# (Re)constructing Narratives in Qur'an Translation

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**Abstract:** Negative and distorted narratives about Islam and Jihad in the Western media, in general, and in certain publications, in particular, have increased with the emergence of terrorist and radical groups in the past decade. Narrative theory has recently expanded to include the study of translations and other types of texts in order to show how ideology and power relations affect narration and potentially steer public opinions. This paper scrutinizes the negative narratives constructed and reinforced over time by both some Western publications after the emergence of ISIS and by some leaders of terrorist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), about Islam in general and about Jihad in particular. It examines a number of narratives regarding jihad and war-related verses put forth by both the Western publications and ISIS leaders in light of Mona Baker and Sue-Ann Jane Harding's theories of narrative. It is found that negative narratives proliferate distorted images and misconceptions about Jihad and Islam. These narratives have contributed to a meta-narrative in which Jihad and Islam are contiguous with terrorism, and that these narratives have therefore contributed to global Islamophobia.

**Keywords:** Jihad, Jihadism, meta-narrative, public narrative, terrorism, translation

## Introduction

Religious texts have always posed obstacles for translators due to the diversity of interpretations accompanying these texts, and the different ways they are understood by both interpreters and translators. Interpretations of religious texts are subject to various variables, including the culture, context, ideology, and religious doctrines adopted by both followers of that religion and interpreters. The translation of holy texts has been always a controversial issue, but the debates surrounding these translations become more confusing and more difficult to solve when we consider mistranslations and distortions of religious texts. Mistranslation may arise due to erroneous understanding of the original lexicon, or from an inauspicious assumption of a lexicon that does not exist in dictionaries, but distortion is performed deliberately by translators for various reasons (El Diwani 2005).

The Islamic holy text; the Quran, has been translated by Muslim and non-Muslim individuals and organizations all over the world. The plurality of

translations might mean that some are adequate while others are not. Adequate translations consider the sensitivity of the Quranic verses, and ensure fidelity to both text and context in determining meaning, and in removing any ambiguity resulting from translation.

This paper uses data from a project entitled, "The Mis/translation of Jihad Verses in the Holy Quran: Relating it to terrorism and distorting the real image of Islam in the Western publications after the emergence of ISIS." This study examines two groups of books from the mentioned data, each of which reflects different attitudes toward Islam, Jihad, the Quran, and radical groups. The first group is comprised of books written by Western authors published after 2014(the emergence of ISIS) and the second group is comprised of books written by Western authors before 2014. The reason behind examining books by western authors before 2014 (emergence of ISIS) is to highlight any differences on the degree of hostility towards Arabs and Muslims and to highlight the number of jihad verses which were taken out of their contexts. Publications from each of these two groups scrutinized Quranic mentions of Jihad, war, the names of some Islamist figures, and stereotypes of Islam. To compare works from each group, the study extracted interpretations and translations from these books and compared their meaning and reason for revelation according to the Ibn Katheer interpretation of "tafsir.". This current paper is going to examine the narratives included in both groups of books mentioned above; the ones (re) constructed by both the western media and ISIS leaders. Although some previous studies examined negative narratives distorting Islam, this study examines for the first-time examples from the Quran; those examples were misquoted and mistranslated by ISIS and/or Western Media.

## 1.   Previous studies
### 1.1  Conflict and mass media

Mass media plays a major role not only in reporting, but in narrating important events and steering public opinion. Media has its choice of stories, sources, storytelling methods, and narratives within which these stories are framed; it can choose to cover or neglect certain details and therefore, influence public perception of events (Gardner 2001; Puddephatt 2006). Governments, key political figures, and the wealthy owners of media organizations influence media coverage and narration so profoundly that some people have argued that freedom of the press "doesn't fully exist" (Gardner 2001: 303). These pressures tend to manipulate and influence both local and international communities. Gardner classified media into hate and peace media, where the former seeks to promote hatred and prejudice toward certain "races [and] ethnic or social groups" (2001: 303) by presenting biased views, perspectives, and analysis, and implicitly functioning as propaganda. Such propaganda "focuses on this inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on mass-media interests and choice," which can follow ways where the wealth and power can be used to "allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public" (Herman & Chomsky 2012: 2).

In this light, English-speaking media's use of translations of Quranic verses can affect the way that these verses and Muslims themselves are understood in the English-speaking world, because Westerners lack accessible and nuanced comparisons of English translations of the Quran. The contexts in which Western media cite Quranic verses also have a huge influence on public perceptions of Islam and of Quran (Ittefaq and Ahmad 2018; Tan 2016). For example, relying on war-like quotations put forward by ISIS media, fosters only partial, radical understandings of Jihad and Islam those misinterpretations promote negative perceptions of Islam and Quran. ISIS makes use of these misinterpretations to commit terrorism against multiple targets, not only non-Muslims, and this intensifies the negative narratives of such verses and of the Quran as a whole. Consequently, media might and can render this false reflection of the Quran used by radicals, and so does the use of translations that do not give the whole context and idea of the verses (Latif and Munir 2014; Alrefai 2015; Ittefaq and Ahmad 2018).

## 1.2 The image of Islam in Western media and publications

Since September 11, 2001, the West (and the United States in particular) has viewed Islam as a religion of terrorism, violence, and radicalism. These narratives have been bolstered by waves of terrorist attacks committed by those claiming to serve Islam, and have led Western media to depict Islam and Muslims as fanatical and extremist (Ridouani 2011; Latif and Munir 2014; Alrefai 2015). The 9/11 attacks and the subsequent War on Terror (WOT) meta-narrative and the administration of George Bush, in addition to the later public, political narratives produced by successive American governments have had a significant effect worldwide, regardless of their accuracy (Hodges 2011: 5-6). This political climate lends credibility to misrepresentations of Islam that fit into this meta-narrative, and have a permissive effect on Islamophobic narratives around the world. For example, in his 2015 book, *The People Vs Muhammad: A Psychological Analysis*, J.K. Sheindlin pushes the Islamophobic narrative that Islam is not a religion of peace, but is instead a religion which aggressively pursues a violent agenda against non-Muslim people and countries.

