

## **Terrorism: Between Islamic Radicalism and Misinterpretation of *Jihad* Doctrine**

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the relationship between Islam and terrorism. The West accuses Islam as a religion inspiring the act of terrorism. This accusation stemmed from the fact that there are many terrorist attacks perpetrated by extremist Muslims in the name of Islam. This article argues that there is no single verse in the Holy Qur'an that teaches Muslims to commit the acts of terrorism. The rise of violence in the Muslim world is a result of internal factors other than religion such as unjust social and economic Muslim condition, repressive domestic political regime and the West intervention in Muslim politics. This article also shows that some extremist Muslims misinterpret doctrine of Jihad and uses such doctrine to achieve their political aims.

**Keywords:** *terrorism, jihad, Islamic radicalism, political regime*

### **Introduction**

The September 11 attack has brought the issue of Islam and violence into focus worldwide. Muslim extremists, apparently from Al-Qaeda members, had hijacked the airplanes into the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in the name of God (Pallmeyer, 2003: 13). President George W. Bush pledged to 'rid the world of evildoers' and declared the war on terrorism combating not only the perpetrators but also the rogue states

and terrorist organisations in the world (Chomsky in Booth and Dune, 2002: 128). The perception of western people that terrorism is related to Islam is strengthened when the US Department of State (2003) included terrorist organisations in its list, mostly located in Muslim countries.

Many scholars have different perspectives on Islam and terrorism. For Huntington, Islam is the enemy of the West. He states that “the underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilisation whose people is convinced of superiority of their culture, and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power” (1996: 217). Pallmeyer argues that the Koran, as God’s revelation, encourages Muslims to commit the acts of violence. “Religious violence”, he states, “prevalent among the followers of monotheistic traditions is not primarily a problem believers distorting their ‘sacred text’. It is, rather, a problem rooted in the violence of God traditions that lie at the heart of these ‘sacred texts’” (Pallmeyer, 2003: 73-93). In contrast, Juergensmeyer states that Osama Bin Laden and his al-Qaeda is a minority within the Muslim world. “Osama bin Laden is no more representative of Islam than Timothy McVeigh is of Christianity, or Japan’s Shoko Asahara is of Buddhism” (Juergensmeyer, 2002: 358). Taheri argues that Islam is not religion of terrorism. What Hezbollah, Khomeini, and radical Muslims do is not representation of Islam and “Islam is not limited to what Khomeini teaches” (Taheri,1987: 11). Only a

small minority of Muslims agree with the acts of violence against disbelievers in unconditional circumstance.

According to Islamic teachings, however, Muslims are not allowed to attack innocent people. The use *jihad* is also restricted to defensive mechanism. This article argues firstly, the western perception of Islam as a religion inspiring terrorism is misleading. Secondly, the emergence of radical Islamic movements justifying the acts of violence and terrorism is a result of political and social grievances and western intervention rather than of Islam itself. Finally, this essay demonstrates that “defensive jihad” is misinterpreted and misused by radical Islamists to justify their acts of violence and terrorism.

### **Western Perception, Islam, and Terrorism**

The accusation that Islam inspiring terrorism is based on the fact that many radical Islamic movements committed acts of violence in the name of Islam. The Office for Combating Terrorism of the US Department of State in 1983 (quoted in Hussain, 1987: 36) stated that nearly 60 percent of terrorist casualties in the world occurred in the Middle East. It means that terrorist activities mostly committed by Muslims. The Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt in 1954 tried to murder President Nasser who then suppressed this organization (Kepel, 1993: 41-2). In 1981, Extremist Islambuly assassinated President Anwar Sadat. Radical movements, such as Hamas, Hezbollah, FIS, GIA and Al-Qaeda target not only the

government officials, military officers but also foreign tourists and interests (Norton, 2003: 205-6).

