

Moderation through Restraint: Mahmud Yunus's Contextual Interpretation of *Qitāl* and Interreligious Relations in Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm

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Abstract. Religious moderation has gained increasing attention in Indonesia following the implementation of the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJM) 2020–2024, with the Ministry of Religious Affairs designated as the leading institution in promoting this agenda. This study aims to examine Mahmud Yunus's moderate exegetical approach to Qur'anic verses concerning *qitāl* and non-Muslim relations. Using a qualitative library-based method, this research employs descriptive-analytical and thematic approaches to analyze Mahmud Yunus's *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* in comparison with other Nusantara exegetical works. Primary sources consist of Yunus's tafsir, while secondary sources include relevant scholarly literature. The findings indicate that Mahmud Yunus's work represents a moderate *tah, lili* model of Qur'anic interpretation. His exegetical approach is grounded in two key concepts: *al-Sumt*, which emphasizes restrained silence toward potentially contentious verses, and *al-Ta'at, ul*, which refers to the suspension of legal application in certain contexts. These concepts enable a contextual understanding of *qitāl* verses that avoids literalist and extremist interpretations. Consequently, Yunus's tafsir contributes to the promotion of religious moderation by fostering interreligious tolerance while preserving the essential meaning of Qur'anic injunctions.

Keywords: Tafsir of the Nusantara, Moderate Interpretation, Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsīr al-Qur'an al-Karim*.

Introduction

The interpretation of religious texts has become a critical issue in contemporary societies, particularly in pluralistic contexts such as Indonesia. Exclusive and rigid religious interpretations are often regarded as incompatible with modern values of tolerance and coexistence.² However, achieving moderate religious understanding is not a simple task, as sacred scriptures contain both inclusive and exclusive theological narratives.³ These textual tensions become especially sensitive when interpreters address verses concerning interreligious relations and *qitāl* (combat), which may be misread in ways that reinforce hostility toward religious others.

In the Indonesian context, Qur'anic interpretation plays a central role in shaping religious attitudes. As the world's largest Muslim-majority country, Indonesia has produced a vast body of Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*), reflecting diverse theological orientations. While this richness contributes to intellectual discourse, it also presents challenges when certain interpretations emphasize exclusivist

² Afadlal, *Islam Dan Radikalisme Di Indonesia*, ed. Endang Turmudi and M. Riza Sihbudi, 1st ed. (Jakarta: LIPI Press, 2005).

³ Basri Basri and Muhammad Muhammad, "Rethinking Religious Moderation Through The Study Of Indonesian Exegesis : A Study Of Tafsir Al-Azhar By Hamka," *Khazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora* 21, no. 1 (2023): 41–58, doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.18592/khazanah.v21i1.8737>; Muhammad, "Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: A Critical Analysis of Indonesian Muslim Interpretations," *Afkar* 27, no. 1 (2025): 341–82, doi:10.22452/afkar.vol27no1.9.

boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims.⁴ Studies on Nusantara exegetes such as Nawawi Banten, Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (Hamka), and Quraish Shihab show that discussions of non-Muslims often highlight doctrinal differences that may be perceived as reinforcing religious distance.⁵

A frequently cited example is Qur'an 3:85, which states that no religion other than Islam will be accepted in the hereafter. When interpreted without contextual sensitivity, such verses can be used to legitimize rigid theological positions. Although exclusivist claims are not unique to Islam, similar assertions appear in other religious traditions. Nevertheless, the problem does not lie in the texts themselves, but in how interpreters frame them within specific social and political contexts.

Indonesia's multicultural composition demands interpretive approaches that promote harmony rather than division. While many Qur'anic interpretations aim to guide moral and spiritual life, some readings—especially those addressing interreligious conflict—risk fostering suspicion or antagonism toward religious minorities. This challenge highlights the importance of moderation-oriented hermeneutics that balance textual fidelity with social responsibility.

Among Nusantara tafsir works, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim* by Mahmud Yunus presents a distinctive interpretive model. Unlike more polemical exegetical traditions, Yunus adopts a restrained and non-provocative approach when discussing verses related to non-Muslims and *qital*. Rather than employing extensive *takwil* (interpretive reinterpretation), as seen in the works of Muhammad Hasbi ash-Shiddieqy⁶ and Abdul Mustaqim,⁷ Yunus emphasizes two key principles: *al-S'umt* and *al-Ta'at'ul*.

Al-S'umt refers to a deliberate silence or avoidance of speculative commentary on certain Qur'anic verses that could generate controversy. Although not a conventional term in Qur'anic exegesis, it is rooted in Ash'arite theological thought, which encourages accepting ambiguous (*mutashabihat*) verses without forced interpretation. This approach reflects an ethical caution aimed at preserving textual integrity and preventing misinterpretation.

Al-Ta'at'ul, on the other hand, is inspired by the interpretive principle articulated by al-Sha'rāwī, who argued that some Qur'anic rulings should not be actively interpreted or applied when their socio-historical conditions are no longer relevant.⁸ In this study, *al-Ta'at'ul* is conceptualized as a context-sensitive strategy that suspends rigid application of certain legal or combative verses until appropriate circumstances emerge.

