

KAMARULNIZAM ABDULLAH

MOHD AFANDI SALLEH

CONCEPTUALIZING JIHAD AMONG SOUTHEAST ASIA'S
RADICAL SALAFI MOVEMENTS

Kamarulnizam Abdullah

Universiti Utara Malaysia, School of International Studies, College of Law,
Government and International Studies, Kedah, Malaysia.

Email: kamarulnizam@uum.edu.my; kamarulnizam67@yahoo.com

Mohd Afandi Salleh

Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Faculty of Law and International Relations,
Terengganu, Malaysia.

Email: afandi@unisza.edu.my

Abstract: The major argument in this article is that the contemporary concept of jihad inclines to have a heavy personal political baggage. In Southeast Asia, the talibanization and the influence of the al-Qaeda interpretation of the jihad appear to have made their inroad in regional radical salafi movements such as the Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), Jama'ah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT), and Hizbut Tahrir (HT). Radical salafi differs from the traditional salafi given its belief in the use of force to achieve religious-political objectives. Indonesia has been the center for these movements and their presence has been felt in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Thailand and Philippines. Some of them have been active in propagating the new concept of jihad. Therefore, this article maps out the conception of jihad as it is propounded by the three movements. It discusses how the conception of these movements of jihad has departed from the earlier salafi movements. In addition, it discusses how the idea has been expanded from Indonesia to other parts of the Southeast Asian archipelago.

Key Words: Jihad, Radical Salafi, Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), Jama'ah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT), and Hizbut Tahrir (HT), religious fundamentalism.

Introduction

Studies on *jihad* as concept, ideology, and forces of political mobility have earned a wide coverage in the academia¹ since the rise of the political Islam worldwide.² Furthermore, there were also Western scholars who attempted to thoroughly study the concept, and yet the majority of them appear to have had a bias understanding, viewing the concept as a threat to Western security and civilization.³ It can be argued however that there is no single notion of the concept of *jihad*, even among Muslim scholars. For the Muslim scholars, debates on the jihadi concept can be divided between the so-called reformists and classicists.⁴ For classicists, the fundamental meaning of *jihad* is that of a holy physical fighting, which entails being in the offensive, and represents a non-negotiable concept, yet for the Muslim reformists, the character of *jihad* in its sense of fighting or struggle, should be viewed defensive in nature.

The emergence of Taliban, al-Qaeda and later the Islamic State (IS) has witnessed the rise in importance of the concept of *jihad*. Al-Qaeda's conceptualisation of *jihad* has given emphasis on the qital's offensive notion of the concept. *Jihad* is seen as an armed struggle against the Western domination and its representatives, especially the United States. The September 11 incidents were the culmination of al-Qaeda's determination of holy war against the political deprivation. The *jihad* of the Islamic State is no different from that of al-Qaeda's, but its execution of the concept seems to be more lethal and rigidly dogmatic.

In Southeast Asia, calls for *jihad* against Western political discrimination have become more vocal ever since the 2002 Bali Bombing incidents. It cannot be denied that *jihad* has always been at the forefront in the struggle of the separatist movements in the region, i.e. through Moro Islamic Liberation Movements (MILF) of the Philippines, and other Muslim-based separatist movements. But it was the Bali Bombings and the ethno-religious conflicts in various parts of Indonesia that have brought up the concept of *jihad* to its prominence. The *salafi* radical movements seem to offer a new conceptualisation of jihadi ideas to the region.

This article seeks to map out the conception of *jihad* as being propounded by three regional *salafi* movements - Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), Jama'ah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT), and Hizbut Tahrir (HT). These movements that are active in Indonesia have made the presence of the concept felt in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Thailand and Philippines. Some of them have been active in propagating the new concept of *jihad*. The article, hence seeks to understand how these movements' conception of *jihad* has departed from the earlier *salafi* movements. In addition, it also seeks to answer how the idea has been expanded from Indonesia to other Nusantara archipelago.

The Salafi's Jihad

Jihad, as a concept, has various meanings. Epistemologically, *jihad* generally means to strive in a struggle (by whatever forms).⁵ Conceptually, it seeks every Muslim community to use one's ability and power by exerting oneself spiritually in the way of Allah and by doing one's best to preach the message of Islam to others. Hence, it has developed into a concept of strong resistance that can come in the form of inner spirituality, motivation and physical strength through political mobility.⁶

Hassan al-Banna of the Muslims Brotherhood movement in Egypt points out that every Muslim has the obligation for *jihad*, given that the order comes from Allah (God). In the *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *jihad* is interpreted in two ways: firstly, as personal and a community struggle against injustice. According to Fazlul Karim, *jihad* strives to exert

on one's power in repelling enemy to the extent of one's ability whether by word or deed. It also means a war undertaken for a just cause and for [the] defense of Islam.⁷

Hence, it can be understood that one's struggle can be in oral form, in writing or even by the use of force. But the key nature of the concept calls for hard work and strong endeavor to achieve one's personal goal or objective. Secondly, it is also interpreted as a physical war against the infidels, the enemies and against discrimination. Thus, the element of *qital* (physical war) is part and parcel of this understanding of the *jihad*. The call to raise arms against the enemy is considered *jihad Fisabilillah* (a war for the sake of Islam or God). *Jihad* of this nature can be found in many verses of the Holy Quran such as in *al-Baqarah* (verses 216, 193, 190, 224), *al-Nisa'* (verse 193) and *al-Taubah* (verse 14). In general, these verses call Muslims to uphold the sanctity of Islam. Muslims are even promised with *jannah* (highest level of paradise) in the after-life if they are willing to sacrifice their life.

