

# Transformation of the Concept of Jihad in Historical Lens

Askini Ainul Fithri<sup>a</sup>, Jamalulleb<sup>b</sup>, Jubaedah<sup>c</sup>, Hajam<sup>d</sup>

<sup>abcd</sup> Postgraduate Program, Syekh Nurjati Cyber State Islamic University, Cirebon, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author: [askiniainulfithri@mail.syekhnurjati.ac.id](mailto:askiniainulfithri@mail.syekhnurjati.ac.id)

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**Abstract**— This article discusses the transformation of the concept of jihad in Islam through a historical approach, from the religious struggle that is integral in Islamic history to a narrowed interpretation that often leads to violence and terrorism. The main aim of this research is to provide an in-depth and systematic understanding of jihad, as well as how this concept has changed over time. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative, where the authors analyze data from various library sources, including books, journals, and articles related to jihad. Using a historical approach, the authors explore how the meaning and practice of jihad has changed over time, thereby providing a deeper context regarding the development of the concept of jihad in Islamic history. The results obtained show that jihad actually has broader and more complex dimensions than is often perceived in the context of violence. This research also highlights the importance of religious education and interfaith dialogue to build a better understanding of jihad in the modern era. For further research, it is recommended that a more in-depth study be conducted on the application of jihad values in the current social and political context, as well as identifying ways to educate the public about the true meaning of jihad as a struggle for good.

**Keywords**— Transformation; Jihad; Historical Approach

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of jihad in Islam has been the subject of intense debate in various contexts, including academic, social, and political. Although the term jihad itself means struggle or effort, its interpretation has shifted from a broader and more complex meaning to a narrower and even extreme perception. This perception is often related with violence and terrorism, even though in fact the concept of jihad has a more multidimensional and historical dimension.

The history of jihad itself began since the beginning of the development of Islam in Mecca and Medina in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. At that time, the Prophet Muhammad saw. and his companions carried out jihad through the sacrifice of property and life to strengthen Islam and protect themselves from the threat of their enemies. After Islam spread throughout Arabia and several countries in the world, jihad experienced wider development and variation in form. During the Umayyad and Abbasid Dynasties, jihad was often carried out in the form of warfare and conquest of new territories to expand the territory of Islamic power.<sup>1</sup>

However, throughout its history, jihad has also been misused and misinterpreted by some groups who enforce their will using violence and terrorism.<sup>2</sup> One example is historical events such as the rebellion of Prince Diponegoro in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which was an example of defensive jihad in order to fight against Dutch colonialism in Indonesia.<sup>3</sup>

This modern condition demands a deeper and more systematic analysis of the transformation of the concept of jihad through the lens of history. This analysis will help understand the evolution of the meaning of jihad, from its understanding as an integral religious struggle in Islamic history to extreme behavior that is often derided as a false representation of the religion.

Therefore, this article aims to analyze the transformation of the concept of jihad through a historical perspective. Through the method of historical analysis, the authors want to explore how the meaning of jihad has changed over time. The ultimate goal is to reconstruct a more precise and holistic understanding of the concept of jihad, so as to reduce misunderstandings and conflicts arising from misinterpretations.

## II. METHOD

The type of research in this article is descriptive qualitative, which aims to describe the transformation of the concept of jihad accurately and systematically. With this type of research, the authors need to collect relevant data to provide a comprehensive picture of the transformation of the concept of jihad.<sup>4</sup>

The method used by the authors is library research. This method is used to collect and analyze data from various literary sources such as books, journals, articles, or other documents about the transformation of the concept of jihad. This method is also very relevant to qualitative research, where the authors do not need to make direct field observations. The data that has been collected is then analyzed descriptively analytically, which aims to describe and analyze the data in depth, so as to provide a better understanding of the transformation of the concept of jihad.<sup>6</sup>

The transformation of the concept of jihad is then analyzed using a historical approach. The historical approach is an important method in the study of Islam, which helps in understanding the context and development of this religion over time. In this study, history not only functions as a background, but also as an analytical tool to explore the meaning and implications of various events related to Islam. Therefore, a historical approach allows us to understand how the meaning and practice of jihad has changed over time, as well as how interpretations of jihad may vary.

### **III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Definition of Jihad**

The word jihad comes from the root words *jahada - yajhudu - jahd/juhd* which means to be serious or try hard. The word *jahd* or *juhd* means energy, effort, or strength. In a general sense, jihad includes all physical and spiritual worship and ways of achieving goals without despair, giving up, and self-interest, whether through physical struggle, emotions, property, energy, or knowledge as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad saw. during the Mecca and Medina periods. Then, in a specific sense, jihad means fighting infidels to uphold Islam, and this meaning is often used by some Muslims in understanding jihad.