‘Terror and counter-terror’ represents the struggle between good and evil, democracy and totalitarianism and depicts a sort of hostility between Islam and the West. Islam is a symbol of the force of evil whereas the West is the innocent victim (Hussain, 1988: 1-3). Western people will not question Christians and IRA connection because IRA uses non-religious and political purposes in their acts of terrorism. In contrast, Islamic movements such as Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah recruit their members, and justify their activities in the name of Islam. As noted by Taheri (1987: 10-17), ‘Islamic Terrorism’ is different from others in three aspects. Firstly, as an expression of Islamic revivalism, it refuses all secular ideologies such as socialism, communism and liberalism. Secondly, Holy war, a form of their activity, will not end before the victory is achieved. Thirdly, “it forms the basis of a whole theory both of individual conduct and of state policy” (Taheri, 1987: 17), based on Islamic values and rejects to form alliances with other movements in achieving their objectives. “The truth is” as Boroumand (2002: 6) argue “that contemporary Islamist terror is an eminently modern practice thoroughly at odds with Islamic traditions and ethics”. Halliday (2002: 78) notes that acts of violence committed by invoking religion is related not only to Islam but also to other religions such as Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland , Baruch Goldstein from

fanatical Jews, and Hindu chauvinist group in India (Also look at Rappoport,1984: 658-77). Halliday (2002: 78) also states that “identification of Islam with terrorism” is intended to delegitimise political group such as PLO of Palestine in mobilizing Muslims and to restrict terrorism discussion only to the Muslim world.

For Williams, the acts of violence committed by radical Muslims are terrorism because “terrorism is politically (including ideologically, religiously, or socially-but not criminally) motivated violence, directed generally against non-combatants, intended to shock and terrify, to achieve a strategic outcome” (Williams, 2004: 7-10). Thornton also defines terrorism in similar way, namely, “a symbolic act designated to influence political behaviour by extra normal means, entailing the use of threat of power” (quoted in Wardlaw, 2004: 9). These extra means include murdering, assassination, hijacking, bombing, kidnapping and intimidation (Booth, 2002: 8; Norton, 2003: 206). Thornton divides two kinds of terror , enforcement terror which is committed by the state to eradicate the challenge that threaten the authority, and agitation terror referring to the use of terror by people to destabilise the political order and to replace it (Wardlaw, 2004: 10). Williams (2004: 10) recognises state terrorism and passive and active state-sponsored terrorism. It depends on someone’s point of vantages in distinguishing resistance from terrorism in the case of Islamic radicalism (Esposito, 2002: 130). However, Norton

notes that "... where the state is deaf to its citizens and residents violence might be justifiable and legitimate even though it is deemed illegal by the authorities" (Norton in Esposito, 2002: 206).

There is a moral problem in defining terrorism as the acts of violence can be justifiable and unjustifiable. The boundaries of justifiable and unjustifiable is relative and depend on those who define this term. For Israel and the US, PLO is an illegitimate terrorist group without moral justification in using violence to achieve its goal. In contrast, Palestinians consider PLO is a legitimate representative of oppressed people and is justifiable to use violence in attaining its goal (Wardlaw, 2004: 4-5). Unlike Williams, Dawisha (quoted in Azra, 1996: 147-8), uses Islamic radicalism to label the acts of terrorism committed by Muslims. "If terrorism is only one of policy instrument of the movement, radicalism is the essence of the policy itself. Radicalism also covers values, purposes and concerns from people who formulate the policy." PLO may leave "terrorism" formally and use diplomatic strategy, however, PLO cannot separate itself from radicalism. If so, PLO leaves the purpose of Palestine nation to overthrow status quo and build the independence Palestine. "Radicalism", noted Dawisha, "is spirit encouraging people to weaken and change the existing political order, by using violence". In other words, radicalism refers to the idea and act which lead people, state

and regime to overthrow the existing political order, or to change the power relation in international system.

The 1979 Iranian revolution and hostage crisis were the greatest sources of the West's fear of "Islamic terrorism" (Gerges, 1999: 45). This fear created monolithic view towards Islam as "threat" (Esposito, 1995), "green perils", and "new enemy" to the US. They believe that terrorism is perpetrated by fanatic Muslims who based their acts not on anti-Semitic resentment but on Islam which is exemplified by Muhammad (Gerges, 1999: 46). Such views followed by Huntington, Pipes, and Lewis, are rooted in orientalist tradition covering the actual knowledge of Islam (Said, 1981: 161) and in secular view of religion assuming that the unification between religion and politics lead to extremism as shown by the theocratic Iranian government (Esposito, 1995: 243).

