

THE QUR'ĀN AND ITS TRANSLATION: AN ANALYSIS OF DISCOURSE ON *JIHĀD* IN SELECTED ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS ◊

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ABSTRACT

Translation of a literary text from its original language to another requires not only great skill in both languages, but also in depth knowledge of the background and culture as well. A scripture, particularly the Qur'ān, which proclaims itself as a linguistic marvel, presents a higher level of difficulty. The translating the Qur'ān is different from all other texts and scriptures. The Word of God cannot be presented in any human language and it is difficult to have the formal and dynamic equivalence. This paper aims to analyze the verse 9:5 of the Qur'ān which deals with the concept of *Jihād* and how different versions appear in the five representative English translations. The selected translations are those rendered by Yusuf Ali (apologetic and pseudo-rational), Hilali and Muhsin Khan (salafi), Abul Ala Mawdudi (traditional) Muhammad Asad (apologetic) and Tarif Khalidi (modern). Modification of the Qur'ānic terms, distortion of the syntactic structure, selection of biblical archaic lexicon, negation of the semantic coherence of the Qur'ānic verse, marginalization of important message etc. are found. They find room for accommodating their ideologies and viewpoints in their translation of the Qur'ānic verse.

Keywords: *the Qur'ān, English Translations, Discourse on Jihād.*

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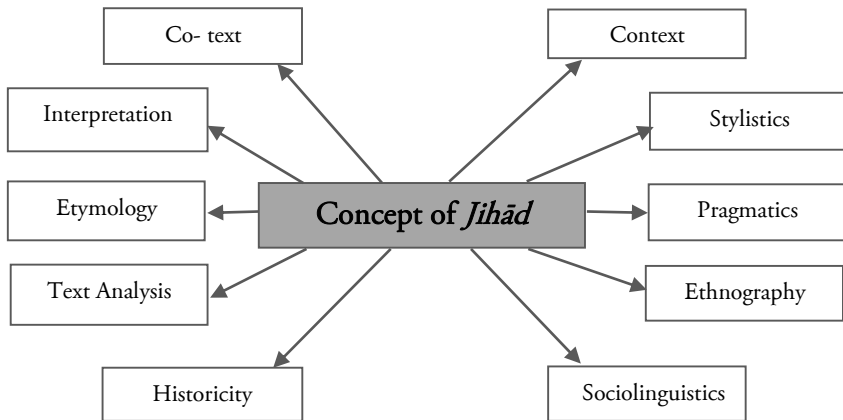
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1 INTRODUCTION

The word *Jihād* occurs in the Qur’ān 41 times. Throughout the modern discourse the word *Qatl* (to kill) is also used as a synonym to *Jihād*. Thus the word *Qatl* is used 170 times. So it is clear that a format of discourse is needed to understand and analyze the meaning and concept of *Jihād* in Islam. This format of discourse should take into account co-text, context, intertextuality, coherence, cohesion, ethnography of communication, speech act, interactional sociolinguistics, historicity etc. To analyze the text or verse without referring to the thematic unity of the Qur’ān may lead to misunderstanding. Cross reference is the most important step to analyze the Qur’ānic discourses. The totality and thematic unity should be taken into account to internalize the Qur’ānic message and to translate or interpret it. In the Publisher’s note on *The Message of the Qur’ān* by Muhammad Asad, A.S. Ukhalkar states:

The Qur’ān must not be viewed as a compilation of individual injunctions and exhortation, but as one integral whole, that is, as an exposition of an ethical doctrine in which every verse and sentence has an intimate bearing on other verses and sentences; all of them clarifying and amplifying one another. (Ukhalkar, n.d: 3)

Diagrammatically the format of discourse to understand the concept of *Jihād* can be presented thus:



(Figure 1, Concept of Jihad)

2 ETYMOLOGY OF THE WORD *JIHĀD* AND ITS MEANING

The Arabic word *Jihād* is derived from the root *Jahada* which means to strive, to struggle, to exert. The Qur'ān uses the word with a number of diverse meanings in different contexts. Sometimes it refers even to the efforts of non-Muslims. Allah says in the Qur'ān

God has ordered man to be kind to his parents. However, if they compel you to take anyone as partner with Him that you do not know (to be His partner), do not obey them. All of you have to return to Him. He will then inform them what they used to do. [Al-'Ankabut 29:8]

To explore or to showcase the meaning of the Qur'ān is also *Jihād*:

(O Prophet), do not follow the unbelievers. Engage them with this Qur'ān on a big scale. [Al-Furqān 25:52]

Ibn Hanbal reports that when Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) returned from *Tabūk* battle, he told his followers “We return from the lesser *Jihād* to the greater *Jihād*”. (Ibn Hanbal, n.d: 5/21) The greater *Jihād* is the more difficult and more important struggle against one's ego, selfishness, greed, and evil.