According to some Muslim scholars or ulama, there are various levels of *jihad*, namely *Jihad an-nafs* (*jihad* against one's self), *Jihad ash-Shaytan* (*jihad* against Satan), *jihad* against the *munafiqin* (hypocrites) and *kuffar* (disbelievers), and *jihad* against oppressing and unjust leaders.⁸ None of these are ignored nor evaded. Furthermore, Enizer and Wildan argue that there are various forms of *jihad*.⁹ The first form of *jihad* is to deliver and to preach Islam to the unbelievers. The second form is through waging a physical war against confrontational and intimidating enemies. The third form of *jihad* is a task to deliver true meaning of Islam to oppressed leaders, and finally, *jihad* can also be referred to as one's dedication and commitment to the welfare of his/her parents.

Although the majority of Muslim scholars argue that *jihad* should be interpreted in a wider context, it is the *jihad fisabillah* of physical wars

against enemies and non-Muslims that has got its prominence globally - either in a negative or positive way. It has been used for political mobilising in countries with a Muslim majority. It has conjured up an idea of offensive and holy war against not only the infidels but also against major powers, particularly the United States, seen as the great enemy of Islam in the world.¹⁰

Yet, among Muslim communities, the concept of *jihad* has also invited various interpretations and heated debates. The *salafis* are among them. The term *salafi* here refers to Muslims or Muslim movements that espouse the idea of using earliest Muslims as precedence or example of the current Islamic practices.¹¹ The *salafi* emphasizes on basic or fundamental teachings of Islam. In the western writings, they are always being referred to as the fundamentalists, militants or radicals. But Muslim scholars tend to disagree with the term since it connotes the idea of radicalism, militancy and negativities. Not all *salafis* are militants or radicals. There are also *salafis* that are accommodative or moderate.

The philosophy of Salafism has, to some extent, influenced the thinking and Islamic understanding in Malaysia and Indonesia since the early 20th century. The influence exists in different forms - neo-Salafi, classical Salafi, radical Salafi or moderate Salafi movement - to describe the degree adherence to the salafi philosophy. The neo-Salafi variety is more home-grown and adaptable to the local political environment although the idea to create *Daulah Islamiyah* is the basic foundation of the Salafi movement. To neo-Salafi, their objective can be achieved through participation in the mainstream political process like elections, whereas, radical salafi is closely associated with the political philosophy of Wahabbism, which has made its appeal to the Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM), JI, Lasykar Jihad, Front Pembela Islam (FPI), Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), Jamaah Ikhwah al-Muslimin Indonesia and Indonesia's HT.¹² Wahabbism is a sect within Salafism that is attributed to the 18th century Saudi Islamic scholar, Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab who stressed on Tauwheed (the oneness of God). KMM's and JI's Wahabbism of black and white Islam has inevitably created prejudices about the religion and its followers, especially in the aftermath of the September 11 incidents. Consequently, the most common prejudgment created by JI's, JAT's or JI's Wahabbism is that Islam condones the practice of *jihad*.

Debates on *jihad* among the Salafi movements have centered not only on the meanings but also more importantly on questions of justifying the jihadi action. The two main streams of argument on the justification aspect of *jihad* are between the "radical Salafi" (sometimes referred to as the fundamentalists) and a more "traditional Salafi" (sometimes referred to as the moderate Salafi). Although conceptually it is debatable to identify who the radical Salafi are, this article rests its definition on these major characteristics,

1. The text in the holy Quran and hadith (the saying and deeds of the

Prophet Mohammad) are usually literally interpreted with one-sided approach. The method of interpretation of the holy verses ignores the historical circumstances surrounding it, hence, 'allows the possibility to be more advanced and dynamic interpreted to be suited with age advancement, without leaving its basic principles'. In such literal interpretation, the contemporary world is seen as "not being Islam".¹³

2. Strong advocate on the inseparability of personal religious (private domains) and public life (and state domain). Islam is seen as *ad deen* (way of life encompasses every domain of human society) and reject the notion of secularism.

3. Rejection of the concept of religious freedom based on Western perspective. The group abhors religious conversion from Islam to other religions and would take consequently legal sanction for those who violate it.

4. *Jihad* is considered the sixth pillar of Islamic belief.¹⁴

5. *Sharia* law is the highest legal system yet how it is achieved can vary from a soft approach (through propagation and education) to a use of force.¹⁵

On the notion of *jihad*, the radical *salafis* rest their arguments on various verses (mentioned earlier) in the Holy. But their justification should also be understood under the current context of international affairs. The radical Salafi movements in general have been frustrated with what they consider to be injustices against the Muslims. The inability of leading Muslim communities or countries to respond to the injustice which is considered to be done against them further infuriates them. Hence it is not surprising that a call for *jihad* has been a phenomenal development in the global scene.