Despite the potential significance of these concepts, academic attention to Mahmud Yunus's tafsir remains limited. Between 2007 and 2023, only a small number of studies focused specifically on his work.⁹ Most of these studies examine his biography, general methodology, or the systematic

⁴ Fawaz A. Gerges, *Making the Arab World: Nasser, Qutb, and the Clash That Shaped the Middle East* (NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), <https://press.princeton.edu/books/hardcover/9780691167886/making-the-arab-world>; Muhammad Muhammad et al., "Jewish Antagonism as Portrayed by Hamka in the Book of Tafsir Al-Azhar," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 24, no. 2 (August 7, 2024): 513, doi:10.22373/jiif.v24i2.19900.

⁵ Muhammad Muhammad, "Perceptions of Jews in the Qur'an: A Critical Examination of Hamka's 'Tafsir Al-Azhar,'" *Colloquia Humanistica* 2025, no. 14 (2025): 1–18, doi:<https://doi.org/10.11649/ch.3410>; Ali Hamdan, Zaenul Mahmudi, and Muhammad Muhammad, "Anti-Semitism in M. Quraish Shihab's Interpretation of Verses about Jews in Tafsir Al-Misbah," *AL QUDS: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis* 7, no. 1 (May 9, 2023): 121, doi:10.29240/alquds.v7i1.5331.

⁶ Muhammad Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Majid An-Nuur* (Semarang: Pustaka Rizki Putra, 2000).

⁷ Abdul Mustaqim, "Bela Negara Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an (Sebuah Transformasi Makna Jihad)," *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (2017): 109–30, doi:10.24042/ajsk.v11i1.614.

⁸ Muhammad Mutawallī Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr Al-Sha'rāwī* (Mesir: Akhbār al-Yawum, 1997).

⁹ Endad Musaddad, "Metode Tafsir Mahmud Yunus," *Al-Fath* 01, no. 01 (2007): 34–46.; Nurul Syarifah, "Tafsir Akademik Karya Mahmud Yunus: Corak Ilmiah, Sosial Dan Intelektual Dalam Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim," *JURNAL At-Tibyan Jurnal Ilmu Alquran Dan Tafsir* 5, no. 1 (2020): 103–18, doi:10.32505/tibyan.v5i1.1157.; Muhammad Dalip, "Melacak Metodologi Penafsiran Mahmud Yunus Dalam Kitab Tafsir 'Quran Karim,'" *Tafsir* 8, no. 1 (2020): 18–37.; Deden Rohmanudin and Badruzzaman M Yunus, "Methodology of Nusantara Tafsir: A Study of The Tafsir Turjaman

structure of his exegesis. None, however, analyze *al-S.umat* and *al-Ta'at.ul* as conceptual tools for religious moderation, particularly in relation to sensitive verses on *qital* and non-Muslim relations.

This gap is significant, considering that Yunus's tafsir demonstrates a moderation-oriented approach that aligns closely with Indonesia's contemporary religious moderation agenda promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. His interpretive restraint offers an alternative to literalist or confrontational readings of Qur'anic texts, emphasizing ethical responsibility, social harmony, and theological humility.

Therefore, this study aims to examine Mahmud Yunus's exegetical methodology through a qualitative descriptive approach based on library research and thematic analysis. The research focuses on selected verses related to *qital* and interreligious relations in *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim*. By applying descriptive-analytical and comparative methods, this study seeks to demonstrate how *al-S.umat* and *al-Ta'at.ul* function as moderation-oriented interpretive strategies.

By highlighting concrete exegetical cases, this article contributes to the broader discourse on religious moderation in Indonesia. It shows that moderation does not require altering the Qur'anic text, but rather adopting interpretive ethics that prioritize contextual awareness, social harmony, and theological responsibility. In doing so, Mahmud Yunus's tafsir offers a valuable model for promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence in pluralistic societies.

Results and Discussion

Understanding Mahmud Yunus and His Commentary Book

Mahmud Yunus (1899–1982) was a prominent Nusantara Qur'anic exegete whose intellectual formation combined local Islamic education with formal training in Egypt. Born in Sungayang, Minangkabau, he initially studied under his grandfather and later attended Surau Tanjung Pauh before continuing his education at al-Azhar University in 1924, where he obtained the *Syabadah 'Alimiyyah* within one year. He subsequently pursued advanced studies at Dar al-'Ulum and graduated in 1930 with a *Tadris* diploma.¹⁰ His educational trajectory reflects the broader pattern of early twentieth-century Indonesian Muslim intellectuals who sought scholarly legitimacy through Middle Eastern institutions.

Mahmud Yunus's intellectual legacy is most clearly represented in *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim*, a work he began writing in 1922 and completed in 1938. Although the process spanned sixteen years, the effective writing period amounted to approximately four years, as his studies in Egypt interrupted the project.¹¹ This prolonged process indicates that the tafsir was not merely a spontaneous translation project, but a carefully developed exegetical work shaped by Yunus's evolving intellectual orientation.

The emergence of Yunus's tafsir must be understood within the broader transformation of Islamic scholarship in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the Nusantara. Dutch colonial policies expanded access to formal education, resulting in increased literacy and the rise of Muslim intellectual

Al- Mustafid by Abdul Rauf Al Sinkili and Tafsir Qur ' an Karim by Mahmud Yunus" 2, no. 1 (2023): 1–8, doi:10.15575/mjiat.v2i1.20128.vv; Matsna Afwi Nadia, "Epistemologi Tafsir Qur'an Karim Karya Mahmud Yunus," *Tanzil: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an* 2, no. 1 (2023): 113–30.

¹⁰ Mahmud Yunus, "Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim" (Selangor: P.N. Klang, Selangor, Malaysia, 2003), iii.