The West's broad acceptance of the negative narratives surrounding Arabs, Muslims, and terrorism did not occur out of the blue; these narratives developed through the long history of Western empires' domination of the Arab and Islamic worlds (Mešić 2008; Ridouani 2011; Hamdan, et al. 2021). The current movements of Islamic radical factions and terrorist militias have begun to capitalize on this tense political and historical situation, implementing their agendas by taking advantage of Western misinterpretations, mistranslations, and meta-narratives surrounding Islam and the Quran, to develop a whole new adverse meta-narrative, i.e., Jihadism. These actions have in turn generated further anti-Muslim meta-narratives all over the world.

**1.3 Narrative theory**

The study of narratives and narratology has been seen as a way not only to study the human act of narration, but also to investigate and analyze communicative acts such as translation, and to scrutinize the embedded, fundamental features of these acts that change and reshape human stories. This analysis includes investigations of the underlying agendas of these acts. According to the social theory of narrative, narratives are essential modes of communication, and are the results of mixed, cross-cutting human experiences that shape and reshape people's views and experiences (Sunil 2017). Contrary to the textual theory of narrative, which indicates that narratives should be linked to the particular texts from which they originate, the social theory of narrative argues that narratives are tied to a "range of texts and discourses without necessarily being fully or explicitly articulated" (Baker 2005: 5). This view sees narratives as abstract units that represent the accumulation of information and experiences. As such, narratives do not "merely represent, but constitute the world" (Harding 2012: 287). This theoretical discussion is important because, as Boukhaffa states, "narrative theory presents a practical framework that can examine all stages and facets of textual productions from the pure textual elements to the larger contextual frame in which they are produced, disseminated, and consumed" (2018: 169).

Moreover, Baker (2005; 2010a; 2010b; 2014) and Harding (2012) discussed aspects of narratives in relation to translation studies, and summarized four types of narratives in accordance with the work of Somers and Gibson (1994). First are *ontological* (or personal) narratives, which consist of personal and individual stories and experiences that define an individual's place in the world, helping them make sense of their lives. Ontological narratives are "interpersonal and social by nature" (Baker 2005: 5).

Second are *public* narratives, which include shared stories and experiences that circulate within social institutes or configurations (Harding 2012). Harding lays out a narrative typology to describe public narratives. This typology begins with local narratives, in which locality restricts a narrative's circulation to a particular place-time configuration. She then moves to describe public narratives, distinct from societal narratives. In the former, narratives "can be used to indicate (any) narratives that circulate in the public sphere" and community (Harding 2012: 293). In the latter, narrative circulation is restricted to social, religious, or private bodies and institutions, which preserve their narratives in a space distinct from the public sphere.

Third are *conceptual* (or disciplinary) narratives, which are articulated mostly by scholars, researchers, and scientists in presenting their interpretations and perspectives (Baker 2005; 2010b; 2014; Somers and Gibson 1997). Baker (2014: 211) points out that such narratives can sometimes provide biased or false interpretations beyond the disciplinary boundaries of the matter. Harding (2012) views theoretical narratives as a branch of conceptual/disciplinary narratives, and wields this concept to define the extent to which such narratives focus "on the act of theorizing" (293).

Fourth and final are *meta- or master* narratives, which indicate how concepts, theories, or perceptions are socially encoded in narratives (Baker 2005). These narratives are "highly influential, resilient narratives with a high degree of geographical and temporal reach and a very high level of abstraction" (Baker 2014: 160). Examples of meta-narratives are Marxism, nationalism, and so on (Baker 2005; Harding 2012).

The study of narratives must also examine how narratives are formulated and how they function. As such, we need to investigate the various features that narratives obtain, which might help us apply narrative theory to the study of translation. Some of these features are outlined by Baker (2005; 2014) and Harding (2012) from those originally presented by Somers and Gibson (1994); relationality, selective appropriateness, casual emplotment, and temporality, before moving on, we shall engage with each of these in turn.

Relationality defines the relationships among narrative elements or events; the functions of episodes and chunks of a given story which are derived from the overall narrative context and without which the story is incomprehensible (Somers and Gibson 1994; Baker 2005; 2014; Harding 2012). Baker (2014) argues that relationality can cause difficulties in translation due to the fact that dialect or registers can function "as an index of social standing, level of education, or age group" (168). Selective appropriateness refers to the translators' choice to highlight or include certain details or narratives, and marginalize others. Such choices profoundly impact all elements of translation – which texts are translated and how, which details are emphasized, marginalized, or omitted, etc. – and these choices therefore shape the course of a narrative (Harding 2012; Baker 2014). Casual emplotment refers to the significance of events themselves, and communicate to a narrative's followers how they should interpret an event's relation to a given narrative perspective. For example, Baker (2005) suggests that Palestinians see suicide bombings and individual armed operations against Israel as a response to Israeli settler colonialism, whereas Israelis often see these attacks as essential self-defense strategies for keeping the peace. The point here is that the narrative suggests an agreed-upon fact (suicide bombings, etc.), but people disagree on how to interpret the fact's narrative content. Temporality points to the time and place in which narratives are embedded, as time and space are essential to meaningfully constructing narratives (Baker 2014).

