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religious extremism & radicalism

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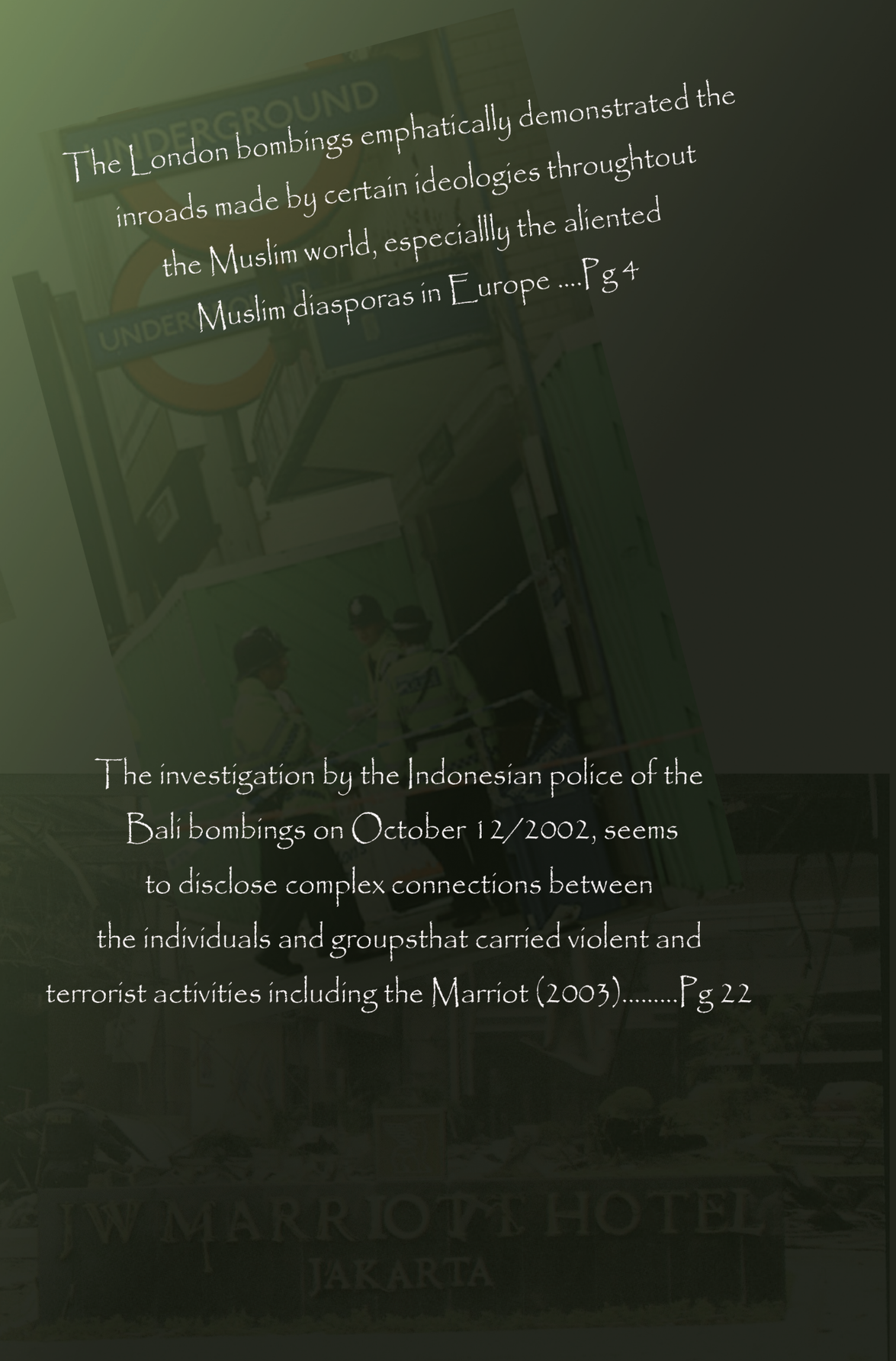

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Our say....

RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM & RADICALISM

The drive to prevail over religious extremism and radicalisation must start with a dialogue on what set in motion the conflict in the Middle East. Understanding the religious premise of the extremists and radicals is just as vital as knowing how their global network and violent strategy have managed to break into the borders of their targeted countries. Study indicates that many Islamic scholars agree with the assessment that the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan are slowly developing into a war of ideas that will serve as a catalyst for the globalisation of religious extremism if left unchecked.

There is an urgent need to address the existing rift between western and eastern cultures. Understanding Arab culture and the culture of Islam is the first step in bridging the religious divide that the West currently faces. The West must get to know the people of Islam and the cultural imperatives of the religion. The worst mistake anyone in a decision-making position could do is to make light work of the effort to understand Islam. For many, the distractions of globalisation, urbanization, and transnational terrorism cloud the reception of those with the greatest need to listen. The failure to understand the nature of Islam permits the radicalisation of Muslims worldwide while blinding the rest of humanity to a solution which hides in plain sight. The solution must include a closer examination of the influence Islam has on its community of faith. Before the world can build an effective strategy to neutralize the extremist ideologies that underpin the global extremist movement, it must first commit to understanding Islam as it is practised and observed by Muslims today.

The need to understand religious civilisation as a key factor of change in the Middle East is further evidenced by the failure of international efforts to effectively engage religious leaders with any measurable consistency. Strategies for dealing with religious leaders have tended to be vague and hasty at best. Scholars of Islam take a slightly different approach to the issue. They characterise the ongoing war of ideas as a lack of western understanding regarding religion and the role of indigenous religious leaders. These misunderstandings centre on the lack of knowledge of Islam, the Quran, and the religious faith of Muslims, which is in direct contrast to the liberal interpretations taken by astute extremists with Islam and the Quran. Muslims are not convinced that the secular humanism the West is offering is the right solution for followers of Islam.

International bombings and the continued conflict in the Middle East have sent scholars, planners, and senior leaders worldwide scrambling to harness the influence of Islam on the Muslims and leaders in their communities. It also appears evident that not many diplomatic strategists predicted and even fewer military planners were prepared for the significant role several Islamic leaders have established in the ongoing conflict. Osama bin Laden, Ayatollah Sistani, and the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi each demonstrated their ability to impede progress or influence change within the Muslim community. Understanding this type of religious influence on all aspects of change in an Islamic society is critical to the stability of the region.

The demonstrated influence of the Grand Ayatollah Ali Husseini al-Sistani became clear when he issued a number of fatwas to direct participation in the voting process. When the Askaria Shrine was attacked, the Iraqi Shi'ite prelate, once again, stepped in with a different type of authority. He spoke of the need for Shi'ite Muslims to defend themselves with armed, religious militias if the foreign forces and the Iraqi government cannot. This magnitude of influence by religious leaders implores additional questioning. Were the foreign forces and civil planners aware of the Ayatollah's influence prior to the fatwas being issued? Were strategic planners aware of his span of control prior to arriving in theatre? Finally, what are they doing to bring the prelate aboard now? It appears lessons were learnt rather belatedly.

An improved understanding of the Islamic rule of law and how Muslims interpret the Quran is imperative to the successful bridging of the cultural gaps. Western values, including individual and religious freedoms, are not natural fits for the culture of Islam. Young boys in Iraq, for example, grow up with religion. They end up in the mosque, learning from the Imam; depending on the interpretation, they learn moderation or extremism, and in between the two, there lies an abyss As a result, more and more Muslims are answering the radicals call to arms which has led some observers to accuse the Islamic clergy of booby-trapping minds and exploiting the state of frustration suffered by the Muslim youth to perpetuate violence.

Religion and influential religious leaders continue to play a critical role in shaping global strife and reconciliation. Whether destructive or constructive, religious leaders, organisations, and institutions often influence the direction of conflict-prevention and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Religious groups are typically deep-rooted, mature organisations with independent resources to shape conflict-prevention and reconstruction efforts from the grassroots to the international level. The broad range of activities carried out by religious actors in conflict-prone settings demonstrates both the significant threats they may pose and the great opportunities they represent. These organisations are invaluable if effectively utilized. They are uniquely positioned to help or hinder evolving situations at the local level far better than any military organisation or secular relief effort.

The world watched the ringleader of the 7 July 2005 terrorist attack in London, his voice inflected with a West Yorkshire accent, preaching jihad in English. Al Jazeera aired the communique of 30-year-old Mohammad Sidique Khan, in which Khan explained why he helped murder over 50 of his fellow Britons on a bus and in the Underground. "Until you stop bombing, gassing, imprisonment, and torture of my people, we will not stop this fight," Khan declared. "We are at war, I am a soldier and now you too will taste the reality of this situation." The London bombings emphatically demonstrated the inroads made by certain ideologies throughout the Muslim world, especially the alienated Muslim diasporas in Europe. Attacks like these are further evidence that these creeds have evolved into a well-financed, complex, global movement.

The religion of Islam is undergoing a significant revolution due to the pervasive ideological pressures. The insurgency consists of people who draw upon a long tradition of extreme intolerance that does not distinguish politics from religion and distorts both. Extremists believe Islam is the only true religion and there is no room for interpretation. An insurgent believes that his immoral acts of violence are moral and that he is on the right path to God.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, we are currently witnessing a spiritual tug-of-war between Islamic Hirabah (terrorist) and the West-led foreign forces to win the hearts and minds of the people who are in essence the living spirit of Islam. This conflict is not limited to improvised explosive devices, traffic checkpoints, or door-to-door searches. This war is about regional stability, failing nation-states, and religious ideology, a war unrestrained by conventional conflict with a reach that extends to incidents like the recent caricaturing of the Prophet, whereupon terrorists and global extremists rallied thousands in defense of yet another perceived attack on Islam. This perceived threat perpetuates the radical extremists' cause and serves to lengthen an already protracted conflict between east and west.

Overtly, extremist terror is carried out in the name of religion; yet, the terror imposed upon the world provides neither salvation nor solutions. Clearly, there is a plethora of useful lessons to learn concerning the values, beliefs, and cultures of Islam, to include those of radical extremists. An enhanced understanding through increased debate and open dialogue about the nature of religious extremists will better assist policy makers to deal with these issues. And at the core of it, the West must implement a moral, just policy towards the Middle East.

Ustaz Syed Ahmad bin Muhammad Semait

(21/8/1933 – 15/7/2006)

Source by : Mufti Syed Isa Semait
Report in Berita Harian, 20 July 06,
Report in The New Paper, 17 July 06 &
Obituaries in Berita Harian, 20 July 06

Ustaz Syed Ahmad bin Muhammad Semait was born in Singapore, on Monday, 21 August 1933, corresponding to 29 Rabiul Akhir 1352. His father was an Arab who worked as a clerk in a real estate company and was active in social works among the local Arab community. His mother hailed from Kemaman, Terengganu, Malaysia.

Ustaz Syed Ahmad has one maternal brother and two maternal sisters, and three brothers and two sisters from the same father and mother. When he was 12 years old, his father passed away. With no one to support the family, life was hard. His father's relatives suggested that Ustaz Syed Ahmad and his younger brother, Mufti Syed Isa, to be sent to an orphanage called Malja' al-Aitam (later renamed to Darul Ihsan). This is to enable both of them to continue their studies. However, Ustaz Syed Ahmad could not stay long in that orphanage. He had to work to ease the financial burden of his mother. Ustaz Syed Ahmad received his formal education at Madrasah Aljunied Al-Islamiah. He stopped when he finished Level Six and did not continue in the Special Class which was opened to selected students, even though he was among the best students in his cohort. He worked fulltime in a textile shop owned by the famous scholar ***Sheikh Umar bin Abdullah Al-Khatib.***

His education did not stop there. He continued attending the weekly religious class with the Madrasah principal at that time, Syeikh Abdullah Balfaqeh, learning the traditional way. He also attended the famous Sunday morning class, reading books on Tasauf, Hadith and Tafsir with the local ulama. And on every Thursday night, he attended another class held by a group of ulama, reading books on Fiqh and other subjects. Both of these classes continue till today. In his later life, both classes were to be lead by Ustaz Syed Ahmad. Now, the trust to lead them fell on his brother, Mufti Syed Isa Semait.

His work in the textile shop owned by the famous scholar ***Sheikh Umar bin Abdullah Al-Khatib*** served to be more than just earning money for his mother and siblings. It was to be one of the momentous moment in his life. Two things happened when he worked there:

a) He benefited a lot from the knowledge and mastery of Islam from the erudite scholar ***Sheikh Umar Al-Khatib***. He was not only his employer, but more importantly, as what Ustaz Syed Ahmad later admitted, his 'Syeikh Al-Fateh'. He learnt with ***Sheikh Umar Al-Khatib*** throughout his life. Even though there were certain things that he quite not agree with Syeikh Umar Al-Khatib, that only showed his critical and analytical mind. And ***Sheikh Umar Al-Khatib*** did not stop him from giving second opinions.

b) He began to develop the interest and acumen in business. He began to see business opportunities in selling Arabic reference books to madrasah students and teachers.

In 1950, he left his teacher's shop and together with his brother, Syed Umar bin Muhammad Semait, he opened up a shop dealing with Arabic books. He called it Al-Maktabah At-Tijariyah Asy-Syarqiyah. During this time, his other brother, Mufti Syed Isa bin Muhammad Semait, was studying in Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. He used this opportunity to appoint his brother as books purchaser in Cairo and to send them back to Singapore.The business went well. He decided to expand it to include books meant for the Malay community. Thus, he folded up his company and setup a new one and gave it a Malay name: Pustaka Nasional. He wanted this company to be his medium of dakwah.

Ustaz Syed Ahmad proved to be a prolific writer and translator. He wrote many books on Islam, and translated numerous Arabic books to Malay. When they were already Islamic books in Arabic translated to Malay, he would republished them with better

type face, layout and in more readable Malay. Sometimes he would made the necessary corrections and additions after counter checking with the original Arabic text.

The following are some of the books he wrote:

1) **Kuliah Subuh – Pada membicarakan Hadis 40** (3 vols: 741 pages)
2) **Hadis Qudsi – Analisa dan Komentar** (2 vols: 648 pages)
3)**Sepuluh Yang Dijamin Masuk Syurga** (1 vol: 450 pages)
4) **100 Tokoh Wanita Terbilang** (1 vol: 577 pages)
5) **Untaian Kisah Para Wali** (1 vol: 472 pages)
6) **Syarah Ratib Haddad** (1 vol: 280 pages)

Some of the books he translated:

1) **Isra' dan Mi'raj** – Abdul Halim Mahmud (2001, 150 pages)
2) **Kurnia Rabbani Limpahan Rahmani** - Sidi Syeikh Abdul Al-Jailani (2001, 660 pages)
3) **Dakwah Yang Sempurna Peringatan Yang Utama** – Imam Habib Abdullah Al- Haddad (2000, 299 pages)
4) **Al-Adzkar Lin Nawawi** – Imam An-Nawawi (2000, 794 pages)
5) **Tata-tertib Pengajian Al-Quran** – Imam An-Nawawi (1999, 182 pages)
6) **Belitan Iblis** – Ibnul Qayyim (1994, 478 pages)
7) **Dosa-dosa Besar** – Muhammad bin Ahmad Adz-Dzahaby (1994, 598 pages)
8) **Benteng Diri Ahli Hakikat** – Syed Ahmad Ar-Rifa'I (1994, 425 pages)
9) **Halal Dan Haram Dalam Islam** – Dr Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi (1995, 578 pages)
10) **Taubat Dan Liku-likunya** – Imam Ghazali (1995, 280 pages)
11) **Rahsia Sufi** – Syeikh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani (1997, 263 pages)
12) **Untaian Kisah Nabi Dan Para Sahabat** – Al-Kandahlawi (1997, 795 pages)
13) **Petunjuk Thariqat ke Jalan Akhirat** – Imam Habib Abdullah Al-Haddad (1999, 225 pages)
14) **Bimbingan Mu'min** – Imam Ghazali (1978, 873 pages)
15) **Nasihat Agama Dan Wasiat Iman** – Imam Habib Abdullah Al-Haddad (1981, 493 pages)
16) **Petunjuk Jalan Thariqat / Penuntun Hidup Bahagia** – Imam Habib Abdullah Al- Haddad
17) **Masalah Sufi** – Abu Said Al-Kharraz (1981, 598 pages)
18) **Peringatan Tentang Umur Insan** – Imam Habib Abdullah Al-Haddad (1982, 168 pages)
19) **Mu'jizat Al-Quran** – Muhammad Mutawalli Sya'rawi (1985, 592 pages)
20) **Pendidikan Anak-anak Dalam Islam** - Abdullah Nasih Ulwan (1988, v1: 612 pages,v2:
21) **Roh** – Ibnul Qayyim (1990, 551 pages)
22) **Was-was** – Ibnul Qayyim (1990, 123 pages)
23) **Induk Pensucian Diri** – Syed Hawa (1992, 1426 pages) – co.translater M. Abdai Rathomy
24) **Kifayatul Akhyar** – Imam Taqiyuddin Abu Bakar bin Muhammad Al-Husaini (1993, v1:736 pages, v2: 624 pages)
25) **Sahih Al-Bukhari** – Imam Muhammad bin Ismail Al-Bukhari (published post-humously in 2006, 3 volumes)

Ustaz Syed Ahmad Semait might not leave a mark giving wonderful speeches and lectures, but his dakwah through writing has left a profound impact in the literary world. Perhaps his most famous and well received work is the book 'Nasa-ih Ad-Diniyah wal Wasaya Al-Imaniyah' by Imam Abdullah bin Alawi Al-Haddad, which he translated to Malay and gave the title ' Nasihat Agama dan Wasiat Imam'. He went to great length to ensure the accuracy and integrity of his translation, reading the book cover to cover several times with ***Sheikh Umar Al-Khatib*** and trying to understand the true meaning of every word and sentence. The book has two editions: Malay Rumi, and Malay Jawi. The Rumi edition was printed 8 times, the last one in 2001. The Jawi edition was printed 7 times, the last one in 2004.He did not teach many classes. But his famous was the Ihya' Ulumiddin class held every Friday after Isyak prayers at Masjid Abdul Razak. There he would explain what Imam Al-Ghazali wrote in that book, and shared what he had gathered from his teacher ***Sheikh Umar Al-Khatib*** in his Sunday morning's Ihya' Ulumiddin class.

Ustaz Syed Ahmad's last class was on Friday, 14 July 2006. As usual, after Isyak he taught Ihya' Ulumiddin at Masjid Abdul Razak. After that class, he took his wife and some of his relatives, to Kuala Lumpur by car where he had his normal weekly religious class at a mosque there. It was unsual since he normally would take the bus.

About 1.10 am, Saturday morning, 15 July 06, near the 190.1 km mark along the Yong Peng-Pagoh stretch of the highway, a boar crossed the road. The car hit it, flung up and overturned. Ustaz Syed Ahmad and Madam Fatimah, the driver's sister, were thrown out of the car. Both were seated beside the doors.

Ustaz Syed Ahmad passed away at the site of the accident. He was buried at Batu Pahat, fulfilling his wish to be buried at wherever he died. He left behind 3 children.

May Allah bless his soul.

THE SHADOW OF TERRORISM

Spreading jihad online

by Mafoot Simon
Senior Writer
"Article courtesy of SPH - The Straits Times"

INTERVIEWING the more than 600 radicals imprisoned in Saudi Arabia since 2004, the kingdom's officials discovered an interesting fact: It was not Osama bin Laden, the Saudi-born .leader of Al-Qaeda, who had the most influence on them.

The dubious honour went to Abu Mohammed al.Maqdisi, a Palestinian Jordanian who is a self-taught Islamic intellectual. He is regarded as the spiritual mentor of Al-Qaeda's head in Jordan, Abu Musab Zarqawi, who died in an American bombing strike in June this year.

One reason for the Jordanian's popularity among the Saudi radicals is obvious: In a 2000 treatise titled Clear Evidence On The Infidel Nature Of The Saudi State, he declares the kingdom's rulers to be infidels, against whom jihad must be carried out. And the same goes for other Arab regimes. Arab states, he says, are apostate states. Not that democracy is any better. He sees it as simply another religion.

Maqdisi, who is serving time in a Jordanian prison on terrorism charges, is acknowledged as a leading light among radicals. Some terrorism analysts consider him the most influential living jihadist theorist. The Combating Terrorism Centre (CTC), a private think-tank at West Point, the US military academy, conducted a study recently on the most popular jihadist radical texts to be found in Al-Qaeda's main online library. Maqdisi's works came out tops in two of six categories.

In the category of most down- loaded, his Clear Evidence On The Infidel Nature Of The Saudi State - sometimes translated as The Shameful Actions Manifest In The Saudi State's Disbelief, CTC researcher Will McCants told The Straits Times - topped the list. It had been downloaded 47,123 times since its publication in 2000. In the category of the most read, Maqdisi s other treatise, This Is Our Doctrine, published in 2003, came out top with 106,104 hits. This text contains, among other things, a detailed and careful discussion of *takfir,* the practice of deeming individuals unbelievers.

The CTC study, *"the first systematic mapping of the ideology driving the actions of the terrorists responsible for the 9/11 attacks and other violent actions around the world"*, aims to identify "the most infuential people... among the jihadi thinking class, what they are thinking, and where the movement is most vulnerable ideologically".

One of the most interesting findings in the study: When jihadists get most criticised and condemned is when they (1) declare other Muslims apostates; (2) attack other Muslims, women, children and the elderly; (3) attack the sources of a nation's wealth, such as tourism and the oil industry; and (4) create political and social chaos.

These condemnations are particularly damaging when they come from three tyes of individuals: influential religious leaders, former jihadists and prominent current jihadists.

These are the chinks in the armour that should be fully exploited, the CTC researchers recommend. But back to Maqdisl. Just who is he? He was born Isam Tahir al-Barqawi in Nablus, in what is currently known as the West Bank, in 1959. His family emigrated to Kuwait and the young Maqdisi went to Iraq to study engineering at the wishes of his parents.

But what he really wanted was to study syariah at the Islamic University in Medina. So he embarked on a self-guided study course. He travelled throughout the region and, while in Medina, was heavily influenced by the writ- ings of Saudi scholars, in particular the 18th-century cleric Muham- mad ibn Abd al Wahhab, the founder of Wahhabism. As analyst Steven Brooke has noted in The Preacher And The Jihadi (Eudson Institute, November 2006), Maqdisi's studies of these thinkers had a deep impact on his life and thought. In his 1985 book Millat. Ibrahim, which is often translated as The Religion Of Abraham, Maqdisi elaborated on two Islamic principles that have preoccupied him throughout much of his intel- lectual career.

The first is *tawhid* or the oneness and absolute indivisibility of Allah and the related religious obligation to worship Him and no other god. The second and related principle is the obligation to struggle against polytheism in all its manifestations.

A Muslim, said Maqdisi, must demonstrate enmity and hatred to- wards all of polytheism's adherents until they renounce their ways and return to the true path of Islam. For Maqdisi, fulfilling these twin obligations is the paramount duty of every Muslim, more important than daily prayer, alms giving or any other religious obligation.

In Maqdisi's mind the combination of these two religious obligations - belief in *tawhid* and the Islamic struggle against polytheism - translated into a desire for radical political change and jihad.

"Jihad is an act of worship and an obligation that is legislated until the Day of Judgment. Nothing invalidates it. It is permissible to perform it at any time, like charity, unlike zakat",

he wrote in This Is Our Doctrine. *Zakat* is the obligatory practice of giving alms once a year, while charity can be carried out at any time.

According to Maqdisi, he chose to write his books because he realised that "many beginning students of knowledge have access to our books and that some Issues may confuse them". The trouble, of course, is that Maqdisi is not the only one who is being read by "many beginning students of knowledge". There are other even more radical jihadist thinkers whose thoughts are found online.

Top Militant Ideologues

THESE are the four top radical ideologues, according to a recent study by a team from the Combating Terrorism Centre at West Point.

» Abu Qatada al-Filistini: A Jordanian intellectual of Palestinian origin. His most read work is the Characteristics Of The Victorious Sect In The Muslim's Home Land (Greater Syria). In it, he says jihad is the essence and identity of the Muslim, and it is obligatory for every Muslim to fight an apostate government, even if he has to do it alone.

His other works include Why Pursue Jihad? and Islamic Movements And Contemporary Alliances. He was born Umar Mahmud Abu Umar in 1960 in Bethlehem, in what is now the West Bank, and has lived in Britain since he sought asylum there in 1993. Now in a British jail, Jordan is seeking his extradition to face terrorism charges, but there is no extradition treaty between the two countries. He is said to be a member of Al-Qaeda's fatwa committee, a spiritual father of the Algerian radical group GIA and mentor to Richard Reid, the shoe bomber. He was involved in terrorist cells in Paris and Madrid and is wanted by several Western governments.

» Abu Jandal aI-kill: A Saudi scholar. His most read work is his 460-page tome Osama b. Laden: Renewer Of The Era And Conqueror Of Americans, a biography of AI-Qaeda's leader. His real name is Faris b. Ahmad Al Shuwayl al-Zahrani. In 2003, he succeeded Saudi Shaykh Yousef al-Ayiri, the leading ideologue of Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia, who was arrested by Saudi security forces. Abu Jandal was himself arrested and jailed in 2004.

His biography on Osama elevates the AI-Qaeda leader to the position of mujaddid, which is typically given only to a pious person who revives and rejuvenates the religion.

Moderate Muslims believe there is only one such in each century. An example is the ninth-century Islamic scholar Imam Shafii, the founder of the Shafii school of jurisprudence. Abu Jandal's next most popular work is a 2002 publication entitled The Scholar's Ruling On The Killing Of Soldiers And Secret Police. It is, in effect, a fatwa on the legitimacy of killing Saudi security forces.