¹¹ Rosihon Anwar and Asep Abdul Muhyi, "Transmisi Dan Transformasi Tradisi Tafsir Dari Mesir Ke-Nusantara: Kajian Tafsir Qur'an Karim," *Tashwirul Afkar* 41, no. 2 (2022): 213–40, doi:10.51716/ta.v41i2.78.

production.¹² This context enabled Qur'anic exegesis to move beyond pesantren circles and reach a broader Muslim readership. Mahmud Yunus strategically responded to this development by producing a tafsir in the Indonesian language using Latin script—an approach that diverged from the dominant Arabic or Jawi-based traditions.

According to Rosihon Anwar and Asep Abdul Muhyi,¹³ *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim* is among the earliest Indonesian-language Qur'anic commentaries written in Latin script. This linguistic shift was not merely technical but ideological, as it aimed to democratize access to Qur'anic understanding for Muslims unfamiliar with Arabic. However, this approach initially faced resistance, as some scholars viewed Latin-script tafsir as a deviation from Islamic orthodoxy.¹⁴ The controversy highlights the tension between textual preservation and pedagogical accessibility in Indonesian Islamic scholarship.

Mahmud Yunus explicitly justified his translation-oriented approach in the preface to his tafsir. He argued that translating the Qur'an was not only permissible (*mubāḥ*) but also potentially a communal obligation (*fard kifāyah*) to convey Islam to non-Arabic-speaking communities.¹⁵ This theological justification situates Yunus's tafsir within a da'wah-oriented framework rather than a polemical one.

Structurally, Yunus's tafsir follows a minimalist format. Each surah is introduced with its name, Indonesian translation, place of revelation, and number of verses. The Qur'anic text is presented alongside its Indonesian translation, followed by brief explanatory notes at the bottom of the page. Unlike classical tafsir works that provide extensive philological, legal, or theological analysis, Yunus limits his commentary to essential clarifications. Not all verses receive explanation; only those deemed to require additional context are discussed.

Yunus himself acknowledged that his work leaned heavily toward translation rather than detailed exegesis. This methodological choice aligns with the classical view that the Prophet Muhammad did not explain every Qur'anic verse, but only those containing ambiguous or unusual elements (*gharib*).¹⁶ Consequently, modern tafsir scholars classify Yunus's work as *tafsir ijmālī*, characterized by concise and global interpretation rather than analytical elaboration.

However, the simplicity of Yunus's tafsir does not indicate methodological weakness. On the contrary, his restraint reflects a conscious exegetical strategy aimed at avoiding speculative or polemical interpretations. One key feature of this strategy is Yunus's rejection of *Isrā'iliyyāt*—narratives derived from Jewish and Christian traditions often used in classical tafsir. Instead, Yunus prioritized seven interpretive sources: Qur'an with Qur'an, authentic hadith, Companions' explanations, Tabi'īn consensus, Arabic linguistics, qualified *ijtihad*, and rational interpretation.¹⁷

Despite acknowledging multiple sources, Yunus's tafsir primarily relies on rational interpretation (*tafsir bi al-ra'y*) rather than transmitted reports (*bi al-ma'thūr*). This is evident in his interpretation of Surah al-Fātiḥah, where he cites only two supporting verses (Q. 64:11 and Q. 16:89)

¹² Yulia Rahmi, "Konstruksi Manhaj Akademisi Terhadap Kitab Tafsir Al-Fatihah Karya Mahmud Yunus," *Islam Transformatif: Journal of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 2 (December 30, 2020): 165, doi:10.30983/it.v4i2.3407.; Syafwan Rozi, Nurlizam, and M. Zubir, "The Reception of Hamka's Tafsir Al-Azhar within Social Religious Issues in the Malay World," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 25, no. 2 (August 30, 2024): 247–72, doi:10.14421/qh.v25i2.5406.

¹³ Anwar and Abdul Muhyi, "Transmisi Dan Transformasi Tradisi Tafsir Dari Mesir Ke-Nusantara: Kajian Tafsir Qur'an Karim."

¹⁴ Syarifah, "Tafsir Akademik Karya Mahmud Yunus: Corak Ilmiah, Sosial Dan Intelektual Dalam Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim."

¹⁵ Mahmud Yunus, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim* (Selangor: Klang Book Centre, 2003).

¹⁶ Muḥammad Ḥusain Al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsir Wa Al-Mufasssirūn* (Kairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 2005).

¹⁷ Muḥammad 'Alī Ayāzī, *Al-Mufasssirūn Ḥayātuhum Wa Manhajuhum* (Tīhrān: Mu'assasat al-Ṭibā'ah wa-al-Nashr, 2007).

without referencing prophetic hadith or Companions' explanations. Such selectivity demonstrates Yunus's preference for logical coherence over textual accumulation.

Methodologically, Yunus employs the *tab,lili* approach, interpreting the Qur'an sequentially verse by verse. In terms of presentation, his tafsir follows the *bayānī* style, emphasizing descriptive explanation without engaging in comparative analysis or critical evaluation of competing opinions.¹⁸ This stylistic simplicity contributes to the accessibility of his tafsir, but also reflects his avoidance of theological controversy.

Analysis of Mahmud Yunus's Interpretation: A Unique and Moderate Approach

Yunus's interpretation in his tafsir book avoids antipathy towards individuals or groups with differing ideologies. His exegesis is beautifully crafted, providing a sense of peace and tranquility to the reader. Even when interpreting verses that other commentators might use to incite hatred against followers of other religions,¹⁹ Yunus does not convey such sentiments. It appears that Yunus employs two approaches when dealing with verses that tend to incite hatred towards other religious communities: offering good counsel to all humanity, especially Muslims, or opting to remain silent without providing interpretation.