Yet the call is not new. The development has been in tandem with the rise of Islam since the advent of the Iranian revolution in 1978. The revolutions and the subsequently Islamic revivalism have provided an ideal platform for the radical Salafi movements to exert their ideology and belief among the Muslim community worldwide. Since the Iranian revolution, Islam seems to play a vital role as a catalyst for the expression of frustrations of those who represent the marginal mass.¹⁶ In 1981, for instance, Abd al-Salam Faraj, an Egyptian pro-Salafi author wrote in his book entitled *The Neglected Duty*,

Is it not high time for Muslims to Act?' God asks indigently. How much more impatient he must be after fourteen centuries! Muslims must, therefore, make 'every conceivable effort' to do God's will. They must not be like the previous generations, who imagined that they could establish an Islamic state by peaceful, nonviolent means. The only way was by *jihad*, a holy war.¹⁷

Although the call for *jihad* was a reflection of his frustration against the Egyptian regime, it has transcended the geographical boundaries. He was perturbed by the Muslim leaders' indifferent attitudes towards the problems faced by Palestinians. Hence he saw no other alternatives but to mobilize the Muslims politically by using *jihad* as a tool. Faraj used various verses from the Quran to justify his call for militant *jihad* and among others quoted a verse from the Quran, which states "Slay those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God wherever you may come upon them and take them captive, and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every conceivable place".¹⁸

The verse in *al-Tauba* has become the point of reference for all contemporary radical Salafi movements to justify their actions. For Ayman Al Zawahiri and Osama Ben Laden, the two most prominent leaders of al-Qaeda, the verse paves the way for *jihad* to be interpreted beyond anything. Zawahiri's book, *Knights under the Prophet's Banner*, which outlining al-Qaeda's ideology, used *jihad* as unity goal for all radical Salafi movements across the continents. *Jihad* has been used as universal values against the infidels of the Western world.¹⁹ Furthermore, he labeled the West "not only an infidel but also a hypocrite and a liar" and argued that "the principles that it brags about are exclusive to, and the personal property of its people alone...they are not to be shared by the peoples of Islam, at least nothing more than what a master leaves his slave in terms of food crumbs".²⁰ He was actually referring to the Western powers that have been perceived to give undivided support towards the creation of the Israeli state. Hence, he believes that the issue has "no solution without *jihad*".²¹

Ben Laden and his associates singled out the United States and its allies as the major target of their jihadi campaign. Ben Laden reasoned that the "crimes and sins committed by the Americans are a clear declaration of war on Allah, his Messenger, and Muslims. And *ulema* have throughout Islamic history unanimously agreed that the *jihad* is an individual duty if the enemy destroys the Muslim countries".²² Hence Muslims were compelled to rise against the major power through whatever means such as suicide bombings and terror acts. They were promised with martyrdom and eternal paradise in the name of *jihad*. Although the holy Quran clearly states that suicide is a cause for eternal damnation, Ben Laden's powerful image of Islam by using religion as a means of justifying their actions, had succeeded in gaining public support and aid. Pipes argues that Ben Laden and al Zawahiri have taken the concept of *jihad* outside its normal meaning and transformed it essentially into the sixth pillar of Islam.²³ For radical *salafis*, it is not about religion; it is simply about using religion as an ends and means to achieve political objectives.

It can be argued that radical *salafis*' central issue is not about *jihad* but about mobilizing Muslims through *jihad*. Their efforts, furthermore, have

been fuelled by political frustrations and by the antagonism with the secular West. Calling for *jihad* is then a political avenue to garner mass support worldwide. At the same time, the radical Salafi also opine that “people’s tendency to return to religion increases when they are situated in critical situation.”²⁴ This means that the frustration they are suffering has the potential to become a ‘partner’ for radical Salafi movements that act in the name of Islam.²⁵ This also explains the rise of radical Salafi movements all over the world with the message of offensive *jihad*.

The contemporary Muslim reformists such as Hassan al-Banna, al-Maududi, Mirza Tahir Ahmad and others have argued that the radical salafis’ justification for *jihad* is merely an extended version of the Muslim classicists’ viewpoint of the early period of Islam.²⁶ It is basically inapplicable to the contemporary world system. Radical *salafis*’ and Classicists’ interpretation of the Quran and *hadith* regarding the matter are sometimes misleading and out of context. Therefore, some radical *salafis*’ and classicists’ justification of *jihad* have been modified and overhauled by Muslim reformists so that the justification appears to be relevant to the modern international system. Some reformist intellectuals’ justification of *jihad* has even departed from that of the traditional argument by asserting that *ijtihad* (independent judgment of the Islamic law) should be reclaimed.

The reformists have given three conditions under which *jihad* is permissible.²⁷ One is that jihad against non-Muslim or non-believers are justified only for defensive purposes. The reformists argue that the Quran has no instruction to fight against non-Muslims or non-believers unconditionally. As Mutahhari asserts, when “they [non-Muslims] attack us, [sic] thus we fight them”. This assertion is based on verse in al-*Baqarah*: 191-192: “And fight them until persecution no more and religion is for Allah. But, if they desist, then let there no more hostility except against wrongdoers”.²⁸

Except for its religious determination, the assertion is in the line with the modern commitment of interstate relations in recognizing the sovereignty of individual countries. A state has the right to protect its territory, population, sovereignty, and dignity from outside intrusion. Islam, as can be inferred from several verses in the Quran, insists on peace as the main pattern for inter-state relation.²⁹ It is noteworthy, according to reformists, that the Charter of the United Nations reflects the same idea but in a different way.³⁰