According to Norton (1999: 52), the reality of Muslim world is not "a coherent political force". Muslims are very diverse ranging from traditionalists, modernists, liberalists to other extremist groups such as Bin Laden's al-Qaeda. This latter remains a minority of more than one billion Muslims. Esposito (1995: 238-43) also notes that there is no Islamic threat or the clash of civilisation between Islam and the West. Political Islam is not the threat but the challenge for the West to understand various dynamic of Islamic movements, for the local governments to respond them positively, and for Islamic movements themselves to translate their ideology into peaceful

practice rather than revolution. However, temporary anti-Western unity can be formed, when the Western governments are not sensitive to Muslim grievances. Gerges (1999: 31) echoing accommodation's group notes that some Western government foreign policies towards the Muslim world such as double standard in promoting democracy and uncritical support to Israel have become central opposition from Islamists.

### **The Roots of Islamist Radicalism**

It is argued that the violent conflict was caused by the Muslim state in order to suppress Islamic movements resisting against the practice of corruption, authoritarianism, and anti-democracy (Edwards, 2004: 52-3). It will be a mistake if people only rely on the symptoms of the acts of violence without understanding the roots of problem. Many western academics examine radical Islamic movements in the same way they view terrorism in Europe. Both of them are different, however. In most democratic western countries, people can articulate their aspirations and demands through political participation; therefore, terrorism is abnormal. In contrast, in the Muslim World, especially in the Middle East, democracy has not been well-developed, most governments are authoritarian, lack of legitimacy and not allowing opposition and dissent groups; therefore, radicalism is inevitable symptom (Hussain, 1987: 3, 23).



This 'domestic discontent' is deteriorated by economic problems such as high rate in unemployment, and insufficient social infrastructures. Moreover, the practice of corruption among government officials is rampant and the economic gap is wide between the rich and the poor. These grievances fueled by religious justification burst into the acts of violence (Fuller,1999: 110). In Algeria, for example, the rise of Islamist violence was triggered by the state authoritarianism which nullified the general election in which the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was on the verge of attaining parliamentary majority. Then, the military seized the control of the state, detained the leaders of FIS. The decision to halt the election was a result of the fear of Islamist "threat" of FIS which gained the popular support and called for establishing Islamic society by replacing the Algerian government dominated by nationalists (Milton, 2004: 52). This led to bloody civil war involving military, FIS and Armed Islamic Group (GIA), in which not only were governments officials and soldiers killed but also civilians (Esposito, 1995: 179-81). Military arrested 5,000-30,000 of FIS militants and FIS was dissolved on 4 March 1992 of committing multiple law violation (Willis, 1996: 256-7). However, the idea of nullifying the election, as stated by Edwards (2004: 53) was inspired by the US and France, which were fear of Algeria of becoming Islamic state like Iranian government.

Transformation of Islamic movements from peaceful to violent one was also experienced by Egypt. Muslim Brotherhood was influential organisation confronting against the British colonialism for Egypt independence and accommodated by Anwar Sadat's government. However, under Nasser's government, this organisation was suppressed and its leaders were tortured and sentenced to death for their opposition. The government responses caused the rise of radical movements such as Islamic Jihad and *Takfir wa al-Hijrah* (Esposito, 1995: 133-150). These movements targeted not only government officials but also western interests and tourists.

The West's intervention, especially the US, in the Muslim world has contributed to radicalisation of Islamic movements (Fuller, 1995 :111). The US is regarded as the "guarantor of the status quo" and it indicates its hypocrisy (Hadar, 1993: 39-40). On the one hand, the US promotes democratisation by giving the freedom to people to determine their future through a general election. On the other hand, inspired by "the Islamic threat", the US backed up many authoritarian and repressive regimes in the Muslim world. US policymakers believe that democratically elected Islamic governments will undermine the US hegemony and interests. As a result, the US supports autocratic Saudi government, and the Egyptian regime which, noted Middle East watch, "regularly resort to physical and psychological torture". Moreover, the Egyptian regime received the second largest the US foreign aid

(Hadar, 1993: 39). Iran under Shah was the great example of the US intervention. The integration of Iran into western economy and culture, its dependence to the US, and its repressiveness against Iranian Muslims led to the rise of Islamic revolution resonating around the world (Halliday, 2003: 65-7).

