Ali asserts that this verse was intended for people who were from the group of pagan and they decided to convert to Islam. They suffered from various tortures that made them fly and struggle sincerely and patiently in the way of Allah (A. Y. Ali 1993, 686). Thus, this verse is oriented internally, wherein people who were just converted to Islam had to face a bitter reality as a consequence of their conversion. All the pains that these people endured were considered as jihad.

Prophet Muhammad PBUH also decreed in his hadith: "*Narrated from Ibnu Abbas Radliyallahu 'anhu that Rasulullah Shallallaahu 'alaihiwa Sallam decreed during the liberation of Mecca: "There is no fly after the liberation of Mecca. There is only jihad and good deed. If you are told to depart to the field of jihad, you must go.*" (Al-Bukhārī 1401, 200). The two verses and one hadith above are sufficient to represent that the essence of jihad was initially intended for a positive orientation and for the internal of Moslems. The meaning of jihad evolvedbecoming a war or *qital* after

the political constellations required Moslems to take such necessary actions. However, this changing of meaning did not instruct Moslems explicitly to go on war, rather this meaning had to go through a gradual and strict process. Based on *nash* (Quranic regulations), there are three phases to implement jihad. *First*, the phase where a Moslem has to hold back and he is forbidden to go on war. *Second*, the phase where a Moslem is allowed to go on war. *Third*, the phase where a Moslem is obliged to fight against those who attack and defame other Moslems because of their belief in Islam (Qardhawi 2010, 166).

The first verses from the Quran that Allah Himself 'grants permission'(A. Y. Ali 1993, 853) to Moslems to go on war can be seen in Surah Al-Hajj [22] verses 39-40. *"Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and most surely Allah is well able to assist them (39). Those who have been expelled from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah. And had there not been Allah's repelling some people by others, certainly there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered; and surely Allah will help him who helps His cause; most surely Allah is Strong, Mighty (40)."*

The phase that allowed Moslems to go on war began after the revelation of this verse. The motive behind the revelation was because Moslems were oppressed and expelled from their homes. This verse also inspired Prophet Muhammad to form a special task force located outside the city of Madinah with a duty to keep vigil from any unexpected attacks done by ethnic groups or the group of Quraisy Mecca. According to Majid Ali Khan, this verse also initiated the first war between Moslems and Quraisy Mecca in a location called Badar on the 17th days of Ramadan and the second year of Hijri (Khan 1985, 127).

Based on Tafsir al-Zamakhsyari, the permission to go on war was granted after the revelation of seventy verses that forbade any event of war (Al-Zamakhsyari 1998, 4). This period of restraining from wars indicates that wars in Islam are not favorable. Additionally, Tafsir al-Thabari provides an interpretation over Surah 22: 39, in which God permits Moslems to fight against the unbelievers who oppress and attack them (Al-Thabari 2001, 571). Al-Thabari adds, by quoting Ibn Zaid, the

permission was granted after Prophet Muhammad and his companions forgave the unbelievers who had oppressed them for ten years (Al-Thabari 2001, 575). During this period of time, Prophet Muhammad and his companions restrained, established prayers, and worshipped Allah (Qardhawi 2010, 162).

Al-Thabari's interpretation over the above verse means that Prophet Muhammad and his companions faced very bad treatments from the unbelievers patiently for a ten-year period of time, and Allah finally granted permission to fight against them. It can be inferred that any decisions to go on war must be preceded with the phase of restrain and prohibition to fight in the form of being patient with all psychological and physical attacks from the unbelievers. This phase of restrain and prohibition to fight is similar to what has been illustrated by Yusuf Qardhawi (Qardhawi 2010, 166). This fact infers that any statement to conduct frontal and offensive wars must be preceded by a period of restrain as instructed in the first seventy verses. The phase of restrain itself can be considered as jihad because it was surely not an easy task to hold back for as many as ten years, to wait for the gradual revelation of the seventy verses as a response to physical and psychological attacks from the unbelievers, and finally to receive revelation that permitted Moslems to go on war. Additionally, it is very obvious that war is not an option that Moslems want because peace is much better than war (Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia 2015, 128)

According to Sahiron Syamsudin, the implied message behind jihad is that Islam wants to erase oppression, enforce the freedom of belief, and disseminate the message of peace. Referring to Muhammad Syahrur's opinion, Sahiron states that a peaceful jihad that is in line with Allah's way may be followed by a war only in an emergency condition. This jihad ensures that all men have freedom to choose (*hurraiyat al-ikhtiyar*), which includes freedom of belief, freedom of expression, freedom of using religious and sect symbols, justice, and equality. Therefore, it can be understood why the Quran Surah 2: 190 orders Prophet Muhammad and his companions not to kill the unbelievers who are unprepared to fight and surrender peacefully to Moslems (Syamsuddin 2012, 97).