The second condition of the reformists’ justification - to prevent oppression of Muslims outside the territory of Islam - does not necessarily mean that an adversary has to be a physical threat to Muslims. *Jihad* is also justified when other Muslim groups are oppressed and unjustly treated. The interesting point here is that some *Shi’ite* reformists contend that oppressed people do not necessarily have to be Muslims.³¹ But, the immediate obligation is to help oppressed Muslims. Muslims in other parts

of the world are guilty, according to the *Shi'ite* reformist interpretation, of allowing and supporting an aggressor's oppression if they fail to help the victims. The request for help is not needed. Rendering help to these oppressed Muslims is mandatory. However, as for rendering help to non-Muslims, *Shi'ite* reformists tend to suggest that the help is mandatory when the oppressor "has positioned a people in a vacuum and blocks the call of Islam".³²

Finally for reformists, *jihad* is only justified when an enemy breached a peace pledge with Muslims.³³ But, Ghunaimi argues that this justification is practically irrelevant to the current world situation. There are hardly any instances in contemporary international politics of a Muslim country attacking its neighbour or other countries because of a failure to conform to a treaty. In fact, any acts that involve physical harm to another country can spur the involvement of an allied country.³⁴ For Muhammad Hamidullah another Muslim reformist thinker, in addition to the three conditions, *jihad* is justifiable in order to command the good and to prevent the commission of evil. Unfortunately, he fails to elaborate on what the word 'evil' means in relation to the notion of *jihad*. The problem with his argument is that "it [justification of *jihad*] can be interpreted in such a way as to include that [sic] which can [sic] hardly be considered defensive as this is commonly understood".³⁵ In other words, his justification of *jihad* is too vague.

The appearance of the defensive character in the reformists' justification of *jihad* - as in the sense of fighting or struggle - at the turn of this century stemmed, to some extent, from the influence of western domination and the period of colonialism. Modern reformed Muslim thinkers have realized that the rigidity of the application of *jihad* should be altered so that it will suit contemporary international relations. Moreover, some of these reformists have either been exposed to Western ideas or have graduated from Western universities and this has influenced their writings and thought. They have consequently tried to reconcile Western and Islamic ideas. Unlike their predecessors, therefore, their language on *jihad* justification tends to be moderate.³⁶ They assert that Islam has long ago justified *jihad* as an instrument for defense. Fighting, they argue, should not be commenced because of one's ideology or disbelief in Islamic teaching. Freedom of religions is therefore guaranteed. *Jihad* is only justified when Muslims are being attacked by intruders. They realize that the political importance of *jihad* has undergone changes in its justification to suit the changing circumstances of life, further scrutiny and analyses have suggested that modern justification of *jihad* does not totally depart from that of the classical viewpoint. However, the reformists emphasis on 'defense' as the prime justificatory principle for *jihad* is not merely an apologia for weakness and failure to live up to a doctrine, but it intends to be seen as a process of evolution dictated by Islam's interests and changing social condition.³⁷

The Anatomy of Southeast Asia's Radical Salafi Movements

Southeast Asia has been the host for various locally and internationally based Salafi movements. It ranges from groups with very inward looking peculiarities wanting to only cleanse its members' spiritual ability such as the Jamaah al-Tabligh and Al-Arqam, to politically inclined movements such as Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), Jama'ah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT), al-Maunah, Hizbut Tahrir (HT) and the infamous Jamaah Islamiyah (JI). They have the *jihadi* objectives of bringing back the pristine notion of Islamic values and norms. Islamic *sharia* (law) is deemed to be the highest law on the land but the mechanisms to achieve its objectives may be different. The following section will discuss three selected radical Salafi movements, namely JI, Jamaah Asharut Tawhid, and Hizbut Tahrir that have made headlines all over the world. The section discusses their evolution and their concept of *jihad*.

1. Jamaah Islamiyah (JI)

Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) was established by two Indonesian clergies, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Abdullah Sungkar, who were evading prosecution in their country during the Soeharto period. They went to Malaysia to pursue their jihadi dreams by recruiting locals and expanding their networks throughout the region. The movement was associated with terrorism and labelled as a threat to the Southeast regional stability, being accused of a series of bombings and planned attacks on strategic locations in regions such as in Bali (2002 and 2005), the J. W. Marriot Hotel, Jakarta (2003), the Australian Embassy in Jakarta (2004) and a number of other incidents in Indonesia and the region.³⁸ The movement was also held responsible for its planned attacks on American and Israeli interests in Singapore.³⁹ The JI-style bombing on the J. W. Marriot and Ritz Carlton Hotels in Jakarta on July 17, 2009 raised speculations that the movement would continue to strike against Western interest in the region.⁴⁰

Ba'asyir's imprisonment for his indirect involvement in various bombing incidents was considered to be the turning point of the movement. The movement eventually fell apart when all of its important leaders such as Azhari Hussin, Nordin Mat Top, Hambali, and Dulmatin were either killed or caught by the Indonesian or regional authorities.

