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CLASSIFICATION OF QURANIC VERSES INTERPRETED DISPUTATIOUSLY

Abstract. *This article examines the phenomenon of the disputatious or misinterpretation of Quranic verses by deviant movements and extremist groups throughout Islamic history and in the contemporary era. The study identifies the principal causes of misinterpretation including religious illiteracy, malicious ideological intent, and hyper-literalism and classifies the most commonly misused categories of Quranic verses. Specific cases are analysed: the use of Surah Ali 'Imran 3:104 by Hizb ut-Tahrir to justify a political movement; the use of Surah an-Najm 53:39 to deny the transmission of spiritual reward to the deceased; the use of Surah al-An'am 6:57 and al-Ma'idah 5:44 by Kharijite-inspired groups to condemn modern governance as unbelief; and the exploitation of verses on jihad, emigration (hijrah), and relations with non-Muslims to incite violence and social division. For each case, the article presents the scholarly response grounded in the classical methodology of tafsir, the reasons for revelation (asbab al-nuzul), and the consensus of Ahl al-Sunnah. The article concludes that countering misinterpretation requires the promotion of methodologically rigorous exegesis and the transmission of the classical scholarly tradition to new generations.*

Keywords: *Quranic exegesis (tafsir), misinterpretation, extremism, Hizb ut-Tahrir, jihad, Kharijites, asbab al-nuzul, Ahl al-Sunnah, takfir, classical Islamic scholarship.*

INTRODUCTION

Islam calls humanity to unity, peace, and justice, and enjoins avoidance of discord. In Surah Ali 'Imran 3:103, Allah states: «And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided.» The Prophet ﷺ said: «Indeed, my community will never gather upon misguidance; therefore, if you see disagreement, adhere to the sawad al-a'zam (the great majority)» (Ibn Yazid al-Qazwini, 1999, Hadith No. 3950). Despite these clear injunctions, certain factions throughout history have deliberately misinterpreted

Quranic verses to justify their erroneous ideological positions and to sow strife (fitna) among Muslims.

The misinterpretation of Quranic verses involves explaining them in a manner that serves specific ideological objectives, while disregarding contextual factors such as reasons for revelation (asbab al-nuzul), linguistic requirements, the principle of abrogation (nasikh-mansukh), and the correlation of verses with Prophetic hadith. The principal causes of this phenomenon are: religious illiteracy insufficient grounding in tafsir methodology; malicious intent the exploitation of scripture for political or radical ends; and hyper-literalism the refusal to apply necessary interpretive (ta'wil) reasoning to metaphorical or allegorical passages (Obidov, 2003:309). Classical exegetes countered these dangers by insisting that every verse be analysed through its linguistic context, its reasons for revelation, its correlation with other scriptural sources, and within the framework of established Islamic creed and jurisprudence (Rakhimdjanov & Ernazarov, 2018:115).

MAIN PART

«And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful.»

Hizb ut-Tahrir interprets this verse as a divine obligation to establish a political movement and restore the Caliphate, claiming that the command to form a «group» (ummah) validates their organisation exclusively (Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, 2015:9). The classical exegetical tradition, however, understands the verse as a general social injunction addressed to all Muslims. Ibn Kathir explains: the verse commands that a section of the community undertake the collective duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil, a role fulfilled by scholars (ulama), not by any single political party (Ibn Kathir, 2019:459). The word ummah here denotes any qualified social unit scholars, moral leaders, charitable workers rather than an exclusive political structure.

«And that there is not for man except that [good] for which he strives.»

Certain pseudo-Salafi movements cite this verse to argue that the reward of acts performed on behalf of the deceased recitation of Quran, charity, supplication cannot reach their souls (Ibn Abdulhalim, 1995:366). The Ahl al-Sunnah scholars respond by reading this verse in conjunction with the hadith narrated by Abu Hurayra (may Allah

be pleased with him): «When a human being dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: ongoing charity (sadaqah jariyah), beneficial knowledge, or a righteous child who prays for him» (narrated by Imam Muslim). Furthermore, Surah al-Hashr 59:10 «And [there is a share for] those who came after them, saying, ‘Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith’» demonstrates that supplication for the deceased is itself a Quranic practice (Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2023b:210). Scholars have accordingly held that dedicating the reward of Quranic recitation to the deceased falls under this verse’s scope.

«Legislation is not but for Allah» (6:57); «And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed then it is those who are the disbelievers» (5:44).

Kharijite-inspired movements use these verses to declare modern states, constitutions, and democratic systems as kufr (disbelief), and to brand as apostates all those who participate in legislative processes (Tulepov, 2013:168; Kholiqnazar et al., 2023:325). The scholarly response is threefold. First, the disbelief referenced is non-excommunicating: it does not expel a person from Islam. Second, the designation applies only to one who rejects divine authority explicitly with heart and tongue; Imam Fakhruddin al-Razi, citing the Companion Ikrimah, writes that whoever acknowledges Allah’s law as truth but fails to apply it in a specific instance is not thereby a disbeliever (Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, 2015:15). Third, verse 5:44 was revealed specifically concerning the Jews among the People of the Book, as stated by al-Sha’bi (Tulepov, 2013:156). The phrase «legislation belongs to Allah» affirms the divine origin of Sharia but does not preclude the exercise of ijtihad and maslahat (public interest reasoning) in the administration of society.

