

Interrogating Western Perspective on Islam and Terrorism

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Abstract:

This article aims at discussing Western perspective on Islam and Terrorism especially in the wake of September 11 atrocity. Two different perspectives on Islam and terrorism exist. One perspective argues that It is Islam, a different civilisation whose people is convinced of superiority of their culture, and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power. The other argues that Islam is not religion of terrorism. Majority of Muslims disagree with the acts of violence against disbelief in unconditional circumstances. This article finds that according to Islamic teachings, Muslims are not allowed to attack innocent people and the use jihad is restricted to defensive mechanism. This article further 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 Islam itself. Finally, this article demonstrates that “defensive jihad” is misinterpreted and misused by radical Islamist to justify their acts violence and terrorism.

[Artikel ini bertujuan untuk membahas perspektif Barat terhadap Islam dan Terorisme khususnya pasca kekejaman 11 September. Ada dua perspektif berbeda tentang Islam dan terorisme. Salah satu perspektif berpendapat bahwa Islamlah, sebuah peradaban berbeda yang masyarakatnya yakin akan superioritas budayanya, dan terobsesi dengan inferioritas kekuasaannya. Yang lain berpendapat bahwa Islam bukanlah agama terorisme. Mayoritas umat Islam tidak setuju dengan tindakan kekerasan terhadap kekafiran dalam keadaan tanpa syarat. Artikel ini menemukan bahwa menurut ajaran Islam, umat Islam tidak diperbolehkan menyerang orang yang tidak bersalah dan penggunaan jihad dibatasi pada mekanisme pertahanan. Artikel ini lebih lanjut berargumentasi, pertama, persepsi Barat terhadap Islam sebagai agama yang menginspirasi terorisme adalah menyesatkan. Kedua, munculnya gerakan-gerakan



Islam radikal yang membenarkan tindakan kekerasan dan terorisme merupakan akibat dari keluhan politik dan sosial serta intervensi Barat, dan bukan akibat dari Islam itu sendiri. Terakhir, artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa “jihad defensif” disalahartikan dan disalahgunakan oleh kelompok Islam radikal untuk membenarkan tindakan kekerasan dan terorisme mereka].

Keywords :

Western Perspective, Islam, Terrorism, Jihad, Radical

A. Introduction

The September 11 attack has brought the issue of Islam and violence into focus worldwide, because Muslim extremists, apparently from Al-Qaeda members, had hijacked the airplanes into the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in the name of God.¹ 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 rouge states and terrorist organisations in the world.² The perception of western people that terrorism is related to Islam strengthen when the US Department of State (2003) included terrorist organisations in its list, mostly located in Muslim countries.³

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”.⁴ Pallmeyer argues that the Koran, as God’s revelation, encourage Muslims to commit acts of violence. He states that “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’”.⁵ In contrast,

¹ Jack Nelson Pallmeyer, *Is Religion Killing Us?: Violence in the Bible and the Quran* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003), 13.

² Chomsky in Ken Booth dan Tom Dunne, *World in Collision, Terror and the Future of Global Order* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 128.

³ “Pattern of Global Terrorism,” *United States Department of State* (blog), diakses 4 Juni 2024, <https://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgtrpt/2003/31600pf.htm>.

⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and The Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 217.

⁵ Pallmeyer, *Is Religion Killing Us?: Violence in the Bible and the Quran*, 73–93.

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".⁶ 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".⁷ Only small minority of Muslims agree with the acts of violence against disbelief in unconditional circumstance.

However, according to Islamic teachings, Muslims are not allowed to attack innocent people and the use of jihad is restricted to a 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 Islam itself. Finally, this article demonstrates that "defensive jihad" is misinterpreted and misused by radical Islamists to justify their acts of violence and terrorism.

B. Western Perception, Islam, and Terrorism

The accusation that Islam inspires 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 1983⁸ stated that nearly 60 percent of terrorist casualties in the world occurred in the Middle East. It means that terrorist activities were mostly committed by Muslims. The Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt in 1954 tried to murder President Nasser who then suppressed this organization.⁹ In 1981, an extremist Islamist assassinated President Anwar Sadat. Radical movements, such as Hamas, Hezbollah, FIS, GIA and Al-Qaeda not only target the

⁶ Mark Juergensmeyer, "Terror in the Name of God," *Current History* 100, no. 649 (2001): 357–61.

⁷ Amir Taheri, *Holy War: Inside the World of Islamic Terrorism* (Maryland, USA: Alder and Alder, 1987), 11.

⁸ Quoted in Hussain Asaf, *Political Terrorism and the State in the Middle East* (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1988), 36.