The semantic range of *Jihād* is very broad and it encompasses many forms and levels. To struggle against one's desire is a form of *Jihād*. To struggle against sin constitutes another form of *Jihād*. To make any effort to purify oneself is also a form of *Jihād*. Towqueer Alam Falahi observes that the deviation from evil thoughts, idleness, formality and self projection is also a major incentive for strengthening the practice of *Jihād* by the soul. (Falahi, 2004: 60)

Hasanuddin Ahmed refers to the armed form of *Jihād* subject to certain rules, restrictions and guidelines.

In the west Jihād is generally rendered as 'holy war', a usage the media has popularized. Unfortunately, some Muslim writers also translate Jihād as 'holy war'. 'Jihād' and 'Qitāl' are sometimes loosely used in one and same sense, where as the Qur'ān has made a clear distinction between the two. To fight for the cause of the truth and thus to endanger one's own life, is the highest form of sacrifice. What more can one offer than one's own precious life in such a sacred cause! Thus 'Jihād' against the wanton enemies of Allah with one's own life, is only the last phase of the struggle which a true Muslim carries on for the sake of Allah and for his 'Dīn'. (Hasanuddin, 2008: 117)

Hasanuddin Ahmed says that

Jihād as a struggle with arms and its con-commitant supreme sacrifice should be made only under the command of righteous imam who can see the entire perspective and judge justly of its necessity. (Hasanuddin, 2008: 117-118)

Maududi defines *Jihād* thus:

Jihād literally means 'to strive' or 'to exert to the utmost'. In Islamic parlance it signifies all forms of striving, including armed struggle, aimed at making the Word of God prevail. (Maududi, 2004: 282)

In short, *Jihād* is a strife against desire, falsehood, *Satan* etc. in the path of God by thought, tongue, hand and if necessary by arms.

3 METHODOLOGY

For making a comparative analysis the verse *al-Tawba* 9:5 is selected. Its translations and commentaries rendered by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1872-1953), (Yusuf Ali, 1989) Taqiuddin al Hilali (1895-1990) and Muhammad Muhsin Khan (1925--), (Hilali&Muhsin Khan, 2006) Muhammad Asad (1900-1992), (Asad, 1980) Abul Ala Maududi (1903-1979), (Maududi, 2004) and Tarif Khalidi (1938--), (Khalidi, 2008) are selected.

3.1 The Rationale behind selecting this verse:

The verse is the quoted verse with respect to the Islamic view point on *Jihād* by media in modern time. And it is misinterpreted and distorted without anything to do with the quoted original text. Today's academic and socio-cultural scenario resounds with the misinterpretation of this verse.

3.2 The Rational behind selecting these translations:

These translations are chosen for conducting this study as representatives of various schools, viewpoints and methods of interpretation. Yusuf Ali represents the apologetic and pseudo-rational mindset (Kidwai, 2011: 16); meanwhile Taqiuddin al Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan stand for *Salafi* tradition (Afsar&Azmat, 2002). Abul Ala Maududi is traditional in approach and viewpoint (Kidwai, 2005: 242), at the same time Muhammad Asad is apologetic (Kidwai, 2011: 70) and Tarif Khalidi is modern (Kidwai, 2011: 158).

3.3 Paradigm of Analysis

Analysis will be made based on following:

- a) Morphological level analysis: at this level emphasis will be given to only the morphemes that are crucial to discuss the message of the verse.
- b) Syntactic level analysis: at this level the syntax will be analyzed, only, if it is necessary to discuss the discourse of the verse. Otherwise, syntax will be analyzed in discourse perspective, if it is needed.
- c) Discourse level analysis: at this level the discourse of the verse will be analyzed.