Narratives influence the discourses of terrorism and counter-terrorism, in which political and other institutions define actors, even as the concept of terrorism lacks a clear definition and characteristics. The acts of translation and narrative framing contribute to these discourses. For example, when studying the translations of narratives on Middle Eastern affairs provided by the Middle East Media Research Institution (MEMRI), Baker (2010) found that MEMRI contributed to the image of Arabs and Muslims as terrorists and extremists, thus contributing to the negative public narratives surrounding them in the Western world.

Translation should thus be understood as a form of re-narration, which constructs rather than represents events, characters, etc. from another language (Baker 2014). Significantly, "the actions and structure of a translation production

team can reflect ideologies and narratives circulating in the communities to which team members hold allegiance" (Jones 2010: 224). Baker (2006: 159) argues that the approach of narrative theory is distinct from other disciplinary approaches in that it expects "unit of analysis to be a narrative, understood as a concrete story of some aspect of the world, complete with characters, settings, outcomes or projected outcomes, and plot." Such an approach neither solely nor basically worries about catching a lot of repetitive semantic examples in a given language. Moreover, "by applying narrative theory together with discourse analysis, we locate these decisions within a larger discourse of re-narrating, rather than just translating, stories; identifying translators as storytellers, and more importantly as active political agents" (Dubbati & Abudayeh 2018: 149). Narrative theory does not push us to closely read translated texts to evaluate their accuracy; rather, it endeavors to recognize the stakes involved in any given experience or narrative, and strives to understand the inter-relations between them (Baker, 2006). Therefore, this paper wields narrative theory to examine the negative narratives constructed and reconstructed by both ISIS leaders and some Western media about Jihad in Islam.

## 2.   Methodology and material

A total of 64 books were investigated for this study. A search was carried out on the Amazon website to find the best-selling books that discuss jihad, ISIS, and the image of Islam to examine their ideas, attitudes, and use of jihad and war-related Quranic verses in these books, as well as to highlight the misinterpretation, misquotation, and mistranslation of these verses. Each one of the verses of interest was extracted, along with their contexts and interpretation, from the examined books and were then compared to their description and reasons of revelation in the Ibn Katheer interpretation. The Ibn Katheer interpretation (Tafseer al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓeem) was used because it is one of the most comprehensive, famous, most widely cited, and complete explanations and commentaries of the Quran. Ten books proved to be irrelevant, even though their titles were related to the topic of this project and were therefore excluded from the analysis. The remaining books were divided into two groups and focused on the following topics of concern: terrorism, jihad, jihadism and Islamic militancy, Salafism, Islamism, radical and terrorist groups, Islam and the Middle East, images of Islam, and Islamophobia.

Group One included 37 books that were published from 2014 (coinciding with the expansion and rise in awareness of ISIS) and were written by Western authors. Group Two included 7 books which were written before 2014, but also by Western authors, to highlight any differences in the degree of hostility towards Arabs and Muslims and the number of jihad verses that were taken out of context following the rise in the international awareness of ISIS.

All the Quranic verses mentioned in these books, particularly those where the concepts of jihad or qital (lit: fight) were mentioned within a war-related context, were extracted and studied. Those verses were cited to highlight different arguments about aspects of warfare in Islam, such as semantic sense, thoughts and stereotypes about Islam, and how some authors linked those verses to terrorism,

ISIS, Islamic radicalism, and Islamophobia, which increased after several terrorists' attacks were committed by fundamentalist groups in the name of Islam.

The examples discussed below are articulated in line with narrative types and features discussed in the narrative theory section above. Moreover, 54 books were used in this study, from which 25 repeated verses were examined. 82 leaders were mentioned in the examined books, only 6 who were the most influential for ISIS were discussed here because of time and space limitations

## 3. Findings and discussion

To sum up the findings of project from which the data of this paper is taken, we can say that the two groups of books cite a number of jihad-related verses presenting several arguments, namely the nature of relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, the law of war and use of force, Islam as a religion of violence or peace, and the ideology of Islamist extremist and radicalist where ISIS at the top of them. verses like 9:5, 9:29, 2:190-193 are the most frequently-cited verses among the two groups. The three verses are considered as a Quranic statement of using force, imposing various different arguments about the method of enforcement used in Islam. The three verses are  for expressing violent and offensive act against non-Muslims, awarding high privilege of fighting disbelievers, and imposing a state of humiliation for those who choose to keep religion in return of leaving them to live under the Islamic rule (Evans and Johnston, 2015; Lister, 2016; Bukay, 2017; Gorka, 2016; Sheindlin, 2015; Spencer, 2015; Spencer, 2005; Bonney, 2004; Firestone, 1999). Other verses that are cited in the same context throughout the two groups are 47:4, 5:33, 9:73, 47:4, 9:123, 9:19-21, 9:111, 8:60, and 61:11,  jihad is viewed as equal to fighting and fighting in the way of God and the highest obligation in Islam that deserves to be rewarded paradise in the Afterlife. According to some authors; Muslims are ordered to kill and execute disbelievers wherever found, and impose humiliating terms in return of their safety or of making temporary treaties. War in the above verses are viewed as an on-going clash between Muslims and unbelievers, peace is temporary only according to Rabil (2014), Bartal (2015); Kilpatrick, 2016; 2015; Evans and Johnston, 2015; Lister, 2016; Bukay, 2017; Gorka, 2016; Sheindlin, 2015; Spencer, 2015; Spencer, 2005; Bonney, 2004; Firestone, 1999).

The negative attitude and hostility expressed by those authors against Islam and Muslims which affect the interpretation and understanding of the cited verses in their books is noted to be more frequent in Group one than in Group two.