Yunus employs two steps in his tafsir book: first, translating the words of the Qur'an into Indonesian; second, interpreting the Qur'an. This concept differentiates between his translation and interpretation of the Qur'an. Arabic language experts define the translation (*al-Tarjamah*) of the Qur'an with four meanings: 1) explaining the meaning of the Qur'an and interpreting it in Arabic, 2) conveying the purpose of the Qur'an's recitation, 3) interpreting the Qur'an's explanation in a language other than Arabic, and 4) translating it into another language.

Translation of the Qur'an can be divided into two parts: first, *al-Tarjamah al-Harfīyah*, which involves translating each word of the text while maintaining the conformity of the original text; second, *al-Tarjamah al-Tafsīriyah*, which involves translating by conveying the meaning and purpose of the words without requiring exact detail.²⁰ There are differing opinions regarding the legality of translating the Qur'an literally, with some scholars even prohibiting this practice.²¹ However, Yunus argues that literal translation of the Qur'an is not forbidden and is even recommended, especially in countries where the majority of the population does not speak Arabic.²²

When looking at Yunus's translation of the Qur'an, it is evident that Yunus interprets it according to the original text of the Qur'an. At times, his translation appears harsh, and at other times, gentle. Sometimes it seems anti-non-Muslim, while at other times, it shows tolerance towards non-Muslims. This diversity is unavoidable because the Qur'an itself encompasses such variations. However, if one focuses on interpretations that are anti, racist, discriminatory, or harsh towards adherents of other religions, these elements will not be found in Yunus's tafsir.

For example, when interpreting Surah Al-Fatihah 1:7, which is often interpreted by most mufasssirs with elements of hatred towards adherents of other religions such as Jews and Christians or

¹⁸ Ridlwan Nasir, *Memahami Al-Qur'an: Perspektif Baru Metodologi Tafsir Muqarin* (Surabaya: Indra Media, 2003).

¹⁹ Sayed Khatib, "Hakimiyyah and Jahiliyyah in the Thought of Sayyid Qutb," *Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 3 (July 8, 2002): 145–70, doi:10.1080/714004475. See also, Muhammad Muhammad, "Hamka's Thought in Tafsir Al-Azhar: Between - Acculturation and Rejection of Local Culture" 1 (2025): 226–46, doi:10.1163/29502683-bja00012.

²⁰ Tasfin Akram and Rahmi Iman, "Translation of the Meanings of the Holy Quran (Definition and Ruling)," *Majallah Al-Qism Al-Arabi* 5, no. 25 (2018): 13–32.

²¹ Brat Shaswar Hashani and Saadeldin Mansour Gasmelsid, "Types of Translations of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an and Its Evaluation," *Journal of Islam in Asia (E-ISSN 2289-8077)* 18, no. 1 (June 30, 2021): 115–36, doi:10.31436/jia.v18i1.1036.

²² Yunus, "Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim," 8.

those who do not accept the truth of Prophet Muhammad's message,²³ Yunus does not mention these two religions at all and does not mislead any religion. Yunus interprets this verse with a very positive and moderate explanation. Yunus explains:

*"Jalan yang lurus itu telah dituruti oleh orang-orang yang mendapat nikmat dari pada Allah, serta tiada dimurkai dan tiada pula sesat, sebab mereka mempergunakan nikmat itu menurut mestinya. Adapun orang-orang yang mendapat nikmat, tetapi nikmat itu dipergunakannya untuk berjudi, minum arak, berbuat jahat (zina) dsb, maka orang itulah yang dimurkai Allah. Begitu juga orang yang mempergunakan kekayaannya untuk berfoya-foya, bermewah-mewah, memboroskan uang kepada yang tak berguna (mubazir) dsb, maka orang itulah yang dikatakan sesat atau salah mempergunakan nikmat Allah."*²⁴

"The straight path has been followed by those who have received blessings from Allah, and they are neither condemned nor misguided, for they utilize these blessings properly. As for those who have been blessed but use their blessings for gambling, drinking alcohol, committing adultery, and such, they are the ones whom Allah has cursed. Similarly, those who use their wealth for extravagance, luxury, or wasteful spending on frivolous things are considered misguided or have misused Allah's blessings."

Yunus's interpretation of the phrase "*ghayr al-Maghdūb ‘alayhim wa lā al-Dālīn*" is very calm, not influenced by exclusive theological dogma, and opens up an interpretation far from antagonistic impressions. His interpretation focuses on the general human errors of not understanding ethical principles of logic, such as gambling, consuming substances that impair the mind, committing adultery, and wastefulness. This ethical principle-based interpretation is endorsed by all major religions, and the constitution acknowledges the prohibition of such reprehensible acts. This approach cannot be found in other tafsir works, especially those that interpret the Qur'an using a *tablī* method.²⁵

To support the author's argument that Yunus' tafsir is the most moderate, aside from the interpretation examples mentioned above, the author includes interpretations of several verses filled with Islamic absolutism, namely: Ali 'Imran 3:19 and 85; Al-Ma'idah 5:3; Al-An'am 6:125; Al-Tawbah 9:29, 33, 36; Al-Rum 30:30; Al-Zumar 39:3 and 22; Al-Fath 48:28; and Al-Saf 61:9. In addition to these verses, to further convince, the views of Yunus when dealing with qital verses and verses containing elements of suspicion towards adherents of other religions are also included.