⁹ Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 41–42.

government officials, military officers but also foreign tourists and interests.¹⁰

'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.¹¹ 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, 'Islamic Terrorism' is different from others, 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",¹² based on Islamic values and rejects to form alliances with other movements in achieving their objectives.

However, "The truth is" as Boroumand argue "that contemporary Islamist terror is an eminently modern practice thoroughly at odds with Islamic traditions and ethics".¹³ Halliday notes that acts of violence committed by invoking religion is related not only to Islam but also other religions such as Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, Baruch Goldstein from fanatical Jews, and Hindu chauvinist group in India.¹⁴ Halliday also states that "identification of Islam with terrorism" is intended to delegitimise political group action such as Palestine in mobilizing Muslims and to restrict terrorism discussion only to the Muslim world.¹⁵

¹⁰ Augustus Richard Norton, "Terrorism," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of The Modern Islamic World*, ed. by John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 205–6.

¹¹ Asaf, *Political Terrorism and the State in the Midle East*, 1–3.

¹² Taheri, *Holy War: Inside the World of Islamic Terrorism*, 10–17.

¹³ Ladan Boroumand dan Roya Boroumand, "Terror, Islam, and Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (2002): 5–20.

¹⁴ Fred Halliday, *Two Hours that Shook the World. September 11, 2002: Causes and Consequences* (London: Saqi Book, 2002), 78; Also look David C. Rappoport, "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions," *American Political Science Review* 78, no. 3 (1984): 658–77.

¹⁵ Halliday, *Two Hours that Shook the World. September 11, 2002: Causes and Consequences*, 78.

The 1979 Iranian revolution and hostage crisis is the greatest sources of the West's fear of "Islamic terrorism".¹⁶ This fear created monolithic view towards Islam as "threat"¹⁷, "green perils", and "new enemy" to the US. They believe that terrorism is perpetrated by fanatic Muslims who based not on anti-Semitic resentment but on Islam which is exemplified by Muhammad.¹⁸ Such views followed by Huntington, Pipes, and Lewis, are rooted in orientalist tradition covering the actual knowledge of Islam¹⁹ and secular view of religion assuming that the unification between religion and politics leads to extremism such as theocratic Iranian government.²⁰

According to Norton, the reality of Muslim world is not "a coherent political force".²¹ Muslims are very diverse ranging from traditionalists, modernists to liberalists and other extremist groups such as Bin Laden remain minority of more than one billion Muslims. Esposito also notes that there is no Islamic threat or the clash of civilisation between Islam and the West.²² 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 echoing accommodationist group notes that some Western government foreign policies towards the Muslim world such as double standard in promoting democracy, uncritical support to Israel have become central opposition from Islamists.²³

For Williams, the acts of violence committed by radical Muslims are terrorism because "terrorism is politically (including ideologically,

¹⁶ Fawaz A. Gerges, *America and Politic Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 45.

¹⁷ John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹⁸ Gerges, *America and Politic Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?*, 46.

¹⁹ Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and Expert Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1981), 161.

²⁰ Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, 243.

²¹ Agustinus Richard Norton, "Rethinking United States Policy Toward the Muslim World," 1999, 52.

²² Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, 238–43.

²³ Gerges, *America and Politic Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?*, 31.

religiously, or socially-but not criminally) motivated violence, directed generally against non-combatants, intended to shock and terrify, to achieve a strategic outcome".²⁴ 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".²⁵ These extra means includes murdering, assassination, hijacking, bombing, kidnapping and intimidatin.²⁶ Thornton divides two kinds of terror, *enforcement terror* which is committed by the state to eradicate the challenge that threaten the authority, and *agitational terror* referring to the use of terror by people to destabilise the political order and replace it.²⁷ Williams recognise state terrorism and passive and active state-sponsored terrorism.²⁸

However, 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 whom define this term. For Israel and the US, PLO is a illegitimate terrorist group without moral justification in using violence to achieve its goal. In contrast, Palestinians consider PLO is legitimate representative of oppressed people and justifiable to use violence in attaining its goal.²⁹ Unlike Williams, Dawisha uses Islamic radicalism to label the acts of terrorism committed by Muslims.³⁰ "If terrorism is only one of policy instrument of the the movement, radicalism is the essence of the policy itself. Radicalism also covers values, purpose and concern 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

²⁴ Clive William, *Terrorism Explained: The Fact about Terrorism and Terrorist Groups* (Sydney: New Holland Publisher (Australia) Pty Ltd, 2004), 7–10.

²⁵ Quoted in Grant Wardlaw, *Political Terrorism: Theory, Tactics, and Counter-Measures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 9.