In March 2004, he released an article entitled The AI-Qaeda Organisation And Asymmetrical War, in which he described several characteristics and tactics used by Al-Qaeda.

» Abu Umar al-Sayf, another Saudi scholar, dubbed the Mufti of Arab fighters in Chechnya. His most read work is The State Of The Islamic Nation And The Absent Terror. Muhammad b. Abd Allah al-Sayf al-Jabir al-Buaynayn al-Tamimiwas born in Qassim, Saudi Arabia. He was to have been responsible for the Islamic courts in Chechnya when then Chechen president Zelimkhan Yandarbiev attempted to declare the country an Islamic state. He was killed last year, at the age of 37, in a Russian counter-terrorism operation in neighbouring Dagestan.

» Abd al-Akhir Hammad al-Ghunaymi, a former senior leader of Egypt's Jama'a al-Islamiyya. He was one of the earliest Jama'a members to go to Afghanistan to join the anti-Soviet jihad there, and was among those sentenced to death (in absentia) in the so-called "returnees from Afghanistan" mass trials of 1992 in Egypt. He sought asylum and has been living in Bonn since 2000. His most read work is On Doctor al-Buti And His Book On Jihad, a 1997 publication which takes on Syrian scholar Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti's interpretation of jihad. Several historical phases of jihad are generally acknowledged by Muslims. The first was the Mecca era, which lasted three years. The second was called the Medina era; in which God allowed fighting.

In the third phase, there are three categories or chapters: fighting with permission, fighting back against only those who attack Muslims and fighting all infidels.

Al-Buti considered each a separate category that can be implemented in specific cases and suitable situations. For Hammad, on the other hand, the three are a progressive evolution of one into the other, and Muslims are now into the final chapter of fighting all infidels.

5 years after the JI arrests

Long shadow of terrorism

By Chua Lee Hoong
Review Editor
"Article courtesy of SPH - The Straits Times"

THAT fears of terrorist strikes might have led to the postponement of the Asean summit that is to have taken place in the Philippines today is a reminder again that terrorism casts a long shadow unlikely to fade any time soon. Five years ago this month, the Singapore and Malaysia governments simultaneously arrested a number of Muslim militants planning terror attacks in the region. In Malaysia, the 13 men arrested were members of a new wing of an Islamic militant group with links to Zacarias Moussaoui, a Frenchman involved in the Sept 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States.

In Singapore, the 13 detained were members of the Jemaah Islamiah (JI), a clandestine network with cells in Malaysia, Indonesia and, more recently, the Philippines. They were planning to strike US naval vessels in Singapore waters, as well as a shuttle bus service used by Americans to travel between the Yishun MRT station and Sembawang Wharf. Two of them had trained with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, a separatist movement fighting for independence for Mindanao Island in the southern Philippines. The latter, incidentally, is seen by security experts as the weak link in South-east Asia's fight against terrorism.

In Singapore today, 34 people linked to JI are still in custody. There are 26 others not locked up but who must comply with certain restrictions or risk being detained.

So the terrorism threat is real and has a face - in fact, many faces: The terrorist is not always a Muslim, a 'jihadist' willing to kill others and himself. If there were comprehensive statistics, we would probably find that the majority of terrorists are in fact not Muslim. However, four aspects make the threat from the jihadist particularly challenging.

Asymmetrical means

THE first is the nature of jihadi terrorism itself. Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong once observed that where 'the communists fought to live...the jihadi terrorists fight to die and live in the next world'. Their willingness to martyr themselves gives them a competitive advantage over security and law enforcement officials.Yes, terrorists of other persuasions are also willing to martyr themselves. But Islamic militants are disproportionately represented. Some of them (not all, it must be said) also elevate to the status of legitimate targets people with no fault other than that they are 'unbelievers' or 'infidels'.Not surprisingly, the root causes of Islamic terrorism are more complex than those of most other forms of terrorism. Political causes might explain the nationalist or separatist who resorts to violence. Alienation and anomie might explain the anarchist. A sense of injustice and wanting to right capitalistic wrongs might explain the communist. But the Islamist, and the Islamic terrorist?

Security experts are increasingly coming to accept that Islamic terrorism cannot be neatly diagnosed as stemming from this or that. There are no clear root causes. There are factors that give terrorists a pretext for action, such as the US-led invasion of Iraq and the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, but take these away and there will still be jihadi terrorists. One stark example: planning for the Sept 11 World Trade Centre blasts began in 1993, long before the US ouster of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

Thin red line

PROFESSOR John Esposito, a well-known Islam expert at Georgetown University, and Ms Dalia Mogahed of Gallup Organisation recently conducted a survey of some 9,000 Muslims in nine major Muslim countries. The survey yielded the fascinating result that very little separates the 'moderate' from the 'radical'; the former defined as a Muslim critical of the Sept 11 attacks, and the latter as one in support of them. Levels of education, income and religiosity hardly varied between the two groups.

What did vary was the way they viewed the West. Moderates were willing to build bridges with the West, while radicals saw the West as attempting to 'influence and control my way of life'.Ms Anna Simons, a professor of defence analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, takes the argument further. It is not wise to formulate policies based on any perceived distinction between 'moderates' and 'radicals' because the line between the two is not stable. Rebuking Western commentators who attribute Islamic terrorism to pat reasons of discrimination and alienation, she wrote in The American Interest (Summer, 2006): 'We gloss over the possibility that Islamists might want to do us grave harm out of deep spiritual conviction. It is easier and more politic to boil the problem down to inequities rather than iniquity.'Note here that deep spiritual conviction is not the same as deep spiritual learning; all too often the jihadi terrorist has been found to be a Muslim who does not know his religion as well as might be desired. In the European Union, fully 20 per cent of jihadi terrorists are recent converts to Islam.

Global inspiration, local action

THIS brings us to the second point, the ability of Islamic terrorism to be local and global at the same time. Some call it the 'glocalisation' of terrorism.

Islam is a religion whose reach is global. With the Internet as enabling medium, this helps terrorists recruit, advertise and communicate. For example, Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian terrorist implicated in Al-Qaeda's 1998 bombings in Tanzania and Kenya, recently called on the ummah, the global Muslim community, to 'wage a popular jihadist war'.Home-grown terrorist groups have thus mushroomed in many countries - in Asia and increasingly in the more open societies in the West. The March 11, 2004, Madrid train bombings and the July 7, 2005, London subway bombings are spectacular examples.

Less spectacular but no less worrisome are the foiled plots. In Canada, 17 Muslim men were arrested in June this year for a plot to cause 'massive' damage in the Toronto area. In the US, more than 50 Muslim Americans have been arrested for various plots since Sept 11. Most of them were born and bred in the US. Counter-terrorism officials call these perpetrators 'clean skins': they have no prior criminal or security record. Their intellectual and ideological inspiration comes from militant teachings that can be found on the Internet. They operate locally and independently, without direct links to any established terrorist organisation. Some may even be mere teenagers. They are a big source of worry to law enforcement agencies because monitoring them effectively requires tremendous amounts of resources, both human and technological.

This was perhaps why, last month, Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller, the head of Britain's domestic intelligence service, MI-5, told the British media about 'close to 30 plots' that her agency had uncovered and was monitoring. It was a departure from her usual taciturnity that helped to raise public awareness of the seriousness of the issue. The threat, she said, was one that would 'last a generation'. Or more. The threat, after all, has taken 30 or more years to reach its present proportions, and the end game is nowhere in sight. Communism took 100 years to defeat, and even then it was not overwhelmed as such, but burnt itself out - after enough people were convinced by the evidence of their own eyes that it did not offer a superior way of life, far less a solution to the world's problems.

A widening divide

IN THE case of jihadi terrorism however, things will probably get worse before they get better because of what seems to be a widening divide

between the Muslim and the non-Muslim worlds. On the Muslim side is a perception of victimisation fuelled by unsympathetic Western comments and media reports; on the non-Muslim side is a perception of Muslim unreasonableness fuelled by reports of what they see as Muslim over-reaction to events such as the publication by a Danish paper of cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad and Pope Benedict's remarks about reason and religion.Prince Alwaleed, nephew of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, noted in a recent interview in The McKinsey Quarterly: 'In the West, and specifically in the US, any act of terrorism by a Muslim is blamed on the entire Muslim community. In response to a recent attempted terrorist plot in the United Kingdom, for instance, the President of the United States talked of Islamic fascism. One or two people, or 20 people, or 100, or even 1,000 may fall into that category, but you can't make a general statement about 1.3 billion people. I acknowledge that we have problems inside our Islamic community, but putting all Muslims into one pot and implying Islam is a terrorist religion adds fuel to the fire. This polarisation between Islam and Christianity is very dangerous.'

Indeed it is. There is nothing more that the militant ideologues – upon whose teachings terrorists feed - would like than for that to happen. One ideologue found online, Abu Bakr Naji, writes almost gleefully of 'dragging the masses into battle such that polarisation is created between all the people'.

Exploiting democracy

WHEN Madrid was struck in 2004, three days before a general election, it signalled that jihadi terrorists had reached a new tactical high. They had learnt to manipulate the very political system that democratic countries build their foundations on. Angered by official attempts to pin the blame on Basque separatists instead of Al-Qaeda, as the evidence pointed, Spanish voters threw out the Popular Party headed by then Premier Jose Maria Aznar, and voted in the Socialist Party headed by Mr Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. Mr Aznar was a rare European supporter of the US involvement in Iraq, while Mr Zapatero had promised to withdraw Spain's 1,300 troops from Iraq if he won. Which he did promptly.The terrorists had successfully exploited political differences within Spain, and between Europe and America. In the Middle East, a number of what might be called terrorist-political organisations have exploited democracy in a different way, by taking part in elections and winning seats in government. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Hizbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Palestinian territories are prime examples.

The long-term implications of this trend are far from clear. To be optimistic, the responsibilities of formal power might temper their violent tendencies and moderate them into 'normal' political parties which seek power through constitutional means. To be pessimistic, their new positions will allow them to spread their influence and subvert the system from within. One can expect the rise of subconventional warfare between these groups and the governments they seek to unseat. And they are not confined to national boundaries: Their links and influence cut across borders. Taken together, Hamas, Hizbollah and the Muslim Brotherhood mark the rise of non-state actors as players in the Middle East. This is a new challenge to the power balance in the region, dominated traditionally by Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria and Iraq.

In sync

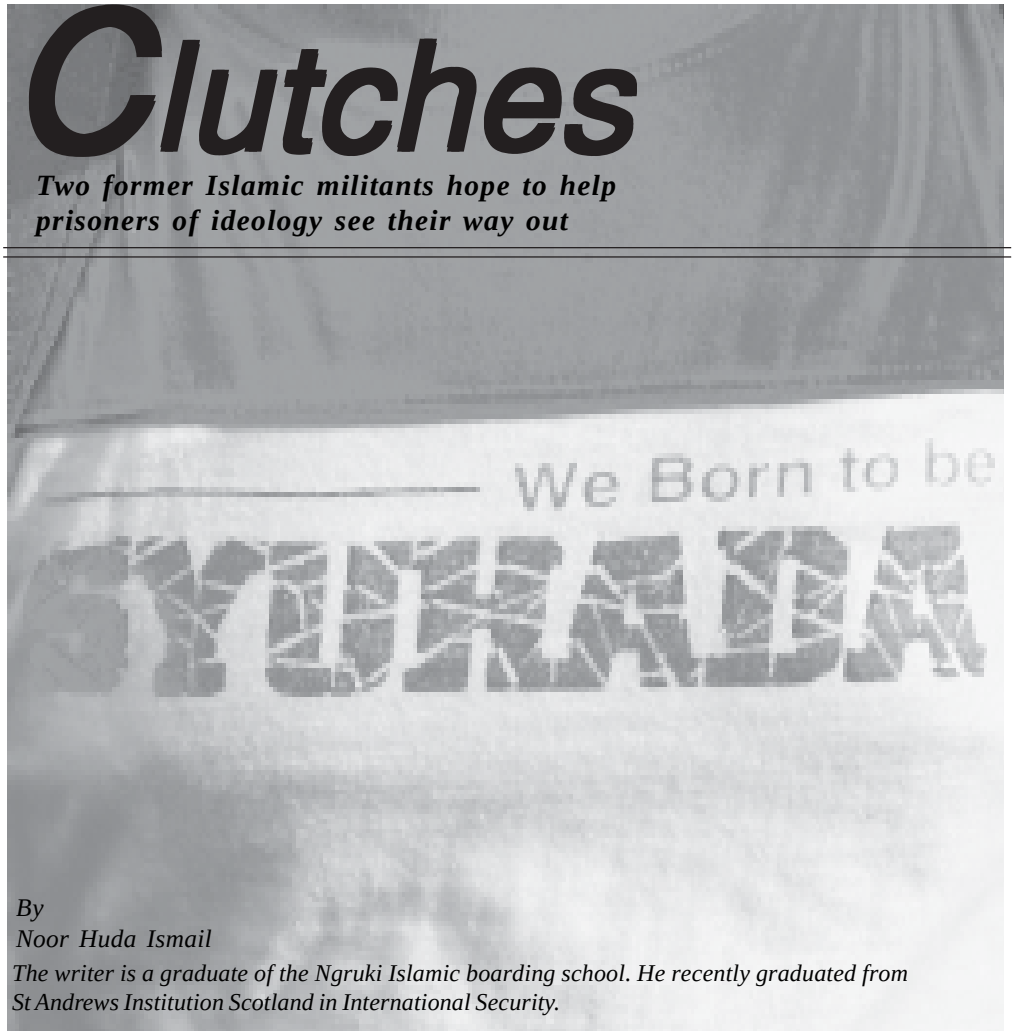
SO, THE shadow of today's terrorism threat is indeed a very long one. It spans the globe, touching myriad local communities, including Singapore's.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Singapore government had a programme to inoculate Singaporeans against communist ideology. Many organisations were called into action - from schools to the People's Association to business groups. Today, we have a roughly similar, although probably not as concerted, programme via the Religious Rehabilitation Group, the Community Engagement Programme and Inter-racial Confidence Circles.But today's terrorist threat is more complex and delicate. In the Middle East, it is complicated by interplay with nationalist and political factors. In most other countries, including Singapore, it is complicated by communal and religious factors. Countering the jihadist threat, if done clumsily and with racial or religious prejudices, risks alienating entire Muslim communities and widening racial fault lines.

To counter the threat effectively, it is necessary for many things to be in sync - every national policy, every government action, every arm of government, every national media, every private organisation that might unwittingly host a potential terrorist. It is a tall order, but that is the only way - if the long shadow of terrorism is not to grow.

Out Of Radicalism's Clutches

Two former Islamic militants hope to help prisoners of ideology see their way out



By
Noor Huda Ismail

The writer is a graduate of the Ngruki Islamic boarding school. He recently graduated from St Andrews Institution Scotland in International Security.

In a noisy house in Curug, East Jakarta, Fauzi Isman sits crossed-legged on a simple wooden bench. He is wearing a plain white T-shirt and blue sarong. 'It is good to be a free man,' he says.

Isman, 36, comes from a military family and graduated from the Jakarta State Academy of Statistics in 1988. He said he had wanted to overthrow the Indonesian government and replace it with an Islamic state. He was arrested in 1989 for subversion and freed 10 years later

However, he is still under police probation because of his old ties with a group called Pengajian Santa (Santa Study Group), an offshoot of Darul Islam (DI). DI was itself a movement that began in 1948 during a regional rebellion in West Java under the charismatic leadership of S. M. Kartosuwirjo, who was disappointed with the then-newly independent Indonesia for its rejection of Islam as its sole foundation.

Then-president Sukarno had opted instead for Pancasila, an ideology based on the philosophy of the Indonesian people

Independently, other rebellions under the name of DI emerged in South Kalimantan, South Sulawesi and Aceh. Over more than half a century, the movement produced several offshoots, such as Jemaah Islamiah (JI), which often resort to violence in their aim to establish an Islamic caliphate in the region.

The bombing in front of the Australian Embassy in Jakarta last September showed how JI collaborated with members of other DI splinter groups. Heri Golun, the alleged suicide bomber, is said to have been a DI member. (But earlier reports said he was an aimless youth until he was enlisted by two hardline clerics.)

Isman says that the underground movements develop their capabilities in secrecy. 'If they feel they have sufficient logistics and dedicated members, they will resurface and become more capable than ever.'

Recalling his involvement in DI, Isman says that one day in April 1988, a friend, Nurhidayat, asked him to join an Islamic training group. He agreed, and the next day he joined nine others for three days of training in the Pasar Santa mosque in South Jakarta. (Hence, the group's name.)

On the first day of the course, the instructor taught the group the meaning of illah, the concept of God and its implications; and muskilatul ummah, the current problems of the Muslim community.

During this session, the instructor claimed that although Muslims made up the majority in Indonesia, this did not mean that they were free to fully practise their religion. Why? Because the country was not run under syariah law, or Islamic jurisprudence. 'Our law is made by man, not by God,' the instructor had said.

On the second day, Isman was taught akhlaq, or Islamic ethics. The group was also taught syiroh, which is commonly understood as the history of Islam. In this case, however, syiroh was mainly the history of DI founder Kartosuwirjo.

On the last day, the instructor introduced the trainees to the concept of firoq, a clear segregation from the secular Indonesian government.Members of DI, Isman says, reject the idea of the state based on Pancasila, the Indonesian state ideology, and seek to replace it with Islamic state or caliphate.

The trainees were also taught the movement's concepts of jihad and martyrdom. During this stage, the concept of fa'i - robbing infidels or enemies of Islam to secure funds for defending the faith - was introduced.

But fa'i also attracted many thugs to the movement. This tactical alliance between purists and thugs, between ideologues and criminals, proved important for raising funds, making logistical plans and recruiting additional manpower for waging jihad.

In 1989, Isman travelled to Talangsari, a village in South Sumatra, for more training. He joined a few hundred like-minded militants living in a radical training camp established by a man named Warsidi.

During his one year at this camp, Isman was trained in martial arts and the use of crude weapons, among other things. He also learnt to shoot a bow and arrow.

In 1989, the head of a local military garrison confronted Warsidi about the group's activities. The military man was later found murdered. Following this incident, the army sent troops to the insurgents' camp. The ensuing battles left at least 100 dead according to official accounts.

Isman, however, claims the number is closer to 300. But he was not at the location and therefore did not witness the killings. Instead, he was in Bali, on a recce of the island for a bomb attack. But soon after, he was arrested for subversion and locked away in Jakarta's Cipinang prison.

Isman's involvement in the movement ended there. He declares that he is a repentant man now and no longer supports violence.

But that did not stop the radicals from trying to recruit him again. Five years ago, he says, a group of mujahideen trained in Afghanistan and the Philippines visited him at home, inviting him to join in their plans to blow up churches. But he refused.

He had undergone conversion while in prison, he says, jokingly. These days, he teaches the Chinese martial art of taiji.

He also wants to start his own religion and call it 'Love and Happiness', he jokes.

Meanwhile, on the outskirts of Jakarta, Tajul Arifin, a former member of the DI military wing Angkatan Mujahidin Islam Nusantara (Amin), recalls the day he robbed Bank Central Asia in 1999 under the banner of fa'i.

His leader had told him that doing so was the right thing as the bank's transactions were not interest-free and thus it was a non-syariah institution.

'The bank's practices were not in accordance with Islam and were against the syariah law,' says the 39-year-old Arifin.

For his crime, he was jailed for five years. He was released in March.

Voicing his regrets, Arifin, who is also from a military family, notes that he had misunderstood a saying of the Prophet: 'Whosoever sees disobedience to God (munkar) should change it with his hand (might). If he is unable to do it, he should change it with words (advice) and if he is still unable to do that, he should change it with his heart (reject it).'In the past, Arifin had taken that to mean that it was right for the Muslim to use violence (might) to right perceived wrongs (munkar). Now, he realises that 'might' does not necessarily equal 'right', and a better way to resolve conflicts is through persuasion and advice.

Mr Mohamad Haniff Hassan, an analyst at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, explained in a recent article (Vigilante Action Is Un-Islamic, The Straits Times, November 2004) that Islamic scholars interpret 'hand' in the hadith to denote the 'hands of authority'.

'For example, for acts of evil in a family, the persons of authority are the father and the mother; those who are not the persons of authority in that family do not have the power

*It is rare that these people analyse the root of problems in Muslim society from within. Nor do they look at the dynamics within Islamic society from the spirit of inter-cultural, inter-faith or inter-civilisational dialogue, or partnership between the Muslim and non-Muslim communities, they say. 'With such characteristics, radical tendencies are prone to **violence**,'*

Both Isman and Arifin are convinced that there are many more militants who are not happy with the path they have taken. But they require help to get out.

to prevent evil with the 'hand'. At school, the person of authority is the headmaster of the school,' he had written.

While in prison, Arifin, who was also alleged to have taken part in an attempt in 2000 to assassinate Indonesian politician Matori Abdul Jalil, a one-time leader of the Islamic National Awakening Party, wrote a book for his friends still in the underground movement, urging them to stop their violence.

One is naturally surprised and must wonder how a highly educated man and son of Indonesian military officer could be involved in such a clandestine movement.

Mr Yunanto, the executive director of The Ridep Institute in Jakarta and a writer on radicalism, militancy and fundamentalism within the Muslim community, says that people who join militant movements usually have a simplistic understanding of Islam.

'With such mentality, they promote obedience and loyalty more than criticism and logical argument,' he says.

These people view Islam as a religion that should be followed blindly. They also claim that their simplistic understanding of Islam is the 'true Islam'.

They often consider interpretations embraced by the majority of Muslims, such as those of mainstream Islamic organisations like Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama - two major Islamic organisations said to have between them some 80 million members - as 'polluted Islam or not true Islam'.

Both Isman and Arifin can attest to how such people think. It is rare that these people analyse the root of problems in Muslim society from within. Nor do they look at the dynamics within Islamic society from the spirit of inter-cultural, inter-faith or inter-civilisational dialogue, or partnership between the Muslim and non-Muslim communities, they say.

'With such characteristics, radical tendencies are prone to violence,' Isman says.

Both Isman and Arifin are convinced that there are many more militants who are not happy with the path they have taken. But they require help to get out.

'They are the prisoners of ideology,' Isman notes.

He adds that the best way to help them is through repentant murobby, the movement's term for someone who recruits and brainwashes new recruits.

But he realises it is not going to be easy. 'There are not many murobby who have adopted a new life, but at least there are a few we can approach and work with,' he says.

Isman believes radicals can only be changed by those whom they respect. They could then be deployed gainfully in mosques, Islamic schools or other charity organisations.

'They are actually hardworking and dedicated,' he adds.

IDEOLOGICAL RESPONSE to TERRORISM & EXTREMISM

by
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Research Analyst at the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research at the S.Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

The Ideological Battle

Terrorism as an act of violence has been committed by people from all religious and political backgrounds. Several groups who called themselves Jews, Christians or Muslims, have used terrorism to force their agenda, issues or beliefs. None of these groups represent the true religion of the Jews or the Christians as much as these terrorists represent Islam.

Attacks on the civilians and the least expecting people around the world by these groups is the kind of strife that cannot be justified by any religion or under any cause and is strongly condemned in all religions including Islam as clarified by the words of God in the Quran and the Final Testament. Thousands of women, children and men, young and old have been killed in attempts to achieve or hold on to special interests whether political, social or "religious".

Terrorism occurs when ideological motivation meets with operational capability. The way in which a terrorist group shapes its radical worldview and disseminates it to audiences worldwide plays an important role in the public interface between the group and its target audience. The war on terror is ought to be called the ideological battle against radical extremists who happen to use terror as a weapon to disrupt the conscience of the free and peaceful world.

Counter Terrorism Approaches

An effective multi-pronged approach is needed for us to combat terrorism in the long run. Technically, counter terrorism can be divided into 2 approaches, namely Operational and Strategic. Operational Counter Terrorism aims at reducing the immediate threat by targeting the terrorist cells and disrupting their attack plans. On the other hand, Strategic Counter Terrorism aims at changing the mindset and to create a hostile environment for the terrorists. In other words, we can say that it aims at changing the hearts and minds of the terrorists

Why Ideology is Important for Terrorists?

Let us look at the significant role that ideology plays for terrorists' organizations

like Al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in Southeast Asia. Firstly, ideology is the organizing principle of the terrorist organizations. It provides a motive and framework for their actions. Secondly, as demonstrated by the World Trade Centre, Bali 1 and 2, Marriott and Australian embassy bombings, it provides justification for their acts of violence. Thirdly, ideology is a language of mass mobilization. Calling for jihad in the name of Islamic duty has enabled Al-Qaeda and JI to continuously indoctrinate and recruit terrorist members. Fourthly, in the guise of a social program, ideology can generate Muslim public support whether as supporters who provide financial, logistical assistance or as sympathizers who do not morally condone these acts. Finally, over time, the ideology will further radicalize Muslim communities by indoctrinating them into a culture of violence and radical interpretations of Islam.

Why Ideological Response?

Given the unique challenges posed by religiously-motivated terrorism, effective counter-terrorism measures demands a multi-pronged approach. In particular, we need to focus our deterrence efforts on battling the ideological and social framework of radical Islam for four main reasons:

Firstly, counter ideology will provide alternative solutions to terrorist propagating violence. Given the alienated and uncompromising worldview of the terrorists, they cannot be bought by political concessions, amnesties or other personal incentives. The best chances for success is to engage them in dialogue, show them where they have gone astray and provide them with better alternatives to their violent acts.

Secondly, it is important to note that geopolitical battle rather than ideological battle will result in the loss of human lives, damage to property and vital installations and create a greater sense of fear and insecurity. In fact, engaging in physical battle may create the opposite effect desired; that the terorrists may have reason to validate their actions and in turn increase their pool of recruits, supporters and sympathizers. Thirdly, counter ideological work will prevent further radicalization of Muslim communities.