Out of the 12 verses that explain Islamic absolutism in Yunus' work, only 5 verses are interpreted by him, namely in surah Ali 'Imran 3:85; Al-Rum 30:30; Al-Zumar 39:3 and 22; and Al-Saf 61:9. In Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:3, where other mufasssirs typically emphasize the perfection of Islam brought by Prophet Muhammad, Yunus does not touch on this discussion. He focuses more on discussions about what is legally consumable by Muslims, ethics, and tools that can be used to slaughter animals. Yunus chooses to remain silent on the phrase "*al-Yawm akmalu lakum dinakum wa atmamtu 'alaykum ni'mati wa raditu lakum islam dina*."

Furthermore, out of the 5 verses that explain Islamic absolutism, Yunus directs the interpretation towards the concept of thinking and reflection for the readers. The tone of Yunus' interpretation of these five verses has a commonality. It centers on the idea that a person who thinks correctly will inevitably accept and embrace Islam. This assumption is driven by Yunus' perspective that Islam is an easy religion to understand, learn, and practice. Additionally, the principles in Islam

²³ Nawawi Muhammad bin 'Umar, *Marāḥ. Labīd Li Kashf Ma'nā Al-Qur'ān Al-Majīd* (Bairut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1997), 1/8. See also, Teungku Muhammad Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy, *Tafsir Al-Quran Majid An-Nuur* (Semarang: PT. Pustaka Rizki Putra, 2000), 1/25.

²⁴ Yunus, "Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim.", 8.

²⁵ Hamdan, Mahmudi, and Muhammad, "Anti-Semitism in M. Quraish Shihab's Interpretation of Verses about Jews in Tafsir Al-Misbah."

encompass two elements, namely outward deeds and inner deeds. Therefore, there is no need for someone to seek another religion or mystical order.²⁶ There are several reasons that cause people to distance themselves and reject Islam. One of the reasons mentioned by Yunus when interpreting Surah Al-Rum 30:30 is the influence of customs and associations that cause some people to distance themselves from Islam.²⁷

To prove the logical acceptance of Islam, Yunus illustrates the oneness of God. This explanation is found when Yunus interprets Surah Al-Zumar 39:3. Yunus explains that people who worship wood, stones, graves, statues, and others are making a mistake. This is because none of these have any influence. If someone argues that all these are means (*wasilah*) to reach Allah, then according to Yunus, this argument is also a mistake because that person is essentially associating partners with Allah (*shirk*).²⁸ Yunus' firm interpretation of all humans, regardless of their religion, is evident when discussing Surah Al-Zumar 39:22. He interprets it as follows:

*“Orang-orang yang dibukakan Allah dadanya (hatinya) untuk memeluk Islam adalah ia mendapat cahaya (taufiq, petunjuk) dari pada Allah. Orang itu tidak sama dengan orang yang sesat (kasar) hatinya, sehingga ia tiada mendapat taufiq dari pada Allah. Siksalah bagi orang-orang yang kasar hatinya dan tak mau mengingat Allah.”*²⁹

“Those whose hearts Allah has opened to accept Islam are those who receive light (guidance) from Allah. They are not the same as those who are misguided (hardened in heart) and thus do not receive guidance from Allah. There is torment for those whose hearts are hardened and who do not remember Allah.”

Although Yunus' explanation seems firm regarding enlightenment and misguidance, Yunus avoids mentioning other religions. With this interpretative model, his exegesis is far from discriminatory, racist, and biased against other religions. This interpretation clearly differs from other tafsir books, especially the one recently published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which still contains ambiguity when discussing non-Muslim religions. Additionally, unique to Yunus' interpretation, he always ends with advice directed towards Muslims themselves, urging them to always remember Allah. Similarly, in surah al-Zumar 22, in surah al-Saf 16:9, Yunus provides an explanation:

*“Nabi Isa telah berwasiat juga masa dahulu, bahwa bakal datang seorang Rasul kemudiannya, namanya Ahmad (Muhammad atau orang yang terpuji). Tetapi takala datang Nabi Muhammad itu menyeru kepada agama Islam, lalu mereka mengatakan, dia tukang sibir. Mereka bermaksud hendak memadamkan cahaya agama Islam, dengan perkataan yang bukan-bukan dan caci-nista yang diada-adakan, tetapi Allah menyempurnakan juga cahaya Islam yang terang benderang itu, sehingga sekarang telah memancar cahayanya di Eropa, Amerika, Jepang, dan lain-lainnya, meskipun orang-orang kafir tidak suka demikian itu. Keadaan itu tidak heran karena memang agama Islam itu, agama yang sesuai dengan akal pikiran dan sesuai dengan masyarakat dimana-mana tempat, bahkan sesuai benar dengan kemajuan zaman sekarang. Sebab itulah cahayanya memancar kemana-mana dan mengalahkan sekalian agama. Makin bertambah cacian orang kepada Islam dan Nabinya, makin bertambah terang kebagusan Islam, dengan berkat usaha pemimpin-pemimpin Islam yang memberi keterangan dan penjelasan yang cukup. Sebab itu haruslah kita berhati sabar menangkis segala serangan dan tuduhan itu dengan menunjukkan keterangan yang memuaskan dan menyiarkan petunjuk Qur'an yang menjadi undang-undang Dasar agama Islam.”*³⁰

²⁶ Yunus, “Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim.”, 81-82.

²⁷ Ibid, 598.

²⁸ Ibid, 677.

²⁹ Ibid, 681-682.