Moreover, group two's authors view verses (2:190-193) differently from group one. Tibi (2014), Maher (2016) and Amin (2015) investigated misconception about the whole idea of fighting in Islam which is limited to self-defense response to aggressions. The selective quotation of such verses is also criticized by the Maher (2016) and Amin (2015), these verses are used by radicalists to help them justify their deeds but this use distorts the image of jihad and, thus, Islam. Further, Tibi (2014) shed the light over the difference between Jihad and Qital, arguing that verses with word (Qital) occurrence express a use of force in a given circumstances, while verses with the word (jihad) occurrence encompass a broader sense, not

necessarily a use of force sense. Therefore, it is not accurate to use jihad and Qital interchangeably as equivalent concepts. Consider the following table which shows the repeated verses in both groups:

Table 1. Shared verses among the two groups

| Group 1 | Group 2 |
|---------|---------|
| 9: 5 | 9: 5 |
| 2: 190-193 | 2: 190-194 |
| 9: 29 | 9: 29 |
| 9: 111 | 9: 111 |
| 47: 4 | 47: 4 |
| 9: 19-22 | 9: 19-20 |
|  | 60: 8-9 |
|  | 2: 216-217 |

Group one authors interpreted and translated jihad as the use of force in the way of God and in the sake of religious purposes against non-Muslims. It is assumed by them that Quran is the source of the authoritative commands to fight and kill disbelievers whenever they are found, some of those authors claim an aggressive nature of Islam for being a religion that refuses the coexistence with other religions, unless under its own restricted and humiliating terms in return for keeping their lives and faiths. This suggests that radicalists or as some calls them 'Islamic terrorists" did not initiated from the nonexistent but instead they adopted their ideology from the teachings of Islam and from the aggressive historical record of Islamic battles and expansions (Rabil, 2014; Bartal, 2015; Gorka, 2016; Kilpatrick, 2016; Evans and Johnston, 2015; Lister, 2016; Bukay, 2017; Sheindlin, 2015; Spencer, 2015; Ostovar, 2016; Firestone, 1999; Euben and Zaman, 2009).

A similar and shared point which the two groups are discussing is the controversial verse number 9:5 (the verse of the sword) which expresses a violent statement according to some of them. It is commonly seen as a verse that rejects coexistence with non-Muslims and urges killing them and ending their existence, thus making a justification of using force against non-Muslims by Islamist extremists. Nevertheless, the extent to which this verse is exemplified in this context is seen more frequent in group one. In group two, the verse is less discussed and cited by the authors except by Spencer (2005) who also used the verse to exemplify the violent call of Quran against disbelievers.

Below is a summary of narratives included in the examined books, followed by a number of detailed ones by both ISIS leaders and Western Media both of which are extracted from the examined books:

**Overall narratives**

The first group includes narratives about Islam and jihad from 37 books written by Western authors; 18 from USA, 18 from UK, and one from Germany. Those books include a good number of Quranic verses in different topics, only the repeated verses (8) about Jihad were examined. The repeated verses cited by authors of the first group of books examined in this study we can say that most of the time those authors cite those verses out of their contexts by either mentioning one part of them without finishing the rest of the verse which always clarify it or restrict the condition of fighting mentioned in it or by giving a misinterpretation of such verses or by generalizing wrong and misleading assumptions leading to mislead western readers and audience and showing Islam as a religion of violence and hate against all no-Muslims community. In terms of narrative theory, the authors in group one drop the feature of relationality of narratives that reflects the significance of context in which narrative occurs, in addition to affecting the narratives fabula in the point of the chronological and sequential ordering of Quranic verses, especially jihad and war verses (Bal, 2009). The citation of such verses misses the fact that the sequential ordering of the verses traces the chronological sequence that gives the sense of war and jihad verses and clarifies the connotations of the word jihad whenever mentioned in the verses (Bal, 2009; Harding, 2012; Baker, 2005). The verse of Quran talking about jihad and fighting in Islam in this group is constrained within chronological and sequential ordering of the rise of Islamist radicalist groups, ISIS on the top of them, thus interpreting the narratives of Quranic in relation to the way presented by ISIS and its likes, in addition to the narratives of Islamic scholars and commentators selected by these radicalist groups.

The jihad and war narratives in this group are taken from books written by Western authors before the emerging of ISIS in 2014. Group two is consisted of 7 books; 4 were published in USA, 2 in UK, and one in in Singapore about the same topic. The reason behind examining books by western authors before 2014. Those books include a good number of Quranic verses in different topics, only the repeated verses (13) about Jihad were examined. The narrative of group two concentrate on the selective appropriation of events like 9/11 attacks to highlight the relationship between Al-Qaeda, which adopted the attack, and the Islamic scripts regarding the nature of concept jihad in the light of Al-Qaeda's ideology and methodology of misquoting war and jihad verses to justify their terrorist attacks. The negative tone from the authors of this group tends to be less than group one's. An example can be mentioned in this context is Spencer's perspective of Islam in his (2005) and (2015) books that demonstrate a more public narrative view of Islam in terms of its image in the West. While in his (2015) book, Spencer highlights on the ISIS acts and ideology and concentrate on the casual emplotment of the events that consist the rise of ISIS and other terrorist groups, in addition to the use of media by such groups to represent their ideology and abuse of Quranic verses in the benefit of their propaganda, selectively citing Quranic verses and conceptional narratives of scholars, leaving people to interpret narratives as violent and, thus, Islam and Quranic verses.