The clandestine character of JI has made it difficult to understand the real nature of the movement, but analysts concur that it was loosely organized. Even the evolution of the movement has invited several versions of interpretation. But the widely accepted version is that the movement was indeed founded by Sungkar together with Ba'asyir in the early 1970s. Furthermore, the genesis of JI was closely associated with

Indonesia's Darul Islam (DI) groups. Both movements shared the same aspiration of creating a *jamaah* (community) that would propel Indonesia into an Islamic state that subscribes to the basic Islamic tenets based on the Koran and *Hadith* (the sayings of Prophet Muhammad).

JI expanded and established cells mainly in Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia and Singapore.⁴¹ JI's regional command structure was divided into four. Singapore and the Peninsular Malaysia were under Mantiqi I (Ulla), whereas the major parts of Indonesia were placed under Mantiqi II (Sani). Mantiqi III (Thalid) covered Mindanao, Sabah, Kalimantan and Sulawesi and Mantiqi IV (Rabiah) covered Australia and probably Papua. The Malaysia and Singapore JI was headed by Riduan Isamuddin @ Nurjaman or better known as Hambali.

The immediate objective of JI was to establish *Daulah Islamiyah* (Islamic state) in the region by using force, based on the concept of *Solifus Salleh*. The *Daulah Islamiyah* covered Malaysia, Indonesia, and Southern Philippines. Singapore and Brunei would eventually follow. It shared Al-Qaeda's anti-West sentiment, thus making it a proxy for attacks against Western and United States interests in the region.

The concept of *solifus salleh*, furthermore, emphasizes on the pristine and purity of the Seventh Century Islam as it was subscribed by the prophet and his followers (the *salafs*). One of the major creeds in this concept is its rejection of *ijma'* (scholarly consensus) and *qiyas* (analogy) and also its rejection of the sources and methodological foundations of *ijtihad* (deriving qualified judgment) and *taqlid* (following qualified judgment).⁴² Its departure from the mainstream *Salafism* became distinct when it started condemning and declaring the *umma* (Muslim Community) as unbelievers for their practice of *taqlid* (to follow someone or to imitate). Under this belief, members are obliged to stage *jihad* (interpreted as physical war) against the "enemy" of Muslim people.

2. Jama'ah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT)

The evolution of Jama'ah Anshorut Tauhid (partisans of the oneness of God) or JAT is also closely associated with Abu Bakar Ba'asyir. After he left Majelis Mujahedin Indonesia (MUI) in 2006 due to some leadership tussles, Ba'asyir continued to find a suitable platform to expand its support base. He decided to resign as MUI's *Amir* (supreme leader) citing the secular nature of the movement. However, fellow leaders of MUI accused Ba'asyir of having been a leader with authoritarian style and problems of infallibility and accountability. Ba'asyir, in turn, knew that he could no longer afford to be associated with JI since firstly, JI was in the process of disintegrating, secondly, the joint efforts of the Indonesian authorities supported by the regional countries and the United States had crippled JI's activities, which resulted in a series of deaths of important JI leaders; and finally, the fact that JI was labeled as a terrorist group had

diminished its appeals to the Muslims.

Ba'asyir's further involvement in JI's activities could have curtailed his mobility, especially after his release from prison. Hence, Ba'asyir left with no choice but to set up a new movement. He subsequently established JAT in 2008. According to the ICG Report Update, the establishment of JAT was welcomed by many members of JI, but clashed with the JI leadership over strategy and tactics.⁴³ The movement's membership recruitment was through mass rallies and smaller religious instruction sessions in which Ba'asyir and other JAT figures delivered their flammable sermons against the West and infidels. Nonetheless, such method of recruitment generated subsequent problems to the movement. The movement has been heavily dependent on Ba'asyir's spiritual and oratorical skills to garner membership, without which it would have quickly disintegrated.⁴⁴

In addition, the fact that Ba'asyir's usually flaming and declamatory preaching, especially on *jihad*, has made the movement most appealing to disenchanting Indonesian Muslims. He calls for *jihad* against Islam's enemies but insists it should have stayed within the boundaries of law, yet he rejects man-made laws as unlawful. He also "fulminates against democracy, contends on a full application of *sharia* law, and appears to advocate a militant interpretation of *jihad*."⁴⁵

JAT has been listed in the foreign terrorist network of the US for its involvement in terrorist-linked activities.⁴⁶ Prior to the listing, the Indonesian police uncovered several JAT's underground activities. On 6th May 2012, for instance, JAT's headquarters in Jakarta was raided after tips were directed towards JAT leaders' involvement in raising funds for a militant combat training camp uncovered in Aceh. JAT was also accused of other illicit activities and bank robbery to fund its purchase of assault weapons, pistols and bomb-making materials. The movement was said to act as a mastermind for terrorist-linked incidents such as the suicide bomb attacks at a church in Central Java in September 2011. The Indonesian police also uncovered other additional suicide plots by the movement across the country.

The incidents led to the arrest of Ba'asyir. He was later charged with crimes of inciting others to commit terrorism, which carries a death penalty upon conviction. On 16th June 2011, however, he was sentenced to 15-years imprisonment for his involvement in the setting up of Acehese jihadi combat camp.