³⁰ Ibid, 827.

“The Prophet Isa (Jesus) prophesied long ago that a Messenger named Ahmad (Muhammad or the praised one) would come after him. However, when the Prophet Muhammad arrived and called people to Islam, they accused him of being a sorcerer. They intended to extinguish the light of Islam with false statements and slander, but Allah perfected the radiant light of Islam. Now, its light shines in Europe, America, Japan, and other places, even though the disbelievers disapprove of it. This is not surprising because Islam aligns with rational thought and is suitable for societies everywhere, even perfectly fitting with the advancements of modern times. That is why its light spreads far and wide, surpassing all other religions. The more people slander Islam and its Prophet, the more evident the beauty of Islam becomes, thanks to the efforts of Islamic leaders who provide ample explanations and clarifications. Therefore, we must remain patient in countering all attacks and accusations by offering satisfying explanations and disseminating the guidance of the Qur'an, which serves as the fundamental law of Islam.”

The gentleness of Yunus's interpretation is very evident in the explanation of this verse. Yunus firmly believes that Prophet Muhammad is the Prophet sent after Jesus. Jesus even informed his people about the coming of Muhammad who would bring a new message. The historical reality of Muhammad's arrival with a new message received a negative response, rejection, and was not free from insults. Facing these negative perceptions and insults, Yunus offers a valuable lesson: that through patience in the face of insults, Islam grows stronger and its light shines even brighter. Muslims can counter these insults with satisfying explanations, not with arrogance or the methods used by extremists. Furthermore, another wisdom that can be gleaned from Yunus's interpretation is that he never uses language referring to Jews, Christians, or adherents of other religions. By using general language, Yunus seems to be very considerate of the feelings of people of other religions. This concept is very much in line with the religious moderation envisioned by the Indonesian state today.³¹

Some commentators after the independence of Israel in 1948 have put forward many conspiracies in interpreting the Qur'an, especially those discussing other religions or verses related to opposition against non-Muslims.³² Yunus, who was born during the emergence of theories about Zionist, Jewish, American, and Israeli conspiracies, was not influenced by these ideas. His interpretation remained neutral and unbiased. Yunus's interpretation of the verses on *Qital* in the Qur'an does not lean towards any provocative ideology for readers. This is evident from the nine verses (al-Baqarah 2:190 and 244, al-Nisa' 4:74, 89, and 91, and al-Tawbah 9:29, 33, and 36) that command fighting against non-Muslims in the Qur'an, of which Yunus only interpreted three: al-Baqarah 2:190, al-Nisa' 4:89, and al-Tawbah 9:12. For the remaining verses, Yunus chose to remain silent without providing commentary.

Even though Yunus interpreted these three verses, his interpretation still emphasizes high tolerance. In surah al-Nisa' 4:89, Yunus explains the three classifications of non-Muslims' attitudes towards Muslims: al-Muhāribūn, al-Mu'āhidūn, and al-Muslimūn.

“Orang-orang kafir terhadap kamu orang-orang Islam ada tiga macam: 1) Almuḥaribun, yaitu orang-orang kafir yang memerangi kamu, karena kamu memeluk agama Islam. Maka bendaklah kamu memerangi mereka sebagaimana mereka memerangi kamu, karena mempertahankan agama Allah. Perang ini dinamakan ‘Perang Salib’ yakni berperang karena se-mata-mata mempertahankan agama Allah. Tetapi jika mereka berhenti memerangi kamu dan suka mengadakan perdamaian, maka tiadalah boleh kamu memerangi mereka atau membunuhnya. 2) Almu’ahidun, yaitu orang-orang kafir yang telah berjanji dengan

³¹ Ditjen Bimas Islam Kementerian Agama, *Moderasi Beragama Perspektif Bimas Islam*, ed. Dedi Slamet Riyadi (Jakarta: Sekretariat Ditjen Bimas Islam Kementerian Agama, 2022).

³² Kiki Santing, “Conspiracy Theories and Muslim Brotherhood Antisemitism under Sadat,” *Religions* 13, no. 143 (2022): 3–16, doi:10.3390/rel13020143.

kamu, bahwa tiada akan mengadakan peperangan. Orang-orang kafir ini, tiada boleh kamu perangi atau kamu bunuh, kecuali jika mereka melanggar perjanjian itu. Begitu juga tidak boleh kamu membunuh orang kafir yang memerangimu, tetapi ia telah lari dari medan peperangan, sambil melindukan diri kepada kafir Almu'ahidun. 3) Almusalimun, yakni orang-orang kafir yang datang kepadamu sambil mengatakan neutral (tiada akan memerangimu dan tiada pula memerangi orang kafir Almuharibun). Orang-orang kafir ini tidak boleh kamu perangi atau kamu bunuh.”³³

“The disbelievers towards you Muslims are of three types: 1) **Al-Muharibun**, those disbelievers who fight you because you embrace Islam. You should fight them as they fight you, to defend the religion of Allah. This war is called the 'Crusade', meaning fighting solely to defend the religion of Allah. However, if they cease fighting you and seek peace, then you must not fight or kill them. 2) **Al-Mu'ahidun**, those disbelievers who have made a pact with you that they will not engage in war. These disbelievers should not be fought or killed unless they break the pact. Likewise, you must not kill a disbeliever who was fighting you but fled from the battlefield and sought protection from Al-Mu'ahidun. 3) **Al-Muslimun**, those disbelievers who come to you declaring neutrality (they will neither fight you nor fight Al-Muharibun). These disbelievers should not be fought or killed.”