²⁶ Booth dan Dunne, *World in Collision, Terror and the Future of Global Order*, 8; Norton, "Rethinking United States Policy Toward the Muslim World," 206.

²⁷ Wardlaw, *Political Terrorism: Theory, Tactics, and Counter-Measures*, 10.

²⁸ William, *Terrorism Explained: The Fact about Terrorism and Terrorist Groups*, 10.

²⁹ Wardlaw, *Political Terrorism: Theory, Tactics, and Counter-Measures*, 4–5.

³⁰ Quoted in Azyumardi Azra, *Pergolakan Politik Islam: Dari Fundamentalisme, Modernisme Hingga Post-Modernisme* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1996), 147–48.

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.

C. The Roots of Islamist

It is argued that the violent conflict was caused by the state in order to suppress Islamic movements which resist against the practice of corruption, authoritarianism, and anti-democracy.³¹ 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, radicalism is inevitable symptom.³²

This 'domestic discontent' is deteriorated by economic problems such as high rate in unemployment and population, and insufficient social infrastructures. Moreover, practice of corruption in government officials is rampant and the economic gap is wide. These grievances fueled by religious justification burst into the acts of violence.³³ 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.³⁴ This led to bloody civil war involving military, FIS and Armed Islamic Group (GIA), where not only

³¹ Beverly Milton Edward, *Conflicts in the Midle East Since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2004), 52–53.

³² Asaf, *Political Terrorism and the State in the Midle East*, 3, 23.

³³ Graham E. Fuller dan Ian O. Lesser, *A Sense of Siege: Te Geopolitics of Islam and the West* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1995), 110.

³⁴ Edward, *Conflicts in the Midle East Since 1945*, 52.

were governments officials and soldiers killed but also civilians.³⁵ Military arrested 5.000-30.000 of FIS militants and FIS was dissolved on 4 March 1992 of committing multiple law violation.³⁶ However, the idea of nullifying the election, as stated by Edwards,³⁷ was inspired by Western states, USA and France, which were fear of Algeria of becoming Islamic state like Iranian government.

Transformation of Islamic movements from peaceful to violent 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. Such government responses caused the rise of radical movements such as Islamic Jihad and *Takfir wa al-Hijrah*.³⁸ These movements targeted not only government officials but also western interests and tourists.

It depends on someone's point of vantages in distinguishing resistance from terrorism in the case of Islamic radicalism.³⁹ 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".⁴⁰ In Egypt and Algeria where the acts of violence legitimated by the states, it is *enforcement terror*. Nevertheless, the acts of violence against innocent people committed by Islamic radical movements can not be justified and can be classified as terrorism.

The West's intervention, especially the US, in the Muslim world has contributed radicalisation of Islamic movements.⁴¹ The US as "guarantor of the status quo" indicates its hypocrisy.⁴² On the one hand, the US promotes democratization giving the freedom to people to determine their future by

³⁵ Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, 179–81.

³⁶ M. Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria: A Political History* (Massachusset: Ithaca Press, 1996), 256–57.

³⁷ Edward, *Conflicts in the Midle East Since 1945*, 53.

³⁸ Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, 133–50.

³⁹ John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in The Name of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 130.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Esposito, 206.

⁴¹ Fuller dan Lesser, *A Sense of Siege: Te Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, 111.

⁴² Leon T. Hadar, "What Green Peril?," *Foreign Affairs*, 1993, 39–40.

such as 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” received the second largest the US foreign aid.⁴³ 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.⁴⁴

Moreover, uncritical support of the US to Israel maintains the resentment and opposition from radical Muslims. The US always uses its right in the Security Council to veto the resolution against Israel.⁴⁵ The endless brutality of Israeli soldiers, continuing loss of territory caused great grievance which led to acts of violence. Hamas organised in 1987 has promoted anti-Israel occupation movement and integrated Palestinian nationalist and Islamic radicalism theme.⁴⁶ Like Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas involved in acts of violence such as suicide bombing and shooting under the banner of jihad but reduced its violence after Oslo Peace Accord was signed in 1993. However, with the continuation of Israeli occupation and expansion of settlement, Hamas has escalated its violence.

The rise of international terrorism can not be separated from the involvement of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Saudi Arabia and ISI in preparing 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 Mujahideen received US\$ 600 million aid, including weaponry annually. This intervention was

⁴³ Hadar, 39.

⁴⁴ Fred Halliday, *Islam and The Myth of Confrontation* (London: I.B Tauris Publisher, 2003), 65–67.

