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A Pragma-syntactic Study of the Qur'anic Discourse on Jihad, with  
Reference to Relevance Theory and Contextual Analysis

by

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## **Abstract**

This thesis provides a pragma-syntactic analysis of the Qur'anic discourse on jihad, one of the most misunderstood Islamic doctrines. The study investigates the dominant Western view, as well as the mainstream Islamic conception of jihad in Islam, with reference to its definition, objectives, its relation to the concepts of holy war, disbelief, and the deviant ideologies that endorse committing unjustifiable acts of violence in its name. To arrive at a reliable interpretation of the Qur'anic discourse on jihad, the study puts forward an eclectic model of analysis, based on the linguistic study of discourse context, the principles of relevance theory, Systemic Functional Grammar, and the guidelines of the exegesis of the Qur'an. The model tackles any Qur'anic discourse unit from six perspectives: (1) Microanalysis of the unit in question and the participants therein; (2) its objective setting; (3) its linguistic context; (4) its relevance to preceding ones and to the message of the same sura; (5) its function in the society where it was revealed; (6) any specialized knowledge that adds to its recipients' comprehension; and further highlights the semantic implications of prominent functional syntactic features in each unit. The study finds that the Qur'anic discourse presents jihad, in terms of fighting in the path of Allah, as a means of securing the basic human rights and establishing justice—not as a religious justification for violence and aggression. The Qur'an urges Muslims to fight for the sake of ending oppression, defending their lives and holy places, and for practising acts of worship freely, which are the basic rights secured by all relevant international bodies. On the other hand, it forbids aggression, denounces committing terrorist acts in the name of jihad, and considers killing a human being without a just cause as grave as killing all mankind. The study also finds that Muslims are advised to deal as kindly as possible with non-Muslims, in general, and the People of the Book, in particular, so long as they observe the conditions of non-aggression and peaceful coexistence. It concludes that Islam is, by nature, a religion of peace, and that Muslims may resort to fighting others for just causes, governed by strict restrictions and an inclination to reach the normal state of peace as soon as possible. The study recommends that great efforts be exerted to correct misguided ideologies and misconceptions about jihad in Islam by individuals, organizations, as well as states with majority Muslim populations. It further recommends organizing scholarly debates and

constructive dialogues between those who espouse extremist thought and outstanding moderate Muslim scholars so that their misguided convictions might be changed for the better, which counts as a prerequisite for achieving national and international peace and security. Finally, the study recommends that Islamic states develop and enhance educational strategies and moderate religious discourse that enable their native Muslims to learn and practise the teachings of Islam in a way that shows its eternal message of peace and its role as mercy for mankind.