Imam Raghīb stated that the words *mujahadah* and jihad mean fight as hard as you can to repel the enemy's attacks. He also explained that jihad consists of three types, namely fighting against the visible enemy, fighting against satan, and fighting against lust.

Muhammad Chirzin stated that jihad has two meanings. In a narrow sense, jihad means 'war in the way of Allah' which is indicated by the mention of death on the battlefield as well as the acquisition of *ghanimah*. While in a broad sense, jihad is all efforts which requires Allah's blessing, whether in the form of special (individual) worship and public (collective) worship.

The various opinions of experts on the meaning of jihad illustrate that the meaning of jihad is not always identical to war. The various versions state that jihad also means a serious effort in various activities whose ultimate goal is only to get Allah's blessing.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Jihad in the Early Period of Islam**

##### **1. Jihad in the Mecca Period**

One of the verses that describes jihad in the Mecca period is QS. Al-Furqan verse 52 which means: *"So do not obey the disbelievers, and fight against them with it (the Qur'an) with great jihad"*.

Jihad in this period is closely related to the efforts of the Prophet Muhammad saw. in spreading the teachings of the Qur'an, especially regarding the creed. The Prophet's struggle in spreading monotheistic teachings in the midst of the polytheistic society of Mecca at that time was a great jihad. Therefore, the Qur'an is considered a 'weapon' in jihad, as well as an effort to introduce the teachings of the Qur'an which are monotheistic teachings.

Another verse that describes jihad in the Mecca period is QS. An-Nahl verse 110 which means: *"Then, indeed your Lord (is the protector) of those who emigrate after suffering trials, then they strive for jihad and are patient; indeed your Lord after that is truly Forgiving, most Merciful"*.

In that verse, there are three things that the Prophet and his companions did, namely migrating, jihad, and being patient. Being patient in the face of nurture is one form of jihad that must be done, because the condition of the Muslim community at that time was still weak, both economically, socially, militarily, and politically. Then when experiencing suffering, the Prophet and his companions took the right step by migrating to Habashah.<sup>8</sup>

In the early days of the development of Islam, tyranny and lies were rampant and everywhere, so jihad was against the tyranny and liars of Allah and the prophethood of Muhammad saw. not fought for in the sense of taking up arms, but advised using the approach of the Qur'an and Hadith. This is proven by several prophetic Hadith written at the beginning of the development of Islam, and the Prophet saw. often convey religious messages through his Hadith. The form of tyranny that they commit is tyranny against themselves, because they worship idols and deny the word of God.

## 2. Jihad in the Medina Period

The meaning of jihad in Medina period was certainly different from the meaning of jihad in the Mecca period, because science was developing rapidly and the area of Islamic rule was expanding.<sup>9</sup>

One of the verse that describes the jihad of the Medina period is QS. Al-Hajj verse 39 which means: "Permission has been given (to fight) to those who are being fought because they have indeed wronged. And indeed Allah is truly Almighty to help them".

Since the increasing persecution of the Mecca polytheists against Muslims, many companions have asked the Prophet saw. for permission to be allowed to reply. With the revelation of this verse, Allah gave permission to Muslims to defend themselves, their faith, and face aggression so that they can get freedom of religion and carry out their worship according to Allah's instructions.

In addition, there is also a Hadith of the Prophet saw. which describes the forms of jihad, namely:

عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ قَالَ: جَاهِدُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَلْسِنَتِكُمْ

Meaning: "From the Prophet saw. said: Fight the polytheists with your wealth, your hands, and your tongue".

So jihad in this period tends to be interpreted as 'war' as an effort by Muslims to retaliate against attacks by polytheists through several processes, such as migration, orders to fight, and jihad (fighting) with wealth and life.<sup>10</sup>

## Jihad in the Classic Period (After the Death of the Prophet Muhammad saw.)

### 1. The Era of Khulafaur Rashidin

After the death of the Prophet saw. in 632 AD, the development of the concept and practice of jihad underwent a significant transformation in the socio-political context of Muslims. During the leadership of Abu Bakr as-Shiddiq, there was an apostasy movement carried out by several Arab tribes who refused to pay zakat and rebelled. Therefore, jihad during his time was aimed at extinguishing this *bughat* (rebellion).

During the leadership of Umar bin Khattab, jihad was directed at expanding Islamic da'wah to new areas. Apart from that, he also carried out thought jihad (*ijtihad*) such as creating a calendar as the beginning of the Islamic calendar, establishing treasury, forming an army corps, regulating employee salaries, and many more. Then during the time of Uthman bin Affan, the ideology of jihad proved the strength of the Islamic naval forces led by Muawiyah bin Abi Sufyan to grow rapidly, to bring Islam to the Cyprus and Rhodes regions, and defeat the Roman army. While during the time of Ali bin Abi Thalib faced internal challenges that required jihad against groups that opposed him.