The important lesson from the above interpretation is the attitude of moderation in religion. Fighting against non-Muslims is an obligation that cannot be denied in the Qur'an. However, not all non-Muslims should be fought, only those who oppose Muslims because of their religion. Furthermore, from Yunus's explanation, it seems that in the current era there is no war against non-Muslims, as non-Muslims and Muslims have made peace and stopped fighting Muslims. In reality, the Indonesian constitution recognizes and protects religions other than Islam. Thus, fighting non-Muslims in Indonesia is not justified from Yunus's interpretive perspective.

Non-Muslims in Indonesia can be categorized as al-Mu'ahidun, and thus, it is not permissible to fight them. However, if they violate the agreement by attacking Muslims or insulting Islam, then it is permissible to fight their leaders as Yunus explained when interpreting surah al-Tawbah 9:12. Resistance against non-Muslims when they attack Muslims or insult Islam is regulated by the Indonesian constitution, and there are penalties for blasphemy. Therefore, what Muslims can do is report the actions of non-Muslims to the authorities. This punishment is expected to deter blasphemers in Indonesia. This aligns well with Yunus's interpretation at the end of surah al-Tawbah 9:12: “hopefully they will cease from what they are doing.”³⁴

Fighting against non-Muslims is an obligation for Muslims, but there are limits that must be adhered to. Yunus in surah al-Baqarah 2:190 provides limits, including the prohibition of fighting non-Muslims who do not fight Muslims, non-Muslims who do not participate in the war, and non-Muslims who have ceased fighting Muslims.³⁵ With these limits as explained by Yunus, if applied in today's Indonesia, there is no concept of fighting non-Muslims. This is Yunus's very moderate interpretation when addressing the verses of *Qital* in the Qur'an.

The Concepts of *al-Sumt* and *al-Ta'at, ul* in Mahmud Yunus' Interpretation

The Qur'an is a book of law for all Muslims, covering both worldly and spiritual matters.³⁶ In principle, a book of law must remain applicable everywhere and at all times. One of the unique aspects

³³ Yunus, “Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim.”, 125.

³⁴ Ibid, 262.

³⁵ Ibid, 40.

³⁶ Sumayyah Rafique, Hafiz Muhammad Sarwar, and Naseem Mahmood, “The Holy Quran As Book Of Regulations And Law” 6, no. 11 (2022): 1877–83.

of the Qur'an is that it contains three components: explaining what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen.³⁷

When a Qur'anic verse explains something that has already happened, it serves as an important lesson for Muslims. In this case, the verses about the stories of previous communities can serve as examples. If a verse pertains to a specific law, its implementation can be postponed until the conditions and situations are appropriate. On the other hand, if a Qur'anic verse explains something currently happening, it is obligatory to carry out the commands of that verse. If a Qur'anic verse explains something that will happen, the verse serves as anticipation and preparedness. An example of this is the verse about life after death.³⁸

Focusing on the first component, we find several verses whose laws cannot be applied at present. This does not mean that the law for these phenomena is nullified, but rather that it awaits the actual occurrence of such phenomena. For example, the discussion of slavery in the Qur'an often mentions the legality of intimate relations with slaves without the need for a marriage contract, as explained in Surah An-Nisā' 4:3, 24, 25, Al-Mu'minūn 23:6, An-Nūr 24:33, and others. Essentially, the law on slavery remains, but currently, it is suspended, considering that slavery no longer exists in modern times. Should history repeat itself, the laws on slavery can be re-applied. This explanation can be seen in Mutawalli al-Sha'rāwī's interpretation of Surah Al-Mu'minūn 23:6. Al-Sha'rāwī argues that global regulations have abolished slavery.³⁹

Umar bin al-Khattāb once suspended a law in the Qur'an, and this story is well-known among scholars. The law suspended by Umar was the punishment for theft, which in the Qur'an mandates the cutting off of the thief's hand. However, Umar did not enforce this punishment.⁴⁰ This clearly shows that while the law in the Qur'an remains and must be realized, it can be temporarily suspended when conditions and situations are not supportive. This approach is often overlooked by interpreters who predominantly use allegorical interpretation (takwil), leading to confusion among Muslims. An example is Muhammad Shah,ru'r's interpretation of slavery with the concept of sex partners.⁴¹

Unlike Yunus, who interprets the Qur'an using logic but with great caution, resulting in interpretations that are more calming to the heart. After analyzing Yunus's interpretations, two concepts that he uses to address Qur'anic verses that could cause unrest in Indonesia, such as verses about the exclusivity of Islam or Islamic absolutism and verses about fighting against non-Muslims, can be identified. These two concepts are *al-Ta'at,ul* and *al-S,umt*. With the presence of these two concepts, Yunus does not need to offer peace resolutions as proposed by Abdul Mustaqim.⁴²

The concept of *al-Ta'at,ul* is an interpretive approach often used by scholars when dealing with Qur'anic verses that cannot be implemented in the time and location of the interpreter. An example is Umar, who did not implement the punishment of cutting off the hand of a thief at that time, and al-Sha'rāwī when interpreting the verse on *milk al-Yamīn*.⁴³ In Yunus's tafsir, this concept is frequently applied when discussing fighting against non-Muslims. Yunus often calms tensions by categorizing non-Muslims into three groups, one of which is *al-Muh,aribūn*. This group consists of non-Muslims who can be fought under certain conditions. The presence of these limitations in Yunus's

³⁷ Ibrahim b. Isma'īl Al-Abyārī, *Al-Mawsū'ah Al-Qur'āniyah* (Muassasah Sijl al-'Arab, 1405).