And finally, it is crucial for us to immunise especially the Muslim youth from being

indoctrinated into a culture of violence, hence preventing new generation of terrorists from being recruited

Ideological Response. How?

To develop a viable blueprint for an ideological response, we must factor in the multifaceted, global threat of religiously motivated terrorism.

In the short term, we need to pre-empt and prevent the propagation of terrorist messages by obstructing its channel of transmission, like the websites and sales of books. In the longer term, it is important for us to target the terrorist recruitment mechanism. This can be done by marginalizing the Islamic radicals, promoting the ideological tenets of traditional Islam and strengthening the bonds between Muslim communities and the state

We also need to accumulate sufficient knowledge and expertise in the terrorist ideology before we can develop an effective counter-ideology programme. Towards this end, there is a need to accelerate academic research, particularly to study the various Islamic concepts that have been misinterpreted by the extremists and terrorists. Concepts like Jihad and Islamic State, for instance, need to be studied and understood correctly and practiced contextually.

The spread of the religious ideology cannot be halted without the participation of Muslim communities. In particular, the Ulamas or Muslim religious scholars are the only people who can steer the efforts of counter ideological work. Active contributions from religious scholars and practicing Muslims are crucial as they follow incentives to speak out against radicals, define and defend their own religion

Countering the threat through education can be implemented by engaging the channels of Islamic intellectual activity and the traditional routes for knowledge transmission. As the terrorists' ideologues are often disguised as religious teachers/ leaders, there is also a need for a watchdog body to filter out deviant teachers and deviant teachings. In this case, the introduction of an Asatizah Recognition Scheme by the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore late last year is a step in the right direction as a committee of prominent Islamic scholars will act to control the access to religious status and limit the number and quality of individuals competent to provide religious instructions.

General public should also be targeted in order to create awareness within the community of the danger of these ideologies. One way of doing this is through public talks on deviant ideology, hence preventing them from becoming susceptible to the ***terrorists' ideology.***

Ideological Response. Who?

Firstly, it is important to engage religious deviants in dialogue or counseling sessions in an attempt to bring them to correct Islamic teachings and to instill into them genuine feelings of repentance and remorsefulness.

Secondly, it is equally crucial to extend the counseling services to the families of religious deviants to break the cycle of violence as direct families members are highly exposed to the ideology. As in the case of Singapore, the welfare of the detainees and their families are taken care of for e.g. looking into the children's education needs, financial assistance while their father are being detained and assisting the detainees to secure jobs once he is released.

Finally, the general public should also be targeted in order to create awareness within the community of the danger of these ideologies. One way of doing this is through public talks on deviant ideology, hence preventing them from becoming susceptible to the terrorists' ideology.

Progress in Counter Ideological Work

In Yemen, the ancestral home of Osama, those suspected as having links with al-Qaeda or sympathizers were engaged in regular religious dialogue sessions by a committee represented by prominent Yemeni Islamic scholars. Other efforts to help them reintegrate into society include providing jobs for them. As of June 2005, the committee claimed a 90% success rate, with the recommendation of the release of 350 out of the 400 detained with whom they have had four rounds of dialogue.

In Indonesia, after privately watching videos showing Bali bombers recordings before blowing themselves up, Indonesia's scholars decided to form a task force to counter extremist ideologies in the country. The gathering included members of the nation's highest Islamic authority; the Indonesian Ulama (scholars) Council, Muhammadiyah movement and Nahdlatul Ulama who count on some 40 million members.Indonesian government has also been requested to ban books that propagate terror like books written by Imam Samudra and Amrozi, two of the three 2002 Bali bombers. Mainstream scholars are also urged to write books to counter these books.

In Singapore, the Religious Rehabilitation Group or the RRG has played a very important role in rehabilitating the JI detainees and their families. While these counselling sessions are still ongoing, RRG has embarked on to the next phase, which is the public education phase. This is crucial to immunize the public especially the younger generations from JI's deviant ideology, thus cutting off JI's supply of new recruits in the longer term.

Stay Vigilant. Be Resilient

The terrorist network may have been crippled but terrorist will continue to present a long-term security threat to countries in this region. Terrorist resilience can be partly contributed by their religious ideology; hence an effective counter terrorism strategy should not only disrupt the terrorists' base but also its ideology and appeal.

As an example, the emergence of new groups and factions like Tanzim Qaidatul Jihad headed by Noordin Mohd Top indicates that al-Qaeda's ideology still persists in the region in spite of efforts to eradicate the bases, structural organization and support system for the group.

Conclusion

We should also note that while the current crop of terrorist leaders can be killed, captured or even rehabilitated, the seeds have already been planted for the next generation. Hence, in the longer term, counter-ideological responses are crucial to disrupt the recruitment and regeneration cycle. The younger generation is particularly vulnerable, as it has been shown that these terrorist groups have been able to recruit young people for their suicide bombings.

Islam In Southeast Asia

Tolerance & Radicalism

by
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Paper Presented at Miegunyah Public Lecture The University of Melbourne Wednesday 6 April, 2005

Religious life is often colored by myths. In fact many religions have their roots in the myths, originating from enchantment with gods and nature. Revealed religions like Islam, Christianity and Judaism (the Abrahamic religions) are, however, generally opposed to the mythologising of their doctrine. As a strict monotheistic religion, Islam, in particular, strongly emphasizes the need to keep the faith free from any kind of myth. This is especially true of myths relating to God, since that could lead to "associationism" (shirk), which is one of cardinal sins in Islam.

Despite this, understandings of Islam among Muslims are often colored by misperception, if not, in fact, myths. There is also a great deal of misperception and mythologising among outside observers about Islam and Muslims. This is – in most cases – the result of complex historical, sociological and political factors that are beyond the scope of this lecture. Instead, today a few myths that specifically relate to Southeast Asian Islam will be mentioned and critically assessed.

The first myth – still strong among many Western scholars and observers – is what I call the "myth of abangan", that is, that Southeast Asian Islam is somehow not 'real' Islam. The very term "religion of Java" (1968) coined by the influential American anthropologist, Clifford Geertz, to describe Islamic life among the Javanese, reflects a reluctance to recognize the 'Islamicity' of Islam in Java, or even in Southeast Asian in general. It is something 'Javanese' rather than something Islamic. Through his distinction between santri (strict and practicing Muslims) and abangan (nominal Muslims), Geertz argued that majority of Muslims in Java, and by extension in Indonesia in general, were abangan, that is, nominal, only. As a result, Southeast Asian Islam historically, sociologically, culturally and politically has often been regarded as marginal and peripheral vis-à-vis Middle Eastern Islam. It is viewed as an obscure phenomenon and only a "thin veneer of symbols attached to a supposedly solid core of animistic and Hindu-Buddhist meaning". A consequence of this is that, Islam is thus regarded as having no significant impact on Southeast Asian culture.

It is true that Southeast Asian Islam is among the least Arabicized forms of Islam, largely as a result of a process of Islamization that was generally peaceful, and gradual; but one should not therefore be misled by the abangan "myth". The reality is that while pre-existing local beliefs

and practices resisted the continued process of Islamization, a purer and orthodox form of Islam did, nevertheless, steadily penetrate deeper into parts of the region.

A number of scholars have observed this phenomenon. As early as 1950s, for example, Harry J. Benda maintained that the Islamic history of Indonesia [as elsewhere in Southeast Asia] is essentially a history of santri cultural expansion and its impact on Indonesian religious life and politics (Benda 1958:14). Two decades later, Howard Federspiel (1970:3) concluded that over the past four hundred years, Indonesia [as well as Islam in Southeast Asia in general] has slowly been moving towards a more orthodox form of religion, while heterodox beliefs and practices have declined considerably over the same period. Later research by such scholars as Woodward (1989), Pranowo (1994), Ricklefs (1998) and others have confirmed further the strong tendencies towards Islamic orthodoxy and the blurring of real distinctions between santri and abangan. The process is also known in Indonesia as 'santrinization', a process that involves some indigenization or contextualization.

A move towards Islamic rejuvenation can be observed clearly among Muslims in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia, in the last two decades. New tendencies in religious observance, new institutions, new Muslim groups and new Islamic life-styles have increasingly been adopted by many Muslims in this period. More and more new mosques with new architecture (usually derived from the Middle East) have been constructed – and they are full of congregations, mostly youthful. At the same time, more and more Muslims have gone on the haj, the pilgrimage to Mecca. In fact the number of the pilgrims (some 225,000 Muslims per annum) from Southeast Asia is the largest compared to those coming from other areas of the Muslim world. At the same time, an increasingly large sum of religious alms and donations (zakat, infaq and sadaqah/ZIS) have been collected from well-to-do Muslims and distributed among the poor and deprived Muslims. New institutions for collecting ZIS have been formed, like the Dompet Dhua'fa Republika Indonesia, which has been phenomenally successful.

Changes in the policies of government towards more conciliatory approaches to Islam and Muslim groups in both Indonesia and Malaysia since the 1990s have greatly contributed to the rise of new Islamic institutions, such as Islamic banks (also known in Indonesia as syari'ah banks, since they operate in accordance with the syari'ah/Islamic law), Islamic insurance (takaful), Islamic people's credit unions (BPR-Syari'ah, or Bank Perkreditan Rakyat Syari'ah, and BMT or Bait al-Mal wa al-Tamwil). Malaysia, of course, developed these Islamic institutions much earlier than Indonesia. But now in Indonesia, "conventional banks"—following the Malaysian example—also open Syari'ah divisions or branches.

In addition, new and high-quality Islamic educational institutions have been established in Malaysia and Indonesia, either by Muslim private foundations or by the state. In Malaysia, this includes the formation of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) by the Malaysian government, followed by a number of other Islamic universities and colleges in Malaysia – the latest one being the College University Islam Malaysia (CUIM).

In Indonesia, Islamic higher education now consists of 33 State Islamic Colleges (Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam/STAIN) which were established in 1997 in various cities throughout Indonesia. There are also 13 State Institutes for Islamic Studies (Institut Agama Islam Negeri/IAIN) established in the the 1960s and early 1970s. In the last three years, three IAINs and one STAIN, have been converted to full-fledged university (Universitas Islam Negeri/UIN). These include not only faculties of Islamic studies (religious sciences), but also faculties such as Economics and Social Sciences, Science and Technology, Psychology and Faculties of Medicine and Health Sciences.

These Islamic higher educational institutions undoubtedly play an important role in the modernization of Muslim society. Owing much to "rational" and "non-denominational" approaches to Islam, graduates of IAINs, STAINs, and UINs in general have been recognized by Indonesian society in general as having progressive, inclusive, and tolerant views of Islam. In contrast, many students and graduates of "secular" universities such as the University of Indonesia (UI) or Bandung Institute of Technology (Institut Teknologi Bandung/ITB) tend to be more literal in their view and understanding of Islam. STAIN, IAIN and UIN graduates are instrumental in the building and spread of Islamic institutions such as the Islamic

schools, pesantrens (traditional Islamic boarding educational institutions), madrasahs (Islamic religious schools), NGOs and Majlis Ta`lim (religious group discussions in offices and society at large: Jabali & Jamhari 2002).

In the meantime, new quality schools and madrasahs, such as the Sekolah Islam al-Azhar, SMU Madania, SMU al-Izhar, and the like have also been established in ever-increasing number since the late 1980s. These Islamic schools are known as "sekolah Islam unggulan" (quality Islamic schools) are attended mostly by children of the Muslim elite. As I have argued elsewhere, these schools play an important role in the "re-Islamization" or "santrinization" of Muslim parents.

At the same time, the madrasahs—now according to Indonesian Educational Law of 1989 equivalent to "secular schools"—and pesantrens or pondok (the Islamic boarding schools) have been modernized as well. They now employ the national curricula issued by the Ministries of National Education and of Religious Affairs. It is inaccurate to assume that in Indonesia the madrasahs and pesantrens have sufficient discretion in their curriculum to teach subjects according to the wish of their teachers or the foundations that own them. It is therefore wrong to regard them as the "breeding ground" of Talibanism or extremism, as is the case for many madrasah in Afghanistan or Pakistan.

Pesantren are now also established in the urban areas. In the past, pesantren have been associated mostly with rural areas, and have thus been a symbol of Muslim backwardness. This is no longer true. Furthermore, in the past pesantren were generally located in Java, but now more and more have been founded also in Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and other islands. Pesantren now play a number of roles. They are not only centers of Islamic education, but also centers of social development and empowerment. As centers of Islamic education, pesantrens now offer a variety of education, ranging from general schools to madrasahs to vocational training, up to university level studies. And, as centers of social development, pesantren conduct programs and activities related to economic development, social welfare, appropriate technology for rural areas and so forth.

All of these developments represent wider changes within Southeast Asian Muslim communities. Since the 1980s, a new Muslim middle class has developed. While there is no specific term used to denote them in Indonesia, in Malaysia the rising Muslim middle class is called the "new Malay" (cf Alatas 1996). Although this new Muslim middle class is heavily tied to, and dependent upon, the ruling regimes in the respective countries, there is little doubt that they have played a significant role in the construction of, and support for, the new Islamic institutions. Furthermore, they are instrumental in the spread of new life-styles, such as the widespread use of jilbab for women, or of "baju koko", Muslim shirts – or even a new tradition of conducting religious discussions, seminars, and ceremonies in hotels and other prominent places.

Despite all of these new attachments to Islam, it is important to point out that, by and large, they have not led to significant changes in political attitude. The majority of Muslims in Southeast Asia continue to hold fast to the political arrangements achieved in the period of independence following World War II. It is true that after the fall of Soeharto, many Islamic parties have been established in Indonesia; but they have usually failed to win significant votes, including in the general elections of 1999 and 2004 (Azra 2000). Likewise, in Malaysia, although PAS (the Islamic Party) was able to increase its power in elections during the last years of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, it is clear that the secularist UMNO remains too strong to beat. In fact, the new Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, has been able to reverse the trends and UMNO once again won the last elections at the expense of PAS, which saw its power decline significantly. It seems that it is almost a myth that the Islamists would be able to wrestle political power in both Indonesia and Malaysia, therefore to exaggerate the strength and influence of the Islamists in the region is to contribute to another myth.

One of the most obvious features of Islamic politics in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia, is conflict and fragmentation among political elite. A great number of Islamic political parties have appeared, especially in Indonesia in the post-Soeharto period. These parties have been involved not only in gaining political power, but also in determining the meaning and interpretation of Islam. But, again this has not hindered the development of Indonesia's – long awaited – democracy. The surprisingly peaceful elections of 2004 only consolidated this democracy further. The new –


Qiblatain Mosque, Madina, Saudia Arabia

and, once again, secularist – leadership of Indonesia under Presiden Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Vice President Muhammad Jusuf Kalla now have popular mandate to deliver better political, economics, social and cultural conditions in Indonesia.

Transnational Connections

It is clear that in addition to the internal dynamics in Malaysia and Indonesia that contribute to the increased momentum of new attachment to Islam, transnational or global influences have also played an important role. As I argued elsewhere (Azra 2004), the tendency toward orthodoxy in Southeast Asia had its origins in the intense religio-intellectual transnational contacts and connections since the 16th century between Malay-Indonesian students and their co-religionists and 'ulama' (religious scholars) in the Middle East, particularly in the Haramayn (Mecca and Medina). Returning students or scholars implanted a more shari'ah-oriented Islam in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, which forced the so-called "pantheistic" (or wujudiyyah mulhid) Sufism to cede ground (Azra 2004). This was the beginning of the rise of a more scriptural Islam, or in Reid's term, "scriptural orthodoxy" in Southeast Asia (Reid 1988) that we see today.

Intense contacts between Southeast Asian Islam with that of the Middle East continued in the 19th century and, by the end of that century, new transnational waves of Muslim discourse reached the shores of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. These were brought into the archipelago not only by returning students, but also by haj pilgrims who from the 1870s traveled in ever increasing numbers to the Holy Land. The most important discourse in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago arising from this wave was pan-Islamism, but other waves followed in the early 20th century, originating from Cairo, and categorized by many observers as "Islamic modernism". The spread of this new discourse had led to the formation of such modernist Muslim organization as the Muhammadiyah (1912), al-Irsyad (1913) and Persis (in the early 1920s) (Azra 2002a; Laffan 2003).

In contemporary times, the transnational waves that influenced Muslim discourse in Southeast

Asia no longer stem only from the Haramayn or even from Cairo. In fact, the previously respected position of the Haramayn (or, indeed, Saudi Arabia as a whole), has been in decline for the last few decades, at least so far as the discourse of Southeast Asian Islam is concerned. In fact, Wahhabism, which originated from Arabia in the late 18th century and which is now the official religious ideology of Saudi Arabia, remains an anathema for many, if not most, Muslims in Southeast Asia. The traditions of Islam in Southeast Asia are, in the main, simply incompatible with Wahabi literalism, puritanism and radicalism. Therefore we should not overplay the influence of Saudi Arabian Wahhabism in Southeast Asia. There are, of course, traces of Wahhabism in the region, but they do not significantly influence the course of mainstream Southeast Asian Islam (Azra 2002a).

In recent times, other places in the Middle East, or elsewhere in the Muslim world, have begun to exert more influence and have, in turn, left their mark on Muslim discourse in Southeast Asia. Thus, since 1980s the discourse developed by such scholars as Abu al-A'la al-Mawdudi, Sayyid Qutb, Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani and Middle Eastern movements like al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun (and its splinter groups), Hizb al-Tahrir and the like began to spread in Southeast Asia. The Iranian Islamic revolution of Ayatullah Khomeini in 1979 further inspired Islamists in the region to be more assertive.

At the same time, however, Muslim thinkers living in the Western hemisphere, such as Ismail al-Faruqi, Fazlur Rahman, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and others, provide another stream of Islamic thought that is widely circulated in Southeast Asia. Through their books, which have been translated in Indonesian and Malaysian languages, they continue to exert a significant influence among Southeast Asian Muslim thinkers.

It is important here to point out that despite all the influences from the outside, Southeast Asian Muslim thinkers have also developed their own distinctive thought. This is no simple, uncritical adoption of thought from abroad. In fact, there are continued attempts among Southeast Asian Muslim thinkers and 'ulama' to formulate ideas that respond to modern Islamic thought elsewhere in the world but which has greater relevance for Southeast Asian historical, sociological, cultural and political contexts. This is apparent in the concepts introduced by Southeast Asian Muslim scholars such as "indigenization", or "contextualization" of Islam in Southeast Asia.

Continued "indigenization", makes it almost a cliché to say Southeast Asian Islam is distinctive, having a different expression compared with Islams in the Middle East or elsewhere in the Islamic world. In the 1990s Southeast Asian Islam was dubbed by leading international media such as Newsweek and Time magazines as "Islam with a smiling face". Islam in the region was generally regarded as a brand of peaceful and moderate Islam that has no problem with modernity, democracy, human rights and other tendencies of the modern world.

It is worth mentioning here that, according to a report entitled "Freedom in the World 2002: The Democracy Gap" released by the Freedom House in late December 2001, Indonesia was identified as one of the "bright spots" of democracy among dominant or pre-dominant Muslim countries. The 'democracy gap' is especially clear in the Islamic Arab countries, but Indonesia, and – I would argue – Malaysia as well, show considerable democratic fervour.

However, although democracy is strong in post-Soeharto Indonesia, its relationship with Islam is not always so clear. Discussion and debate on this issue is now at the forefront, as both discourse and reality, in Indonesian politics. The conflicting political trends that emerged with Indonesian democratisation from the interregnum of President B.J. Habibie until today has also created much confusion in this regard but the success of the peaceful general elections of 1999 and 2004 has shown that Islam and democracy in Indonesia are not inherently opposed and can, in fact, work well together.

Looking again at religious, sociological and political realities of Southeast Asian Muslim, I would argue that there is only very limited room for radical discourses and movements in Southeast Asia in general. It is therefore simply wrong to assert that Muslim radicalism in the Middle East will find a fertile ground in Southeast Asia.

Radicalization of Militant Groups

In the last several years, however, some foreign observers as well international media have asserted that the face of Southeast Asian Islam is undergoing significant change. Increasingly, Islam in the region is regarded as experiencing a rapid process of radicalization - worse still, the Muslim region of Southeast Asia is now perceived by

some as a potential "hotbed of terrorism". This perception, I would argue, is another popular 'myth' about Islam. There is – of course – the potential for radicalism among Southeast Asian Muslims, as there is in most communities, but it is going too far to view the region as becoming a "hotbed".

This must be explained carefully. The rapid political changes that have been taking place at the national, regional and international levels, especially after the September 11, 2002 tragedy in the US, have indeed witnessed a rise in Muslim radicalism in the region. The arrest of individuals and groups in Southeast Asian countries, including Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, and Indonesia has increasingly indicated that they have regional links with each other and probably with international terrorist groups as well.

The investigation by the Indonesian police of the Bali bombings on October 12, 2002, for instance, seems to disclose complex connections between the individuals and groups that carried violent and terrorist activities including the Marriot (2003) and Australian Embassy (2004) bombings. A clearer picture of the radical networks appears and there are at least two conspicuous patterns uncovered from police investigation of the Bali bombings. Firstly, some of the perpetrators of the bombings are alumni of the Ngruki Pesantren, the chief of which is Abu Bakar Baasyir, widely regarded as the spiritual leader of Jama'ah Islamiyyah, the core of Islamic radical groups in Southeast Asia. Secondly, some of the perpetrators had been living in Malaysia in the period of Abu Bakar Baasyir's self-exile to escape President Soeharto's harsh measures against him. (Azra, 2003b; ICG August 2002; ICG December 2002; Nursalim 2001).

This perception of the rise of radicalism among Southeast Asian Muslims appeared rapidly after the September 11, 2001 tragedy in New York and Washington DC. The perception grew stronger in the light of successive events in the aftermath of "9-11", especially the Bali bombings that left two hundred innocent people dead. The bombings at a McDonald's outlet and the Haji Kalla car show room in Makasar, South Sulawesi, on the eve of `Id al-Fitr (December 5) the following year, confirmed this perception of a tendency towards terrorism among certain radical individuals and

groups in Indonesia.

Certainly, there can be little doubt that the September 11, 2001 tragedy did rapidly radicalize certain individuals and groups among Muslims in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia. The American military operations in Afghanistan following the attacks on World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington DC has, unfortunately, given real momentum for the radicals to assert themselves. The Bush administration's attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq has fuelled bitter resentment among the radicals. The arrests of suspected radicals in Malaysia, Singapore, and Philippines has added fuel to their anger and bitterness toward the US and symbols that they consider as symbolizing American imperialist arrogance, such as McDonald's, or Kentucky Fried Chicken, outlets.

In addition, political realities in Indonesia have also contributed to radicalization of certain individuals and groups. The breakdown of law and order and the relative weakness of central government authority after the fall of President Soeharto provided room for the radicals to assert themselves. In fact, they attempted in a number of ways to destabilize the President Megawati, whom they had opposed since her PDI-P won the 1999 general elections (Azra 2003a).

One should not be misled, however, with these complex developments. In fact, radicalism among certain groups of Indonesian Muslims in particular is not new. Although Southeast Asian Islam in general has been viewed as moderate and peaceful form of Islam, the history of Islam in the region shows that radicalism among Muslims has existed for at least two centuries. In West Sumatra in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, for example, the Wahhabi-like Padri movement led other Muslims in the area to subscribe to their literal and puritanical understanding of Islam. This violent, armed movement aimed at spreading a pure and pristine Islam it presented as the Islam practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions (the salaf). The Padri, however, failed to gain support from majority of Muslims and, as a result, their movement, which ultimately failed, became isolated as the only precedent for Wahhabi-like radicalism in the Southeast Asia region.

The Padri movement did, however, mark a shift in the continued influence of Middle Eastern Islam on the course of Southeast Asian Islam. As I have argued elsewhere (Azra 2003b), from the 16th century to the 18th century, Islam in the Middle East exerted very strong influence on Islamic intellectualism and religious life in Southeast Asia, mainly through complex networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian 'ulama' who, as mentioned earlier, played a crucial role in the peaceful reform of Islamic intellectualism and life in Southeast Asia over the centuries. I should mention, however, that toward the end of the 18th century, discourse on jihad (holy war) was introduced by such prominent Malay-Indonesian scholars as 'Abd al-Samad al-Palimbani and Daud ibn 'Abd Allah al-Patani, as a response to the increased encroachment of European colonialism in Southeast Asia. This version of Jihad was usually not directed against other Muslims. In West Sumatra, however, it was. It is thus the Padri of West Sumatra who set a precedent for radicalism among Southeast Asian Muslims by launching jihad against their fellow Muslims.

Politico-Religious Roots of Radicalism

The root causes of radicalism among Muslims have always been very complex. The complexity is even greater now, because of a broad range of factors that are working to influence the course of Muslim societies as a whole. In the past, before the modern period, the driver of radicalism were mainly internal, that is, radicalism was usually a response to internal problems faced by the Muslims, such as the rapid decline of Muslim political entities and continued conflict among Muslim communities.

Many Muslims in the colonial time strongly believed that the sorry situation of the Muslim world dominated by Western Christians or atheists had a lot to do with the socio-moral decay of Muslims themselves, resulting from wrong religious beliefs and practices. According to this argument, they had simply abandoned the original and real teachings of Islam and were thus being punished.

As a result, some Muslims felt it necessary to conduct tajdid (renewal) or islah (reform) not only through peaceful means, but also by force and other radical means they considered to be more effective. This, of course, included declaring jihad against Muslims who were regarded as being have gone astray. Islam of course emphasizes the need for Muslims to renew their beliefs and practices. In fact, in one of his hadith (traditions of the prophet), the prophet Muhammad states that

there would be a reformer or renewer (mujaddid) of Islam, coming at the end of every century to renew and revitalize Islam. At the same time, however, it is clear that the same hadith prohibits the use of radical and violent means in the efforts to renew and reform Islam.