3. Hizb at-Tahrir (HT)

Hizb at-Tahrir (Party of Liberation) was founded in 1953 in Jerusalem by Taqiuddin al-Nabhani (1909-1977), an Islamic scholar and Muslim court of appeal judge (Qadi). Al-Nabhan was replaced by Abd al-Qadim Zallum, a Palestinian cleric, upon his death. In 2003, the movement appointed a new

leader, Ata Khalil Abu-Rashta, a Palestinian civil engineer, when Zallum passed away in Lebanon. The movement considers itself a trans-Islamic Sunni political party with more than one million memberships from 40 branches all over the world. It has made its presence known on the European continent particularly in the United Kingdom. Its Arab, Central Asian and United Kingdom branches are considered to be the most active despite some of them having been banned by the host governments, for instance by the Pakistani authorities. The movement also has a growing presence in North America, known as Hizb at-Taḥrīr America.⁴⁷

In Southeast Asia, the movement has been established since the 1980s but it is only for the last five years that it has made its presence felt with various activities targeting the urban middle class and university students. It has its own website in Malaysia (www.mykhilafah.com) and Indonesia (hizbut-tahrir.or.id/).⁴⁸ So far, the movement has not been banned by the two governments. In fact, Indonesia was the first regional host for the annual HT's annual conference known as the International Khilafah Conference which was held on August 12, 2007 in Jakarta. It was advertised as the largest gathering of the movement, thus attracting more than 100,000 people. Hence, it was argued that the movement would remain a source of powerful critique of the Indonesian regime.⁴⁹ The Malaysian branch of the movement, however, appears to take a low key profile with their activities.

According to its UK official website, HT's main objective, among others, is to establish a community that could emulate the style and qualities of the companions of Muhammad. Those who subscribe to the movement are required to show their commitment and to be "ready to work to fulfill these goals". Yet the most interesting goal of the movement is to expand the idea of the caliphate and other important Islamic concepts to the Muslim masses. Its aim is to glorify and to revive the Islamic civilization through the leadership of a caliphate system. Once the idea of a caliphate system is accepted, either through debate or persuasion, in a "targeted country", the movement envisage that it would get support and cooperation from army generals, leaders, and other influential figures or organisations to facilitate the change of the government. The government "would be replaced by one that implements Islam "generally and comprehensively", carrying Islamic thought to people throughout the world".

Hence, a move towards a creation of a world system with that of the caliphate is the corner stone of HT's long term objective. Khalifah is considered the head of state and *ummah*. Furthermore,

He is not a king or dictator but an elected leader whose authority to rule must be given willingly by the Muslims through a special ruling contact called baya. Without this baya he cannot be the head of state. This is completely opposite to a king or

dictator who imposes his authority through coercion and force. It argues the tyrant kings and dictators in the Muslim world are examples of this, imprisoning and torturing their populations and stealing their wealth and resources.⁵⁰

The movement believes all Muslim countries should be unified under one Islamic state or caliphate ruled by Islamic law and with a caliph head of state elected by Muslims. The caliphate system is believed to provide stability and security to both Muslims and Non-Muslims in the predominantly Muslim regions of the world. The system would consist of *sharia* as the highest law of the land. But its idea of Khalifah is not conceptually similar to that of Jamal-Al-Din Afghani's, a political activist and advocate in the late 19th century. Afghani's Khalifah of pan-Islamism advocates close relations among Muslim *ummah* to achieve common objectives under one leadership. HT's idea of Khalifah, on the other hand, is to emulate the early Islam political system under Prophet Muhammad and the four caliphs.⁵¹

The movement's political belief and ideology are very much influenced by the works of Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, its founding leader. Nabhani's works have been translated into various languages and posted on nearly all websites of the local host Hizb at-Tahrir. In his book entitled *The System of Islam*, which has become one of the major references for all HT members, an-Nabhani states,

If not for the influence of the deceptive Western culture and the oppression of its agents that will soon vanish, then the return to the domain of Islam in its ideology and system would be quicker than the blink of an eye.⁵²

Furthermore, in Indonesia and Malaysia, Nabhani's books such as *Daulah Islam* (Islamic State) and *Konsepsi Politik Hizbut Tahrir* (Hizb at-Tahrir's Concept of Politics) have been translated and posted on the movement's local websites.

Nonetheless, it is HT's anti-Zionist sentiments that have caught the attention of the international community. It denounces Israel as an "illegal entity" to be dismantled. The problem for the Muslim community, the movement argues, is that they do not have a strong and unified leadership that could confront Israel and its major ally, the United States. The movement acknowledges that Muslims are reaching a state of total submission and dejection and fail to respond to anything even when they have been intimidated by the infidels. Hence, the movement calls for *jihad* as a unifying rallying point for Muslims to rise up against the injustice and discrimination.

In addition, HT appears to reject the Western concept of democracy. In its Indonesia's website, the movement states that Muslims are obliged

to abolish the Western concept of democracy since it is *haram* (forbidden).⁵³ Western democracy is considered like profane elements that need to be cleaned. In Islam, according to Hizb at-Tahrir's interpretation, elections are held only to elect members to *Shura* Council, which in turn would elect the right caliphate. The function of the caliphate, according to Interviewee A who refused to be identified and who is one of the committee members of the HT Indonesia is not to formulate laws (*tasyri'* function), but to implement it, based on the holy Quran and Hadith.⁵⁴ Hence it is not surprising when Sinclair argues that the movement's basic ideology is,

to overthrow existing governments in Muslim majority countries in order to establish the Caliphate which, it is believed, should be done through convincing the masses of the superiority of Hizb ut-Tahrir's ideology and vision for the caliphate as well as influencing people already in power in Muslim countries.⁵⁵