4 A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The verse and its various translations are affixed at the end (Appendix I).

4.1 The morphological level analysis

For this, the following key morphemes from the verse are selected.

4.1.1 Al-'ashhurul-ḥurum

Yusuf Ali translates the word as 'forbidden months' and does not explain what the months are, but provides an additional information that 'the emphasis is on the first clause' i.e., 'forbidden'. Hilali and Muhsin Khan translate it as sacred months and specify the months by mentioning their order as 'the 1st, 7th, 11th and 12th of the Islamic calendar' (Hilali&Muhsin Khan, 2006: 209). Muhammad Asad also translates the word as sacred months, provides the background information and specifies the months by names (Asad, 1980: 255). He says that it is according to a pre-Islamic custom prevalent in Arabia, the four months – Muharram, Rajab, Dul-Qa'dah and Dul-Hujah were considered 'sacred' in the sense that all tribal warfare had to be cease during these months. His commentary takes into account the history and context of the verse. Tarif Khalidi, also, translates the word as sacred months, but without any comments. Abul Ala Maududi translates the word as sacred months, but in the commentary he uses two words: sacred and prohibited. He also points out that the expression 'sacred months' in the above verse means something different from its usual understanding, whereby fighting during those four months was prohibited (Appendix I). Sacredness of these months is only in the sense that warfare is forbidden in these months and not in the sense of 'sacred' as in 'sacred book' or 'sacred place'. Hence, to the context of the verse, 'forbidden or prohibited', which gives the accurate meaning, is more suited than the word 'sacred'.

4.1.2 *Faqtulū*

The root word is *Qatala*. Yusuf Ali translates it by employing two words: 'fight and slay'. The word 'kill' is used by both Hilali and Muhsin Khan and Tarif Khalidi, at the same time 'slay' is used by Asad and Maududi. What is to be taken into account that the words 'kill' and 'slay' are loaded with additional meanings. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary the word 'kill' means 'to make somebody or something to die' (Hornby, 2005: 846) and 'slay' means 'to kill somebody or something in a war or a fight'. (Hornby, 2005: 1435) So, 'kill' occupies a general meaning and 'slay' occupies an action 'during the war or fight'. So the word 'slay' is more faithful to the original. But two words; 'fight and slay', as used by Yusuf Ali provide the accurate meaning; if the enemies are not ready for repentance, fight them then slay them. It is a step by step process and may wait for their repentance before fighting with them. If they are ready for repentance and accept the Islamic principles, there is no fight at all and Allah will forgive them. It creates a semantic relation to the last part of the verse, i.e. 'Allah is Oft-Forgiving and Most Merciful' and gives additional information that the 'killing' will occur during the war or when war is in progress.

4.1.3 *Al-mushrikina*

Yusuf Ali translates the noun as 'pagans'. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary pagan is a person who holds religious beliefs that are not part of any of the world's main religions. It also has a biblical connotation because it is used in the past by Christians to describe a person who did not believe in Christianity (Hornby, 2005: 1091). It is clear that this meaning is not what is in the verse. Hilali and Khan take the noun as it is and provide a reference to verse 2:105 where they give the meaning of the word as 'the idolaters, polytheists, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah, pagans etc' (Hilali&Muhsin Khan, 2006: 19). They attempt to prove that *Mushrik* is a wide and general term which includes all one who makes association with Allah by worshipping idols, by worshiping human beings and saints and even one who disbelieve in the Oneness of Allah. They make it in an open ended condition by using 'etc.'. It may include one who goes to tombs of saints too. This generalization signifies their *Salafi* ideology in describing the concept of *Shirk*. Tarif Khalidi translates it in an accurate way as 'polytheists'. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 'polytheism' means the belief that there is more than one God' (Hornby, 2005: 1168). Asad and Maududi without using any specific term render a description of the same. 'Those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God' (Asad, 1980: 256) and 'those who associate others with Allah' (Maududi, 2004: 190) are the descriptions by Asad and Maududi respectively. Asad's description includes one who ascribes divinity

to *Sufi* saints, Prophets, animals and even non-living things. Maududi tries to include in his description any association that stands instead of God. It may include even the philosophies and ideologies like communism and socialism that placed in the stand of God.