The two groups of examined books demonstrate narratives about Islam and citing a number of war-related verses, namely verses like 9:5, 9:29, 2:190-193 which are the most frequently-cited verses among the two groups, but in different dimensions, to view the nature of relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, the law of war and use of force, Islam a religion of violence or peace, and the ideology of Islamist extremist and radicalist where ISIS at the top of them. Group one and two offers a discussion of the public narrative that jihad is a violent concept that reflects the disability of Islam to coexist with others and aggression against anyone who do not convert and adhere Islam. Both group one and two The three verses are negatively argued for expressing violent and offensive act against non-Muslims, awarding high privilege of fighting disbelievers, and imposing a state of humiliation for those who choose to keep religion in return of leaving them to live under the Islamic rule (Evans and Johnston, 2015; Lister, 2016; Bukay, 2017; Gorka, 2016; Sheindlin, 2015; Spencer, 2015; Spencer, 2005; Bonney, 2004; Firestone, 1999). However, group one highlight the selective appropriation of event within the scope of ISIS and radicalist groups' societal narratives, and highlight the casual emplotment, in another words, the internal retroversion of during the occurrence of the individual events and sense of verses regardless of the context and the chronical and sequential ordering of verses in a way that clarify the circumstances and regulation of using force in Islam.

While in group two where the negative attitude towards Islam is less intense, the public narratives of Islam and jihad comes as a reflection of the chronical factors affected by the historical clash between Islam and the West, but discussing the views of selective Islamic scholars and their conceptional narratives that takes sometimes a more fundamental dimension of the concept jihad in which jihad is viewed as equal to fighting and fighting in the way of God and the highest obligation in Islam that deserves to be rewarded paradise in the Afterlife. Muslims are ordered to kill and execute disbelievers wherever found, and impose humiliating terms in return of their safety or of making temporary treaties. War in the above verses are viewed as an on-going clash between Muslims and unbelievers, only peace is temporary(Rabil, 2014; Bartal; Kilpatrick, 2016; 2015; Evans and Johnston, 2015; Lister, 2016; Bukay, 2017; Gorka, 2016; Sheindlin, 2015; Spencer, 2015; Spencer, 2005; Bonney, 2004; Firestone, 1999).. Such view of jihad in group two makes the public narratives of jihad turn into meta narrative "jihadism" to express a progressive narrative of violent propaganda against the West by Muslims.

**3.1 ISIS narratives**
In the same context, multiple authors from group two of the examined books scrutinized the ideology of radicalist and Islamist fundamentalists who have taken advantage of misquoted parts of verses and even whole verses out of context as an ideological and religious foundation to establish a violent mindset from which other terrorists can adopt their pretexts to justify their acts and crimes in the name of Islam. This section reviews narratives propagated by six influential men in ISIS: Muhammad Faraj, Osama Bin Laden, Hassan Al-Banna, Abu-Baker Al-Baghdadi, and Zawahiri and Zarqawi These men are the most mentioned in the books

examined in this study, some of those books narrate misinterpreted war-related verses cited by these leaders.

First, Muhammad Faraj[1] uses misquoted verses to establish a certain understanding of Quranic verses out of context (Euben & Zaman 2009; Tibi 2014; Amin 2015). For example; when quoting verse 2:216 of the Quran, which says, "*fighting is ordained for you*" (Euben and Zaman 2009: 62), Faraj only cites the first part of the verse. By only citing the first half of the verse, he seemingly legitimates public narratives which portray Islam as a religion whose followers are urged to kill as part of their devotional practice. This narrative is refuted by the rest of the verse, which continues, "*much as you dislike it*" (2:216: 62) which he deliberately omits, to indicate that fighting is the number one obligation in Islam and Muslims are in an on-going war against all non-Muslims until Islam dominates the whole world and no non-Muslims are left in the world.

Second, Osama Bin Laden [2]misquoted Quranic verses to justify his various actions and involvement in terrorism. These misquotations are considered a form of abrogation, insofar as Bin Laden is "removing phrases that qualify how these verses should be understood" (Amin 2015: 120). In quoting verse 2:193, Bin Laden says in 'The World Islamic Front' issued on 23 February 1998, "*Fight them until there is no more persecution and until worship is devoted to God*," but does not cite the rest of the verse: *"If they cease hostilities, there can be no [further] hostility, except towards aggressors*" (2:190) (Amin 2015: 111). In quoting verse 16:126, he states, "*And if you punish [your enemy, O you believers in the Oneness of God], then punish them with the like of that with which you were afflicted*" (Amin 2015: 114), but omits the qualifier, *"but it is best to show patience"* (16:126). This deliberate omission of clarifying details constructs a negative public narrative about Islam as a violent religion.

In Al-Bannas' [3]ideology of "selective quotation," he cites only parts of verses. For example, when citing verse 4:74, he speaks of the "glorification of fighting and death in "fi sabil" Allah/the path of Allah" (Tibi 2014: 59), omitting the second part of the verse, "*We shall richly reward them whether they die or conquer".* Here, he is reconstructing and reinforcing extant negative narratives about Islam and reconstructing additional negative meta-narratives. Further, he misquotes verse 2:216 just as we saw Faraj do, omitting the second part of the verse and reconstructing negative narratives about Islam in the process. According to some interpreters, he does this in order to highlight what he perceives as a Muslim's essential obligation to violence and conquest (Firestone 1999; Euben and Zaman 2009; Tibi 2014; Sekulow 2016).

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[1] An Egyptian radical Islamist and theorist. He led the Cairo branch of the Islamist group al-Jihad (also Tanzim al-Jihad) He was executed in 1982 for his role in coordinating the assassination of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat the previous year.

[2] founder of the pan-Islamic militant organization al-Qaeda.