One of the strongest tendencies in the discourses and movements of Islamic renewal and reforms is a tendency towards what is seen as the pure and pristine Islam practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions (the salafs). That is why most of the Islamic renewal movements are identified as Salafiyyah (or Salafi, or Salafism). There is a very wide spectrum of Islamic discourse and movements that can be included as Salafiyyah (Cf ICG 2004; Jamhari & Jahroni 2004). So much so, that I can make a distinction between "classic Salafiyyah" and "neo-Salafiyyah"; or "peaceful Salafiyyah" and "radical Salafiyyah". The Wahhabi movement in the Arabian Peninsula that gained momentum in the late 18th century can, for example, be categorized as both 'classic' and 'radical' Salafiyyah. This is also true of the Wahhabi-like Padri movement in West Sumatra in the 19th century, described briefly earlier, which was "classic Salafism", where internal factors with the Muslim ummah or community were its driving force.

The spectrum of "neo Salafiyyah" discourses and movements is certainly very complex. The term "neo" in the first instance refers to the period of the modern period, beginning with the harsh encounters between Muslim societies and Western colonial powers from the 16th century onwards. During this period, the external factors—associated mostly with the Western world—that could incite radicalism became increasingly more and more dominant. In fact, the West has been accused by many Muslims as being responsible for many, if not most, of the problems that Muslims have faced in the last several centuries. Confronting continued Western political, economic and cultural domination and hegemony, many Muslims were afflicted by a kind of defensive psychology that led to, among others, a belief in "conspiracy theories".

There were of course outbursts of Muslim

Demonstration in Jakarta

radicalism in Southeast Asia in the period of the 19th century and up to World War II, during the heyday of European colonialism in the region. These were a different kind of radicalism. They were in fact jihads to liberate Muslim lands (dar al-Islam) from the occupation of the hostile infidel European coming from the lands of war (dar al-harb). According to classical Islamic doctrines, jihad against hostile infidels may be justified and can, in fact, be considered as just war; Jihads of this kind are believed to be wars in the way of God (jihad fi sabil Allah).

Looking at the whole history of radicalism among Muslims, I would, however, argue that radicalism among Muslims is more political rather than religious. In some instances, the original motive could be religious, but the movements soon become very political. Political developments in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia after World War II were important factors in the rise of new kind of radicalism among Muslims. For instance, disappointed with the Indonesian military policies of rationalization of paramilitary groups following Indonesian independence on August 17, 1945, the Muslim militia leader, Kartosuwirjo rebelled against the embattled Republic in the name of Islam. This was the origin of the Dar al-Islam (DI, or Islamic State) or Negara Islam Indonesia (NII, Islamic State of Indonesia) and the Indonesian Islamic Army (Tentera Islam Indonesia/TII), organisations that aimed to establish an Islamic state, dawlah al-Islamiyah, in Indonesia. Even though this rebellion spread to South Sulawesi and Aceh in the 1950s, it failed to gain support from the majority of Indonesian Muslims, who, after a bitter ideological struggle in the last year of Japanese occupation, had accepted Pancasila ("five pillars") as the national ideology, a doctrine that enshrined religious plurality and rejected an Islamic state. As a result, the Indonesian army was able to muster sufficient support and crush these radical movements.

The idea of the establishment of Islamic state (dawlah al-Islamiyyah) is, however, one of the most significant issues that has continually arisen as an aspiration among certain groups of Muslims in Indonesia. Groups among the moderates, such as the Masjumi party under the leadership of Mohammad Natsir, for instance, also sought to transform Indonesia into a dawlah al-Islamiyyah. It is important to point out that – by contrast to DI – these attempts were carried out through legal and constitutional ways, more precisely, through parliament. But they consistently failed, mainly because Islamic parties were involved in quarrels and conflicts among themselves and, therefore, failed to gain a majority in national election of 1955, thus, also in the parliament. This has been the pattern ever since, at all subsequent elections.

It is important to note here that despite this failure, moderate Muslim leaders in Indonesia have never resorted to illegal means, such as armed rebellion, to transform Indonesia into an Islamic state. In contrast, there has been growing tendency among them to accept Pancasila as a final political reality, as the common platform for a plural Indonesia that includes a majority Muslim population. At the same time, however, there remain individuals and Muslim groups who keep the idea of establishing an Islamic state in Indonesia alive. Depending on the political situation, these people operate underground or openly in achieving their goals. They may also collaborate with disgruntled elements of the military or even with other radical groups which, in terms of ideology, are incompatible.

The Soeharto New Order regime was not on good terms with Muslim political forces in general – at least not in the period of 1970s and 1980s. In fact there much mutual suspicion and hostilities between the two sides and President Soeharto took very harsh measures against any expression of Islamic extremism. But at the same time, it is widely believed that certain military generals such as Ali Murtopo and Benny Moerdani recruited ex Darul Islam/TII members to form Komando Jihad (Jihad Command), to conduct subversive activities in order to discredit Islam and Muslims (Ausop 2003).

This is a "marriage of convenience", or in Islamic terms nikah mut`ah. We must therefore be very careful in analysis of radical groups. Some could be genuine, motivated mostly by religion, but others could be "engineered" radicals sponsored by certain individuals and groups of people for their own political ends.

Contemporary Muslim Radical Groups

The fall of President Soeharto after more than three decades in power unleashed idle Muslim radicals. The euphoria of newly-found democracy and lifting of the "anti-subversion law" by President BJ Habibie, provided a basis for radicals to express extremist and radical discourses and to conduct their activities in a more visible manner.

The lack of law enforcement because of demoralization of the police and military (TNI) has created a kind of legal vacuum that has been exploited by the radical groups to take law into their own hands.

Some of the most important radical groups should be mentioned. These include are the Lasykar Jihad (LJ), formed by the Forum Komunikasi Ahlussunnah Wa al-Jamaah (FKAWJ) under the leadership of Ja'far Umar Thalib; the Front Pembela Islam (FPI/Islamic Defence Front) led by Habib Rizq Shihab; the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI/Council of Indonesian Jihad Fighters) led by Abu Bakar Baasyir; the Jamaah Ikhwan al-Muslimin Indonesia (JAMI) led by Habib Husein al-Habsyi; and the Hizb al-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI/ Indonesian Party of Liberation) (Bamualim et al 2001; Azra 2003a; Fananie et al 2002). Some of these groups have been either disbanded by their own leaders—like the Lasykar Jihad—or have been laying low following the arrests and trial of the perpetrators of the Bali and Marriot Hotel bombings.

It is also clear that these radical groups are independent and do not have any connection with established, mainstream Islamic organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) or Muhammadiyah, etc. Nor are they affiliated with Islamic political parties. This is because the radical groups do not trust other established Muslim organizations, whether socio-religious or political in nature. This is mainly because, in the view of these radical groups, established Muslim organizations are too accommodative and too compromising in their political and religious attitude vis-a-vis Indonesian political and religious realities. Political struggles and conflicts among fragmented political groups, as well among the pro- and anti-status quo groups involving also circles in the Indonesian military (TNI) in the aftermath of President Soeharto's fall, provide another impetus for the radical to asserts themselves.

I would suggest that there are at least two categories of these radical groups. The first group includes radical groups that are basically home-grown, such as the Lasykar Jihad, FPI and some other smaller groups. The second group includes Middle Eastern affiliated- or oriented groups, like the JAMI—which has its origin in the al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun in Egypt—and Hizb al-Tahrir, which was initially founded in Jordan by Syaikh Taqi al-Din Nabhani in the 1950s. All of these radical groups do, however, share very strong Middle Eastern-oriented ideology. In religious terms, they subscribe to the ideology of radical Salafism; and in terms of politics, they are believers in the ideology of khilafatism which aims for the establishment of a single, universal khilafah (caliphate) for all Muslims in the world.

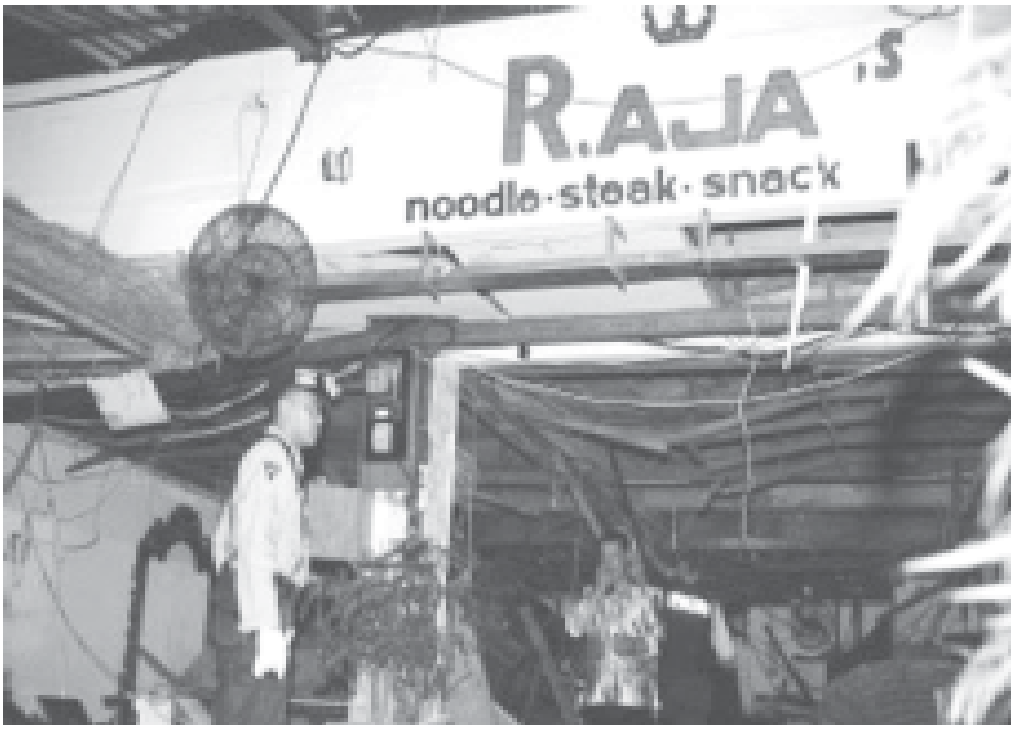
Yet, although these radical groups aim to establish a dawlah Islamiyah of khilafah in the region, they can be differentiated from the old Darul Islam/NII movement in Indonesia. Due to conflicts and splits among the ex-Darul Islam/ NII members resulting from Soeharto-era Indonesian intelligence operations, as mentioned above, radical groups tend to operate independently from older groups (Ausop 2003).

It is important also to point out that the khilafah and dawlah Islamiyyah are conspicuously absent in the discourse of mainstream Muslim organizations such as NU, Muhammadiyah and other major organizations throughout the country. In fact, leaders of these organizations believe that concepts such as dawlah Islamiyyah are simply a new invention among certain Muslim thinkers and groups resulting from Muslim encounter with Western modern concepts of the nation-state. They conclude that the Indonesian model of the Pancasila state is already in conformity with Islam.

Looking at the whole phenomenon of radicalism among Muslims in Southeast Asia, or in Indonesia in particular, it is clear that it has a long and complex history. The history of radicalism among certain Muslim groups also shows that there are many causes for radicalism and that there is a strong tendency that their motives are political rather than religious. It is also conspicuous that their radicalism has a lot to do with the disruption of political and social systems as a whole. The absence of law enforcement, or its weakness, is certainly an important factor in this regard, as radicals take the law into their own hands in the name of their own vision of Islam.

'Blessing in Disguise'?

The terrorist bombing in Bali on October 2002 is certainly a tragedy for contemporary Indonesia. In fact, the bombing reflects a new phase of violence and terror in the country. This can be seen not only in the relatively large number of the victims, but also in the use of so lethal a weapon by the terrorists to achieve the greatest



possible psychological impact, both domestically and internationally. Worse still, there is suspicion that one of the perpetrators was a suicide bomber, reminding one of the Palestinian suicide bombers. It is difficult for Indonesian people in general to accept that individuals among them can be so ruthless and inhumane.

But now, after intensive police investigation, the Bali bombing can, for several reasons, could be seen in some ways as a 'blessing in disguise'. This is because, first, the police have been able to catch the alleged perpetrators of the bombing, and second, because, by doing so, they have uncovered fresh evidence of networks of radicals in Indonesia and Southeast Asia in the general. The revelation of the existence of these networks has been crucial for establishing the fact that the radicals have been working in Southeast Asia, or in Indonesia in particular, in the last several years to achieve their ends, the most important of which is supposedly an "Islamic State of Nusantara" that would consist of Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Singapore and, probably, also the Muslim area of South Philippines (Azra 2003b).

A great deal of credit, then, must be given to the police who have worked tirelessly to investigate the case and have been successful in uncovering links between one perpetrator and another.

These events are important in Indonesia because the revelation of the networks of the radicals by the police has silenced many of the skeptics, who from the very day of the Bali blast had maintained that the bombing was simply a US or Western plot to discredit Islam and destroy the image of Muslims in the country. The skeptics, some of whom are prominent Muslim leaders, who seemed to believe in the so-called "conspiracy theory", in fact accused the Megawati government of slavishly surrendering to the wishes of President Bush of the US in particular. This kind of accusation was also made against Susilo Bambang Yudhoyomo during Presidential elections of 2004 but it failed to make much impact on the public and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono won the elections regardless.

The disclosure of the networks of the radicals also shows that the "conspiracy theory" does not ring true. The statements of Amrozi, Imam Samudra and their accomplices, allegedly involved in the Bali and other bombings, make it clear that the bombings have been motivated by both "genuine" radicalism and hatred against the US and other Western powers. The fact that the perpetrators show no remorse for the innocent

victims has also shown that they have been more strongly motivated by their own violent ideology than by anything else and has done much to lessen even tacit tolerance of radicalism.

Finally, the revelation of the networks of radicals points to the fact that there are indeed terrorists among Indonesians who happen to be Muslims and who are more than happy to use violent means to achieve their ends, even against fellow Muslims. Before the police disclosures, there was a widespread reluctance among leaders of Indonesian Islam to admit that there are terrorists among Indonesian Muslims who have misused the teachings of Islam to justify their terrorist activities. In fact some prominent Muslim leaders have, in the past, issued statements that create an impression not only of defending the radicals, but even of condoning violence and terrorist acts.

Empowerment of the Moderate

It is now the right time for Southeast Asian Muslim leaders – the bulk of whom are moderates – to sincerely admit that there is a serious problem of radicalism among certain Muslim individuals and groups. This problem should be directly addressed by moderate Muslim leaders, hand in hand with law enforcement agencies, for the sake of the image of Islam as a peaceful religion and of Southeast Asian Muslim followers as "Islam with a smiling face". The problems of the radicals should be seen at two levels; first, the abuse and manipulation of certain Islamic doctrines to justify radicalism and terrorism. This abuse undoubtedly comes from literal, Wahhabi-inspired, interpretation of Islam. The second problem is more basic and it relates to the use of violence and terrorism, which, in itself, undoubtedly runs contrary to Islam.

Therefore, it is time now for moderate Muslim leaders to speak more clearly and loudly that literal and puritanical interpretations of Islam will only lead to extremism that is unacceptable to Islam, and that Islam can not condone, let alone justify, any kind of violent or terrorist act. There is absolutely no valid reason for any Muslim to conduct activities that harm or kill other people, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Any kind of resentment and deprivation felt by any individual or group of Muslims cannot, and must not, be used to justify any kind of desperate and inhuman act of this sort.

Furthermore, moderate Muslim leaders should not be misled by the claims and assertion of the radicals. The radicals are shrewd not only in abusing Islamic doctrines for their own ends, but also in manipulating Muslim sentiment through the manipulation of mass media, particularly television. Claims that the arrest of certain radical leaders means the suppression of Islam and the 'ulama' are very misleading. Similarly, claims that the police investigations in Indonesia of certain pesantren in the search for the perpetrators of the bombings, is a first step towards hostility and suspicion against the whole pesantren system is even more misleading.

The simplistic identification of radical leaders and groups with Islam and 'ulama' is likewise very misleading. In fact the radicals are only a very small fraction of the ocean of moderate Muslims in Indonesia who from their sheer number can be fairly regarded as the representation of the peaceful nature of Southeast Asian Islam. Therefore, the moderates should be very careful not to support any impression that could lead to the identification of the radicals with Islam and Muslims at large in the region.

Some have argued that the defensive attitude of certain moderate Muslim leaders, particularly in Indonesia, originates from the trauma of political engineering and abuses by the police and military of the Muslims during the Soeharto period. This argument, I believe, seems irrelevant to the political situation in contemporary Indonesia. There is no evidence that the Megawati Soekarnoputri government was hostile to Islam and Muslims. In fact, President Megawati seemed very sensitive on Muslim issues compared to her predecessor, President Abdurrahman Wahid, despite the fact that he comes from the pesantren milieu. Lacking Islamic credentials, President Megawati in fact carefully avoided making statements, let alone policies, that could spark opposition from Muslims in general. This also seems true for President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who is close to some Muslim groups and, in fact, made political alliances with Islamic parties like the Crescent and Star Party (PBB) and the Justice and Welfare Party (PKS).

There has, of course, been a lot of criticism of President Megawati Soekarnoputri who was regarded as very hesitant and indecisive and wary of taking harsh measures against the radicals, because she was worried it is argued of possible backlash from Muslim public. It appears that she did not realize that the moderate Muslim leaders and organizations were more than willing

to rally behind her in opposition to any kind of religious extremism and radicalism. This was made clear by statements of Hasyim Muzadi (national chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama/NU) and Syafii Maarif (national chairman of Muhammadiyah) in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 tragedy in the US that Indonesian Islam cannot accept any kind of religious extremism. Furthermore, the two largest Muslim organizations, representing some 70 million Indonesian Muslims, have reached an accord to tackle religious radicalism through their various policies and programs.

As for the police force, it has become increasingly difficult for them to abuse human rights to the extent they did in the past. The fall of Soeharto's authoritarian regime and the rise of democracy in Indonesia have forced police to be more sensitive to human rights issues and to the protection of the rights of the alleged perpetrators of any kind of violence and terrorism. But this is, however, not to suggest that the police are free from heavy-handedness and insensitivity, but rather that it is becoming harder for them to get away with it. It is the duty of the public to control and watch the police closely in their investigations in order not only to prevent possible wrongdoings and mishandlings of the suspected criminals by the police, but also to establish credible procedures and support the due process of law.

Therefore, moderate Muslim leaders while maintaining a watchful eye regarding police efforts against perpetrators of violent and terrorist acts, should also support police in their investigations. I suggest that one of the most important root causes of violence and terrorism in present day Indonesia is the almost total absence of law enforcement and, worse still, the persistence of impunity for state officials. In fact the vacuum of law enforcement and of decisive actions by the police have been important raison d'etre for certain radical groups who have decided to take the law into their own hands through unlawful activities, such as the raids on discotheques, nightclubs, and other places the radicals believe to be sources of social ills.

Above all, the future of moderate and peaceful Southeast Asian Islam is dependent on a fair, objective, pro-active attitude on the part of the moderate majority in responding to developments among Muslims in the region. Reactionary and defensive attitudes are not going to help in efforts to show to the world that Islam is a peaceful religion and that Muslims are peace loving people. Again, it is time for the moderates to be more assertive in leading the way to reestablish the peaceful nature of Southeast Asian Islam.

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ISLAM - UMMATAN WASATAN

AN UMMAH JUSTLY BALANCED

This section explains why Islam is, in essence, a simple and moderate religion, which loves peace and hates extremism.

This foundation is important to the correct and positive understanding of Islam. It also undergirds and facilitates discussions in subsequent sections of this paper, especially in controversial issues.

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Allah Almighty made simplicity and moderation as hallmarks of the Muslim *ummah,* as mentioned in the Holy Quran:

"Thus, have We made you an Ummah justly balanced, that you might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves... " (The Holy Quran 2:143)

The *ulama* (Islamic religious scholars) interpret the phrase *Ummatan Wasatan* as the just *(Al-'Adl)* and *chosen (Al-Khiyar)* people. These two interpretations do not contradict each other, as *justness* is a criterion for being *chosen* by Allah. This definition is also in line with the meaning of simplicity, tolerance and moderation as opposed to extremism, as something is said to be *just,* when it is balanced away from extremes.

Moderation in Islam is characterised as follows:

1. Islam is a religion which is easy to practise, and simplicity is preferred in practising it.

Allah Almighty says in the Holy Quran:

"... and has not laid upon you any hardship in religion." (The Holy Quran 22: 78)

In commanding fasting, Allah Almighty says:

"Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties." (The Holy Quran 2:185)

In commanding ablution, Allah Almighty says:

"Allah does not wish to place you in a difficulty, but to purify you, and to complete his favour on you, that you may be grateful." (The Holy Quran 5: 6)

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) warned against complicating the practise of Islam, as it was meant to be easy;

" Indeed this religion is easy and it will defeat anyone who makes it difficult. " (Related by Al-Bukhari)

Here, 'defeat' means that someone who tries to make the practise of Islam difficult will find himself unable to continue practising it.

The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) also said:

"Indeed the religion most favoured by Allah is one which is convenient and tolerant." (Related by Al-Bukhari)

In sending off his messenger on a mission, the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) advised as follows:

"*Make it convenient and do not make it difficult, tell them the good news and do not make them run away*" (Related by Al-Bukhari)

In addition, the Prophet also reminded

"*Indeed, you have been sent to make things easy (for the people), not to make things difficult for them.*" (Related by Al-Bukhari)

Aisyah r.a. said:

"*When the Prophet is given two choices, he will choose the one that is more convenient between the two, so long as it is not sinful.*" (Related by Al-Bukhari)

Among the hallmarks of convenience in practising Islam as a faith, is the provision of *rukhsah* (exemptions), when one faces difficulty in fulfilling certain requirements.

2. Tolerance is a characteristic that cannot be isolated from Islam.

This characteristic is based on the commandment that there is to be no compulsion to accept Islam. Allah Almighty says,

"*Let there be no compulsion in religion.*" *(The Holy Quran 2: 256)*

"*Will you then compel mankind, against their will, to believe...?*" *(The Holy Quran 10: 99)*

Islam encourages respect for other faiths, and does not interfere in other faiths acts of worship. Allah Almighty says in the Holy Quran:

"*Say : O you who reject Faith ! I worship not that which you worship. Nor do you worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which you have been worshipping. Nor will you worship that which I worship. To you be your Way, and to me, mine.*" *(The Holy Quran 109: 1-6)*

Another Islamic injunction which aims to inculcate respect for others, is the prohibition against rebuking or insulting other faiths. This is mentioned in the Holy Quran;

"*Do not revile those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they out of spite, revile Allah in their ignorance. Thus have We made alluring to each people its doings. In the end will they return to their Lord, and We shall then tell them the truth of all they did.*" *(The Holy Quran 6: 108)*

In the effort to foster tolerance, Muslims are encouraged to counter wrong-doing with good deeds.

"*Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: then will he between whom and you were hatred, become as it were, your friend and intimate!*" *(The Holy Quran 41: 34)*

"Repel evil with which that which is best :We are well acquainted with the things they say." (The Holy Quran 23: 96)

In addition, Islam enjoins forgiveness both within the *ummah* and to others. Even in the extreme injustice of murder, the family of a murder victim is encouraged to forgive and in so doing, spare the murderer from capital punishment. Allah Almighty says,

"O you who believe! The law of equality in prescribed to you in cases of murder…But if any remission is made by the brother of the slain, then grant any reasonable demand, and compensate him with handsome gratitude." (The Holy Quran 2: 178)

The following verse was revealed when one of the Companions was dissuaded by his wife and children from joining Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) in battle. Allah Almighty says:

"O you who believe ! Truly, among your wives and your children are (some that are) enemies to yourselves; so beware of them! But if you forgive and overlook, and cover up (their faults), verily, Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. " (The Holy Quran 64: 14)

Fighting for the cause of Islam is a big obligation, and to obstruct someone from it is an equally big offence. Yet Islam proposes forgiveness for such a big offence.

Allah Almighty describes forgiveness as a characteristic of the dwellers of heaven; this is mentioned in the Holy Quran:

"Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth, prepared for the righteous - those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men; for Allah loves those who do good; (The Holy Quran 3: 133 – 134)

Allah Himself is Most Forgiving. Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said that Allah Almighty declared:

"O, son of Adam, as long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for whatever you have done, and I shall not mind. O, son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O, son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth, and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me (syirik) I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as the earth is." (Related by At-Tarmizi)

Tolerance in Islam may also be seen in the manner Prophet Muhammad treated those who committed offences; surely his behaviour is the best example and reference for the Muslim *ummah.*

Abu Hurairah related an occasion when a Bedouin urinated in the mosque, and the people angrily went to ask Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) to reprimand him. The Prophet calmly replied:

"Let him be. Pour over his urine a dipper of water. Indeed, you have been sent to make things easy and not to make them difficult." (Related by Al-Bukhari & Muslim)

A man sneezed during a prayer led by Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). Muawiyah b. al-Hakam As-Salami r.a., who was in the congregation, narrated as follows:

I then said, "*May Allah bless you*". People around me looked at me with disapproval. I asked, "*Why are you all looking at me like that?"*. They then slapped their thighs with their hands. When I realised that they were trying to quieten me, I kept quiet. Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) completed his prayers. Indeed, I have never before or after this, seen a teacher who showed such a good example. By Allah, he did not scold, hit or reprimand me, but said :

" Indeed, no word from man is suitable in solat (prayers). Solat is tasbih, takbir, and recitation of Al-Quran." (Related by Muslim & Abu Daud)

Muslims are not allowed to converse with others during their prayers, and so the rest of the congregation tried to signal to Muawiyah to keep quiet. Yet, Prophet Muhammad kept his patience till prayers were over, before explaining it to Muawiyah.