«The Most Merciful [who is] above the Throne established» (istawā).

Pseudo-Salafi groups interpret istawā as literal ascension, some asserting that «whoever believes Allah is not in the heavens is a disbeliever.» The Ahl al-Sunnah creed holds that Allah is beyond place and spatial description. Linguistically, istawā carries the sense of «establishing absolute authority» or «prevailing over,» and this meaning affirming divine sovereignty without implying corporeal location is the appropriate rendering (Kholiqnazar et al., 2023:336). Surah al-Shura 42:11 «There is nothing like Him» serves as the overriding Quranic principle against all anthropomorphic interpretation.

Extremist movements cite a cluster of verses including Surah al-Anfal 8:39, Surah an-Nisa 4:75, and Surah at-Tawbah 9:111 to incite unconditional armed jihad, claiming Allah commanded fighting until «the entire religion belongs to Him alone» (Kholiqnazar et al., 2023:317). These verses, however, possess specific reasons for revelation connected to the conditions of early Muslim communities in Mecca and Medina, where polytheists expelled and attacked Muslims. Scholars distinguish two categories: offensive jihad (jihad al-talab), a collective obligation (fard al-kifayah) that scholars have reached consensus does not apply in the current era of interstate peace treaties; and defensive jihad (jihad al-difa'), an individual obligation (fard al-'ayn) that arises only when an enemy invades a Muslim land. The Prophet ﷺ stated: «Whoever fights under an unknown banner (rayatun 'immiyyah) and is killed dies a death of ignorance» (Kholiqnazar et al., 2023:317). Targeting non-combatants in Muslim-majority or any other country is categorically impermissible.

«O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.»

Classical scholars including al-Suyuti, who transmits the interpretation of Abu Hurayra via Ibn Jarir and others consistently identify «those in authority» (uli al-amr) as rulers and governors (al-Suyuti, 2004:504). A Muslim must obey the ruler in all circumstances except when explicitly commanded to sin; even then, armed revolt is not permitted. Imam al-Nawawi states in his commentary on Sahih Muslim: «The majority of Ahl al-Sunnah jurists, hadith scholars, and theologians have held that a leader is not to be removed due to moral corruption or oppression, nor is revolt against him permissible; rather, sincere counsel (wa'z-nasihah) is obligatory» (al-Mubarakpuri, 1990:298). Contemporary movements that reject modern governance and declare democratic systems as kufr have no basis in this verse (Kholiqnazar et al., 2023:310).

«O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies (wali).»

Modern deviant groups interpret this verse as a prohibition on all formal agreements or relations with non-Muslims, declaring such arrangements as kufr. The scholarly response distinguishes the Quranic concept of walāyah ideological loyalty or a conspiratorial alliance against Muslims from ordinary diplomatic, commercial, or legal relations. The verse prohibits the former but not the latter. Agreements beneficial to Muslims and consistent with state interests do not fall under this prohibition (Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2023c:500). Furthermore, since the verse is a text of strong warning

(wa'id), the classical methodology requires returning to foundational rulings before drawing legal conclusions.

The misinterpretation of Quranic verses produces identifiable and serious consequences. Theological error: Literal readings of the divine attributes (sifat) lead to anthropomorphism (tashbih) and corporealism (tajsim), both of which contradict the Ahl al-Sunnah creed and seed ideological division. Social fragmentation: Movements that exploit verses on jihad or the commanding of good to sanction violence produce takfir (mutual accusations of unbelief), public conflict, and in extreme cases armed confrontation. Radicalism and extremism: Systematic misreading of verses on jihad and emigration (hijrah) divorced from the specific historical contexts of their revelation has furnished justification for terrorist violence and threats to national security (al-Qadi, 1997:95). Media propagation: Social media has amplified these misreadings among youth, eroding trust in legitimate interpretive authority.

CONCLUSION

The misinterpretation of Quranic verses is not merely a scholarly problem but a concrete danger to social order, religious cohesion, and national security. Each of the cases examined above demonstrates a consistent pattern: verses are extracted from their contextual, linguistic, and jurisprudential framework and pressed into service for predetermined ideological ends. The antidote is equally consistent: rigorous application of classical tafsir methodology encompassing asbab al-nuzul, correlation of scriptural sources, and adherence to Ahl al-Sunnah creed remains the most reliable scholarly defence against misinterpretation. The most urgent practical task is the promotion of scientifically grounded, moderate Sunni exegesis and the systematic transmission of the classical scholarly heritage to new generations (Rakhimdjanov & Ernazarov, 2018:115).

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