[3] an Egyptian schoolteacher and imam, best known for founding the Muslim Brotherhood, one of the largest and most influential Islamic revivalist organizations

Likewise, Al-Baghdadi [4]selectively uses verse 9:111, "*fight in the cause of Allah, so they kill and are killed*" (Spencer 2015: 134), omitting the first part of the verse: "*Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise. [It is] a true promise [binding] upon Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an*" (Spencer 2015: 197). According to Spencer (2015), this verse is intended to convey that only those who kill or are killed in the name of Allah can enter paradise, and thus fits ISIS ideology by urging Jihadists to commit violence (Spencer 2005: 134; Evans and Johnston 2015). Thus, Al-Baghdadi's selective use of this verse constructs a false narrative about Islam and jihad, which he sets as a sixth pillar of Islam. However, according to Schmid, the alleged sixth personal duty to perform jihad is based on later interpretations of jihad by medieval Islamic jurists like Ibn Taymiyya and by modern Islamists like Sayyid Qutb. It is not contained in texts from early 'authentic' Islam" (Schmid 2015: 13). In the exegesis of verse 9:111, Ibn Katheer illustrates that whoever would dedicate their lives and wealth in his cause, Allah promised to bestow them with Paradise, and they would get their promise which is also affirmed in the Bible and Tourat (Ibn, Kathīr 2000).

Moreover, Zawahiri and Zarqawi selectively quoting the verse "make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into the enemies of Allah" (8:60), to legalize the act of spreading terror upon those who the radicalist calls 'Crusaders and whoever helps them' (Spenser, 2015; Sekulow, 2017; Ostovar, 2017; Evans and Johnston, 2015). Looking at the relationality feature of the narrative provided by this verse, Ibn Katheer explains that this verse refers to Bani Quraizah and Persians and it could be a reference to hypocrites at that time. As any state need to obtain power to protect itself and decrease the possibility of getting aggressed by others, the Islamic state is no exception. Thus, Allah orders Muslims to take suitable preparations and power so that the enemies are fearful of assaulting them or transgress on them and therefore preventing potential war. And only in case of war, Muslims are allowed to defend and to fight back aggressors.

In the same context, the radicalists who are mentioned in Spenser's (2015) book also misquote and misinterpret verse (2:191): "persecution is worse than slaughter", to refer to "persecution" is "alleged Western atrocities", thus, according to Zawahiri and Zarqawi, the random use of force and acts of terrorism against the West is justified (Spencer, 2015; Flannery, 2015; Gorka, 2016). In addition to this misinterpretation of verse 2:193, Gorka (2016: 63) mentions "And fight them until fitna is no more, and the human way of life becomes all for Allah." to reflect that the verses is encouraging to fight infidels as presented when mentioning Fitna which is infidelity. While verse 2:194 is mentioned but not cited by Evans and Johnston (2015) to argue Islam is not peaceful and that "Muhammad was not so forgiving" (ibid: 11), meaning that those who have inflicted injury on Muslims, are to inflicted injury on in return by Muslims. The same issue of selective

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[4] an Iraqi terrorist and the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) from 2014 until his death in 2019.

appropriateness of verses irrespective of their context provides an extra foundation of the meta narrative, Islam is terrorist religion, and force people to a narrative accrual by the constant repetition and highlighting more out-of-context verses upon people in the west that Islam and Muslims are targeting the west, and even any non-Muslim is threatened by Islam. Giving the complete dimensions that illustrates the above verses and refutes the foundations of the meta narrative, Islam is a terrorist religion, Ibn Katheer links verses 2:190-194 illustrating that the command of fight is permitted against whoever fights and transgress Muslims, avoiding those who seek peace. The verses also stress on the prohibition of transgression of all kinds, like mutilating dead bodies, stealing, killing women, children, old people, and monks or causing devastation on the land. Fitna (corruption) is an issue that is need to be eliminated as whenever injustice and corruption, fighting is commanded and only against combatants.

The above examples of misquotation, mistranslation, and omission by those leaders participate in constructing and reconstructing a series of erroneous meta narratives about Islam and Muslims by linking their identity to terrorism. In understanding these choices, we should understand that translators

> may generally choose to reinforce or resist the source texts' narratives by reshaping them to guide their reception by the target audience. To do so, they are not short of instruments: textual interventions, paratextual insertions/ deletions, co(n)textual adjustments and transpositions, all can serve as ideal means to achieve the desired goals (Boukhaffa 2018: 169).

Above, we saw that some Islamic leaders cited Jihadist verses out of context, misinterpreted and mistranslated verses, or made generalizing statements leading to incorrect assumptions about Islam and Muslims as inherently and enthusiastically violent and barbaric. This public narrative has developed over time to justify Western imperialism, reinforce established Islamophobic narratives, and connect the public narrative of Islam to a metanarrative in which all Muslims are terrorists. Next, we will engage with narratives pushed by some Western authors after 2014, coinciding with the rise of ISIS.

## 3.2 Narratives in Western media

Some authors (Gorka 2016; Kilpatrick 2016; Rabil 2014; Bartal 2015; Burke 2017), regularly quote verse 9:5 of the Quran: "*When the sacred months have passed slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them, and confine them and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush*". These authors cite this verse to support the metanarrative that Islam is inherently violent and urges Muslims to kill infidels and disbelievers (Rabil 2014: 48; Bartal 2015: 17-18; Gorka 2016: 59; Kilpatrick 2016: 44-45; Burke 2015: 37). After examining this verse, it is clear that public meta-narratives about violent Islam have affected these authors' engagement with the Quran, and led them to look for verses which justify violence and terror fitting these meta-narratives.