3. Islam favours gentleness, promotes refined etiquette, and denounces character bashing.

Islam is a gentle and noble religion. Among the manifestations of gentleness and nobleness in Islam are in da'wah (preaching) for spreading the faith, and in *muamalah (*compassionate dealing) with people, even those who commit vice or act against norms.

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said :

" Indeed, kindness and gentleness does not exist in anything, without beautifying it; and it is not withdrawn from anything, without ruining it." (Related by Muslim)

"Verily, Allah is kind and gentle, loves the kind and gentle, and confers upon the kind and gentle that which he does not confer upon the harsh." (Related by Muslim)

Islam expects gentleness in da'wah. Indeed, the very basis of da'wah is gracious words, even when the one being preached to is a cruel tyrant. For example, when Allah sent the prophets Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) a.s. on His mission to Pharaoh, He commanded :

"So speak (O Moses & Aaron) to him (Pharaoh) gently; perchance he may take warning or fear (God). " (*The Holy Quran 20*: 44)

Similarly, Allah commanded Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) and all the preachers after him;

"Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for your Lord knows best, who has strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance." (The Holy Quran 16: 125)

In this verse, Allah Almighty teaches man to preach in one of three ways:

1. Using *Hikmah* (wisdom)
2. Being a good example
3. Debating in the best and most gracious manner

In this verse, Allah Almighty specifies that to *invite* others to Islam, gentle and gracious means of preaching are to be employed, in line with the nature of Islam itself.

Allah expects dialogue with the People of the Book to be conducted amicably. Allah Almighty says,

"And dispute you not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury)."

(The Holy Quran 29: 46)

There is no contradiction between the gentle means advocated for da'wah, and the command for *jihad* to remove hindrances in the path of da'wah. This is because jihad can only be applied when all peaceful initiatives to overcome those hindrances had been rejected.

This is borne out in Prophet Muhammad's example. For the first 13 years of his mission, he was commanded to be patient and to conduct his da'wah in a gentle manner, even though he and the Muslims were severely abused and oppressed. He did not retaliate, nor allowed any of his followers to do so. Seeking a peaceful solution, he accepted the offer to migrate to Madinah. Yet the attacks against him and Islam continued, eventually escalating into attacks against Madinah. It was only after that, did he use *jihad* to ensure the freedom to preach.

Even after *jihad* was allowed, Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) continued to prefer a peaceful approach to da'wah. It was for this reason that he signed the Hudaibiah Accord whose terms were unfavourable to Muslims, even though by then, Muslims already had the upper hand.

When Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) sent out his army on a military mission, he always reminded them as follows:

" Wage war in the name of Allah and in the way of Allah. Slay those who disbelieve in Allah. Wage war, but do not be excessive; do not be treacherous, do not mutilate (the dead) bodies and do not kill the children." (Related by Muslim)

In another hadith, Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said :

"Do not kill the old, the children, babies nor women, and do not be excessive. Gather the spoils of war, do good, and be virtuous. Indeed, Allah loves those who do good." (Related by Abu Daud)

It is obvious from these hadith, that Islam expects gracious conduct even in *jihad.*

Allah Almighty says,

"And fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits. " (The Holy Quran 2: 190)

In Islam, war should only be waged based on lofty and noble aims – for defence, and to remove impediments to the spread of faith – not because of anger or hatred, nor conducted excessively. That is why Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) prohibited the mutilation of dead bodies (killed during war) and the killing of women and children.

In conducting *jihad*, Muslims are exhorted to fulfill their promises to those with whom they have an accord; treachery is not accepted as a means of securing the upper hand, even in battle. Allah Almighty says:

"O you who believe! Fulfill (all) obligations ." (The Holy Quran 5 : 1)

"...(but the treaties are) not dissolved with those Unbelievers with whom you have entered into alliance and who have not subsequently failed you in aught, nor aided any one against you. So fulfill your engagements with them to the end of their term: for Allah loves the righteous." (The Holy Quran 9: 4)

In the Holy Quran, Allah Almighty also commands Muslims to be good to those who do not wage war against them,

"God forbids you not, with regards to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loves those who are just. Allah only forbids you, with regard to those who fight you for (your) Faith, and drive you out of your homes, and support (others) in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection). It is such as turn to them (in these circumstances), that do wrong. " (*The Holy Quran 60*: 8 – 9)

Allah Almighty even favours being forgiving in war. A good example of this was when Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) forgave and spared the people of Makkah upon taking over the city, even though they had caused Muslims much pain before.

Islam acknowledges the weakness of Man who, by nature, will make mistakes, is forgetful, and prone to commit sins. Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said:

"If you do not commit sin, then Allah will bring forth a group that will commit sin until they begged for forgiveness from Allah, and Allah will forgive them" (Related by Muslim)

Prophet Muhammad also taught that vice has various levels. A person should not be completely condemned, instead he should be judged on the type of wrong-doing committed.

Islam rejects the practice of generally labelling every sin as *kufur* (of infidels), especially when accompanied by physical, verbal or emotional abuse, as these inhibit repentance and keep Man away from religion.

In this respect, Allah Almighty says:

"It is part of the Mercy of Allah that you do deal gently with them. Were you severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you; so pass over (their faults), and ask for (Allah's) forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs (of the moment)." (*The Holy Quran* 3: 159)

The attitude of Islam towards those who commit vice is not to scold or label them as *kufur* (disbeliever), but to explain their errors, and encourage them to repent and improve their way of life.

The above are just some of the illustrations of Islam's gentleness in dealing with various types of people, whether Muslims or non-Muslims.

History has recorded many episodes where people embraced Islam in hordes, as demonstrated in the Malay Archipelago; not because they had been threatened, or because of the might of the sword. There were even nations which once opposed Islam, but later embraced it without being coerced, as in the case of the Mongols.

Islam favours gentleness and graciousness as much as it rejects harshness.

4. Islam prefers peaceful rather than violent approaches.

The emphasis on peace and harmony in Islam may be seen from the following:

a. By virtue of its name, Islam means peace and harmony. Violence is not in line with such a name.

b. Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) was appointed as a blessing for the entire universe.

In the Holy Quran, Allah Almighty says,

"We sent you not, but as a Mercy for all the Universe." (*The Holy Quran* 21: 107) Violence is not concordant with his mission of mercy *(rahmat)*.

c. Allah Almighty commanded Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) to prioritise peace, as in the Holy Quran;

"And if the enemy inclines towards peace, do you (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah." (The Holy Quran 8: 61)

d. Violence does not appeal to the nature of man.

During the Battle of Uhud, the disobedience of some of his followers resulted in a near tragedy. What is significant is firstly, Prophet Muhammad did not act harshly against those who were guilty, and secondly, Allah actually commended him for that in the Holy Quran,

"It is part of the Mercy of Allah that you do deal gently with them. Were you severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from you; so pass over (their faults), and ask for (Allah's) forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs (of the moment)"
(*The Holy Quran* 3: 159)

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) also reminded his followers similarly when he said:

"Convey the good news and do not make them run away, make it easy and do not make it difficult." (Related by Muslim)

e. Muslims are taught to counter wickedness with good deeds.

Violence contradicts this teaching. Allah Almighty says:

"Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: then will he between whom and you were hatred become as it were, your friend and intimate! " (The Holy Quran 41: 34)

f. Violence gives rise to a lot of difficulties, and will only inconvenience oneself.

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said :
"*Indeed this religion is easy and it will defeat anyone who makes it difficult*" (Related by Al-Bukhari)

g. Prophet Muhammad himself established Madinah through peaceful da'wah.

h. Islam is more easily spread in a peaceful environment.

The Hudaibiyah Accord serves as a powerful demonstration of this: record numbers of people came into Islam in the consequent peaceful years, so much that it was almost the same as the total for the preceding 19 years of Prophet Muhammad's mission.

i. History has shown that Islam has the potential to spread rapidly via peaceful methods as it did in the Malay Archipelago and in China.

Therefore, peaceful ways of spreading the faith should be preferred in place of force and violence.

Examples of Moderation in Islam

1 Islam lies between the extremes of those who renounce the world and those who devote themselves to material gains and worldly pleasures.

This is indicated in the Holy Quran, when Allah Almighty says:

"And seek, with the (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on you, the Home of the Hereafter, nor forget your portion in this world: but do you good, as Allah has been good to you, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: for Allah loves not those who do mischief." (The Holy Quran 28: 77)

2 Islam lies between the extremes of those who renounce marriage to maintain purity of their soul, and those who advocate unlimited sexual partners without any strings attached. Islam limits the number of wives a man may take to four, provided he is able to be responsible and fair to all of them.

Allah Almighty says:
"Marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one." (The Holy Quran 4: 3)

3 Islam lies between those who prefer to isolate themselves away from society in order to avoid vice, and those who socialise with unrestricted freedom.

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) encouraged social interactions:
"A Muslim who socialises with others and is patient with their misdeeds, is better than a Muslim who does not socialise with others and is not patient with their misdeeds." (Related by At-Tarmuzi)

However, there are limits to be observed:
"*Anyone who believes in Allah and the Hereafter, should not be alone with a woman who is not his mahram*[1]*. Indeed the third among them is Satan*" (Related by Ahmad)

Moderation in Islam

Moderation in Islam is neither subjective nor determined by rational thought alone. While thoughts, traditions, and current practices are factors that may be taken into

[1] *In Islam, mahram refers to male relatives that a woman is not allowed to marry, e.g., her father, grandfathers, brothers, uncles and nephews.*

account when discussing moderation, in Islam, it is determined based on the Holy Quran and the Sunnah.

Islam commands Muslims to be moderate in practising the teachings of the religion. The teachings of Islam, as outlined in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah, advocate moderation in life. Extremism is actually the result of ignoring or going against the tenets of the religion.

On the other hand, moderation in Islam does not mean ignoring its commandments such as praying (*solat*), fasting or wearing the headscarf for women.

Moderation in Islam may be seen not only in the context of worldly life but also life in the Hereafter. Allah Almighty mentions this point in the Holy Quran,

"And seek, with the (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on you, the Home of the Hereafter, nor forget your portion in this world: but do you good, as Allah has been good to you, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: for Allah loves not those who do mischief." (*The Holy Quran* 28: 77)

In order to understand moderation in Islam, it is necessary to fully understand the Islamic worldview and to understand the philosophy behind the teachings and practices. Some issues which require that prior understanding are; Why do Muslims fast? Why are Muslims required to cover their *aurat*? Why is extra-marital sex prohibited even with mutual consent?

It is also necessary to understand how the *ulama* derive rulings from Al-Quran and As-Sunnah. With an understanding of this process, one will be able to ascertain the extent and validity of their rulings. Without it, extremist tendencies may develop.

On this basis, it can be seen that the concept and meaning of moderation in Islam overlaps significantly with that commonly used, save for slight differences.

THE MEANING OF EXTREMISM ACCORDING TO THE HOLY QURAN & THE SUNNAH

Islam Prohibits Extremism

In essence, Islam guides towards moderation, away from extremism. This can be seen from the following arguments (*dalil*);

1 Allah commands that Muslims always pray for the straight and righteous path.

Allah Almighty says:

"Show us the straight way, the way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not those whose (portion) is wrath, and not those who go astray." (The Holy Quran 1: 6 – 7)

This verse teaches the Muslim *ummah* to distance themselves from two extreme groups, namely the group that neglects the teachings of the religion and the group that is extreme in practising it. Muslims recite this verse in every *rakaat* of every prayer. That is the extent to which Islam reminds its *ummah* to avoid extremism.

2 Islam prohibits its *ummah* from being extreme.

Allah Almighty says:

"These are the limits ordained by Allah; so do not transgress them, if any do transgress the limits ordained by Allah, such persons do wrong (to themselves as well as others)." (The Holy Quran 2: 229)

This verse forbids Muslims from transgressing limits. It also alludes that extremism goes against the teachings of Islam.

Allah Almighty says:

"Do not commit excesses in your religion." (The Holy Quran 4: 171, 5: 77)

[2] *Cited by Abdul Rahman b.Mu'alla Al-Luwaihiq, Al-Ghuluw Fi Ad-Din Fi Hayat Al-Muslimin Al-Mu'asirah, Muassasah Ar-Risalah, Beirut, 1992, pg. 65. See Sayid Qutb, Fi Zilal Al-Quran, Dar Asy-Syuruq, Beirut, 1403H, chapter 4, pg. 1931.*

Although this revelation was originally directed to the People of the Book, its message is clear for all – stay away from extremism. Similarly, Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.)said :

"Distance yourselves from being extreme in religion." (Related by Ahmad, Ibn Khuzaimah, An-Nasa`ii, Ibn Majah and Al-Hakim)

3 Muslims are commanded to practise *istiqamah* (steadfast and straight, without deviations)

Allah Almighty says,

"Therefore stand firm (in the straight Path) as you are commanded, - you and those with you, turn (unto God); and transgress not (from the Path); Verily, He sees all that you do. " (The Holy Quran 11: 112)

This verse commands Muslims to practise *istiqamah*. In his book, *Fi Zilal Al-Quran* Syed Qutb interprets the word *istiqamah* as *i'tidal* (moderation), that is, without deviation[2].

4 Islam knows the damaging results of being extreme.

Allah Almighty says:

"These are the limits ordained by Allah; so do not transgress them, if any do transgress the limits ordained by Allah, such persons do wrong (to themselves as well as others)." (The Holy Quran 2: 229)

This verse states that the outcome of extremism is cruelty and wrong-doing to others.

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said :

"Indeed that which destroyed the people before you is the extremist stance in practising religion." (Related by Ahmad, Ibn Khuzaimah, An-Nasa`ii, Ibn Majah and Al-Hakim)

"Disaster on those who are extreme." (Related by Muslim, Abu Daud and Ahmad)

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said :

"Do not make things difficult for yourselves, then Allah will make it difficult for you. Indeed there was a group who made it difficult for themselves, then Allah made it difficult for them. Their remnants are those in the monasteries. They invented Monasticism; we did not prescribe it for them." (Related by Abu Daud)

These hadith teach that being extreme will cause difficulties to oneself and to others.

The Characteristics of Extremism in Islam

Among the characteristics of extremism that can be gleaned from the Holy Quran and the Sunnah are;

1 Either taking it easy to the extent of neglecting the teachings of the religion, or making it difficult to practise the religion.

Allah Almighty says,

"Show us the straight way, the way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not those whose (portion) is wrath, and not those who go astray." (The Holy Quran 1: 6 – 7)

The *ulama* in *tafsir* (Quranic interpretation) explain that what is meant as those who earned the Wrath of Allah were the People of the Book who made practising religion difficult, while the group that strayed were those who trivialised religion.

2 The *Al-Mutanattiun*

This group was mentioned by Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) in his hadith;

"Destruction upon the Al-Mutanattiun" (Related by Muslim, Abu Daud and Ahmad)

[3] *Cited by Dr. Abdul Rahman b.Mu'alla Al-Luwaihiq, Religious Extremism In the Life Of Contemporary Muslims,translated by Jamaal Al-Din M. Zarabozo, Al-Basheer, 2001, pg. 73. See An-Nawawi, Syarh Muslim, Dar Ihya' At-Turats Al-'Arabi, Beirut, 1392H, chapter 16, pg. 220.*

Imam An-Nawawi explained *Al-Mutanattiun* as those who tend to be excessive, who go over the limits in their words and actions[3].

3 Those who make it a burden upon themselves.

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said :

"Indeed this religion is easy and it will defeat anyone who makes it difficult " (Related by Al-Bukhari)

The characteristic of extremism forbidden here, is making the affairs of religion so difficult that it becomes a burden on oneself.

Types of Extremism

Extremism may be classified as 2 types[4]:

a. Extremism in fundamental principles and *aqidah (*faith*).*

b. Extremism in *juz'ii* (non-fundamental) and *amali* (practical) matters.

Extremism in fundamental principles relates to the *kulliyat* (basic tenets) of *syariah* and beliefs. For example, insisting that there are other infallible men after Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), treating Muslims who commit sins as infidels, or declaring war on fellow Muslims.

Extremism in *juz'ii* matters relates to extremism in the practise of Islam. Examples of this are: renouncing marriage, praying (*solat)* all night through without sleeping, or giving alms to the extent of failing to provide for one's own family.

This classification helps us to understand the following :

a.Some forms of extremism are detrimental to the Muslim *ummah* in general. Others are detrimental to the individual only.

b.There are different levels and degrees of seriousness in extremism. These will have to be factored into our response to it.

c.Extremism in *juz'ii* and *amali* matters tends to be subjective. It may be extreme for an individual in a certain situation, but not extreme for others in a different situation. Some variance is expected and allowed. Therefore, in these matters, we cannot apply a blanket rule to define who is extremist and what is extremism.

d.While some forms of extremism may cause one to become apostate, others are merely sinful.

e.Extremism may exist in opinions only, or in opinions accompanied by action, or in action only. Understanding that such variation exists, will help in handling extremism. For instance, the handling of extremist opinions will naturally differ from the handling of extremist actions.

f.Extremism in *juz'ii* and *amali matters,* if widely imposed by some people upon the majority, will be detrimental. Such extremism then becomes *kulliy* because of the extent of its seriousness.

g.Some forms of extremism may be supported by groups, others by individuals. Some may target small groups, while others target large groups.

The Meaning of Extremism according to Syara'

1 Extremism is when one interprets the *nas* (evidence from the Holy Quran and the Sunnah) in a strict and burdensome manner in contradiction with the nature of the *syara'*, making it inconvenient for oneself and for others.

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[4] Abdul Rahman b.Mu'alla Al-Luwaihiq, Religious Extremism In the Life Of Contemporary Muslims, pg. 74-77.

2 Extremism is making it burdensome in interpreting and understanding the meaning of divine revelations; going beyond that which is demanded from a Muslim, and going beyond established and accepted methodologies.

Both the above characteristics are part of the *Al-Mutanattiun* group mentioned in the earlier hadith.

The next hadith relates to points 3, 4 and 5. It is about 3 men: one who refuses to break his fast, another who prays without stopping for any sleep, and the third who distances himself from women and refuses to get married.

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) counselled them:

"Truly, I am the most fearful of Allah, and the most pious among you; yet I fast and break my fast, I pray and I sleep, and I also marry women. Then, he who does not like my example, is not of me (not one of my followers)." (Related by Al-Bukhari).

3 Extremism is when one makes an act of worship compulsory on oneself or on others when it is not compulsory in Islam, regardless of how much Islam encourages that act of worship.

4 Extremism is when one treats as *haram* (forbidden) what Allah has declared as *halal*, as illustrated in the above hadith.

5 Extremism is when one neglects *dharuri* (critical) needs like eating, drinking and sleeping.

6 .Extremism is not only in overdoing, but also in neglecting.

Nevertheless, the following are not considered extremism in religion:

1.Striving to excel. Extremism only happens when it causes problems and becomes a burden on oneself.

2.Holding to a strict *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) view, if it was proposed by an *ulama* who is *mujtahid* (expert in Islamic laws) or being a follower of one who is knowledgeable in religion. For example, holding to the view that playing and listening to string and wind musical instruments is *haram*. If extremism happens in this area, it is not primarily caused by having such a view, but by having a negative attitude towards those who have a different viewpoint and hurling abuse at them. A strict *fiqh* view per se does not imply extremism.

The Meaning of Extremism according to the *Ulama*

To round up this discussion on the meaning of extremism, the following is how it is defined by the *ulama*:

Ibn Taimiyah wrote:

"Extremism (Ghuluw) is being over the limit, like adding on something, while praising or insulting someone who qualifies, or the like.[5]"

Ibn Hajar explained it as,

"To be excessive and rigid to the point of transgressing limits.[6]"

The same meaning was given by Imam Asy-Syatibi[7].

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[5] *Cited by Abdul Rahman b.Mu'alla Al-Luwaihiq, Religious Extremism In the Life Of Contemporary Muslims,pg. 85. See Ibn Taimiyah, Iqtidho' As-Sirat Al-Mustaqim (tahqiq Nasir Abdul Karim),1404H, chapter 1, pg 289.*

[6] *Ibid, pg. 86. See Ibn Hajr, Fath Al-Bari, Al-Matba'ah As-Salafiah Wa Maktabatuha, Kaherah, 1380H, chapter 13, pg. 278.*

[7] *Ibid. See Asy-Syatibi, Al-I'itisom, Dar Al-Makrifah, Beirut, 1405H, chapter 3, pg. 304.*

CHARTER of moderation in Religious Pratice

This section presents a charter which aims to outline the parameters of moderation as a guide for the life and religious practice of the Muslim community in Singapore.

by Ustaz Mohd Haniff Hassan

Islam encourages moderation and extremism is at odds with it. Extremism results in various adverse outcomes not only for the individuals concerned, but also to the family, society, religion and country.

Advances in information technology has provided a rapid and unfettered platform for communication and dissemination of ideas. Hence, there is an urgent need to instruct the community on the parameters of moderation.

The Charter Of Moderation in Religious Practice is an initiative to provide benchmarks on moderation in religious practice for the community.

The benchmarks serve to narrow areas of ambiguity and confusion. Clarity will facilitate efforts in public education and control. It will also facilitate efforts in closing the gap between various differences, which sometimes throw various parties into extremist tendencies and conflicts.

This charter provides a framework not only for handling the issue of moderation between Muslims and non-Muslims, but more importantly, to strengthen the practice of moderation amongst Muslims themselves.

We believe Muslims need to understand and practise moderation amongst themselves before they can practise it consistently with others. More importantly, Muslims need to unite in support of moderation, to face greater challenges in the future.

We must learn from events in other countries and the reality facing the Muslim *ummah* all across the world. The main stumbling block to us giving an adequate response to challenges such as extremism, is not the lack of resources, but the lack of unity and mutual support in confronting problems.

While it may be true to say that the challenges facing the Muslim community in Singapore is not as severe as the situation in some countries, we cannot take it easy and wait for something undesirable to happen before taking action.

The worldwide resurgence of Islam makes it more important in the life of the Muslims. More people will look at a certain issue from a religious perspective, more will search for religious views on matters related to everyday living, more people will come forward to voice out their views taking into account religious teachings, and more will come forward in the effort for progress in religious aspirations.

Without clear parameters separating moderation and extremism, there is an

increased possibility of incidents that may result in conflicts and misunderstanding between Muslims and non-Muslims, and among the Muslims themselves.

A POLICY STATEMENT

Islam supports moderation in *aqidah, ibadah, muamalah* and *da'wah.*

In whatever action and practice in Islam by individuals, institutions and the general public, all forms of extremism should be avoided.

Extremism is an act that goes over the limits of what should be, whether from the viewpoint of *syara'*, customs or rationality. It has the following characteristics;

1. Interpreting *nas* with a strict interpretation which conflicts with the *syariah* and its basic purposes, resulting in difficulties for oneself and others.

2. Making it burdensome in interpreting and understanding the meaning of divine revelations beyond which demanded from a Muslim.

3. Making a practice obligatory on oneself or on others for the purpose of devotion *(ibadah*), when Allah had not made it obligatory, regardless of how much Islam encourages that practice[1].

4. Treating something as *haram* or forbidden for the purpose of devotion *(ibadah*), when Allah had made it *halal*.

5. Forsaking basic matters in life or part of it, for example, refusing to eat and drink, sleep or marry, for the purpose of devotion *(ibadah*).

6. Excessive either in adulating or condemning others.

CHARTER ON MODERATION IN RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

The following are our standpoints in ensuring moderation in *da'wah;*

1. We are committed to respecting the principles of democracy in social interactions and in our efforts to achieve the aspirations of the Muslim community. It is on this premise that we commit to constantly abide by the laws and regulations in our actions.

2. We are committed to safeguarding peace. We are not harsh and violent in religious practice, nor in achieving our aspirations. We understand *jihad* in its broader meaning. Armed *jihad* is only against those who declare war on us.

3. Diversity is inherently created in nature by Allah Almighty; therefore, we face it positively. We are not hostile to differences and diversity, be it in matters relating to religion, nation or culture. We wish to establish synergistic relationships out of this diversity, via peaceful and harmonious coexistence. Our relationships are based on mutual respect and the desire to promote understanding, tolerance and confidence of each other.

4. We believe that Islam is a comprehensive way of life and reject the separation between worldly and religious affairs. However, we consider a secular state positively in that it guarantees freedom in religion, recognises the positive role of religion in developing the society, and it acts as a neutral structure within which harmony in social and religious practice may be secured. In reality, it is a practical choice for the minority Muslims in Singapore.