Uncritical support of the US to Israel maintains the resentment and opposition from radical Muslims to the West. The US always uses its right in the Security Council to veto the resolution against Israel (Harb, 2003: 86). The endless brutality of Israeli soldiers, continuing loss of territory caused great grievance among Muslims which led to the acts of violence. Hamas organised in 1987 has promoted anti-Israel occupation movement and integrated Palestinian nationalist and Islamic radicalism theme (Davidson, 1998: 69-70). Like Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas involved in the acts of violence such as suicide bombing and shooting under the banner of *jihad*. Although it reduced its violence after Oslo Peace Accord was signed in 1993, Hamas has escalated its violence after Israel continued its occupation and expansion of Palestinians' settlement.

The rise of international terrorism cannot be separated from the involvement of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Saudi Arabia and ISI in preparing a training ground for "jihadists" from all over the world such as Algeria, Egypt, Arabian Peninsular and Southeast Asia. They shared together, received guerilla warfare training and built extremist Islamic

ideology based on armed struggle. By 1982 the *Mujahidin* received US\$ 600 million annual aid, including weaponry. This intervention was motivated by the US ambition to humiliate and overthrow the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. In this case, *realpolitik* reason was more important than ideological one for the US. The USA and Saudi also supported Taliban to ascend the power due to its Sunni oriented and anti-Shi'ism, and its "predicted" ability to protect the US interest, building pipelines from Turkmenistan to South Asia. The USA neglected Ahmad Shah Massoud, the key person who can prevent the extremism of Taliban, who warned the USA and its allies about the danger of Taliban- ISI-Al-Qaeda triangle to international and the West security (Saikal, 2003: 95-108; Kepel, 2002: 8, 143). The spread of "jihadists" with armed, uncontrollable group and access to funds made them being involved in the acts of terrorism in Algeria, Egypt, and became the greatest threat to Central Asia stability (Hadar, 1993:32). They targeted not only "near enemy", secular regimes in the Muslim world, but also "far enemy", the US and the West (Lee, 2004: 46). This logic of *jihad* became Osama's ideological justification to commit the acts of terrorism due to the US invasion to the holy lands in Saudi Arabia, severe economic embargo led by the US in Iraq, and the endless occupation of Israel in Palestine (Kepel, 2002: 14).

### ***Jihad*: Misinterpreted and Misused Doctrine**

After September 11 attack, *jihad* has become an important word in the West. *Jihad* derives from *jabada* meaning “struggle (*jabd*), exertion, striving; in the juridico-religious sense. It signifies the exertion of one’s power to the utmost of one’s capacity in the cause of Allah” (Bonney, 2004: 12). It is an antonym of sitting (*qu’ud*). There are two kinds of *jihad*, the greater *jihad* referring to the spiritual struggle against the evil in oneself, and lesser *jihad* meaning fighting injustice and defending Islam (Esposito, 2002: 28). In the Koran, *jihad* is frequently followed by phrase “*fi sabil Allah*”, in the path of God. The believers are ordered to strive with their property and soul for the sake of Allah’s pleasure.

The *lesser* jihad is connected to physical struggle mentioned in the Koran as *qatala* and *harb*, to kill, and it is used in military and warfare context. This is a concept of ‘legitimate’ or ‘just’ war in Islam, *al-harb al-mashru’a* or *al-harb al-’adilla* that is different from ‘*ghazu*’ or ‘*adwun*’ referring to aggressive and robbery motivated-war. (Halliday, 2002: 48). Esposito (2002: 31-32) notes that the war in Islam is “defensive *jihad*” ruled by the Quran in Medina to give a guideline to the Prophet on how to overcome upheaval, civil war and to behave during the war and peace period. Moreover, justification for *jihad* based on the Islamic universalism is not to force other people to convert to Islam. During a war Muslims are strongly prohibited to combat innocent people such as women, children, *rabbi* and monks (Look at QS. 2:190, 192, 294; 4:90; 8:61; 9:91; 47: 4; 48: 17).

Olivier Roy (2004: 41) argues that the Koran is sterile from justification of *jihad* as understood by Islamic radicals. *Jihad* is neither one of five Islamic pillars nor an individual duty (*fardh a'yn*). During the Prophet, *jihad* is a collective duty (*fardhu kifayah*) that was stipulated by authoritative jurists. It is not stipulated by individual and socially isolated Muslims as exemplified by Islamic radicals.