Furthermore, the discourse on jihad during the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties was not much different from the period of the Khulafaur Rashidin. If during Khulafaur Rashidin era the understanding of jihad was applied more in a practical form, then during the Umayyad era, especially the Abbasid era, the discourse on jihad had become a theoretical study among Muslim intellectuals, both *ulama*, philosophers, sufis, and so on.<sup>11</sup>

### 2. The Era of Umayyad Dynasty

Jihad during the Umayyad dynasty (661-750 AD) had quite high variations and complexities, involving various political, military, and propaganda aspects. Muawiyah bin Abi Sufyan's ability to stabilize the political atmosphere has provided an opportunity to create large programs that are fundamental and strategic for the expansion of the spread of Islam, as well as development and progress in various areas of life of the Muslim community.<sup>12</sup>

The Umayyad dynasty carried out extensive military expansion, several areas outside the Arabian Peninsula that Muawiyah successfully controlled included Tunisia, then in the east he controlled Khurasan to the Oxus River and Afghanistan to Kabul. Muawiyah's navy was even able to attack the capital of Byzantium, namely Constantinople. Muawiyah's expansion also succeeded in reaching North Africa, his successors also succeeded in penetrating mainland Europe. One of his commanders, Tariq bin Ziyad, played a major role in the conquest of Europe. He managed to cross the strait of Gibraltar and defeat the army of King Roderick of Andalusia (Spain at that time). Several cities in Andalusia that were conquered by Islamic troops included Toledo (the capital of Andalusia, Seville, Malacca, Elvira, and Cordoba).<sup>13</sup>

The Umayyad dynasty also became a center for advanced propaganda and da'wah. The development of da'wah during the Umayyad dynasty had both inward and outward activities. Inward da'wah activities are an act of guidance and consolidation, while outward da'wah is an effort to widen the area of da'wah. Islamic da'wah at this time also moved towards the development and expansion of scientific fields with Arabic as the main medium, and the knowledge developed

included the sciences of Qira'at, Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh, Nahwu, Tarikh, and Geography. Apart from that, translations into Arabic also continue to be carried out in various scientific disciplines, including chemistry, physics, astronomy, medicine, and others. Then, as a positive step in efforts to develop science, the Umayyads founded a small city as a center for scientific and cultural activities called Marbad, a satellite city of Damascus.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. The Era of Abbasid Dynasty

Jihad during the Abbasid dynasty (750-1258 AD) was a multifaceted phenomenon that encompassed various aspects, including war, propaganda, education, and the development of science. There are several important points related to jihad during the Abbasid dynasty, namely:

- a) Jihad in the sense of war against the enemy, namely war against the infidel forces who want to extinguish the message of Islam. Like in 758 AD, where the troops of the Caliph Abu Ja'far al-Manshur succeeded in recapturing the Malatia Fortress in Cappadocia and Sicilia from the hands of the power of Emperor Constantine V.
- b) Jihad in the sense of eliminating opposition movements, namely fighting to crush the *bughat* movement, namely the opposition that wanted to separated from the central government. By crushing this *bughat* movement, Caliph al-Manshur succeeded in strengthening political stability and domestic security.
- c) Jihad in the sense of eliminating deviant sects, means eradicating deviant sects that threaten the sovereignty of the state.
- d) Jihad in the sense of mobilizing the abilities of the *ulama*, namely the *ulama* participating in explaining straight Islam to ward off false beliefs and deviant sects.
- e) Jihad in the sense of deploying the capabilities of science and technology experts, means conducting research in various scientific fields in order to produce a scientific paradigm that is integrated with Islam.
- f) Jihad in the sense of education and da'wah, namely encouraging regeneration programs for *ulama*, *umara*, *mujahid*, and science and technology experts to ensure that these programs run well and correctly in accordance with the basic message of the Qur'an and Hadith.<sup>15</sup>

#### a. Jihad in Modern Era

Since the beginning of the arrival of colonialists, both Dutch and Japanese, Muslims have considered colonialism as a form of injustice that must be opposed. The concept of jihad in Islam is not only limited to the spiritual aspects, but also includes physical struggle against oppression. In this case, jihad becomes a term that unites the spirit of resistance against colonialists who seek to control and exploit natural resources and local communities.