The Quran even mentions and recognizes that humansdo not want wars. It is stated in Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 216: *"Fighting is enjoined on you, and it is an object of dislike to you; and it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you love a thing while it is evil for you, and Allah knows, while you do not know."* These verse recognizes that Allah knows humans hate wars. Thus, the permission to go on war was preceded by the phase of prohibition, which according toTafsir al-Zamakhsyariwas preceded by the revelation of seventy verses forbidding wars, or according toTafsir al-Thabari was preceded by ten years of suffering from physical and psychological attacks.

The permission to go on war was also favored by Prophet Muhammad and his companions at that time in order to receive mercy from Allah. Mercy is equivalent to Allah's compassionate. The meaning of compassionate is closely related to peace, not war. The Quran Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 218 explains: *"Surely those who believed and those who fled (their home) and strove hard in the way of Allah these hope for the mercy of Allah and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."* This verse emphasizes that people who commit jihad in the way of Allah actually hope for mercy and compassionate from Allah. This verse is ended with an emphasis that Allah is the Forgiving and Merciful. Thus, it can be inferred that the verse of jihad is actually situated within the context of peace, and the true message behind this verse is to place the message of peace above all verses about wars. Therefore, Islam is basically a religion that loves peace, instead of conflict and war.

Indeed, there are several verses in the Quran that contain call of wars, but these wars may be proceeded due two conditions, which are defending from enemy's attacks and defending the freedom to do missionary endeavor in the way of Allah. The wars here are intended to prevent defamation, maintain justice, defend the oppressed groups, and ensure safety from all forms of conflicts. The following verses represent these two conditions. *"And what reason have you that you should not fight in the way of Allah and of the weak among the men and the women and the children, (of) those who say: Our Lord! Cause us to go forth from this town, whose people are oppressors, and give us from Thee a guardian and give us from Thee a helper."* (QS. Al-Nisa [4]: 75)

Another verse mentions, "*And prepare against them what force you can and horses tied at the frontier, to frighten thereby the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them, whom you do not know (but) Allah knows them; and whatever thing you will spend in Allah's way, it will be paid back to you fully and you shall not be dealt with unjustly.*" (QS. Al-Anfal [8]: 60). Additionally, this verse states, "*Fight then in Allah's way; this is not imposed on you except in relation to yourself, and rouse the believers to ardor maybe Allah will restrain the fighting of those who disbelieve and Allah is strongest in prowess and strongest to give an exemplary punishment.*" (QS An-Nisa' [4]: 84). Lastly, this verse recalls, "*And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you, and do not exceed the limits, surely Allah does not love those who exceed the limits.*" (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 190).

The verses above imply that jihad in the form of war must be based on procedures in which Moslems are being attacked first so the jihad is an effort to defend sovereignty and missionary endeavor. Moslems are obliged to jihad and raise arms against those who attack them. However, wars should be done without exceeding the limits, and this is very important to understand the meaning of war in Islam. It also must be understood that the forms of jihad in Islam can be persuasive and offensive. As stated by Khadduri, jihad is viewed as a religious propaganda that can be done persuasively or offensively (Khadduri 1955, 56). However, peaceful and persuasive ways are more emphasized and prioritized than offensive ways.

Once again, what must be understood is that jihad, in the forms of wars, in Islam is permitted for a self-defense, not for attacking. Jihad in the form of an offensive war and destruction is not the essence of the jihad itself. This view is supported by Asymawi who argues that jihad in the forms of wars happened after Moslems had no choice but fought against Quraysh in the war of Badar in 624 AD. At that time, Prophet Muhammad viewed the definition of the material concept of war had surpassed its spiritual essence. Thus, after the war of Badar, Prophet Muhammad decreed: "*We come home from a small jihad (the war of Badar) to a bigger jihad.*" In other words, wars are just small jihad. Jihad is not a sword to draw or a war to fight, but it is a collective effort to

fight evils such as greed, ignorance, and ruthlessness. This jihad is the big jihad after the victory in the war of Badar (Al-Asymawi 1987, 97).