4.2 *The syntactic level analysis*

As there is no syntactical or structural ambiguity in the verse which is crucial to understanding the discourse, this part of analysis is not undertaken. There are no structural problems identified both by the translators and the researcher, because almost all translators have rendered the structure in a same way.

4.3 *The discourse level analysis*

The Questions arise:

1. Is it obligatory to kill non-Muslims without any condition?
2. Who are referred to in the noun '*Al-mushrikīna*'?
3. What is the importance of repentance in the verse?

Yusuf Ali presents the intensity and nature of the war to emphasize the meaning of the word 'kill' and provides an English phrase 'you cannot fight with kid gloves' (Yusuf Ali, 1989: 438). He refers to the nature of enemies in his words 'the other party (*Mushrikūn*) shows no sign of desisting from its treacherous designs by right conduct, that the state of war supervenes – between faith and unfaith.' (Appendix I) From this, it is clear that the enemies are already in war with Muslims and they are not ready to seize it. If other party is ready for amendment, he says 'even then, there is room for repentance and amendment on the part of the guilty party, and if that take place, our (Muslims') duty is forgiveness and the establishment of peace' (Appendix I). He proclaims the way of repentance and the duty of Muslims. He argues that 'the repentance must be sincere, and that is shown by conduct – a religious spirit of true prayer and charity' (Yusuf Ali, 1989: 438). He states that Muslims never bar the gate against repentant. On the contrary, we must do all we can to make their way easy, remembering that Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. So, totality of the verse is taken into account in the commentary and all questions are addressed.

Hilali and Muhsin Khan make a reference to foot note of (v.2:193), where they provide *Hadīth* which is reported by Ibn Umar:

Narrated Ibn Umar: Allah's Messenger said, "I have been ordered (by *Allah*) to fight against the people till they testify that *La ilāha illallah wa*

Anna Muhammad-ur-Rasūl Allah (none has the right to be worshipped but *Allah* and that Muhammad is the messenger of *Allah*), and perform *As-Salāt* (*Iqāmat-as-Salāt*) and give *Zakāt*, so if they perform all that, then they save their lives, and properties from me except for Islamic laws, and their reckoning (accounts) will be with (done by) *Allah*." (*al-Bukhari*, n.d: 1/24)

This *Hadīth* speaks of the message that to believe Allah and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and follow Islamic principle is the central. And if they (non believers) perform so, they save their lives and properties from Muslims. *Hadīth* should be taken in a general sense and does not refer to war or war field where as the verse refers to the war in progress. So the reference to this *Hadīth* is irrelevant (Hilali&Muhsin Khan, 2006: 37).

In the commentary they quote an event (Appendix I) reported by Abu Hurairah. It showcases the incidents occurred immediately after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the role taken by Abu Bakar (RA), the first *Khalifā*. Abu Bakar (RA) was ready to fight against one who made difference between *Salāt* and *Zakāt* and who denied to pay *Zakāt*.

This denial was from Muslims themselves. By providing this *Hadīth* Hiali and Muhsin Khan try to expand the meaning of *Mushrikūn* even to Muslims who made changes in Islamic fundamental principles. So, they addressed the second question and provide an additional meaning that sometimes even Muslims may include under the term but do not addressed the question of war against non-Muslims and role of repentance in the verse.

Comparatively Muhammed Asad provides a good commentary taking into account co-text and context of the verse. He points out that 'the above verse relates to warfare already in progress with people who have become guilty of a breach of treaty obligation and of aggression' (Asad, 1980: 256). It explains the nature of the enemies in a historical setting. Discourse of the verse is clearly discussed with cross references and taking into account the thematic unity of the Qur'ān.

The above verse, which speaks of a possible conversion to Islam on the part of "those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God" with whom the believers are at war, must, therefore, be considered in conjunction with several fundamental Qur'ānic ordinances. One of them, "There shall be no coercion in matters of faith" [2:256], lays down categorically that any attempt at a forcible conversion of unbelievers is prohibited - which precludes the possibility of the Muslims' demanding or expecting that a defeated enemy should embrace Islam