One of the important moments in the history of jihad in Indonesia was the 'Jihad Resolution' issued by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari on 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 1945. This resolution called on Muslims to fight back against the Dutch colonialists who attempted to occupy Indonesia after Japan's defeat in World War II. This call is not just a call to war, but is also a manifestation of the moral and religious obligation to defend independence.<sup>16</sup>

Jihad Resolution issued by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari in 1945 was an important historical milestone in Indonesian's struggle for independence. In the resolution, KH. Hasyim Asy'ari emphasized that defending the homeland from colonialism is the obligation of every Muslim. He stated that 'defending the Motherland is part of the faith' and that 'whoever dies fighting colonialism is a martyr'.

In the struggle against colonialism, jihad has several dimensions, such as:

- a) *Physical Struggle*. This is the most known form of jihad, where Muslims take up arms to fight the invaders. The Battle of Surabaya on 10<sup>th</sup> of November 1945 is a concrete example where Islamic boarding school students and the community united against Dutch troops. This battle became a symbol of the resistance of the Indonesian people and is commemorated as Heroes' Day.<sup>17</sup>
- b) *Intellectual Struggle*. Apart from physical resistance, jihad also includes efforts to increase people's awareness and knowledge of their rights. *Ulama* and Islamic boarding school students play an important role in educating the public about the importance of independence and the right to self-determination. This intellectual jihad aims to empower society to be able to fight colonialist propaganda.<sup>18</sup>
- c) *Economis Struggle*. Jihad can also be seen from an economic perspective, where Muslims try to be economically independent so as not to depend on colonialists. This includes boycotting foreign products and developing local economies as a form of resistance to economic exploitation by outside parties.<sup>19</sup>

After Indonesia achieved independence, new challenges emerged in the form of neo-colonialism and foreign influence which continued to shadow the nation's sovereignty. In this case, jihad no

longer only means physical resistance against invaders, but also includes struggle against various forms of social, economic, and cultural injustice.

In the modern era, many developing countries, including Indonesia, still face challenges from foreign powers who want to control natural resources and local markets. Therefore, jihad can now be understood as an effort to defend economic and political sovereignty from foreign influence.<sup>20</sup> Jihad also means empowering society through education and improving the quality of life. This includes efforts to overcome poverty, ignorance, and social injustice that still exist in society.<sup>21</sup>

In the current context of globalization, jihad can also mean fighting for human rights and social justice for all people regardless of ethnic or religious background. Muslims are invited to be actively involved in social movements aimed at creating a more just world.<sup>22</sup>

Apart from that, developments in information technology have provided a new dimension to jihad. With the existence of social media and other digital platforms, Muslims can now spread positive messages about Islam more effectively. The use of technology for da'wah has become a form of jihad in this era. Today's young generation also has diverse views about jihad. Most of them understand that jihad is no longer synonymous with physical warfare, but rather an effort to live according to Islamic values in everyday life. They see jihad as an effort to contribute positively to society and the surrounding environment.

Then, one of the biggest challenges in understanding the concept of jihad in the modern era is the misuse of the term by certain groups who associate jihad with violence. This causes a negative stigma towards the term jihad among the general public. Many people associate jihad with terrorism because of the actions of extremist groups that use the name of religion to justify violence. This needs to be straightened out, so that people understand that jihad is actually a struggle for good. The importance of religious education in understanding the concept of jihad cannot be underestimated. Good education will help Muslims understand the true meaning of jihad and how to apply it in a modern context. In this increasingly connected world, interfaith dialogues are important to reduce misunderstandings about the concept of jihad. By dialogue, Muslims can explain the true meaning of jihad to non-Muslims and bridge differences in understanding.

Through good education and interfaith dialogue, we can develop a better understanding of the concept of jihad, so that the true essence of this struggle remains alive in the hearts of every Muslim throughout the world.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The concept of jihad in Islam can be seen through three main periods:

1. Jihad in the early period of Islam, was a struggle led by the Prophet Muhammad saw. to spread the teachings of Islam and defend himself from persecution. Jihad in Mecca was more spiritual in nature with an emphasis on sacrifice of property and life, whereas in Medina jihad became more physical with permission to fight as a response to oppression. Jihad in this period was characterized by migration and war to protect beliefs and the right to worship.
2. Jihad in the classic period, especially during Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, underwent significant transformation. Jihad is interpreted not only as physical warfare, but also includes efforts to spread knowledge and build society. This is where jihad began to become known in a wider military context, with battles aimed at expanding Islamic power. However, jihad also functions as a tool to quell rebellions and establish the stability of Islamic rule.
3. Jihad in the modern era is no longer limited to physical resistance against invaders, but also includes struggle against social, economic, and cultural injustice. With technological development and globalization, jihad now includes education, da'wah, and efforts to empower society.

From this, it can be seen that the concept of jihad in Islam has undergone changes that reflect the social, political, and cultural context of each era. This reflects the flexibility of Islam in responding to the challenges of the times and the needs of the people.

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