The analysis was further expounded by Baran by arguing that the movement is not only promoting political violence but that it also "... acts as a "conveyor belt for young Muslims, using its legal status to indoctrinate them before they leave the group to join more extreme groups that may engage in violence".⁵⁶

Although HT has so far refrained itself from being involved in terror activities, its radical ideologies are the major cause of concern for the authorities. In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 incidents, for instance, HT issued a statement rejecting the use of aggression against civilian non-combatants. Yet, International intelligentsia blamed HT for the suicide bombing incident in the Tel Aviv bar in 2002 by a United Kingdom national known as Omar Shariff, reportedly the first UK suicide bomber. It is alleged that Shariff was radicalized by HT's religious activities. The movement was also linked to the London Underground Bombings in July 2005. In Pakistan, the links between senior army officers with local HT led General Musharraf to outlaw the movement in 2003. The Pakistani authorities also believed there was a link between al-Qaeda and HT.

***Jihad* in the Minds of Radical Salafis: The Nexuses**

There are some observations that can be made when analyzing the three movements' conception on *jihad*. The three movements share the same characteristics of radical *salafis* discussed earlier in this article: firstly, advocating unconditional use of force to achieve a true Islamic social and political society based on *sharia* law. Secondly, these radical Salafi movements translate in a literal manner and interpret the holy

Quran and hadith to justify their actions. The movements fail to interpret the holy book based on its contextual analysis and historical circumstances. Hence, they understand the text only from its initial value meanings. Thirdly, the movements vehemently reject the secular notion of societal life. Islam is seen as *ad deen wadunniah*, thus advocating total infusion between private and public domain. Moreover, the movements do not believe in religious freedom, the conversion to other religions being intolerable. Fourthly, these radical Salafi movements consider *jihad* the sixth pillar of Islamic belief. It is every Muslim's obligation to achieve the four objectives mentioned above through offensive *jihad*. Finally, they tend to condone terrorist acts especially against the West and Jews.

In addition, the leadership and idiosyncrasy of leaders plays a crucial role in the Salafi movements. Baa'syir of JI and JAT and Nabhani of HT are considered the ideological godfathers of their movements. The leader of the movement usually needs the charisma and charm that could attract ordinary people to join the movement. Such a movement can attract more members if the leader himself is perceived as having respected religious credentials. This kind of respect would usually lead to total and blind loyalty towards the leader. The implication is that the leader usually seizes the opportunity to achieve and attain his personal interest.⁵⁷ It can be argued that be it JI, JAT or HT, the movements' conception on *jihad* has been a reflection of their leader political perception against the status quo.

Their ways of advocating and of conceptualizing *jihad* can be summarized as follow:

a. Jihad as qital (physical war)

Jihad has been conceptualized as *qital* (war), a total physical warfare against the enemies of Islam and infidels. These radical *salafis* have a view that there has always been a *kafir* (infidel) hostility against the Muslims. Muslims, as the radical *salafis* believe, have been colonized physically and spiritually by the Western infidels, who have led the world into socio-political quandaries. Hence it is always a universal legal duty for all Muslims to defend their rights. JAT for instance, strongly argues that,

the *Shari'a* of Islam obliges us to maintain the five things, which are *dharuriyah* (primary), then the things which are of necessity in nature / additional *hajiyah* (secondary), only then for the last are the things which are *tahsiniyah* (supplementary) in nature / entirely decorative is *haram* – once again, *haram*, for the Muslims to remain silent when the honour (*murū'ah*) and dignity of the highness of Islam are mocked! If those acts of the Mujahids of Islam, in defending the honor, dignity and blood of the Muslims from the atrocities of the *kuffar* invaders, are classified as terrorism, while those

kuffar leaders are affixed with brotherhood, in fact even considered as guests of honor of the State when coming to visit, by the leaders of Muslim countries, so we ask: "What model of barbaric world civilization are you defending and protecting with the wealth and the people of the Muslim countries, O leaders...?"⁵⁸

As for the JI, the concept of *salifus soleh* was the corner stone of its jihadi call. The concept allows the declaration of *jihad* (by emphasizing the physical war side of the concept) not only against the Western powers, but also against Muslims who reject the *Salafi* philosophy of *jihad*. Furthermore, the concept also rejects the traditional understanding of the Islamic teachings, which is an infusion of religious teachings with local values and norms. The concept accepts only the Quran and *Hadith* as the main sources of Islamic practices.

For the Indonesian HT, mobilizing its members for *jihad* has been clearly spelled out in Article 56 of its draft constitution. It states that it is an individual duty for every Muslim to be conscripted as part of the Jihadi forces. "Every male Muslim, fifteen years and over, is obliged to undergo military training in readiness for *jihad*." Furthermore, the *Khalifah* would appoint the *Amir al-Jihad* (commander-in-chief) to head and supervise "the army, the police, equipment, tasks, armament supplies, internal security, foreign affairs, and finally industry" — since "all factories of whatever type should be established on the basis of the military policy."⁵⁹

There is a strong conviction among these radical Salafis that world politics is a land of war and that it is divided between the *Darul Islam* (Abode of Muslim) and *Darul Harb* (Abode of War). HT's conception of *jihad* is based on these classifications.