as the price of immunity. Secondly, the Qur'an ordains, "Fight in God's cause against those who wage war against you; but do not commit aggression, for, verily, God does not love aggressors" [2: 190] and, "if they do not let you be, and do not offer you peace, and do not stay their hands, seize them and slay them whenever you come upon them: and it is against these that We have clearly empowered you [to make war]" [4: 91]. Thus, war is permissible only in self-defense [2: 167-168], with the further proviso that "if they desist - behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace" [2: 192], and "if they desist, then all hostility shall cease" [2: 193]. Now the enemy's conversion to Islam - expressed in the words, "if they repent, and take to prayer [lit., "establish prayer"] and render the purifying dues (*Zakāt*)"-is no more than one, and by no means the only, way of their "desisting from hostility"; and the reference to it in verses 5 and 11 of this *Sūrat* certainly does not imply an alternative of "conversion or death," as some unfriendly critics of Islam choose to assume'. (Asad, 1980: 256)

This commentary of Muhammad Asad gives the totality of the message and any one even without the background knowledge can get a clear idea regarding the message of the verse. He addressed three of the questions.

Whereas Hilali and Muhsi Khanm expand the term even to Muslims, Maududi tries to limit injunction to polytheists. And he says that the injunction for war would not apply, if they failed to fulfill any one of these three conditions: give up polytheism, establish prayers and pay *Zakāt*. He adds that apart from a disavowal of unbelief and polytheism, the Muslims are required to establish prayers and pay *Zakāt*. Without these, their claim that they had abandoned unbelief and embraced Islam would have no credence. So he makes a link between believe and practice. The nature of war and the references to other verses are not addressed by Maududi.

Tarif Khalidi renders the translation of the verse in to English, without any comments or footnotes. The nature of enemies; i.e. they are in war with Muslims, is not clear from his rendering. It seems that polytheists include all non-believers. What is special to him is that he merges the verse 5 and 6 altogether in his translation. His translation of the word *Zakāt* as 'alms' which means, according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 'money, clothes and food that are given to poor people' (Hornby, 2005: 41) is not sufficient to include the sense of *Zakāt*. His selection of lexical items such as 'arrest them' and 'imprison them' is user friendly. In the rendering of Tarif Khalidi structural easiness can be seen as in 'Once the sacred months are shorn' instead of 'And so, when the sacred months are over (Asad)', 'But when forbidden months are

past (Yusuf Ali)', 'Then when the sacred months have passed (Hilali and Khan)' and 'But when the sacred months expire (Maududi)'.

Correct meaning of this verse can also be understood in the light of following points:

1. The enemies, referred in the verse, are in war with Muslims and show no sign of desisting from treacherous designs.
2. The verse is not a license to fight against all non-Muslims without any condition.
3. Thematic unity of the Qur'an should be taken into account, for understanding the meaning of the verse.
4. If the guilty party is ready for repentance, Muslim's duty is to forgive and establish peace.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Major differences in translating the nature of war

1) Asad, Maududi and Yusuf Ali take the injunction of the verse applicable only to the war in progress.

2) Yusuf Ali states; if the enemies are not ready for repentance fight them then slay them. It is a step by step process and may wait for their repentance before fighting with them. If they are ready for repentance and accept the Islamic principles, there is no fight at all and Allah will forgive them.

3) Hilali and Tarif Khalidi do not provide discussion on the nature of the war. They translate the word *Faqtulū* as 'kill' which is a general word for 'to make somebody or something to die'. So the nature of war is not clear from their rendering and it seems that the injunction is applicable even to out of war, whereas the verse is on the war in progress.

5.2 Major differences in defining the term *Mushrik*

1) Yusuf Ali translates the term as 'pagan' with biblical connotation. He comes to be an archaic biblical in selection of lexicon; pagan for *Mushrikūn*. It showcases his passion to translate in accordance with the Bible language.

2) Hilali and Muhsin Khan attempt to prove that *Mushrik* is a wide and general term which includes all one who makes association with Allah by

worshipping idols, by worshipping human beings and saints and even one who disbelieve in the Oneness of Allah. They make it in an open ended condition by using ‘etc.’. It may include one who goes to tombs of saints too. This generalization signifies their *Salafi* ideology in describing the concept of *Shirk*.

3) Tarif Khalidi translates it in an accurate way as ‘polytheists’.

4) Asad’s semantic modification of the term through description of the term includes one who ascribes divinity to *Sufi* saints, Prophets, animals and even non-living things.