Harun Ibn Musa, as quoted by Sahiron Syamsudin, elaborates in his book *Wujuhwa al-Nazha'ir* that the meaning of jihad may have three possibilities, which are: *first*, jihad *bi al-qaul* (QS. 25: 52 and 9:73); *second*, jihad *al-qital bi al-silah* (wars) (QS 4: 95); *third*, jihad *al-a'mal* (hard work) (QS 29: 6, 69 and QS 22: 78) (Syamsuddin 2012, 92).

According to Sahiron, the meaning of jihad that contains wars cannot be placed equal to or above the verses that contain peace. He asserts that the Quranic verses about peace have to be placed as reference for Quranic verses about wars. Thus, the verses about jihad are placed based on its textual and historical contexts. Wars are permitted only if the is no solution to eliminate oppression and ensure the religious freedom and peace. This means that humans must prioritize peace as best as they can (Syamsuddin 2012, 99).

This peaceful meaning of jihad must be promoted and disseminated to avoid miss interpretations and judgement addressed to Islam as a religion of war and destruction. Not to mention that Western media very often make propaganda and bad stereotype towards the meaning of jihad. This becomes their weapon to discredit Islam as a religion of war. The message of jihad that is very often mistakenly understood by Westerners substantially needs an in-depth analysis in order to prove that the logic behind violence addressedto the meaning of Islam is basically an anti-thesis of the true meaning of Islam itself.A perusal that refers to a fact that some events of violence were indeed done by some Moslems is merely a perusal of their rigid interpretations towards the true meaning of the texts in the Quran. They then use these interpretations as argumentations to legitimate any events of violence that are addressed to them.

The meaning of violence and wars in Islam indicates ethics of wars that are much better than the ethics of wars in the previous civilizations. Two examples of prominent civilizations before Islam were the Rome and the Persia, wherein these civilizations were conducting wars for expansions and colonializations. The wars done by the Rome and the Persia were offensive and destructive in nature. As a comparison, Islam

involved in wars under two conditions, which were when Islam was being attacked (defensive and passive) and when Islam had to ensure the safety of its missionary endeavor.

The Rome and the Persia often fought to each other as recorded in the history book. At that time, these two civilizations competed to become the best and the ruler of the world. They fought for as long as seven centuries, that was began in 92 BC. The wars were mostly between the Roman Empire and two powers of Persia-Iran, Parthia and Sasaniyah. The factors that caused the wars between the Rome and the Persia were territorial expansion, economics, and trivial conflicts that triggered destructive wars. These two civilizations were in turn in winning the wars that eventually long and tiring wars weakened the power of these civilizations. According to Chris Brazier, the wars between the Rome and the Persia were unproductive and too frustrating and exhausting to think about (Brazier 2010, 42).

Frye adds that "People might think that the blood spilled in the wars between these two civilizations was meaningless and the wars were not worth it at all. The wars only gave each side little prices that had to be paid expensively. Similar war happened in the ditch war during the First World War (Frye 1993, 139). It can be concluded that the wars happened between the two dominating civilizations before Islam caused total damage that destroyed every aspect of human life. The total damage was meaningless because the primary goals of the wars could not be reached and something that were not fundamental in life. Power, territory, economics, and other trivial conflicts were goals that resided within the political domain. Thus, political issues became very dominant. Politics, in fact, is something that will last and disappear due to political succession, either done peacefully or violently.

Wars in the Islamic history were different because the wars were an effort to defend from the enemy's attacks in the Muhammad's era and to ensure the missionary endeavors in his companions' era. Additionally, Islam always prioritized the ethics of war, which were the prohibition to attack unprepared enemy, to kill children and women, and to perform a total damage. According to Peters, the purpose of holy war or jihad was not to force the unbelievers to embrace Islam. This is completely different

with what is usually stated in the Western literatures. The primary purposes of jihad were to expand and defend the Islamic territorial (*dar al-Islam*). The unbelievers who surrendered to Islam could even choose to embrace their religions by paying *jizyah*, or choose to convert to Islam in order to receive their full rights as civilians (Peters 1977, 3).