The change in interpretation of *jihad* from defensive to offensive by using the “sword verses” (QS. 9:5) was initiated by Islamic jurists, who relished royal patronage, following the spread of Islam beyond Arabian Peninsula. At this period, *jihad* targeted not only Muslim enemies but also apostates, polytheists and People of the Book, namely, Jews, Christians and other beliefs who did not accept the Islamic rule (Esposito, 2002: 34-5). This offensive *jihad* become complex because jihadists pursue martyr that transforms a person into eternal and peaceful rewards before God (Euben, 2002: 373). Martyrdom has a good example in Shi'a tradition when Imam Hussain, a descendent of Caliphate Ali, was killed in the ‘tragedy of Karbala’ in opposition against Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah (Bonney, 2004: 225). However, Islam values one's life and condemns the suicide as *kufr*. Only those who are killed in defending Islam in defensive *jihad* can be categorised as a martyr (Saikal, 2003: 27).

Many western scholars state that the “sword verses” confirm that Islam legitimates unconditional warfare. Pallmeyer

(2003: 91) argues that “it is less than forthcoming to speak of Islam being hijacked by extremists” but the passages of the Koran demand Muslims to combat against enemies “in service of Allah or in pursuit of “Islamic justice” by using acts of violence and terrorism. This statement is similar to Firestone’s (1999: 88) stating that the Koran 9: 5 endorses Muslims to kill unbelievers unconditionally. In response to this, Esposito states that people cannot exegeses a verse of the Koran separated from context and other verses. “The sword verse” (QS. 9:5), cannot be interpreted without examining its following verse (9:6) “But if they repent and fulfill their devotional obligations and pay the zakat [tax for alms] then let them go their way for God is forgiving and kind”. This verse is “a call for peaceful relation” and can be used to legitimate offensive jihad if the existence of Muslim is threatened (Esposito, 2002: 35).

*Jihad* has more political than theological orientation in Qutb’s interpretation influenced by Mawdudi, Hasan al-Banna and Ibn Taymiyya. Qutb’s concept of *jihad* is started with his idea to revive the Islamic glory *vis-à-vis* western hegemony. *Jihad* is the continuation of the God “politics” and revolutionary political struggle to defeat Islamic enemies in order that Muslim can implement Islamic law (*shari’a*). By eradicating political barriers, he notes, the central aim of revolutionary struggle can be achieved. He also explains that the establishment of Islamic hegemony through *jihad* is intended to liberate individuals from non-Muslim political domination (Azra, 1996:137). At this

point, Qutb is strongly influenced by “the logic in Ibn Taymiyya’s *fatwa* on the Mongols to call for a *jihad* against ‘un-Islamic’ Muslim rulers and against the West” (Esposito, 2002: 46; Euben, 2002: 371). As a result, Qutb denies modernist Muslims who are prone to restrict *jihad* as “defensive *jihad*” or is conducted in Muslim territories. For Qutb, there is a close relation between *jihad* and Islam as a dynamic and revolutionary religion. It is recognised that the modernist Muslims such as Abduh, Ridha and Syaltut argue that *jihad* is conducted against non-Muslims only if they attack Muslim and Islam (Azra, 1996:138).

Qutb’s revolutionary ideology has inspired many radical movements in the Middle East during 1970s, such as Jamaat Muslim (Takfir wa al-Hijrah), Muhammad’s Youth, in using *jihad* as justification to challenge the ‘secular’ governments and the West and to create Islamic society (Esposito, 2002:62). Qutb’s interpretation also influenced Muhammad Faraj, Ali Benhadj of FIS, GIA in Algeria, Ayman Zawahiri, and Osama bin Laden. The latter studied under Qutb’s brother, Muhammad Qutb (Zimmerman, 2004: 240). Iranian Revolution is also traceable to Qutb’s ideology. Khomeini was one of Navab Safavi that was invited by Brotherhood to Egypt and who met Qutb in 1953. Navab’s group killed some secular intellectuals and politicians, but he was executed in 1955 and his organisation was dissolved. Khomeini and his followers in Islamist cultural association used and spread Qutb’s



revolutionary culture, culminated in 1979 Iranian Revolution (Boroumand, 2002: 8).