These authors also mistranslate key passages of the Quran to validate and reinforce negative meta-narratives. For example, they often quote verse 47:4 out of

context by only mentioning the first part of the verse: "*When you meet the unbelievers, smite their necks*" (Evans and Johnston 2015: 81; Spencer 2015: 165; Kilpatrick 2016: 45-46). The entire verse is as follows:

> *So, when you meet those who disbelieve [in battle], strike [their] necks until, when you have inflicted slaughter upon them, then secure their bonds, and either [confer] favor afterwards or ransom [them] until the war lays down its burdens. That [is the command]. And if Allah had willed, He could have taken vengeance upon them [Himself], but [He ordered armed struggle] to test some of you by means of others. And those who are killed in the cause of Allah - never will He waste their deeds (47:4).*

By mistranslating and omitting parts of the verses, these authors claim that Muslims are obliged to kill and execute disbelievers and non-Muslims. These claims reinforce the view that Islam is violent and Muslims are incapable of coexisting with people of other faiths which is a public narrative constructed by hate media as indicated before

In terms of the relationality feature of the narrative mentioned above, these authors ignore the relationality of these texts by omitting essential context. They also ignore the original sequential ordering of the verses, which is essential context for their interpretation, because the original sequence presents just circumstance for war and violence, and thus clarifies the connotations of the word Jihad (Baker 2005; Bal 2009; Harding 2012). These authors however, use Quranic verses describing Jihad within the context of the rise of radical Islamist groups such as ISIS, which aim to spread their own narratives by misinterpreting Quranic verses, and manipulating public narrative familiar to Muslims (Schmid 2015: 3) in order to gain acceptance in the Muslim community and to recruit young men and newly converted Muslims.

When examining narratives presented by some western authors, we can also see their selective appropriation of events like September 11 to highlight the relationship between groups such as Al-Qaeda and the interpretations of Islam and Muslims as violent. For example, Firestone (1999: 58-59) presented a negative public narrative by citing verse 2:191 of the Quran:

> *Kill them wherever you find them and turn them out from where they have turned you out, for fitna is worse than killing, but do not fight them at the Sacred Mosque unless they fight you there. But if they fight you, kill them. Such is the reward of the unbelievers.*

However, Firestone omits the next verse, which reads, "*But if they give over, surely God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate*" (2:192).

In his 2005 book, Spencer reinforces the public narrative that Muslims cannot coexist with people of other faiths by citing verse 9:29 of the Quran. He has two main interpretations of this verse. First, that the verse indicates that Muslims should wage war against Christians and Jews, and idolaters; second, that fighting is not necessary if people of these groups choose to keep their religion, live under Islamic rule, pay *jizya* (a poll tax), and accept humiliating treatment (Spencer 2005: 19). In his 2015 book, Spencer reconstructs the same public narrative of verse 9:29 by

relating it to the rise of ISIS. Another example of misquotation is evident is when Evans and Johnston (2015) also cite verses like 9: 73, 9:29 and 9:5, as shown below (ibid: 81): Allah commands Muhammad to "strive (jihad) hard against the unbelievers," for their end will be hell (9.73; 98.6). The devout Muslim is to "fight those who do not believe in Allah…and do not forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden" (9.29). Muslims are to "slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them, and confine them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush" (9.5).

The citation of parts of the above verses comes to argue that violent commands is indeed common throughout the verses of Quran, highlighting those three verses representing the violence reflected by current attacks by extremists Muslims. Yet, they see that no matter how hard the 'Islamic apologists' try to reject the claims that Islam is not violent such Quranic examples do exist (Evans and Johnston 2015). In this example, Evans and Johnston (2015) try to focused on the casual emplotment of the Quranic narrative mentioned in the aforementioned verse as a generalized and meta narrative on its own without considering the set of circumstances and chronological setting on which this verse is applicable. Another feature that appears to have an effect on the developing the false meta narrative, Muslims are terrorist, is to selectively appropriate this verse in order to showcase evidence in Quran that supports their claimed narrative

Further, Evans and Johnston (2015) highlights the issue of war captives under the name of jihad, quoting the text translation and commentary of Abdullah Yusuf Ali chunks of the verses 4.24 it, as seen in the following: " women "whom your right hands possess," are "captives in a jihad, or war under the orders of the righteous Imam against those who persecute faith. In such cases formal hostility dissolves civilities." (Evans and Johnston, 2015: 4), arguing that sex slavery is permitted in Islam in the case of War and jihad (in its violent sense). the issue of translation is also tackled from the perspective of Bukay (2017) who sees that the translation of the part of verse 4:29 that says "do not kill yourselves" is problematic. According to him, the right translation should be hinting for the prohibition of Muslims killing another. The above western authors attempt to provide a conceptual narrative based on the public narrative that Islam abuses women, and thus try to broaden this narrative into Islam supports and encourages the sex slavery of women based on selective appropriate the above Quranic verse irrespective of its chronological and historical setting, dropping the fact that Quran aimed at gradually decreasing until eliminating the historical dilemma of slavery that was a normal public narrative before 1400 years ago, in which the verse plays an initial role in limiting the problem of slavery to be later on prohibited.

Furthermore, the above authors also cite 8:69 and 33:27 to argue that jihad is a way to impose the economic oppression and that Quran legislate it. Evans and Johnston (2015) also mention the verses (56:17-24) which are speaking of the description of paradise and what it contain, as a reward of fighting disbelievers and non-Muslims, while there is no hints in the context of these verses that this reward is restricted on those who fight and kill infields. So, fighting non-Muslims comes from the point that, Evans and Johnston, all religions are not the same and the