According to Houriya and Stuart, HT believes that its idea of an Islamic state, which is governed by *Sharia*, can wage war to annex all Muslim-majority countries as well as to colonize non-Muslim countries. HT believes that Muslims should engage in this war to convert all 'lands of war' into the 'land of Islam' through offensive warfare.⁶⁰ Killing civilians to achieve this is allowed. It believes that Muslims have a "religious" duty to liberate perceived 'occupied Islamic lands'.⁶¹ Furthermore, HT also believes that "terrorizing" the "enemy" is a religious duty against those committing "aggression against the sanctities of the Muslims".⁶² The idea is actually part of Indonesia HT's profess and struggle.⁶³

b. Jihad as a Force for Political Mobilization

The focus point of the jihadi call for these radical Salafis is the United States and its loyal ally, Israel. International injustice, the allegedly blind support of the United States towards Israel, and its involvement in the current political turmoil in the Middle East are viewed by many radical Salafi movements as recipes for a continuous flourishing of terrorist

attacks and activities.⁶⁴ The International Khalifah Conference of the Indonesian HT, which took place in Jakarta in 2007, openly condemned Zionism and the creation of Israel. The annual conference stirred high emotion among the attendees "...into a frenzy ... by calling for a war on Jews."⁶⁵ The crux of this hatred and accusation lies on displeasure of such movements over the 50-year conflict between Palestinian and Israel.

Israel is perceived to be the number one enemy of HT's jihadi call.⁶⁶ The state has to be destroyed by whatever means, and killing Israeli Jews is believed to be sanctioned by Islam.⁶⁷ To achieve this, HT prescribes violent *jihad*, which includes suicide bombings as well as hijacking and bombing Israeli planes.

JI and JAT also share the same sentiment with HT. Baa'syir argued that he "... supported Osama Bin Laden's struggle because his is the true struggle to uphold Islam, not terror. The terrorists are America and Israel."⁶⁸ He also believed in "Osama bin Laden's struggle because his is the true struggle to uphold Islam." Furthermore, Baa'syir also made a controversial statement which he delivered upon his release in East Java in 2006: "God willing, there are none here, if there were infidels here, just beat them up. Do not tolerate them". This portrayed his deadly actions against Australia, another ally of the US.⁶⁹

The death of Osama, furthermore, would garner widespread sympathy from radical Salafi movements in the region, particularly to JI and JAT that have been inspired by al-Qaeda's bold and confrontational approach towards major powers. In fact, Osama bin Laden has become a powerful mythic icon for impatient, alienated, and angry radical salafis. It can be argued that Osama bin Laden has, perhaps, revolutionized some Muslims' responses to what they perceive as being international injustice and American hegemony.

c. Localization of Jihad

Jihad among these three radical Salafis has also been used for localized context. Some international issues were localized to garner support and to mobilize Muslim sentiment against an incident that deemed insulting to Islam. Baa'syir, for instance, sent a stern warning that the movement would,

...declare war to those who dare to create an insult to the Prophet Muhammad and fail to immediately stop such actions. Our reprisal is based on the provisions of sharia Islam. We consider that only death penalty alone shall be made for those who do insult to the Prophet Muhammad.⁷⁰

His harsh statement was a reaction towards a cartoon depicting the Prophet Muhammad with a bomb-shaped turban drawn by a Danish cartoonist, Kurt Westergaard. The caricature of the Prophet Muhammad

also outraged the Muslims world.

JAT and JI also worked closely with other locally based radical groups such as Laskar Jihad and Front Pembebasan Islam (FPI). Hence, it is not surprising when FPI's involvement and action in the Pontianak incident on March 2012, received wide support from JAT, especially when its leader, Ali Al Muntahar, argued that FPI's actions "is a part of the Islamic *ummah*, those who disturb the FPI, it means they are disturbing the Islamic *ummah*... the Muslims do not attack, but they are attacked first!"⁷¹

Conclusion

Jihad has become a fluid concept under the current modern history. Throughout the centuries, the *jihad* conception, with its sense of fighting or struggle – has undergone various changes in content, application and argument in order to adjust to the contemporary world. One may argue that *jihad* is an in-built character of every Muslim. *Jihad* should be viewed as Muslims' strive for inner strength. Yet, it has been *jihad*, as a holy war that has been emphasized in many years. Since the rise of Taliban and subsequently al-Qaeda, as alternative yet important political forces in the international system, the concept of *jihad* has undergone another transformation of ideas, meanings and theories. *Jihad* has been viewed from the *qital* (war) perspective, which emphasizes physical war against the non-believers. Ironically, however, the *qital* conception of *jihad* has further been expanded to include war against fellow Muslims who deemed to be associated with the non-believers. It can be argued that the contemporary concept of *jihad* inclines to have a heavy political baggage.

In Southeast Asia, the *talibanization* and the influence of the al-Qaeda interpretation of the *jihad* appear to have made their inroad in regional radical *salafi* movements such as the Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), Jama'ah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT), and Hizb at-Tahrir (HT). The interpretation and the conceptualization of *jihad* for these regional Salafi movements appear to be closely associated with the *qital* ideas. Furthermore, the jihadi calls are aimed to political mobilization against the perceived domination of Western powers, particularly the United States and its allies.

Notes

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