It is important to note that Qutb and other godfathers of revolutionary *jihad* were influenced by other ideologies in interpreting *jihad*. Boroumand also argue that Qutb is “Leninism in Islamic dress” and influenced by Marxist and fascist critiques of western capitalism and democracy. When Muslim Brotherhood faced challenges from the secular government and the communists in Egypt after Banna’s assassination, Qutb framed ideological responses for his society. However, he was lack of education in traditional theology and studied in the US between the year of 1948 and 1950. He idealised “a monolithic state ruled by a single party of Islamic rebirth” and would use revolution in toppling the enemy, the Egyptian rulers. He also imagined an ideal society as classless in which “the ‘selfish individual’ of liberal democracies would be banished and the ‘exploitation of man by man’ would be abolished. God alone would govern it through the implementation of Islamic law” (Boroumand, 2002: 8).

Khan (2003: 420-21), a liberal Muslim scholar argues that Qutb’s revolutionary *jihad* is contrary to the traditional Islamic thought emphasising stability and order and rejecting rebellions and armed struggle against the state authority. He also notes that Qutb apparently was influenced by John Locke’s philosophy and ideas of individual freedom, legitimacy of the government and the use of revolution. For both of them,

individual freedom is absolute and should be subordinated by God only, not to be enslaved by men. Legitimacy of the government can be achieved by fulfilling what society need during social contract. If the government fails to do, it will be illegitimate and subject to be dissolved with revolution if necessary. It should be noted, however, that Qutb's interpretation of the faith was influenced by the environment where he lived. Qutb lived under Nasser's regime who was socialist and authoritarian and Qutb had difficulty in implementing his belief in such environment.

The domestic grievances, in politics, social and economic, combined with the West intervention and religious justification fuel the situation to burst into the acts of violence and terrorism. Jeurgensmeyer (2000: 212-3) explains this transformation in four stages, firstly, the terrorists view the problem of Islamic society such as Palestine problems, secular states, the West policy, in black and white polarisation. This situation is perceived by their group who then united in political and social activities to change the situation into Islamic society. In this stage, they do not see the possibility to release their aspiration through the existing institutions. The third stage is "*satan-isation*" of enemy and cosmic war in which terrorists consider the world as contestation between "the force of evil" represented by "the infidels" and "the force of good", that is, the terrorists. In this phase, they seek religious justification, *jihad*, against "the force of evil". Finally, terrorists perform the

acts symbolising the depth of the struggle. They choose the violence as an effective method to execute their acts of violence such as hijacking, explosion, guerilla war and kidnapping. In this context, there is transformation from a worldly struggle into a sacred battle in which religious justification accompanies cosmic war concept. “It is not so much that religion has become politized but the politics has become religionized” (Juergensmeyer, 2001: 358).

People such as Khomeini, Bin Laden and other radical Muslims, successfully used Muslim’s grievances against the repressive regimes and their supporter, the West, to wage the acts of violence and terrorism under justification of *jihad*. Extremist Muslims go beyond traditional interpretation of *jihad*: defensive *jihad* should be collective duty not individual one nor target non-combatants (Esposito, 2002: 153-8). *Jihad* interpretation is subject to change and is not limited to “holy war”. As Lawrence (1998: 160-85) notes, the struggle for achieving better economic life is absent from *jihad* advocates. Unlike in the Middle East, in Southeast Asian Muslims such as Malaysia under Mahathir Muhammad, *jihad* became the spirit to compete with economic globalisation.

## **Conclusion**

Radical Islamic movements have the same ideology that has tied them together, the belief in Islam. They are concerned with the idea of *al-Nizham al-Islamy* (Islamic Order), by overthrowing “secular regime” and their supporter, the West, the US especially and they are using “*jihad*” as a method to achieve the goal. To some extent, the moral justification underlying the rise of contemporary radical movements can be understood, *jihad*, conducted by them is more political than religious. In this context, the radical Islamic movements are the “inevitable result” of “official political terrorism” committed by the West and the West-supported authoritarian regimes in the Muslim world. The radical Muslims will continue to exist unless the just international order is established. *Jihad* in Islam as encroached in the Koran and practiced by the Prophet Muhammad is “defensive *jihad*”, which has limitations. Muslims are prohibited to become transgressive, to kill non-combatants. *Jihad* is interpreted by Islamic jurists and moderate, radical and extreme Muslim groups. Therefore, there is no single interpretation of *jihad* which can be accepted throughout the history and societies. Interpretation of *jihad* is subject to change. In the case of extremist Islamic movements which use *jihad* as justification for their acts of violence including combating innocent people, their interpretation cannot be justified.

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