5) Maududi attempt to modification of lexical meaning by providing the description of the word *Mushrikūn*. He includes in his description of the term any association that stands instead of God. It may include even the philosophies and ideologies like communism and socialism that placed in the stand of God. He takes into account the socio-cultural background at the time of his rendering.

5.3 Other Differences

1) Muhammad Asad tries to communicate the accurate meaning of the verse by cross references and taking into account the history, pragmatics and discourse of this Qur’ānic verse.

2) Yusuf Ali provides a comprehensive comment by taking into account coherence and totality of the Qur’ānic message.

3) Hilali and Muhsin Khan concentrate on defining the term *Mushrik* and ignore the question of nature of war and its historical background.

4) Modification of style of expression and selection of user friendly words like ‘arrest them’ and ‘imprison them’ are employed by Tarif Khalidi.

In short, Modification of the Qur’ānic terms, selection of biblical archaic lexicon, negation of the semantic coherence of the Qur’ānic verse, marginalization of important messages etc. are found in various translations. Translators find room for accommodating their ideologies and viewpoints in their translation of the Qur’ānic verse.

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APPENDIX I

The verse (Al Tawba 9:5) related to *Jihād* and its translations with commentary that are used in the study:

فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرْمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخُذُوهُمْ وَأَخْصِرُواهُمْ وَأَقْعِدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصِدٍ فَإِن تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٥﴾

1) Yusuf Ali : 9:5

'But when the forbidden months (*1250) are past, then fight and slay (*1251) The Pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleague them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, (*1252) and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful'.

*1250: The emphasis is on the first clause: It is only when the four months of grace are past, and the other party shows no sign of desisting from its treacherous designs by right conduct, that the state of war supervenes - between faith and unfaith.

*1251: When war becomes inevitable, it must be prosecuted with vigor. According to the English phrase, you can not fight with the kid gloves. The fighting may take the form of slaughter, or siege, or ambush and other stratagems. But even then, there is room for repentance and amendment on the part of the guilty party, and if that takes place, our duty is forgiveness and the establishment of peace.

* 1252: The repentance must be sincere, and that is shown by conduct -a religious spirit of true prayer and charity. In that case we are not to bar the gate against the repentant. On the contrary, we must do all we can to make their way easy, remembering that Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most merciful. (Yusuf Ali, 1989: 438)

2) Hilali & Khan: 9:5

'Then when the Sacred Months (the 1st, 7th, 11th, and 12th months of the Islamic calendar) have passed, then kill the *Mushrikun* (see V.2:105) wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them, and prepare for them each and every ambush. But if they repent [by rejecting Shirk (polytheism) and accept Islamic Monotheism] and perform *As-Salāt* (*Iqamat-as-Salāt*), and give *Zakāt*, then leave their way free. Verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (*1)'

* 1: (V.9:5) (A) See the footnote of Verse 2: 193 (B) Narrated Abu Hurairah (RA): When the Prophet (pbuh) died and Abu Bakr became his successor and some of the Arabs reverted to disbelief, Umar said. "O'Abu Bakr! How can you fight these people although Allah's Messenger said: 'I have been ordered to fight the people till they say: *La ilaha illallah* (none has the right to be worshiped but Allah), and whoever said *La ilaha illallah* will save his property and his life from me, unless (he does something for which he receives legal punishment) justly, and his account will be with Allah?'" Abu Bakr said "By Allah! I will fight whoever differentiates between *Salāt* (prayers) and *Zakāt*; as *Zakāt* is the right to be taken from the property (according to Allah's orders).

By Allah! If they refused to pay me even a kid they used to pay to Allah's messenger (pbuh), I would fight with them for withholding it." Umar said: "By Allah! I was nothing, but I noticed that Allah opened Abu Bakr's chest towards the decision to fight. Therefore I realized that his decision was right." (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*. Vol.1., *Hadith* No.59). (Hilali & Muhsin Khan, 2006: 209-210)

3) Muhammad Asad: (9:5)

'And so, when the sacred months are over (*6), slay those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God wherever you may come upon them, (*7) and take them captive, and besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every conceivable place! (*8) Yet if they repent, and take to prayer, and render the purifying dues, let them go their way: for, behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace. (*9)'

*6: According to a pre-Islamic custom prevalent in Arabia, the months of Muharram, Rajab, Dhul- Qa'dah and Dhul-HuJah were considered "sacred" in the sense that all tribal warfare had to cease during those months. It was with a view to preserving these periods of truce and thus to promoting peace among the frequently warring tribes that the Qur'an did not revoke, but rather confirmed this ancient custom. See also 2:19 and 217.