5. We love this country and it is in our mutual interest to ensure its progress, continous development and prosperity, as guided by the principles of our religion. We

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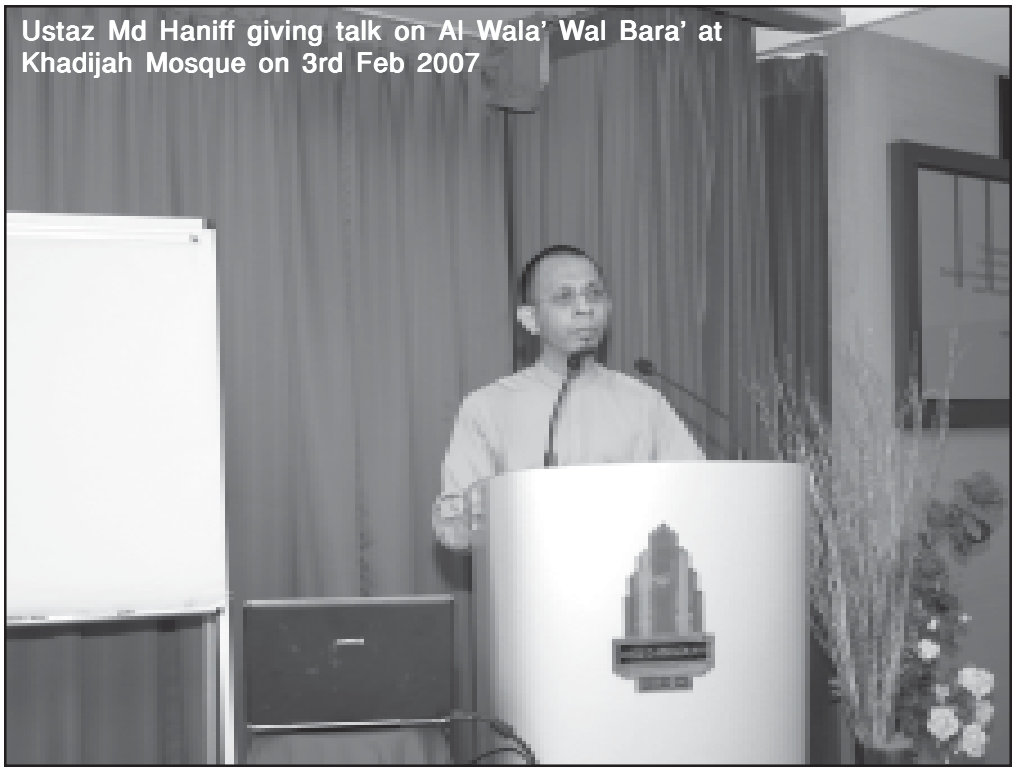
[1] *This consideration is takes into account the ability of the particular individual, group or community,and the consideration of other benefits and detriments.*

[2] *The maqasid syar'iah comprise these five objectives of the syariah:preservation of religion, life, mind, property/wealth and posterity.*



Ustaz Md Haniff giving talk on Al Wala' Wal Bara' at Khadijah Mosque on 3rd Feb 2007

identify ourselves as Singaporeans, as much as we identify ourselves with our race and religion. Having such multiple affiliations inevitably causes conflicts in certain situations, but we are committed to looking for a common and equitable meeting point. Whatever differences that arise should be handled according to the principles of democracy and legal procedures via a peaceful process.

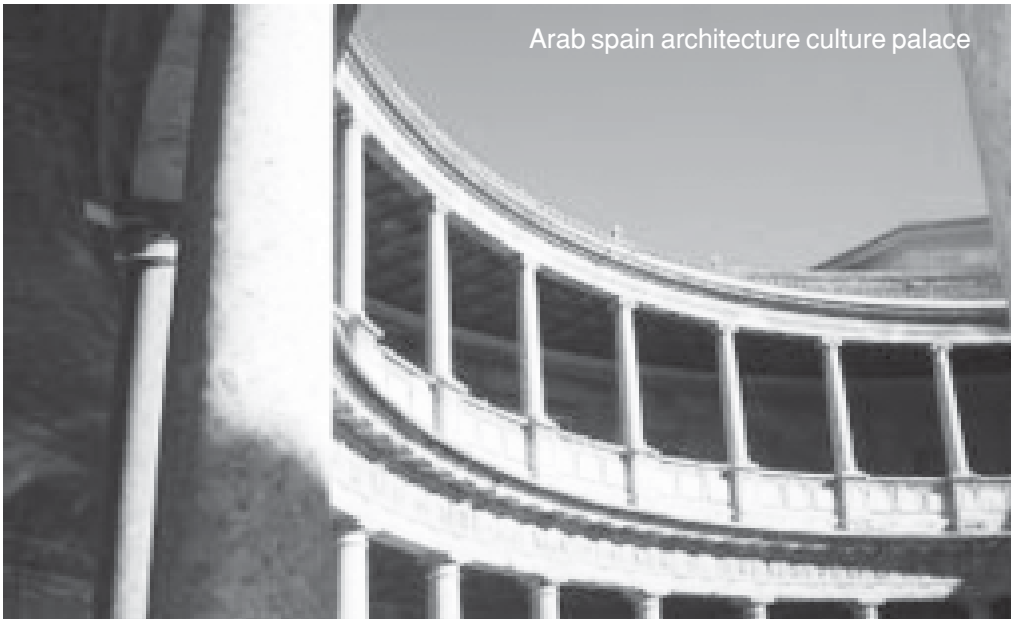
6. *Da'wah* is part of the responsibility and points of honour for the Muslim *ummah*. However, it must be carried out with due consideration of the *maqasid syar'iah*[2] and after weighing its positive and negative outcomes based on established principles. For instance, *Da'wah* cannot be implemented in a manner that it will cause a bigger detriment or eliminate a bigger benefit than what already exists for the community.

7. In matters related to *fiqh,* we recognise *Hanafi, Maliki, Asy-Syafi'i* and *Hanbali* as schools of thought that may be practised by Muslims in Singapore. Similarly we recognise the views of the respected and *mujtahid ulama* of the *Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jemaah*. However, for official matters, *Asy-Syafi'i* is the official *mazhab* (school of thought).

8. In matters related to *aqidah*, we recognise the views and the principles of the *Salaf.* We also acknowledge the *mazhab* of *Abu Musa Al-Asy'ari* and *Abu Mansur Al-Maturidi* as part of *Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jemaah*.

9. *Khilaf* (differences in opinions) may occur in issues that are supported by *qat'ii nas* (definite nas). In matters of *aqidah, ibadah* and social relationships which are not supported by *qat'ii nas*, it is acceptable to have *khilaf*.

10 *Khilaf* in matters not supported by *nas* may be accepted, as long as such views are supported by evidence that are consistent with *Usul Fiqh*. The type of *khilaf* that cannot be accepted are those that do not go



through procedures agreed upon by the majority of *ulama.*

11.Followers of different *mazhab* may pray together in the same mosque, and followers of one mazhab may pray behind the *imam* of other mazhab in congregational or Friday prayers.

12.One cannot claim their *jemaah* or group is the one true Islamic *jemaah*, or that anyone who does not join that particular *jemaah* or organisation is considered to be out of the Islamic community or may be condemned.

13.In matters related to *ijtihad*, one cannot claim that only his views are true and others are wrong, deviationist or *bid'ah.*

14.Any opinion from man regardless of how lofty his position is, may either be accepted, or rejected, except those of the *ma'sum* (infallible) Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). One cannot adulate anyone else to the point of considering him as *ma'sum* and as an indisputable source of truth.

15.A Muslim cannot disassociate *(Bara')* himself from the Muslim community.

16. A Muslim cannot label another as *kafir*. In the Singapore context, judgement of *kufr* or *kafir* may only be decided upon by the religious authority.

17.A Muslim does not turn *kafir* merely because of the following;

a.Committing vice, as long as he does not considers the vice as halal

b.Holding political positions in a non-Islamic government

c.Living under a non-Islamic government or country

d.Not being in certain organisations

18. The practice of *taqlid* (following the opinion of a particular imam/mazhab) is acceptable for the general public, and should not be condemned indiscriminately. On the other hand, *ijtihad* cannot be made obligatory for everyone.

19.*Khilafiyah* issues should not be a source of controversy, polemic or conflicts in society. Objective and academic discussions are to be encouraged at a suitable time and place, within the appropiate audience.

20.The practice of character bashing and labelling others as *kafir*, *fasiq*, and committing *bid'ah* or other malicious names with regard to *khilafiyah* issues or, because of it, or because of the wrong-doing of particular individuals, is not acceptable.

21.Discussions on matters that are trivial and non-beneficial to society should be avoided.

22.*Bid'ah idhafiyah*, *tarkiyah* and *iltizam* are *khilafiyah* isssues in *fiqh* and should not be made a source of conflict in society.

23.The practice of *uzlah* (isolating oneself altogether) from a society considered immoral in order to protect oneself, is rejected, because Islam is a religion of *da'wah* and reformation.

24.Sufism and *tasawuf* are accepted as practices which aim to purify the soul and bring oneself closer to Allah. Since there is *khilaf* among the *ulama* on this subject; any opinion from the recognised *ulama* may be adhered to, except when there is *fatwa* prohibiting it.

25.Inspiration and *kasyf* (inner voice or dream) of pious men are gifts from Allah Almighty to them, but these may not be used as the basis for extracting religious rulings. It may only be used as a guide, provided it is not contradictory with *syara'*.

26.*Fatwa* and the opinions of the *ulama* are very much dependent on the prevailing time, conditions and environment. Any *fatwa* which does not involve matters that are *qat'ii*, may change according to changes in time, condition and environment..

27.Respecting the authorities, and being polite and constructive in voicing disagreements are part of good manners in Islam and a manifestation of moderation.

PROPOSED ACTIONS TO NURTURE MODERATION & DEAL WITH EXTREMISM

To nurture moderation in the practice of Islam, and to overcome extremist tendencies, we propose the following actions;

1. Extensively educate the community on the accurate *Tasawur* (world view) of Islam. May consider to include the study of Islamic *Tasawur* in madrasahs.

2. Popularise the learning of the *syariah* decision-making tools and processes among Muslims. These include the sciences of the Hadith, *Ulum Al-Quran*, *Usul Fiqh* and *Qawa'id Fiqhiyah*. This will open up their minds to the broader perspective of Islam on any one issue.

3. Popularise the learning of comparative *fiqh* to open up the community's minds to the diversity of opinions of the *ulama* on any one issue.

4. Popularise contemporary *fiqh* views.

5. Streamline the *ulama's* viewpoints on important issues.

6. Engage and interact with extremist groups via dialogue and discussions.

7. Narrow the gap between the *ulama*, leaders and youth.

8. Clarify issues that arise.

9. Refrain from being harsh and extreme in dealing with extremism.

10.Safeguard *manhaj syar'ii* (correct methodology) in *istidlal* and *istinbat* (deducing a ruling from the sources of the syariah) before issuing any ruling.

11.Stay clear of creating controversies, confusion and antagonism within the community.

12.Stay clear of actions which create controversies, confusion and antagonism towards Islam and Muslims.

THE POVERTY OF FANATICISM

"The Islamic movement risks ceasing to form an authentic summons to cultural and spiritual renewal, and existing as little more than a splintered array of maniacal factions. The prospect of such an appalling and humiliating end to the story of a religion which once surpassed all others in its capacity for tolerating debate and dissent is now a real possibility."

by Abdal - Hakim Murad

British convert to Islam, Abdal-Hakim Murad, was born in 1960 in London. He was educated Cambridge University (MA Arabic), and at al-Azhar University, the highest seat of learning in Sunni Islam. He has studied under traditional Islamic scholars in Cairo and Jeddah, including Shaykh Ahmad Mashhur al-Haddad, and Shaykh Ismail al-Adawi. Abdal-Hakim Murad has translated several classical Arabic works, including Imam al-Bayhaqi's 'Seventy-Seven Branches of Faith', and 'Selections from the Fath al-Bari'. He is also the Trustee and Secretary of The Muslim Academic Trust and Director of The Anglo-Muslim Fellowship for Eastern Europe.

Blood is no argument', as Shakespeare observed. Sadly, Muslim ranks are today swollen with those who disagree. The World Trade Centre, yesterday's symbol of global finance, has today become a monument to the failure of global Islam to control those who believe that the West can be bullied into changing its wayward ways towards the East. There is no real excuse to hand. It is simply not enough to clamour, as many have done, about 'chickens coming home to roost', and to protest that Washington's acquiescence in Israeli policies of ethnic cleansing is the inevitable generator of such hate. It is of course true as Shabbir Akhtar has noted that powerlessness can corrupt as insistently as does power. But to comprehend is not to sanction or even to empathize. To take innocent life to achieve a goal is the hallmark of the most extreme secular utilitarian ethic, and stands at the opposite pole of the absolute moral constraints required by religion.

There was a time, not long ago, when the 'ultras' were few, forming only a tiny wart on the face of the worldwide attempt to revivify Islam. Sadly, we can no longer enjoy the luxury of ignoring them. The extreme has broadened, and the middle ground, giving way, is everywhere dislocated and confused. And this enfeeblement of the middle ground, was what was enjoined by the Prophetic example, is in turn accelerated by the opprobrium which the extremists bring not simply upon themselves, but upon committed Muslims everywhere. For here, as elsewhere, the preferences of the media work firmly against us. David Koresh could broadcast his fringe Biblical message from Ranch Apocalypse without the image of Christianity, or even its Adventist wing, being in any way besmirched. But when a fringe Islamic group bombs Swedish tourists in Cairo, the muck is instantly spread over 'militant Muslims' everywhere.

If these things go on, the Islamic movement will cease to form an authentic summons to cultural and spiritual renewal, and will exist as little more than a splintered array of maniacal factions. The prospect of such an appalling and humiliating end to the story of a religion which once surpassed all others in its capacity for tolerating debate and dissent is now a real possibility. The entire experience of Islamic work over the past fifteen years has been one of increasing radicalization, driven by the perceived failure of the traditional Islamic institutions and the older

Muslim movements to lead the Muslim peoples into the worthy but so far chimerical promised land of the 'Islamic State.'

If this final catastrophe is to be averted, the mainstream will have to regain the initiative. But for this to happen, it must begin by confessing that the radical critique of moderation has its force. The Islamic movement has so far been remarkably unsuccessful. We must ask ourselves how it is that a man like Nasser, a butcher, a failed soldier and a cynical demagogue, could have taken over a country as pivotal as Egypt, despite the vacuity of his beliefs, while the Muslim Brotherhood, with its pullulating millions of members, should have failed, and failed continuously, for six decades. The radical accusation of a failure in methodology cannot fail to strike home in such a context of dismal and prolonged inadequacy.

It is in this context - startlingly, perhaps, but inescapably - that we must present our case for the revival of the spiritual life within Islam. If it is ever to prosper, the 'Islamic revival' must be made to see that it is in crisis, and that its mental resources are proving insufficient to meet contemporary needs. The response to this must be grounded in an act of collective muhasaba, of self-examination, in terms that transcend the ideologised neo-Islam of the revivalists, and return to a more classical and indigenously Muslim dialectic.

Symptomatic of the disease is the fact that among all the explanations offered for the crisis of the Islamic movement, the only authentically Muslim interpretation, namely, that God should not be lending it His support, is conspicuously absent. It is true that we frequently hear the Quranic verse which states that "God does not change the condition of a people until they change the condition of their own selves." [1] But never, it seems, is this principle intelligently grasped. It is assumed that the sacred text is here doing no more than to enjoin individual moral reform as a precondition for collective societal success. Nothing could be more hazardous, however, than to measure such moral reform against the yardstick of the fiqh without giving concern to whether the virtues gained have been acquired through conformity (a relatively simple task), or proceed spontaneously from a genuine realignment of the soul. The verse is speaking of a spiritual change, specifically, a transformation of the nafs of the believers - not a moral one. And as the Blessed Prophet never tired of reminding us, there is little value in outward conformity to the rules unless this conformity is mirrored and engendered by an authentically righteous disposition of the heart. 'No-one shall enter the Garden by his works,' as he expressed it. Meanwhile, the profoundly judgmental and works - oriented tenor of modern revivalist Islam (we must shun the problematic buzz-word 'fundamentalism'), fixated on visible manifestations of morality, has failed to address the underlying question of what revelation is for. For it is theological nonsense to suggest that God's final concern is with our ability to conform to a complex set of rules. His concern is rather that we should be restored, through our labours and His grace, to that state of purity and equilibrium with which we were born. The rules are a vital means to that end, and are facilitated by it. But they do not take its place.

To make this point, the Holy Quran deploys a striking metaphor. In ***Sura Ibrahim***, verses 24 to 26, we read:

Have you not seen how God coineth a likeness: a goodly word like a goodly tree, the root whereof is set firm, its branch in the heaven? It bringeth forth its fruit at every time, by the leave of its Lord. Thus doth God coin likenesses for men, that perhaps they may reflect. And the likeness of an evil word is that of an evil tree that hath been torn up by the root from upon the earth, possessed of no stability.

According to the scholars of tafsir (exegesis), the reference here is to the 'words' (kalima) of faith and unfaith. The former is illustrated as a natural growth, whose florescence of moral and intellectual achievement is nourished by firm roots, which in turn denote the basis of faith: the quality of the proofs one has received, and the certainty and sound awareness of God which alone signify that one is firmly

grounded in the reality of existence. The fruits thus yielded - the palpable benefits of the religious life - are permanent ('at every time'), and are not man's own accomplishment, for they only come 'by the leave of its Lord'. Thus is the sound life of faith. The contrast is then drawn with the only alternative: kufr, which is not grounded in reality but in illusion, and is hence 'possessed of no stability'.[2]

This passage, reminiscent of some of the binary categorisations of human types presented early on in ***Surat al-Baqara***, precisely encapsulates the relationship between faith and works, the hierarchy which exists between them, and the sustainable balance between nourishment and fructition, between taking and giving, which true faith must maintain.

It is against this criterion that we must judge the quality of contemporary 'activist' styles of faith. Is the young 'ultra', with his intense rage which can sometimes render him liable to nervous disorders, and his fixation on a relatively narrow range of issues and concerns, really firmly rooted, and fruitful, in the sense described by this Quranic image?

Let me point to the answer with an example drawn from my own experience.

I used to know, quite well, a leader of the radical 'Islamic' group, the Jama'at Islamiya, at the Egyptian university of Assiut. His name was Hamdi. He grew a luxuriant beard, was constantly scrubbing his teeth with his miswak, and spent his time preaching hatred of the Coptic Christians, a number of whom were actually attacked and beaten up as a result of his khutbas. He had hundreds of followers; in fact, Assiut today remains a citadel of hardline, Wahhabi-style activism.

The moral of the story is that some five years after this acquaintance, providence again brought me face to face with Shaikh Hamdi. This time, chancing to see him on a Cairo street, I almost failed to recognise him. The beard was gone. He was in trousers and a sweater. More astonishing still was that he was walking with a young Western girl who turned out to be an Australian, whom, as he sheepishly explained to me, he was intending to marry. I talked to him, and it became clear that he was no longer even a minimally observant Muslim, no longer prayed, and that his ambition in life was to leave Egypt, live in Australia, and make money. What was extraordinary was that his experiences in Islamic activism had made no impression on him - he was once again the same distracted, ordinary Egyptian youth he had been before his conversion to 'radical Islam'.

This phenomenon, which we might label 'salafi burnout', is a recognised feature of many modern Muslim cultures. An initial enthusiasm, gained usually in one's early twenties, loses steam some seven to ten years later. Prison and torture - the frequent lot of the Islamic radical - may serve to prolong commitment, but ultimately, a majority of these neo-Muslims relapse, seemingly no better or worse for their experience in the cult-like universe of the salafi mindset.

This ephemerality of extremist activism should be as suspicious as its content. Authentic Muslim faith is simply not supposed to be this fragile; as the Qur'an says, its root is meant to be 'set firm'. One has to conclude that of the two trees depicted in the Quranic image, salafi extremism resembles the second rather than the first. After all, the Sahaba were not known for a transient commitment: their devotion and piety remained incomparably pure until they died.

What attracts young Muslims to this type of ephemeral but ferocious activism? One does not have to subscribe to determinist social theories to realise the importance of the almost universal condition of insecurity which Muslim societies are now experiencing. The Islamic world is passing through a most devastating period of transition. A history of economic and scientific change which in Europe took five hundred years, is, in the Muslim world, being squeezed into a couple of generations. For instance, only thirty-five years ago the capital of Saudi Arabia was a cluster of mud huts, as it had been for thousands of years. Today's Riyadh is a hi-tech megacity of glass towers, Coke machines, and gliding Cadillacs. This is an extreme case, but to some extent the dislocations of modernity

are common to every Muslim society, excepting, perhaps, a handful of the most remote tribal peoples.

Such a transition period, with its centrifugal forces which allow nothing to remain constant, makes human beings very insecure. They look around for something to hold onto, that will give them an identity. In our case, that something is usually Islam. And because they are being propelled into it by this psychic sense of insecurity, rather than by the more normal processes of conversion and faith, they lack some of the natural religious virtues, which are acquired by contact with a continuous tradition, and can never be learnt from a book.

One easily visualises how this works. A young Arab, part of an oversized family, competing for scarce jobs, unable to marry because he is poor, perhaps a migrant to a rapidly expanding city, feels like a man lost in a desert without signposts. One morning he picks up a copy of Sayyid Qutb from a newsstand, and is 'born-again' on the spot. This is what he needed: instant certainty, a framework in which to interpret the landscape before him, to resolve the problems and tensions of his life, and, even more deliciously, a way of feeling superior and in control. He joins a group, and, anxious to retain his newfound certainty, accepts the usual proposition that all the other groups are mistaken.

This, of course, is not how Muslim religious conversion is supposed to work. It is meant to be a process of intellectual maturation, triggered by the presence of a very holy person or place. Tawba, in its traditional form, yields an outlook of joy, contentment, and a deep affection for others. The modern type of tawba, however, born of insecurity, often makes Muslims narrow, intolerant, and exclusivist. Even more noticeably, it produces people whose faith is, despite its apparent intensity, liable to vanish as suddenly as it came. Deprived of real nourishment, the activist's soul can only grow hungry and emaciated, until at last it dies.

THE ACTIVISM WITHIN

How should we respond to this disorder? We must begin by remembering what Islam is for. As we noted earlier, our din is not, ultimately, a manual of rules which, when meticulously followed, becomes a passport to paradise. Instead, it is a package of social, intellectual and spiritual technology whose purpose is to cleanse the human heart. In the Qur'an, the Lord says that on the Day of Judgement, nothing will be of any use to us, except a sound heart (qalbun salim). [3] And in a famous hadith, the Prophet, upon whom be blessings and peace, says that

> *"Verily in the body there is a piece of flesh. If it is sound, the body is all sound. If it is corrupt, the body is all corrupt. Verily, it is the* ***heart****."*

"Verily in the body there is a piece of flesh. If it is sound, the body is all sound. If it is corrupt, the body is all corrupt. Verily, it is the heart.

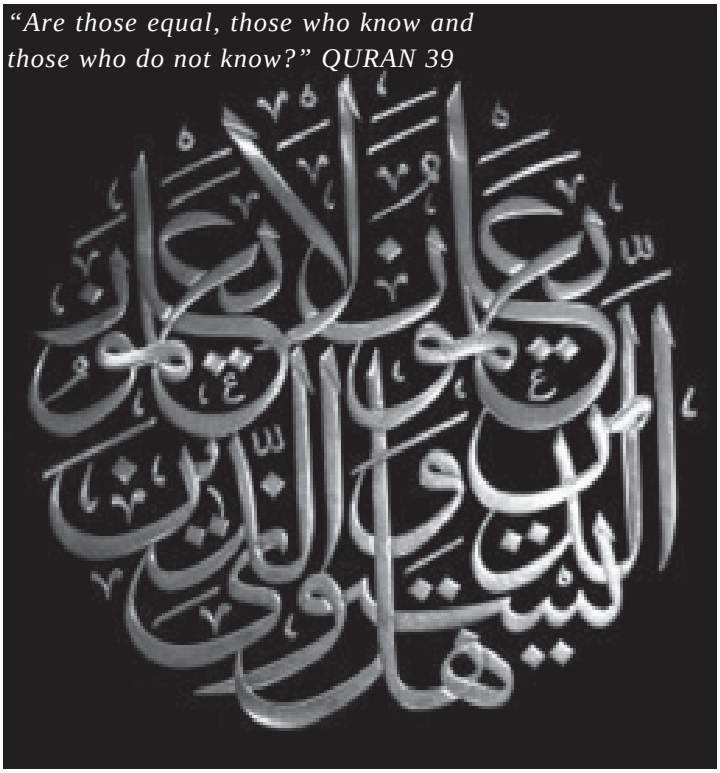
Mindful of this commandment, under which all the other commandments of Islam are subsumed, and which alone gives them meaning, the Islamic scholars have worked out a science, an ilm (science), of analysing the 'states' of the heart, and the methods of bringing it into this condition of soundness. In the fullness of time, this science acquired the name tasawwuf, in English 'Sufism' - a traditional label for what we might nowadays more intelligibly call 'Islamic psychology.'

At this point, many hackles are raised and well-rehearsed objections voiced. It is vital to understand that mainstream Sufism is not, and never has been, a doctrinal system, or a school of thought - a madhhab. It is, instead, a set of insights and practices which operate within the various Islamic madhhabs; in other words, it is not a madhhab, it is an ilm. And like most of the other Islamic ulum, it was not known by name, or in its later developed form, in the age of the Prophet (upon him be

blessings and peace) or his Companions. This does not make it less legitimate. There are many Islamic sciences which only took shape many years after the Prophetic age: usul al-fiqh, for instance, or the innumerable technical disciplines of hadith.

Now this, of course, leads us into the often misunderstood area of sunna and bid'a, two notions which are wielded as blunt instruments by many contemporary activists, but which are often grossly misunderstood. The classic Orientalist thesis is of course that Islam, as an 'arid Semitic religion', failed to incorporate mechanisms for its own development, and that it petrified upon the death of its founder. This, however, is a nonsense rooted in the ethnic determinism of the nineteenth century historians who had shaped the views of the early Orientalist synthesizers (Muir, Le Bon, Renan, Caetani). Islam, as the religion designed for the end of time, has in fact proved itself eminently adaptable to the rapidly changing conditions which characterise this final and most 'entropic' stage of history.

"Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know?" QURAN 39



What is a bid'a, according to the classical definitions of Islamic law? We all know the famous hadith:

Beware of matters newly begun, for every matter newly begun is innovation, every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is in Hell. [4]

Does this mean that everything introduced into Islam that was not known to the first generation of Muslims is to be rejected? The classical ulema do not accept such a literalistic interpretation.