⁴⁵ Osama Gazali al-Harb, “The Arab-Israeli Conflict and Hostility to the West in Arab and Islamic Countries,” in *Islam and The West: Dialogue of Civilizations in Search of A Peaceful Global Order*, ed. oleh Chaedar S. Bamualim (Jakarta: Center For Language and Culture, 2003), 86.

⁴⁶ Lawrence Davidson, *Islamic Fundamentalism* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998), 69–70.

motivated by the US ambition to humiliate and overthrow the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. In this case, *realpolitik* reason was more important than ideological 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 warn the USA and its allies about the danger of Taliban- ISI-Al-Qaeda triangle to international and the West security.⁴⁷

The spread of "*jihadists*" with armed, uncontrollable group and access to funds makes them being involved in the acts of terrorism in Algeria, Egypt, and become the greatest to central Asia stability.⁴⁸ They target not only "near enemy", secular regimes in the Muslim world, but also "far enemy", the US and the West, as plotted by *jihadists* when Al-Qaeda's headquarter moved to Sudan in 1991.⁴⁹ This logic of jihad becoming Osama's ideological justification of the acts of terrorism was the US invasion to the holy lands in Saudi Arabia, severe economic embargo led by the US in Iraq, the endless occupation of Israel in Palestine.⁵⁰

D. Jihad: Misinterpreted and Misused Doctrine

After September 11 attack, jihad has become important word in the West. Jihad derives from *jahada* meaning "struggle (*jahd*), 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".⁵¹ It is antonym of sitting (*qu'ud*).. There are two kinds of jihad, the greater jihad referring to spiritual struggle against the evil in oneself, and lesser jihad meaning fighting injustice and defending Islam.⁵² In the Koran, jihad is frequently followed by phrase "*fi*

⁴⁷ Amin Saikal, *Islam and The West: Conflict or Cooperation?* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 95–108; Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, trans. oleh Anthony F. Robert (London: I.B Tauris Publisher, 2002), 8, 143.

⁴⁸ Hadar, "What Green Peril?," 32.

⁴⁹ Martin A. Lee, "How the CIA Missed Jihad," *The Progressive*, no. Aug (2004): 45–48.

⁵⁰ Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, 14.

⁵¹ Richard Bonney, *Jihad From Qur'an to bin Laden* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 12.

⁵² Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in The Name of Islam*, 28.

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 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* different from ‘*ghazu*’ or ‘*adwun*’ referring to aggressive war and robbery motivated.⁵³ Esposito notes that the war in Islam is “defensive jihad” ruled by the Duran in Medina to give guideline to the Prophet on how to overcome upheaval, civil war and to behave during war and peace period. Moreover, justification for jihad based on the Islamic universalism is not to force other people to convert to Islam.⁵⁴ During 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 argues that the Koran is sterile from justification of jihad as understood by Islamic radicals. Jihad is neither one of five Islamic pillars nor individual duty (*fardh a’yn*). During the Prophet, jihad is collective duty (*fardhu kifayah*), stipulated by authoritative jurists not individually and socially isolated as conducted by Islamic radicals.⁵⁵

The change of interpretation of jihad from defensive to offensive initiated by Islamic jurists, who relished royal patronage, following the spread of Islam beyond Arabian peninsular by using the “sword verses” (QS. 9:5). At this period, jihad target 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.⁵⁶ This offensive jihad become complex because *jihadists* pursue martyr transforming people into eternal and peaceful rewards before God.⁵⁷ Martyrdom has a good example in Shi’a tradition when Imam Hussain, a descendent of Chaliphate Ali, was killed in the ‘tragedy of Karbala’ in opposition against Yazid ibn Mu’awiyah.⁵⁸ However, Islam values one’s life and condemns the suicide as *kufur*. Only

⁵³ Halliday, *Two Hours that Shook the World. September 11, 2002: Causes and Consequences*, 48.

⁵⁴ Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in The Name of Islam*, 31–32.

⁵⁵ Oliver Roy, *Globalized Islam* (London: Hurst and Company, 2004), 41.

⁵⁶ Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in The Name of Islam*, 34–35.

⁵⁷ Roxanne L. Euben, “Jihad and Political Violence,” *Current Hystory*, no. November (2002): 265–376.