³⁸ Jalāl al-Dīn Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān Fī 'Ulūm Al-Qur'ān* (Kairo: Matba'ah H,ijāzī, n.d.).

³⁹ Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr Al-Sha'rāwī*, 16/9965.

⁴⁰ Nadirsyah Hosen, "Hudud and Corruption," in *Crime and Punishment in Indonesia* (Routledge, 2020), 490–503, doi:10.4324/9780429455247-23.

⁴¹ Muhammad Shah,ru'r, "Al-Kitāb Al-Qur'ān" (Siriya: al-Ahālī li al-Tawzī', n.d.).

⁴² Abdul Mustaqim, "Konflik Teologis Dan Kekerasan Agama Dalam Kacamata Tafsir Al-Qur'an," *Epistémé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 9, no. 1 (2014), doi:10.21274/epis.2014.9.1.155-176.

⁴³ Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr Al-Sha'rāwī*, 16/9965.

interpretation indicates his efforts to minimize bloodshed. Yunus also hopes that *al-Muh. arribūn* will not insult Islam and that Muslims will be granted patience in the face of such insults.⁴⁴

The command to fight non-Muslims in the Qur'an remains, and the law is still applicable. However, Yunus's wise stance is to eliminate warfare among humans by narrowing the scope of conflict. This is the concept of *al-Ta'at. ul* in Yunus's tafsir as an effort towards religious moderation and interfaith tolerance. Such interpretations are greatly needed in Indonesia to eradicate exclusive attitudes in religion. The impression will be different when the verses of *qital* are interpreted in such a way as to reach a reinterpretation that ultimately causes discord within the Muslim community itself.

It is a mistake to say that the concept of *al-Ta'at. ul* contradicts the principle of the Qur'an's relevance in every time and place. Since the Qur'an was first revealed, there have been verses that cannot be realized at the present time and are merely illustrations. Examples include descriptions of the coming of the Day of Judgment, life after death, heaven, and hell, which cannot be actualized in the present era. These verses do not lack function; rather, they await the appropriate time and place to become a reality.⁴⁵ Every country has a constitution, and the union of nations has regulations that aim to protect, calm, and bring peace to human life. This does not conflict with the fundamental concepts of *maqāsid al-Qur'an al-Kubrā* and *maqāsid al-Shari'ah*.⁴⁶

Why do modern interpreters often rashly interpret the Qur'an and introduce conspiracies that lead to mutual suspicion among religious communities and eventually call for physical resistance or similar actions? One prerequisite that seems very distant from modern interpreters is *safa' al-Dhin* (purity of religion). The absence of this prerequisite results in unclear interpretations, and the sacred is tainted by human desires.

One concept that can be derived from the study of Yunus's tafsir is *al-S. umt*. This concept applies to mufasssirs who interpret the Qur'an analytically (*tab. lili*). Yunus employed this concept when encountering Qur'anic verses that, if understood, could cause conflict among people, such as Islamic absolutism, which leads to exclusivism and condemns adherents of other religions. This concept is also evident in Yunus's treatment of some verses about *Qital*. Yunus merely translates the Qur'anic text without reinterpreting his translation.⁴⁷ This concept can be considered the safest approach for mufasssirs who interpret analytically. Silence and not elaborating further is the hallmark of the *al-S. umt* concept.

The *al-S. umt* concept in interpreting some Qur'anic verses can provide a solution to issues of extremist theology, radicalism, and terrorism. Consequently, it can foster a paradigm of Islam that is compassionate, tolerant, and calming.

Conclusion

This study has examined Mahmud Yunus's exegetical approach to Qur'anic verses on *qital* and interreligious relations, highlighting its contribution to moderation-oriented Islamic hermeneutics. The findings demonstrate that Yunus's *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim* represents a distinctive model of contextual and ethically restrained interpretation. Two key theoretical principles underpin his approach. First, *al-S. umt* functions as a strategy of interpretive restraint, whereby Yunus avoids

⁴⁴ Yunus, "Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim," 125.

⁴⁵ M. A.S. Abdel Haleem, "The Role of Context in Interpreting and Translating the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 20, no. 1 (2018): 47–66, doi:10.3366/jqs.2018.0320.

⁴⁶ Muḥammad Sadiq Khān, *Fath. Al-Bayān Fī Maqāsid Al-Qur'ān* (Bairūt: al-Maktabah al-'As.riyah, 1992).

⁴⁷ Yunus, "Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Karim."

speculative or polemical commentary on potentially divisive verses. This epistemological caution minimizes the risk of sectarian or interreligious antagonism and redirects interpretation toward universal ethical concerns rather than theological confrontation. Second, *al-Ta'at* operates as a contextual mechanism for suspending the legal application of certain Qur'anic rulings when their socio-historical conditions are no longer present. In his treatment of *qitāl* verses, Yunus limits the scope of legitimate conflict and prioritizes peaceful coexistence, aligning his exegesis with the objectives of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly the preservation of life and social stability. Theoretically, Yunus's tafsir challenges the assumption that religious moderation requires extensive reinterpretation (*ta'wīl*) of contentious texts. Instead, moderation is achieved through interpretive minimalism, contextual sensitivity, and ethical restraint. His inward-oriented discourse, which emphasizes Muslim moral responsibility rather than hostility toward religious others, offers a sustainable hermeneutical model for promoting tolerance and coexistence in plural societies.

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