*7: Read in conjunction with the two preceding verses, as well as with 2: 190-194, the above verse relates to warfare already in progress with people who have become guilty of a breach of treaty obligations and of aggression.

*8: i.e., "do everything that may be necessary and advisable in warfare." The term *Marsad* denotes "any place from which it is possible to perceive the enemy and to observe his movements" (Manar X. 199).

*9: As I have pointed out on more than one occasion, every verse of the Qur'an must be read and interpreted against the background of the Qur'an as a whole. The above verse, which speaks of a possible conversion to Islam on the part of "those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God" with whom the believers are at war, must, therefore, be considered in conjunction with several fundamental Qur'anic ordinances. One of them, "There shall be no coercion in matters of faith" (2:256), lays down categorically that any attempt at a forcible conversion of unbelievers is prohibited - which precludes the possibility of the Muslims' demanding or expecting that a defeated enemy should embrace Islam as the price of immunity. Secondly, the Qur'an ordains, "Fight in God's cause against those who wage war against you; but do not commit aggression, for, verily, God does not love aggressors" (2: 190); and, "if they do not let you be, and do not offer you peace, and do not stay their hands, seize them and slay them whenever you come upon them: and it is against these that We have clearly empowered you [to make war]" (4: 91). Thus, war is permissible only in self-defense (see *Sūrat* 2, notes 167 and 168), with the further proviso that "if they desist - behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace" (2: 192), and "if they desist, then all hostility shall cease" (2: 193). Now the enemy's conversion to Islam - expressed in the words, "if they repent, and take to prayer [lit., "establish prayer"] and render the purifying dues (*Zakah*)"-is no more than one, and by no means the only, way of their "desisting from hostility"; and the reference to it in verses 5 and 11 of

this *Sūrat* certainly does not imply an alternative of "conversion or death," as some unfriendly critics of Islam choose to assume. Verses 4 and 6 give a further elucidation of the attitude that the believers are enjoined to adopt towards such of the unbelievers as are not hostile to them. (In this connection, see also 60: 8-9). (Asad, 1980: 255-256)

4) Abul Ala Maududi: (9:5)

But when the sacred months expire (*6) slay those who associate others with Allah in His divinity wherever you find them; seize them, and besiege them, and lie in wait for them. But if they repent and establish the Prayer and pay *Zakah*, leave them alone. (*7) Surely, Allah is All-Forgiving, Ever-Merciful.

*6: The expression "Sacred months" in the above verse means something different from its usual understanding, whereby fighting during those four months is prohibited. Here the expression refers merely to the four months of respite granted to the polytheists. Since it was not lawful for Muslims to attack the polytheists during those months, they were characterized as *Hurum* (sacred, prohibited).

*7: Apart from a disavowal of unbelief and polytheism, the Muslims are required to establish prayers and pay *Zakah*. Without these, their claim that they had abandoned unbelief and embraced Islam would have no credence. Abu Bakar referred to this verse as the basis of his action in response to the movement of apostasy during his reign. A group of those who had launched a rebellious movement against Islam after the death of prophet (pbuh) contended that they had not renounced Islam and were even prepared to observe the prayers. They were not prepared, however to pay *Zakah*. Many of the companions were puzzled as to how the sword could be unleashed against a people who claimed to profess Islam and observed prayers. Abu Bakar referred to the above verse which enjoins Muslims to follow such polytheists to have their way provided; they give up polytheism, establish prayers and pay *Zakah*. However the injunction would not apply if they failed to fulfil any one of these three conditions. (Maududi, 2004: 190)

5) Tarif Khalidi (9:5-6)

Once the sacred months are shorn, kill the polytheists wherever you find them, arrest them, imprison them, besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every site of ambush. If they repent, perform the prayer and pay the alms, let them go on their way: God is All-Forgiving, Compassionate to each. If a polytheist seeks your protection, grant him protection until he hears the speech of God, then escort him to where he feels safe. For they are a people of no understanding. (Khalidi, 2008: 145).