⁵⁸ Bonney, *Jihad From Qur’an to bin Laden*, 225.

those who are killed in defending Islam in defensive jihad can be categorized as martyr.⁵⁹

Many western scholars state that the “sword verses” confirm that Islam legitimates unconditional warfare. Pallmeyer argues that “It is less than forthcoming to speak of Islam being hijacked by extremists” but the passages of the Koran demand Muslim to combat against enemies “in service of Allah or in pursuit of “Islamic justice” by using acts of violence and terrorism.⁶⁰ This statement is similar to Firestone’s stating that the Koran 9: 5 endorses Muslims to kill unbelief unconditionally.⁶¹ 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 the 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.⁶²

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*) neglected and oppressed by the “infidel” government and the West. By eradicating political barrier, he noted, the central aim of revolutionary struggle can be achieved. He also explained that the establishment of Islamic hegemony through jihad is intended to liberate individuals from non-Muslim political domination.⁶³

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”.⁶⁴ As a result, Qutb denys modernist Muslims who

⁵⁹ Saikal, *Islam and The West: Conflict or Cooperation?*, 27.

⁶⁰ Pallmeyer, *Is Religion Killing Us?: Violence in the Bible and the Quran*, 91.

⁶¹ Reuven Firestone, *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 88.

⁶² Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in The Name of Islam*, 35.

⁶³ Azra, *Pergolakan Politik Islam*, 137.

⁶⁴ Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in The Name of Islam*, 46; Euben, “Jihad and Political Violence,” 371.

prone to restrict jihad as “defensive jihad” or is conducted in Muslim territories. For Qutb, there is close relation between jihad and Islam as dynamic and revolutionary religion. It is recognized that modernist Muslims such as Abduh, Ridha and Syaltut argue that jihad is conducted against non-Muslim only if they attack Muslim and Islam.⁶⁵

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.⁶⁶ 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.⁶⁷ Iranian Revolution is also traceable to Qutb’s ideology. Khomeini was one of Navab Safavi invited by Brotherhood to Egypt and who met Qutb in 1953. Navab’s group killed some secular intellectual 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.⁶⁸

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 challenge from secular government and communists in Egypt after Banna’s assassination, Qutb framed ideological response for his society. However, he was lack of education in traditional theology and studied in the US between 1948-50. He idealised “a monolithic state ruled by a single party of Islamic rebirth” and would use revolution in toppling the enemy, Egyptian rulers. He also imagined 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”.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Azra, *Pergolakan Politik Islam*, 138.

⁶⁶ Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in The Name of Islam*, 62.

⁶⁷ John C. Zimmerman, “Sayyid Qutb’s Influence on the 11 September Attacks,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 2 (2004): 222–52.

⁶⁸ Boroumand dan Boroumand, “Terror, Islam, and Democracy,” 8.

⁶⁹ Boroumand dan Boroumand, “Terror, Islam, and Democracy.”

Khan, a liberal Muslim scholar argues that Qutb's revolutionary jihad is contrary to the traditional Islamic thought emphasizing stability and order rather than justice and legitimacy and rejecting rebellions and armed struggle against the state authority.⁷⁰ He also notes that Qutb apparently was influenced by John Locke's philosophy and ideas in terms of individual freedom, legitimacy of 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 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 is noted that one's interpretation of the faith depends on the environment where he lives. 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 politic, social and economic, combined with the West intervention and justification in religion fuel the situation to burst into the acts of violence and terrorism. Juergensmeyer 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 polarization. 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 "satanisation" 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 symbolizing the depth of the struggle. They choose the violence as effective method to execute their acts such as hijacking, explosion, guerilla war and kidnapping.⁷¹ In this context there is transformation from worldly struggle into sacred battle in which religious justification accompanies cosmic war concept. "It is not so much that religion has become politicized but the politics has become religionized".⁷²

⁷⁰ M.A. Muqtedar Khan, "Radical Islam, Liberal Islam," no. December (2003): 417–21.

⁷¹ Juergensmeyer, "Terror in the Name of God," 212–13.

⁷² Juergensmeyer, "Terror in the Name of God."

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, not target non-combatants.⁷³ Jihad interpretation is subject to change and is not limited to "holy war". As Lawrence noted, struggle for achieving better economic life is absent from *jihad* advocates.⁷⁴ Unlike in the Middle East, in Southeast Asian Muslims such as Malaysia under Mahathir Muhammad, jihad became the spirit to compete with economic globalization.

E. Conclusion

Radical Islamic movements have the same ideology that has tied them together, the belief in Islam. They are concerned to 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 practised by the Prophet Muhammad is "defensive jihad", which has limitations. Muslims prohibit to become transgressive, to kill non-combatants. It is interpreted by Islamic jurists, and other groups in Islamic society from moderate, radical, to extreme in special context. Therefore, there is no single interpretation of *jihad* which can be accepted throughout the history and societies. It is subject to change. In the case of extremist Islamic movements which use *jihad* to justify their acts of violence including combating innocent people, their interpretation can not be justified.[.]

⁷³ Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in The Name of Islam*, 153–58.

⁷⁴ Davidson, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 160–85.

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