Jihad that is perceived as fighting against the unbelievers is not a war based merely on the religious motive, a war to force the unbelievers to convert to Islam. Historically, jihad is generally done based on political motives, such as the territorial expansion and defending Moslems from any attacks (Azra 1996, 129). Thus, this holy war cannot be said that it is identic with jihad. This argument is supported by verses that have been explained above. The discussions on the above verses infer that basically jihad should preferably be in the forms of reminding ourselves and others with reference to the Quran, *hujjah* and thoughts so that people can accept Islam in a peace way because this is the spirit of Islam. Jihad should also be done with patient and sincerity, with efforts, and with the intention to seek for Allah's blessing. This kind of jihad happened in the period of Mecca. Jihad in the period of Madinah changed into wars, which had been permitted by Allah and under a condition that Moslems were being attacked first instead of doing an active and aggressive action.

The permission to do jihad in wars must follow certain procedures stated in the Quran, and must not be done with the intention to make a total damage. Jihad is only done to fight against those who deserve with a reference to the regulations stated in the Quran and the Hadith. It is hoped that this understanding of jihad will erase the stigma of religion of war or religion of terrorism labelled by Western scholars. Bachtiar Ibrahim, a Muhammadiyah figure in North Sumatra, asserts that whoever equalizes jihad with terrorism is a terrorist, because jihad is God's statement and it cannot be interfered. Jihad is a truth that can be tested anytime and anywhere. Jihad is an action that is done only to seek Allah's blessing. On the contrary, terrorism creates disorders and violence that do not agree with humanism and Islamic teachings. He adds that jihad is the opposite of terrors, not the equivalence (Saidurrahman 2012, 70).

The concept of jihad has to be interpreted as it is that aligns with the fundamental foundation of Islam. This interpretation needs to be

disseminated to give an objective and fundamental understanding towards the meaning of jihad itself, in order to avoid stereotyping and partial justification with political purposes to discredit Islam. Besides, the understanding of fundamental verses of jihad can be used as *hujjah* by the radical and fundamentalist groups of Islam not to use the term of jihad as a reasoning to destroy the spirit of Islam as a religion of peace. A comprehensive conclusion can be drawn here is that one of the elements used as an argument by those who view Islam as religion of war basically something that has to be explained and corrected. This correction is then disseminated in order to give understanding that Islam is a peaceful religion. Thus, one needs to explain carefully about the meaning of Islam that Islam is a religion whose spirit is peace itself.

The Spirit of Peace in the Generic Meaning of Islam

There are four methods used to comprehend Islam thoroughly. *First*, Islam must be studied from its original sources, which are the Quran and the Hadith. People fail to understand Islam because very often they learn it only from some Islamic clerics or its believers who might not fully comprehend the Quran and the Hadith. Additionally, they might also learn Islam from classical books such as *fiqh*and *tasawuf* in which their spirits are not congruent anymore with the current development. *Second*, Islam must be studied holistically instead of partially. *Third*, Islam must be studied from literatures that are written by prominent Islamic clerics, *zu'ama*, and scholars because in general they have better understanding of Islam. Their expertise on Islam is a combination of deep understanding of the Quran and the Hadith. *Fourth*, Islam must be initially studied from its normative teachings contained in the Quran,and then must be interpreted based on historical, empirical, and sociological conditions of the society. This way, the degree of relevancy and discrepancy between the meaning of Islam in the normative teachings and the historical, sociological, and empirical conditions can be scrutinized (Nata 2000, 107–9).

There exists a dialectic between texts and contexts within the four methods used to comprehend Islam. Texts can definitely be used to interpret contexts. Texts can be solutions or normative resources for

solving problems related to contexts. Thus, the issue in this paper will be analyzed using the normativity ethical theory proposed by Max L. Stackhouse (1972).

Stackhouse describes his theory into three underlying concepts. *First*, the concept of 'true' or 'false', which is based on certain principles, norms, and objective, positive, rational, and universal laws. This first concept is referred as deontological ethic. *Second*, the concept of 'good' and 'bad', which is focused on the purposes and consequences (good or bad) that are carefully predicted. This concept is known as teleological ethic. *Third*, the concept of 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate', which is determined by its contexts, situations, and conditions. This concept is called contextual ethic.