Islamic God does not want equity among human, unless in his terms, consequently citing verse 48.29: "Muhammad is the messenger of Allah; and those who are with him are strong against Unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other" (Evans and Johnston, 2015: 11), arguing that disbelievers are hated and thus are to be fought by Muslims. In the same context, Bukay (2017) makes mention of verses 3:151, 2:22, and 14:30, arguing that as a result of God's hatred of disbelievers, they are "We will cast terror into the hearts of the infidels, because they set up partners with Allah" (3:151) "their abode is fire" (2:22), and "do not set up rivals to Allah . . . do no set up equals with Allah" (14:30) to represent that all humans are not equal in Islam (Bukay, 2017: 61). Verse 8:60 is also misquoted in Spencer's (2015) book as follows: "make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into the enemies of Allah" (Spencer, 2015: 42), and frequently misquoted in the same book "strike terror into the hearts of the enemies of Allah" (ibid: 43, 50, 51, 66, 107, 165). Another verse which was misquoted is 9:29 "fight those who do not believe in Allah…and do not forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden" (Evans and Johnston, 2015: 81). The way the verse is misquoted presents a distortion of the sense creates a false public narrative that Islam is not tolerant towards non-Muslims and shows how selective appropriateness of certain elements and in a narrative an exclude others can promote for this false public narrative, ignoring its context, thus presenting the idea that Allah commands Muslims to fight non-Muslims unconditionally. This misquotation drops the feature of relationality in the narrative provided by the Quran that a certain category of people that was intended by the above verses who were the people of the book, Jews of Medina, in Prophet Muhammad's era who lives within the Islamic state but do not follow the guidance and orders of Allah in their books, in addition to plotting against Muslims (Maudoodi and Ansari, 2009).

The above examples show how narratives can be (re)-constructed in translating Qur'anic verses whether deliberately or not. Those narratives are constructed with the process of translating those verses and can be seen without making a comparative analysis between the source and the target languages as stated by Mahasneh (forthcoming) when she examined the stakes involved in the counter-terrorism narratives of King Abdullah II in both English and Arabic speeches.

## 4.  Conclusion

To conclude, the above examples where the verses were taken either out-of-context, or selective quotation of Quranic verses yielded misinterpretations of their meanings, either by the authors themselves or by radical leaders who use portions of verses as the basis of their ideologies partially due to misinterpretation and mistranslation of those verses. This result is also highlighted by Mahasneh (2021) As we have seen in the narratives presented by both groups; ISIS leaders' group and some western authors group, both of them validate Western public narratives about the inherent violence of Islam, the supposed necessity of Jihad, and Muslims' inability to coexist with people of different faiths. However, with the first group, we could see clearly the selective appropriation of events within the scope of ISIS

and other radical groups' societal narratives, and how they use these narratives to frame the rise and dominance of ISIS. In other words, members of this group frame the public narrative of ISIS's acts and their societal narratives of Quranic verses, gave internal retroversion, of the individual events within the ISIS's terrorist attacks. This constructs a background within which people build a relation between Islam and the terrorist acts of radical groups.

Both groups misquote, misinterpret, and mistranslate passages of the Quran that deal with Jihad, in order to frame individual and societal narratives of radical parties against wider, public narratives. These re-narrations allow each group to present their view of the broader narrative significance of events and actors within an ideological framework (Baker 2006). Both used the linguistic unit "Jihad" as a stand-alone narrative, regardless of its context, to construct their own individual narratives of Jihad and connecting them to a broader public narrative. These mistranslations of Jihad, which restrict its meaning to an equivalent of *qital* (fight), foster a cultural and public understanding of all violent acts committed by Muslims as terrorist acts seeking to establish the Islamic rule.

Moreover, media is a weapon that has more destructive qualities than what it seems. This coincides with what (Gardner 2001; Puddephatt 2006) stated that media chooses to cover or neglect certain details to affect public perception of events. Although peace organizations and peace-seeking initiatives are set out to reduce the great effect of media in causing more tensions in human crises, but this does not restrain the effect of hate and biased media. Moreover, media is usually focused on conflict and crisis content a fact stated by Gardner who classified media into hate and peace media. Moreover, how an event is seen it is usually affected by official resources. to. Often, news reports writing and preparing get pressured by governmental and political parties to frame and present events to affect the attitude of the audience. The image of Islam, Muslims and jihad has been affected after the 9/11 attacks and the initiation and media coverage of WOT (war on terror) operations. Media coverage of WOT has been highly influenced by the perspective of the US administration, making WOT a war of images not a war on terrorism which, in return, creates a negative attitude towards jihad, jihadism, Islam, and Muslims. It shows them as a violent entity that targets every non-Muslim in the whole world.

To conclude, Translation is a form of re- narration that constructs rather than represents events and people (Baker 2014). This goes in line with the results revealed by this study that some radical groups interpret and translate the Quran out of context in order to justify their acts, and that this practice increases the hostility of some Western authors and media toward Islam and Muslims, leading to an increase in Islamophobia around the world. Moreover, some extremist thoughts and acts published and committed by some Muslims provide the grounds for some Western commentators to frame Islam as a religion of fundamentalism, extremism, and terrorism, especially after 9/11 (Ridouani 2011). In addition, the political factor that dominates the way narratives are formed and framed has the upper hand in worsening the image of Muslims. Politicians use these narratives to gain public support and achieve political gains.

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**Group Three (books before 2014) list**

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2. The Looming Tour, Al Qaeda and the Road TO 9/11 (Lawrence Wright),2006
3. Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam (Reuven Firestone) 1999
4. The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam and the Crusades (Robert Spencer) 2005
5. Jihad: From Quran to bin Laden (Richard Bonney) 2004
6. Inside Terrorism, Revised and Expanded Edition (Bruce Hoffman)2006
7. The Great War for civilization- The Conquest of the Middle East, 2007 Vintage book (Robert Fisk)

## Irrelevant books

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2. Diego Gambetta, Steffen Hertog - Engineers of Jihad_ The Curious Connection between Violent Extremism and Education (2016, Princeton University Press)
3. Patrick Cockburn - The Rise of Islamic State_ ISIS and the New Sunni Revolution (2015, Verso)
4. Patrick Cockburn - The Jihadis Return_ ISIS and the New Sunni Uprising (2014, OR Books)
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