Let us take a definition from Imam al-Shafi'i, an authority universally accepted in Sunni Islam. Imam al-Shafi'i writes:

There are two kinds of introduced matters ***(muhdathat)***. One is that which contradicts a text of the Qur'an, or the Sunna, or a report from the early Muslims ***(athar)***, or the consensus ***(ijma')*** of the Muslims: this is an 'innovation of misguidance' ***(bid'at dalala)***. The second kind is that which is in itself good and entails no contradiction of any of these authorities: this is a 'non-reprehensible innovation' ***(bid'a ghayr madhmuma)***. [5]

This basic distinction between acceptable and unacceptable forms of bid'a is recognised by the overwhelming majority of classical ulema. Among some, for instance al-Izz ibn Abd al-Salam (one of the half-dozen or so great mujtahids of Islamic history), innovations fall under the five axiological headings of the Shari'a: the obligatory (wajib), the recommended (mandub), the permissible (mubah), the offensive (makruh), and the forbidden (haram).[6]

Under the category of 'obligatory innovation', Ibn Abd al-Salam gives the following examples: recording the Qur'an and the laws of Islam in writing at a time when it was feared that they would be lost, studying Arabic grammar in order to resolve controversies over the Qur'an, and developing philosophical theology (kalam) to refute the claims of the Mu'tazilites.

Category two is 'recommended innovation'. Under this heading the ulema list such activities as building madrasas, writing books on beneficial Islamic subjects, and in-depth studies of Arabic linguistics.

Category three is 'permissible', or 'neutral innovation', including worldly activities such as sifting flour, and constructing houses in various styles not known in Medina.

Category four is the 'reprehensible innovation'. This includes such misdemeanours as overdecorating mosques or the Qur'an.

Category five is the 'forbidden innovation'. This includes unlawful taxes, giving judgeships to those unqualified to hold them, and sectarian beliefs and practices that explicitly contravene the known principles of the Qur'an and the Sunna.

The above classification of bid'a types is normal in classical Shari'a literature, being accepted by the four schools of orthodox fiqh. There have been only two significant exceptions to this understanding in the history of Islamic thought: the Zahiri school as articulated by Ibn Hazm, and one wing of the Hanbali madhhab, represented by Ibn Taymiya, who goes against the classical ijma' on this issue, and claims that all forms of innovation, good or bad, are un-Islamic.

Why is it, then, that so many Muslims now believe that innovation in any form is unacceptable in Islam? One factor has already been touched on: the mental complexes thrown up by insecurity, which incline people to find comfort in absolutist and literalist interpretations. Another lies in the influence of the well-financed neo-Hanbali madhhab called Wahhabism, whose leaders are famous for their rejection of all possibility of development.

In any case, armed with this more sophisticated and classical awareness of Islam's ability to acknowledge and assimilate novelty, we can understand how Muslim civilisation was able so quickly to produce novel academic disciplines to deal with new problems as these arose.

Islamic psychology is characteristic of the new ulum which, although present in latent and implicit form in the Quran, were first systematized in Islamic culture during the early Abbasid period. Given the importance that the Quran attaches to obtaining a 'sound heart', we are not surprised to find that the influence of Islamic psychology has been massive and all-pervasive. In the formative first four centuries of Islam, the time when the great works of tafsir, hadith, grammar, and so forth were laid down, the ulema also applied their minds to this problem of al-qalb al-salim. This was first visible when, following the example of the Tabi'in, many of the early ascetics, such as Sufyan ibn Uyayna, Sufyan al-Thawri, and Abdallah ibn al-Mubarak, had focussed their concerns explicitly on the art of purifying the heart. The methods they recommended were frequent fasting and night prayer, periodic retreats, and a preoccupation with murabata: service as volunteer fighters in the border castles of Asia Minor.

This type of pietist orientation was not in the least systematic during this period. It was a loose category embracing all Muslims who sought salvation through the Prophetic virtues of renunciation, sincerity, and deep devotion to the revelation. These men and women were variously referred to as al-bakka'un: 'the weepers', because of their fear of the Day of Judgement, or as zuhhad, ascetics, or ubbad, 'unceasing worshippers'.

By the third century, however, we start to find writings which can be understood as belonging to a distinct devotional school. The increasing luxury and materialism of Abbasid urban society spurred many Muslims to campaign for a restoration of the simplicity of the Prophetic age. Purity of heart, compassion for others, and a constant recollection of God were the defining features of this trend. We find references to the method of muhasaba: self-examination to

detect impurities of intention. Also stressed was riyada: self-discipline.

By this time, too, the main outlines of Quranic psychology had been worked out. The human creature, it was realised, was made up of four constituent parts: the body (jism), the mind (aql), the spirit (ruh), and the self (nafs). The first two need little comment. Less familiar (at least to people of a modern education) are the third and fourth categories.

The spirit is the ruh, that underlying essence of the human individual which survives death. It is hard to comprehend rationally, being in part of Divine inspiration, as the Quran says:

"And they ask you about the spirit; say, the spirit is of the command of my Lord. And you have been given of knowledge only a little."[7]

According to the early Islamic psychologists, the ruh is a non-material reality which pervades the entire human body, but is centred on the heart, the qalb. It represents that part of man which is not of this world, and which connects him with his Creator, and which, if he is fortunate, enables him to see God in the next world. When we are born, this ruh is intact and pure. As we are initiated into the distractions of the world, however, it is covered over with the 'rust' (ran) of which the Quran speaks. This rust is made up of two things: sin and distraction. When, through the process of self-discipline, these are banished, so that the worshipper is preserved from sin and is focussing entirely on the immediate presence and reality of God, the rust is dissolved, and the ruh once again is free. The heart is sound; and salvation, and closeness to God, are achieved.

This sounds simple enough. However, the early Muslims taught that such precious things come only at an appropriate price. Cleaning up the Augean stables of the heart is a most excruciating challenge. Outward conformity to the rules of religion is simple enough; but it is only the first step. Much more demanding is the policy known as mujahada: the daily combat against the lower self, the nafs. As the Quran says:

'As for him that fears the standing before his Lord, and forbids his nafs its desires, for him, Heaven shall be his place of resort.'[8]

Hence the Sufi commandment:

'Slaughter your ego with the knives of ***mujahada.***' [9]

Once the nafs is controlled, then the heart is clear, and the virtues proceed from it easily and naturally.

Because its objective is nothing less than salvation, this vital Islamic science has been consistently expounded by the great scholars of classical Islam. While today there are many Muslims, influenced by either Wahhabi or Orientalist agendas, who believe that Sufism has always led a somewhat marginal existence in Islam, the reality is that the overwhelming majority of the classical scholars were actively involved in Sufism.

The early Shafi'i scholars of Khurasan: al-Hakim al-Nisaburi, Ibn Furak, al-Qushayri and al-Bayhaqi, were all Sufis who formed links in the richest academic tradition of Abbasid Islam, which culminated in the achievement of Imam Hujjat al-Islam al-Ghazali. Ghazali himself, author of some three hundred books, including the definitive rebuttals of Arab philosophy and the Ismailis, three large textbooks of Shafi'i fiqh, the best-known tract of usul al-fiqh, two works on logic, and several theological treatises, also left us with the classic statement of orthodox Sufism: the Ihya Ulum al-Din, a book of which Imam Nawawi remarked:

"Were the books of Islam all to be lost, excepting only the Ihya', it would suffice to replace them all." [10]

Imam Nawawi himself wrote two books which record his debt to Sufism, one called the Bustan al-Arifin ('Garden of the Gnostics', and another called the al-Maqasid (recently published in English translation, Sunna Books, Evanston Il. trans. Nuh Ha Mim Keller).

Among the Malikis, too, Sufism was popular. Al-Sawi, al-Dardir, al-Laqqani and Abd al-Wahhab al-Baghdadi were all exponents of Sufism. The Maliki jurist of Cairo, Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha'rani defines Sufism as follows:

'The path of the Sufis is built on the Quran and the Sunna, and is based on living according to the morals of the prophets and the purified ones. It may not be blamed, unless it violates an explicit statement from the Quran, sunna, or ijma. If it does not contravene any of these sources, then no pretext remains for condemning it, except one's own low opinion of others, or interpreting what they do as ostentation, which is unlawful. No-one denies the states of the Sufis except someone ignorant of the way they are.'[11]

For Hanbali Sufism one has to look no further than the revered figures of Abdallah Ansari, Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, Ibn al-Jawzi, and Ibn Rajab.

In fact, virtually all the great luminaries of medieval Islam: al-Suyuti, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, al-Ayni, Ibn Khaldun, al-Subki, Ibn Hajar al-Haytami; tafsir writers like Baydawi, al-Sawi, Abu'l-Su'ud, al-Baghawi, and Ibn Kathir[12] ; aqida writers such as Taftazani, al-Nasafi, al-Razi: all wrote in support of Sufism. Many, indeed, composed independent works of Sufi inspiration. The ulema of the great dynasties of Islamic history, including the Ottomans and the Moghuls, were deeply infused with the Sufi outlook, regarding it as one of the most central and indispensable of Islamic sciences.

Further confirmation of the Islamic legitimacy of Sufism is supplied by the enthusiasm of its exponents for carrying Islam beyond the boundaries of the Islamic world. The Islamization process in India, Black Africa, and South-East Asia was carried out largely at the hands of wandering Sufi teachers. Likewise, the Islamic obligation of jihad has been borne with especial zeal by the Sufi orders. All the great nineteenth century jihadists: Uthman dan Fodio (Hausaland), al-Sanousi (Libya), Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri (Algeria), Imam Shamil (Daghestan) and the leaders of the Padre Rebellion (Sumatra) were active practitioners of Sufism, writing extensively on it while on their campaigns. Nothing is further from reality, in fact, than the claim that Sufism represents a quietist and non-militant form of Islam.

With all this, we confront a paradox. Why is it, if Sufism has been so respected a part of Muslim intellectual and political life throughout our history, that there are, nowadays, angry voices raised against it? There are two fundamental reasons here.

Firstly, there is again the pervasive influence of Orientalist scholarship, which, at least before 1922 when Massignon wrote his Essai sur les origines de la lexique technique, was of the opinion that something so fertile and profound as Sufism could never have grown from the essentially 'barren and legalistic' soil of Islam. Orientalist works translated into Muslim languages were influential upon key Muslim modernists -

*For Ibn Taymiya himself, although critical of the excesses of certain Sufi groups, had been committed to a branch of mainstream Sufism. This is clear, for instance, in Ibn Taymiya's work Sharh Futuh al-Ghayb, a commentary on some technical points in the Revelations of the Unseen, a key work by the sixth-century saint of Baghdad, Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani. Throughout the work Ibn Taymiya shows himself to be a loyal disciple of al-Jilani, whom he always refers to as shaykhuna (**'our teacher'**). This Qadiri affiliation is confirmed in the later literature of the Qadiri tariqa, which records Ibn Taymiya as a key link in the silsila, the chain of transmission of Qadiri teachings.*

such as Muhammad Abduh in his later writings - who began to question the centrality, or even the legitimacy, of Sufi discourse in Islam.

Secondly, there is the emergence of the Wahhabi da'wa. When Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, some two hundred years ago, teamed up with the Saudi tribe and attacked the neighbouring clans, he was doing so under the sign of an essentially neo-Kharijite version of Islam. Although he invoked Ibn Taymiya, he had reservations even about him. For Ibn Taymiya himself, although critical of the excesses of certain Sufi groups, had been committed to a branch of mainstream Sufism. This is clear, for instance, in Ibn Taymiya's work Sharh Futuh al-Ghayb, a commentary on some technical points in the Revelations of the Unseen, a key work by the sixth-century saint of Baghdad, Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani. Throughout the work Ibn Taymiya shows himself to be a loyal disciple of al-Jilani, whom he always refers to as shaykhuna ('our teacher'). This Qadiri affiliation is confirmed in the later literature of the Qadiri tariqa, which records Ibn Taymiya as a key link in the silsila, the chain of transmission of Qadiri teachings.[13]

Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, however, went far beyond this. Raised in the wastelands of Najd in Central Arabia, he had little access to mainstream Muslim scholarship. In fact, when his da'wa appeared and became notorious, the scholars and muftis of the day applied to it the famous Hadith of Najd:

Ibn Umar reported the Prophet (upon whom be blessings and peace) as saying: "Oh God, bless us in our Syria; O God, bless us in our Yemen." Those present said: "And in our Najd, O Messenger of God!" but he said, "O God, bless us in our Syria; O God, bless us in our Yemen." Those present said, "And in

our Najd, O Messenger of God!". Ibn Umar said that he thought that he said on the third occasion: "Earthquakes and dissensions (fitna) are there, and there shall arise the horn of the devil."[14]

And it is significant that almost uniquely among the lands of Islam, Najd has never produced scholars of any repute.

The Najd-based da'wa of the Wahhabis, however, began to be heard more loudly following the explosion of Saudi oil wealth. Many, even most, Islamic publishing houses in Cairo and Beirut are now subsidised by Wahhabi organisations, which prevent them from publishing traditional works on Sufism, and remove passages in other works considered unacceptable to Wahhabist doctrine.

The neo-Kharijite nature of Wahhabism makes it intolerant of all other forms of Islamic expression. However, because it has no coherent fiqh of its own - it rejects the orthodox madhhabs - and has only the most basic and primitively anthropomorphic aqida, it has a fluid, amoebalike tendency to produce divisions and subdivisions among those who profess it. No longer are the Islamic groups essentially united by a consistent madhhab and the Ash'ari [or Maturidi] aqida. Instead, they are all trying to derive the shari'a and the aqida from the Quran and the Sunna by themselves. The result is the appalling state of division and conflict which disfigures the modern salafi condition.

At this critical moment in our history, the umma has only one realistic hope for survival, and that is to restore the 'middle way', defined by that sophisticated classical consensus which was worked out over painful centuries of debate and scholarship. That consensus alone has the demonstrable ability to provide a basis for unity. But it can only be retrieved when we improve the state of our hearts, and fill them with the Islamic virtues of affection, respect, tolerance and reconciliation. This inner reform, which is the traditional competence of Sufism, is a precondition for the restoration of unity in the Islamic movement. The alternative is likely to be continued, and agonising, failure.

NOTES

1. Sura 13:11.

2. For a further analysis of this passage, see Habib Ahmad Mashhur al-Haddad, Key to the Garden (Quilliam Press, London 1990 CE), 78-81.

3. Sura 26:89. The archetype is Abrahamic: see Sura 37:84.

4. This hadith is in fact an instance of takhsis al-amm: a frequent procedure of usul al-fiqh by which an apparently unqualified statement is qualified to avoid the contradiction of another necessary principle. See Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri, Reliance of the Traveller, tr. Nuh Ha Mim Keller (Abu Dhabi, 1991 CE), 907-8 for some further examples.

5. Ibn Asakir, Tabyin Kadhib al-Muftari (Damascus, 1347), 97.

6. Cited in Muhammad al-Jurdani, al-Jawahir al-lu'lu'iyya fi sharh al-Arba'in al-Nawawiya (Damascus, 1328), 220-1.

7. 17:85.

8. 79:40.

9. al-Qushayri, al-Risala (Cairo, n.d.), I, 393.

10. al-Zabidi, Ithaf al-sada al-muttaqin (Cairo, 1311), I, 27.

11. Sha'rani, al-Tabaqat al-Kubra (Cairo, 1374), I, 4.

12. It is true that Ibn Kathir in his Bidaya is critical of some later Sufis. Nonetheless, in his Mawlid, which he asked his pupils to recite on the occasion of the Blessed Prophet's birthday each year, he makes his personal debt to a conservative and sober Sufism quite clear.

13. See G. Makdisi's article 'Ibn Taymiyya: A Sufi of the Qadiriya Order' in the American Journal of Arabic Studies, 1973.

14. Narrated by Bukhari. The translation is from J. Robson, Mishkat al-Masabih (Lahore, 1970), II, 1380.

http://www.islamfortoday.com/murad02.htm

The Causes of the Radicalization of the Muslim Communities in Southeast Asia

by
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Southeast Asia, more than any other region in the Muslim world, is known for an extraordinarily moderate and tolerant approach to the practice of religion. This is a region where several of the world's major civilizations and religious have converged, and where Muslims and others have co-existed with other religious and cultural traditions in a way that makes Southeast Asia stands as an example to other regions of the world. Nevertheless, it is also true that over the past decades, and accelerating in recent years, there has been a process of radicalization of the Muslim communities of Southeast Asia, which, if left unchecked, could lead to the loss, or at least the attenuation of this valuable tradition of moderation and tolerance in religion.

Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of Radicalization

Before proceeding with the analysis of the trends in the religio-political landscape of Southeast Asia and what they mean for the future of the region and of the Muslim world we need to define our terms, what we mean by radicalization, so that we can have a common language in addressing this issue. I was asked to address the subject of radical and moderate Islam at a hearing of a committee of the U.S. House of Representatives last month, and I said at the time that one of the problems that we have found in the discourse about Islam is that the terms "radical" or "moderate" are often used in a subjective and imprecise way, without going through a process of critically examining what these terms mean. In particular, it is important to examine the relationship between radicalization and violence.

I note that the paper that outlines the design of this conference names violent extremism and radicalization of Muslim communities as the subject or problems that this conference is examining. This suggests that violent extremism and radicalization are separate, but related phenomena, that there may be stages of radicalization that do not incorporate violence but that nevertheless have the potential to lead individuals to violence or that have other detrimental effects.

This is the view that we have taken in our analyses of radicalization in the Muslim world, that the propensity for violence is certainly a defining characteristic of the most extreme segment of the radical spectrum—for instance, in terms of the definition of jihad as armed struggle and as an individual

obligation of the same standing as the five pillars of the religion (the profession of faith, prayer five times daily, zakat or almsgiving, fasting during Ramadan, and the hajj). However, outside of the violent there is a much larger universe of radical fundamentalist or Salafi groups who may not themselves practice violence, but that propagate an ideology that creates the conditions for violence and that is subversive of the values of democratic societies.

Therefore, the willingness to use or justify violence to attain religious or political objectives is one element of what separates radical from moderate Muslimsa very important element, but only one element nonetheless. This is why in our analysis of politico-religious tendencies in the Muslim world we have taken a broader view of what constitutes radical Islam. The analytical framework that we have developed differentiates religious and political currents according to their overarching ideologies; their preferred forms of government (do they seek to establish an Islamic state or are they willing to accept non-sectarian forms of government?); their political and legal orientation (do they insist on the application of Islamic law, or do they accept other sources of law?); their attitudes toward the rights of women and religious minorities (do they deny women equal rights, including the right to political participation? Do they support the education and advancement of women? Would they allow freedom of worship?).

The radical groups may not advocate violence, but they would register significantly lower levels of tolerance. As Donald Emmerson has noted,1 their lower tolerance may then lower these Muslims' reluctance to acquiesce or even take part in the use violence for Islamist ends. In this way, organizations such as the Hizb ut-Tahrir have been identified as a gateway to terrorism. In our own studies of radical recruitment in the Middle East, we found that

individuals recruited into Salafi or Muslim Brotherhood groups decide at some point that their mentors are not Islamic enough and move on to even more extreme and violent groups. This progression from religious radicalism to violent extremism is made possible by the absence of firewalls between mainstream Islam and radicals and violent extremists. Violent extremists can derive scriptural justifications for their actions. This is because the elements of the Islamic tradition that could be used to lend support to radical interpretations have not yet been anachronized. Therefore, if the goal is to turn the ideological tide, modernizing Islamic teachings on jihad is an area where progressive theological work is needed.

1 Donald K. Emmerson, "Islam, Muslims, and Violence: The Useful Diversity of 'Islamism,'" Paper prepared for Special Session on "Islam and Political Violence," Annual Convention of the Middle East Studies Association, November 20-23, 2004 (draft).

2 International Crisis Group (ICG), "Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia: Damaged but Still Dangerous," ICG Asia Report No. 63, Jakarta/Brussels: August 26, 2003, p. 6.

3 "Saudis Quietly Promote Strict Islam in Indonesia," New York Times, July 5, 2003.

4 Zachary Abuza, "Muslims, Politics, and Violence in Indonesia: An Emerging Jihadist-Islamist Nexus?" NBR Analysis, Vol. 15, No. 3, September 2004, p. 31.

Sources of the Radicalization of Muslim Communities in Southeast Asia

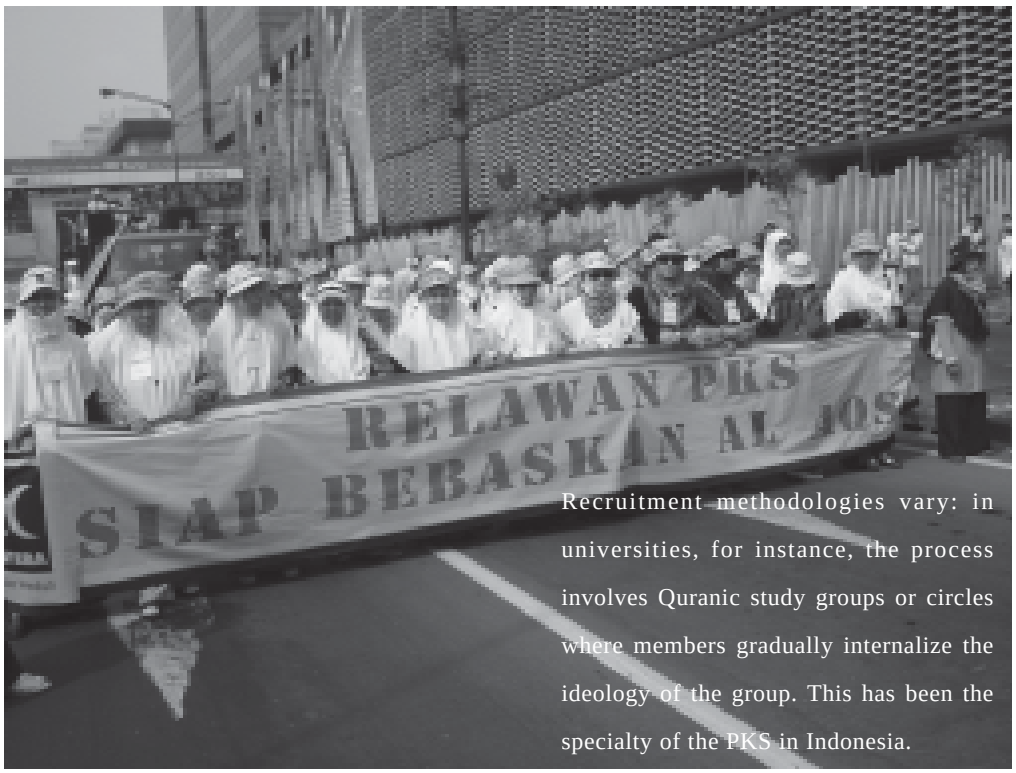
Having defined radicalization and the issues associated with this process in general terms, we can turn to the Southeast Asian experience. One of the assumptions stated in the concept paper for this conference is that violent extremism and the radicalization of the Muslim communities are recent phenomena. This is true, for the reasons that I suggested at the beginning of this presentation, but there have been some historical deviations from the norm. As the Indonesian participants here know, the Padri movement in Sumatra in the 1820s and 1830s involved an effort to introduce Wahhabism, sometimes using forceful methods, by preachers who had returned from Mecca and had been influenced by Wahhabi teachings during the al-Sauds' first occupation of the city at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

With this exception, and of the uprisings against the colonial powers that combined ethnic and religious factors, the only major Islamist revolt in the modern history of Southeast Asia was the Darul Islam rebellion from 1949 to 1962. The Darul Islam experience is important because it is one of the fountainheads of the regional terrorist movement that goes by the name of Jemaah Islamiyah, which seems to me a misappropriation of a perfectly respectable name, but this precisely one of the tactics of the extremists, which is to cloak themselves in the language of religion.

As Sidney Jones has pointed out in her analyses of the origins of Islamist terrorist in Indonesia, Abdullah Sungkar, the co-founder of Jemaah Islamiyah, served as an officer in Darul Islam leader Kartosuwirjo's Islamic Army of Indonesia and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, although he did not participate in the rebellion, accepted the Darul Islam's ideological agenda.2 Individuals from families with a Darul Islam backgrounds continue to play an important role in terrorism in Indonesia. The point here is that while external factors provided the catalyst for radicalization and violent extremism in Southeast Asia, these phenomena have internal sources as well.

Nevertheless, while the seeds of radicalization in Southeast Asia were already there, this process was catalyzed by the worldwide Islamic revival in its Salafi and Wahhabi manifestations there is nothing wrong with religious piety per se and by the influx of money and ideologies from the Middle East, which has allowed extremist groups to expand their activities and to make inroads Southeast Asian educational and social welfare networks.

First, the effects of the worldwide Islamic resurgence. This is a complex phenomenon that reflects the stresses of traditional societies and of individuals within these societies as they seek to adjust to or cope



Recruitment methodologies vary: in universities, for instance, the process involves Quranic study groups or circles where members gradually internalize the ideology of the group. This has been the specialty of the PKS in Indonesia.

with rapid societal change. In its Salafi manifestations, this process involves a rejection of modernity and an effort to return to an imagined past. Chandra Muzaffar describes the manifestations of this phenomenon in his important study, Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia. These include, among other things, greater insistence on the outward manifestations of piety such as the wearing of Islamic garb, greater social distance between the sexes, intolerance of un-Islamic public behavior such as consumption of alcohol at public accommodations, and exclusive, identity-driven politics.