Stackhouse's concept of 'true' and 'false' can be used to analyze the meaning of Islam. As explained previously about the etymological and epistemological meaning of Islam, there is an assumption of the true meaning of Islam that is rooted from the word '*aslama*' which means keeping the safety, submission, obedience, and loyalty. The word '*aslama*' is then conjugated into '*Islam*'that contains all of its basic meanings. A new understanding can then be derived from the word '*aslama*' that Islam is the religion of peace in which its two principal teachings are believing in Allah as the One and nurturing unity and friendship among the mankind. These teachings are authentic proofs that Islam is in harmony with its name. This is a truth taken from the meaning of Islam. Thus, any misunderstanding towards the meaning of Islam will be automatically reduced.

The events of violence that become the anti-thesis of the word Islam (peaceful state) can also be analyzed from the context of Stackhouse's 'good' and 'bad'. Islam is basically a religion that constructs a house of goodness. Prophet Muhammad was sent to correct the morals of his followers. Good morals are the foundation for reconstructing goodness in all dimensions of human life. Additionally, Islam condemns the destructions of the earth. There are many verses in the Quran that condemn these destruction, such as in Surah Ar-Rum [30]: 41: "*Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought, that He may make them taste a part of that*

which they have done, so that they may return."This verse reminds us that destructions on earth are undeniable because as it was predicted that men, since their creation, would do such a thing (the Quran Surah [2]: 12; [2]: 30). Nevertheless, men are always reminded to return to the right path after they do such destructions. Therefore, the meaning of Islam that is oriented to a peace state and constructivism in human life is an anti-thesis of the destructive meaning.

It can be inferred that the concepts of 'good' and 'bad' as well as 'true' and 'false' are in the diametric area when they are used to define the word Islam. However, what needs to be analyzed is Stackhouse's concept of 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' in defining Islam. What has been done by the Westerners in labeling negative stereotypes towards Islam that are more oriented to swords and wars must be further analyzed. An authentic example of this labeling is a controversial issue about the concept of jihad which has been debated between Moslems and Western scholars.

The comprehensive definition of jihad explained previously derives a conclusion that Islam basically desires peace. There are several steps that have to be met before Moslems are allowed to declare a war. Allah's permission to go on war is a long process and must be passed with patient. According to SahironSyamsudin, the implied message behind jihad is that Islam wants to erase oppression, enforce the freedom of belief, and disseminate the message of peace. Referring to Muhammad Syahrur's opinion, Sahiron states that a peaceful jihad that is in line with Allah's way may be followed by a war only in an emergency condition. This jihad ensures that all men have freedom to choose (*hurraiyat al-ikhtiyar*), which includes freedom of belief, freedom of expression, freedom of using religious and sect symbols, justice, and equality. Therefore, it can be understood why the Quran Surah 2: 190 (Tim Penerjemah Al-Qur'an Kementerian Agama RI 2012) orders Prophet Muhammad and his companions not to kill the unbelievers who are unprepared to fight and give up peacefully to Moslems (Syamsuddin 2012, 97).

The above argumentations assert that substantially Islam is a peaceful religion. When a violence is addressed to Islam, it is questionable whether or not the word violence is appropriately accounted for the

name of Islam itself. Who knows that the expression of violence is just a justification for individual and collective actions that are addressed to Islam? From here, it can be analyzed whether or not it is appropriate to define Islam as a religion that is developed with swords and violence. Peace is one of the essential principles in Islam, as stated in the Quran Surah al-Anfal [8]: 61: *"And if they incline to peace, then incline to it and trust in Allah; surely He is the Hearing, the Knowing."* Thus, it is very obvious that maintaining peace in all aspects of life is a principle that is highly encouraged, even it is commanded. With this principle of peace, both society and individuals can live tranquilly and peacefully. If they incline to peace, then incline to it and trust in Allah. Surely He is the Hearing, the Knowing.

Closing

This discussion can be concluded that Islam is basically a religion that is oriented to safety and peace. Although there is a space to interpret the word Islam as submission, obedience, and loyalty in doing what has been commanded, there is also other interpretations that view Islam as a religion of violence and terror. However, the command itself has to be analyzed whether or not its essence is perceived as a command to do violence or just the opposite. The concept of jihad that becomes a negative stereotype used by Westerners to define Islamsubstantially contains the spirit of peace and is very constructive. Thus, further analyses need to be done to better understand this issue. Lastly, the meaning of Islam is most appropriately analyzed using Max L. Stackhouse's normativity ethical theory. It is hoped that the message of peace can be extracted from analyzing the meaning of Islam vis-à-vis to Westerners who understand and consider Islam as the religion of war.

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