In non-Arab countries, this process has involved the displacement of indigenous culture by religious and social practices from the Middle East what the distinguished Indonesian scholar Azyumardi Azra, whom we are fortunate to have in this conference, has referred to as Arabization. This importation of social, political and cultural patterns from the Middle East has had a polarizing impact on Islam in Southeast Asia, where the cultural context is quite different and not always consistent with that in the Arab world.

Second, the export of Saudi money and ideology. Radicalization throughout the Muslim world has been driven by an aggressive proselytizing campaign, directed and funded by the Saudis, in countries from Bosnia to the Philippines. The Saudis funded mosques, schools, and Islamic social welfare organizations that, in countries such as Pakistan, filled the void left by ineffectual or non-existent state institutions. As in the rest of the Muslim world, the influx of Saudi money and ideology has been an important engine of radicalization in Southeast Asia. In the early 1990s Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, Osama bin Laden's brother–in-law and agent in the Philippines, became the regional director of the Saudi-based charity International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), which he used as a cover for al-Qaeda operations there. The Indonesian extremist Agus Dwikarna, who is in prison in the Philippines on terrorism charges, was the

regional head of the al-Haramain Foundation, which was listed by the United Nations in 2004 as an organization with links to al-Qaeda.

The mechanics of Saudi funding of activities in Southeast Asia was through institutional or personal links that Saudi donors established with ideologically compatible organizations or individuals in Southeast Asia to whom they channeled funds and scholarships for study at Saudi universities. For instance, beginning in the 1970s the Rabithat al-Alam al-Islami (World Muslim League) funded programs run by the Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesias (DDII). The Religious Affairs Officer in Saudi embassies abroad is a channel for direct Saudi propagation of Wahhabi ideology. For instance, the Saudi office in Jakarta finances the translation of about one million books a year from Arabic to Bahasa Indonesia and offers scholarships to Indonesian students for study in Saudi universities.3

Third, the consequences of the Afghan war. The war against the Soviets in Afghanistan attracted militants from all over the Muslim world. The war not only served as the training ground for many of today's terrorists and radicals, but it provided the context for the creation of the transnational networks that served as the foundation for al-Qaeda and its associated groups. About a thousand Southeast Asians are estimated to have participated in training or combat in Afghanistan. Of greater consequence, many of the leaders of extremist organizations had experience in Afghanistan, for instance: former Jemaah Islamiyah leaders Hambali and Abu Jibril, the late Fathur Rahman al-Ghozi and Zulkarnaen; former Laskar Jihad leader Ja'afar Umar Thalib; and Abu Sayyaf Group founder Abdurajak Janjalani, among others.

Fourth, there is an organizational basis for the spread of radical ideologies. Radicals by and large are a minority, but in many areas they hold the advantage because they have developed extensive networks spanning the Muslim world and sometimes reaching beyond it. Hizb ut-Tahrir, for instance, is an international organization, and many of the Southeast Asian Salafi groups have intimate ties to their mentors, funders and counterparts in the Middle East. Liberal and moderate Muslims, although a majority in almost all countries, have not created similar networks, although efforts are now beginning to be made, by some of the people present in this room, to network together moderate Muslim organizations in Southeast Asian—an effort that perhaps could be expanded on a global scale.

Fifth, another reason for the spread of radical Islamist groups is their aggressive and sophisticated recruitment techniques. The targets are separate potential pools of recruits, each requiring different methods and venues for recruitment. The key recruitment nodes are mosques and Islamic study circles; schools, universities, and youth organizations; health and welfare organizations, including charities; and other social clusters. Recruitment methodologies vary: in universities, for instance, the process involves Quranic study groups or circles where members gradually internalize the ideology of the group. This has been the specialty of the PKS in Indonesia. In economically and socially marginalized districts, recruits might be willing to join the extremist group as an avenue of escape from boredom or unemployment. Laskar Jihad recruited among the poorest and less educated segments of the population, especially the young rootless urban poor.

Sixth, I should mention that violence itself plays a central role in recruitment. International jihadists have become involved in conflicts from Chechnya and Kashmir to Maluku and Poso, ostensibly to help beleaguered Muslims in these regions, but also to gain credibility among some sectors of the broader Muslim communities and especially among the young people that they hope to entice into joining. We see, for instance, that the playing of sometimes very graphic tapes of the armed jihad has a central role in recruitment events. But these local jihads also provide new members with a "rite of passage" which is the functional equivalent of the previous generation's experience in Afghanistan Beyond that, it could be that from the jihadist standpoint, violence is its own justification. According to Zachary Abuza, the concept of purifying

violence is central to the JI ideology. Religious violence is seen as an act of cleansing of sins, particularly important in the case of JI members who were formerly criminals and are seeking redemption.4

Factors Specific to Southeast Asia

I have outlined above some of the general conditions and processes that have contributed to the radicalization of Muslim communities in Southeast Asia. There are, of course, factors that are specific to Southeast Asia. These domestic factors interacted with broader external trends to produce greater militancy in the region. In Indonesia, the principal dynamic was the weakening of state authority after the downfall of President Suharto.

The political disorder also produced tactical alliances between some elite factions and extremists, which gave the extremists greater scope to expand their political influence. The result was the appearance of radical militias and vigilante groups, communal conflict in eastern Indonesia, and even today, outburst of intolerance such as the violence or threats of violence against the Ahmadiyah sect, Christian churches and Ulil Abshar-Abdallah's Liberal Muslim Network.

In the southern Philippines and southern Thailand, the potential for radicalization lies in a strong sense of grievance on the part of the Muslim populations of these countries toward the central government that has manifested itself in a longstanding insurgency in Mindanao—that has entered, however, a stage of what appears to be serious negotiations toward an equitable settlement—and a situation of escalating violence in southern Thailand.

I believe that it is widely understood now that only Muslims themselves can effectively challenge the message of radicals, and that the role of those of us who stand outside is to do what we can to empower Muslim moderates in this ideological struggle.

What is to be done?

I believe that it is widely understood now that only Muslims themselves can effectively challenge the message of radicals, and that the role of those of us who stand outside is to do what we can to empower Muslim moderates in this ideological struggle. I noted in my presentation that one of the advantages of radicals is that they have extensive networks, while by and large moderates do not. Therefore, central to this task is to create a strong international network to unite the fractured voices of moderate Muslims.

The creation of this network can provide moderates with a platform for their message and amplify their voices. Southeast Asia is unique in the Muslim world in that there is already in place a dense structure of moderate Muslim institutions. There are mass organizations in Indonesia such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah that by and large subscribe to moderate conceptions of Islam. The Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University system comprises, if my information is correct, 47 colleges and universities with over 100,000 students. Muhammadiyah also has an extensive university system.

In Malaysia and the Philippines there has been a significant growth of Muslim civil society. There are already efforts to under way to network moderate Muslim organizations in the region; I want to mention in this regard the work of the International Center for Islam and Pluralism in Jakarta, and the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy, among others.

These institutions can be instrumental in developing and disseminating a moderate narrative that contradicts the radical narrative. So perhaps the turning of the tide can begin not in the alleged center of the Muslim world, the Middle East, but here, in Southeast Asia.

Disaggregating the Islamist Movements

by
Mustapha Kamel Al - Sayyid

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Presented to the Conference on Roots of Islamic Radicalism, Yale, New Haven, May 2004

How radical are Islamist movements?. The general perception of Islamist movements in the West ,if not Muslims in general, is that they are all radicals, in the sense that they accept no compromise with whom they believe to be their adversaries and are inclined to use violence in settling political disagreements with those who hold other beliefs or support opposed viewpoints. Such perception did exist long before events of September 11 in the US, was reinforced by recent deadly explosions in Spanish trains attributed to a group of Muslims mostly of North African origins. How far is such an understanding correct?. This is the major question addressed in this paper. It strives to answer this question by defining the notion of radicalism, then by examining the Islamist movements in a number of Muslim countries in order to find out whether such understanding applies to any of them or all of them, and concludes by suggesting the possible causes that some sections of such movements espouse beliefs and resorts to methods of action that could be described as "radical".

Examples of Islamist movements are drawn basically from Egypt, but also from countries far apart as Algeria, Pakistan and Malaysia in the hope of discovering through the comparison some clues to the roots of "radicalism" among their adherents. Egypt and Pakistan are chosen because they occupy prominent positions in the history of Islamic movements. Egypt was the scene of the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, correctly described as the Greatest modern Islamic movements. Pakistan is the country of Abul A'ala Maudoodi whose radical ideas inspired the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb, the ideological "godfather" of many radical Islamist movement.

The notion of "radicalism"

The term "radical" is defined by Encyclopedia Britannica to mean in politics "one who desires extreme change of part or whole of the social order" (EB, 1994,). The term was used in the British and French context originally to refer to different groups of people whose ideas have been commonly accepted later on and became a mainstream principle of political life in Britain and France. The first person to be described as radical was Charles James Fox who called in England of 1797 for a "radical reform" which implied granting universal manhood suffrage. According to the same source the term was understood later to denote "all those who supported the movement for parliamentary reform". (Ibid). In France, similarly the term was used before 1848 to refer to supporters of universal manhood suffrage as well as open advocacy for Republican principles. The term is given a broader meaning in the US where it denotes extremism of any type whether of the left or

right. Communism is an example of the former and Fascism is an example of the latter (Ibid).

Radicalism, when it came into being, was understood by the public to mean being in total opposition to the existing order or to parts of it. Thus , the term referred only to the substance of the beliefs of those who are seen to be holding extreme ideological positions, not to their methods of action. In fact, the radicals in both UK and France used peaceful methods in their struggle to get their ideas accepted by the general public in their countries. They would mobilize voters, try to transform political parties to adopt their ideas political platforms they communicate to the concerned public.

The current usage of the term extends its meaning to encompass both extremism of ideas as well as of methods. Designating any one to be radical is of course a relative matter. Much depends on who makes such judgment. What is viewed to be "radical" by one person could be an ordinary political stand for another. However, all would agree that resort to non-peaceful methods in struggle for power or in settling differences is indeed a "radical " approach to politics, even when it is justified by the repression used by incumbent regimes or foreign occupying powers.

It is perhaps in this sense that "radicalism of Islamic movements" in current discourse in the West is understood to refer to both their ideas and methods of action. In fact, the interest in such movements has increased not when their ideas were known, but when some of the organizations belonging to these movements proceeded to armed action against their governments as well as against foreign governments.

Classifying Components of Islamist movements

The major argument in this paper is twofold, that radical Islamists constitute only a small fraction of the Islamist movement in any Muslim country, and that the power of this fraction could only be appreciated when it is seen as one component of a larger movement which indirectly sustains it and could continually replenish its ranks so long as the causes that led to the radicalism of this fraction persist. Demonstrating this argument would require a careful examination of all the other components of the Islamist movement and determining the kind of relations that exist among all of them.

It will be easy to appreciate the complexity of the Islamist movement if it is seen as a social movement. Social movements have been defined by many authors, but it would be sufficient for purposes of this paper to use the definition that the Encyclpaedia Britannica offers for them as "loosely organized but sustained campaign in support of a social goal, typically either the implementation or the prevention of a change in society's structure or values. Although social movements differ in size, they are all collective" (EB, 1999, electronic version).

The Islamist movement, thus understood, is composed of a large number of individuals and organizations, who perform different functions, hold varied beliefs or varied interpretations of the same belief, but they share in common the wish to see their societies conforming to a certain ideal which they take to be an authentic Islamic order.

Several authors have attempted to classify Islamist movements. A usual classification is the one that divides Islamists into moderates and radicals, militants, activists and sympathizers. A most recent study of Islamist movements in North Africa suggested that Islamsits belong to one of five categories:

Salafiyyah ilmiyyah –Scientific Salafiyya concerned with re-establishment of the moral order that prevailed at the time of the Prophet Mohammed and who does not engage in politics, but does not mind using violence in order to get other Muslims to observe truly Islamic practices

Salafiyya Jihadiyya Militant Salafists who " attack Western targets in a campaign rationalized in traditional doctrinal terms as a conventional Jihad in defense of Islamic world against Western aggression" ,

Modernists Political activists who are inclined towards peaceful action and who are willing to use modern ideas , techniques and organizations in order to reach their goal of an Islamist state,

Militants who believe that the only way to establish a truly Islamic society is through the use of armed struggle directed mostly against their own governments.

Finally Diaspora Muslim activists who try to maintain an Islamic identity in non-Muslim countries to which Muslims have migrated which

Visit by Professor Dr Abd Rahman to Khadijah Mosque. He is the Chairman of Rehabilitation Group in Saudi for counter terrorism

are mostly Christian societies in Europe and North America.(ICG,2004, I, 3)

The authors of this classification used two criteria in classifying Islamist movements, mainly the substance of beliefs of adherents to these movements as well as their methods of action in pursuit of their specific goal.

Fred Von Der Mehden, describing Islamists in Malaysia, he divided them into four categories: radicals, traditionalists, fundamentalists and accomodationsits(F.V.Der Mehden in Esposito, 1987, 184)

Such classifications are not adequate to portray the complexity of the Islamist movements. They overlook the indirect contribution of two other strands in that movement, one coming from the ruling elites themselves, and the other is provided by apolitical Muslims. The first of these two groups help the Islamist movement by propagating through official media and institutions ideas glorifying a return to a "Golden Age of Islam" , thus unwittingly serving the cause of oppositional Islam by making some of the arguments of the latter acceptable to the large masses. The second group provides sympathy to the activists and militants as they are seen as good Muslims sacrificing their efforts and even their lives for a noble cause.

One may even suggest a fifth category made up of people who could be considered as "Secular Islamists". They are the people who are willing to accept temporarily a separation of religion and state to advance the chances of Islamists' domination of the political system of their countries. The Justice and Development Party of Turkey is the perfect example of such group at present. It does not even have the label Islamist in its official name. Given the history of people who formed this party and the specific characteristics of the Turkish political system, who could deny that such a party is in fact very much of an Islamist party, but which has to make necessary and painful concessions in order to survive.(R.Quinn Mecham, 2004)

Why would some people belong to one of these categories rather than any of the others? Why should some Muslims adopt the militant path as the way to realize their ideal Islamic society?. Many hypotheses could be suggested to provide some clues to the answer of the second question. The following analysis would emphasize three variables that might be relevant in this respect, mainly, the impact of particular interpretations

of Islam , the social background of adherents to the different categories and finally the type of political system under which Islamist movements operate, and particularly the mode of integration of the Islamists into a legitimate political process.

The four countries from which examples of Islamist movements are chosen in this paper are selected because all have important Islamist movements, but they differed in their mode of integrating the movement in their political systems. They also dealt with the tension provoked by the rise of the Islamist movement in different ways, and their ruling elites seem to be immune for the time being from any serious threat to its power. They serve therefore as a field of study of the various conditions that could give rise to Islamic radicalism or could do the opposite by attenuating such radicalism.

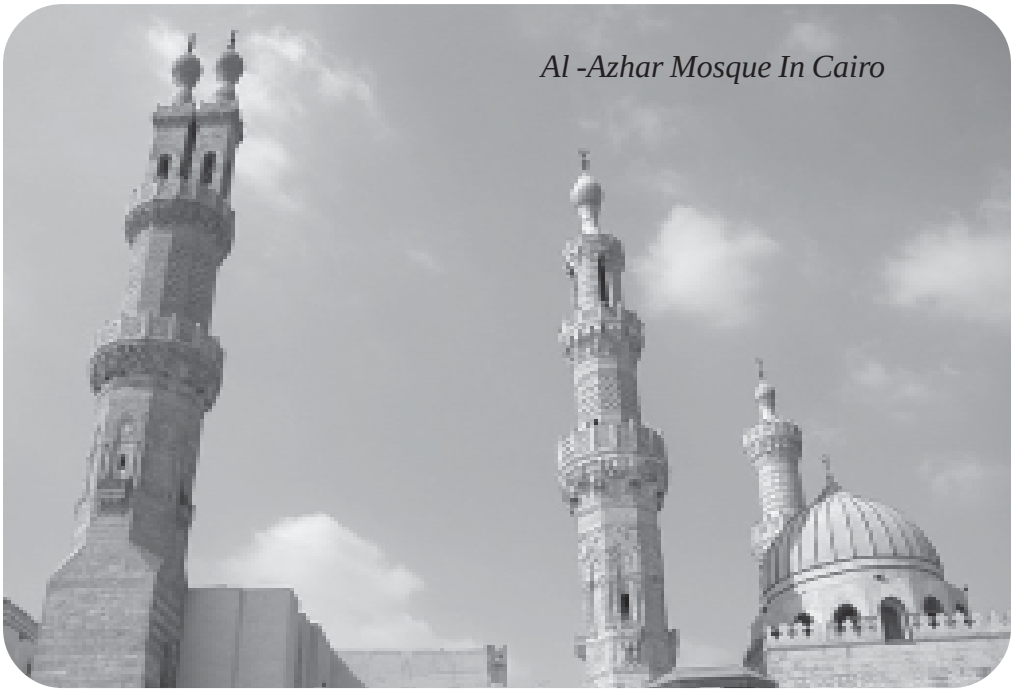
Establishment Islam and the role of the State.

In all four countries, the state played a crucial role in the rise of the Islamist movement, particularly its activist faction. This role was played out in different ways, some of which were quite direct, others, no less important, were carried out indirectly. The government of Egypt under President Anwar El-Sadat released Muslim Brothers from prison and allowed them to publish a monthly and to take part in political activities in the hope of counter-balancing the influence of the Nasserites and the left. The latter were critical of Sadat's policies, particularly what seemed to be a deviation from policies of his predecessor Gamal Abdel-Nasser. In Algeria, it is claimed that President Chadli Bendjedid was hoping to use the Islamists to limit powers of the ruling FLN, or National Liberation Front (A.Basbous,2000,119). In Pakistan, several Presidents, particularly Bhutto(1971-1977) and Zia ul-Haq made concessions to the Islamist movement to the point of adopting laws inspired by the movement's interpretation of Islamic Shari'a (Kemal A.Faruki in J.Esposito, 1987,57-76). Finally in Malaysia, young leaders of the Islamist movement (Pan Malay Islamic Party) were integrated by Mahatir Mohammed, the former Malaysian prime minister in both the government and the ruling party UMNO (Malay-Muslim United Malay National Organization). Anwar Ibrahim the former leader of the the Islamic Youth Organization had occupied several ministerial posts in the cabinets of Mahathir, ranging from culture, youth and sport, agriculture, education and finally becoming vice-premier for the economy before his disgrace and trial immediately after the Asian financial crisis of 1997 (F.V. Der Mehden in J.Esposito, 1987, 183).

Besides, all four states helped the Islamists indirectly by accepting some of their demands. They thus introduced legislative measures and adopted policies in response to calls by Islamists. They accepted implicitly that part of the Islamists' platform. President Sadat got the media to remind the Egyptian people that his name was Mohammed Anwar El-Sadat. He called himself the Pious President. He also coined the slogan that development of Egypt should be based on Science and Faith. One year before his assassination , he got the constitution of the country to be amended so that its second article would elevate principles of Islamic Shari'a to a basic source of legislation.

In Algeria, Houary Boumediene, Algeria's second president allowed the religious hierarchy to enjoy large influence within ministries of Education, Religious Affairs and Justice. His successor Shadli Benjedid introduced in 1984 a family code that reflected Islamists' conservative interpretation of Islam on personal status matters (Basbous, OP.cit,142). A full program of Islamisation of state and society was gradually carried out in Pakistan under both Bhutto and Zia ul-Haq. In Malaysia , the government emphasized the Islamic character of the state in many ways. The Constitution of 1957 provided for Islam as a religion of the federation, the Sultan to be the head of Islamic religion, and protection of Muslims from proselytizing while allowing fro freedom of worship for other religions. Some states adopted statutes that punish Muslims for deviating from moral teachings of their religion. The Federal government attempted however to develop a synthesis between Islam and modern practices and institutions particularly in education and economic fields (Der Mehden, op.cit.183-198).

Governments of the four countries did not want to leave interpretation of Islam to be the monopoly of opposition groups that claim to be striving to build an authentic Islamic society. All had at their disposal religious institutions and members of the clergy who were willing to offer them , very often but not always , the kind of interpretation they like. The Egyptian government , under the monarchy before 1952



Al -Azhar Mosque In Cairo

and under the republican regime since 1953, could use a number of institutions for this purpose. These institutions included century-old ones that were brought under its control gradually with the coming of a modern state institutions to the country at the time of Mohammed Ali in the early part of the 19th century, as well as new organizations that it established in order to extend its control over religious affairs.

The old institutions included both Al-Azhar University, whose chief is appointed by the President of the Republic, before the posts of rector and chief scholar1 were separated under Gamal Abdel-Nasser in 1961. The second post is that of the Mufti, who is the final authority over the interpretation of Islamic religious matters. One of the new institutions that were created by the revolutionary regime of army officers in 1953 was the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, which is oriented more towards foreigners, explaining Islam to them and bringing young people to study Islam in Egypt. Interestingly enough, the first head of this council was Anwar El-Sadat, who became President of Egypt seventeen years later. Another new institutions was the Ministry of Waqf- religious properties- which came into being before the revolution of 1952 for the specific purpose of running religious properties. The head of this ministry was usually a member of the clergy, whose views counted also as being credible reading of religious texts.yet a third institutions was the College of Islamic Studies that was expected to offer a modernist interpretation of religion

These institutions offered the government of Egypt whatever it wanted from them. Shaykh Al-Azhar. The grand professor of Al-Azhar claimed in 1962 that fighting Israel was an Islamic duty. The person occupying the same post argued in 1979 that making peace with Israel was quite compatible with Islamic teachings. A minister of Waqf lost his life in 1977 when he published a book arguing against claims of a militant Islamist organization that the government of a Muslim country must rule on the basis of Shari'a, otherwise it would be usurping powers of Allah. Members of the clergy belonging to these institutions, and who interpret religious teachings the government way, would find pages of newspapers, most of which indirectly controlled by the government as well as waves and screens of the electronic media, also owned by the government, open to them to propagate views on religion acceptable to the government.

Government 's reliance on such institutions to offer a mantle of religious legitimacy to her own

policies and actions allowed these institutions to wield a measure of autonomy. Some of their members may express views not to the liking of the government, with the government tolerating such autonomy for a time, until the person dies or is replaced by another clergyman more sympathetic to government views. That was the case of the late Shaykh Gad Al-Haq who led AL-Azhar institution in the 1990's and expressed views at variance with wishes of the government on a number of issues, including interest payment by banks, which he considered incompatible with Islamic teachings. He was opposed on this matter by Shaykh Tantawi , who occupied then the post of Mufti. The government waited for the death of Shaykh Gad Al-Haq and replaced him by Shaykh Tantawi. (CPSS, 1995, 76).

One would find similar institutions in the other three countries, although they would normally attach great importance to the views of Muslim clergy in Egypt because of the contribution of Egyptian institutions, particularly Al-Azhar, one of the world's oldest universities, in training religious scholars and clergy people for other Muslim countries. In fact, the teaching of Arabic in post-independence Algeria was carried out by Egyptians , many of whom were either graduates of Al-Azhar university, members of or sympathizers with the ideas of the Muslim Brothers, Egypt's mainstream politico-religious organization. Government-controlled religious institutions in Malaysia included the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs(founded in 1968), the Islamic Research Center and Institute of Islamic Mission and Training (1974), besides the department of religion of the Prime Minister's Office(1976). (Deliar Noer,in M.B.Hooker ed.1988,199). All these institutions supplement the role of governors, Sultans of the different negeri(states) who are supposed to be guardians of the Islamic religion. (Ibid, 199).

In Pakistan, the function of providing the state's own interpretation of Islam was entrusted to a new organization established by Ayub Khan in 1959, namely the Institute of Islamic Research, which was initially headed by Fazlur Rahman who became later professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Chicago. Rahman was entrusted by Ayub to offer a more modernist interpretation of religion to counter the relatively conservative one articulated by Islamist parties, particularly the Jamaat-I-Islami (Islamic Party). (S.V.R.Nasr, in J.L.Esposito,,1997, 141-145).

In their attempts to provide their own interpretation of Islam, the four governments were responding to specific situations which varied from one country to the other. The Egyptian government was eager under Nasser to use Islam mainly as a tool of her foreign policy, and –under Sadat- to gain a measure of legitimacy to undermine nationalist-socialist foundations of legitimacy of the Nasserites. Algerian leaders until 1991 considered the enhancement of the teaching of Islamic religion to be a way of asserting the country's national identity, since the Algerians were called Muslims by the French before independence . A similar situation prevailed in Pakistan as well which separated from India over the issue of religion. As in Algeria, to be a Pakistani, meant to be a Muslim as well. Finally, Islam was very important in Malaysia as a basis for solidarity among the Malays in their attempt to gain for themselves what they would consider a fair share of their country's power and wealth. They believed that their share was disproportionately smaller than that of citizens of Chinese and to a lesser extent Indian origins.(Von Der Mehden,Ibid, 183).

Apolitical Islam or Islam in daily life

Foreign visitors to Muslim countries since the 1980's would soon remark the increasing manifestations of the powerful presence of Islam in the daily life of their citizens. The external signs of such presence are numerous. A large number of females, young and old, are veiled. More mosques are being built. Observance of religious rites is rising. More people fast during the month of Ramadan. The sale of alcoholic drinks is banned during this month and restaurants and coffee shops are closed during the day time. The Friday prayer is attended by large numbers of people who would crowd streets of major cities as the mosques cannot accommodate all of them. The number of Muslims who go to Mecca for Hajj-pilgrimage- has put much pressures on Saudi authorities that they decided to fix a quota for each country not to be exceeded. Islamic charitable associations are mushrooming, many of them use the mosque as a center for their medical, educational and social activities, without necessarily getting an official permission from the government to undertake.

The number of religious books on sale exceeds in some countries the number of books dealing with other matters. Recital of the Quran is often heard from many stores at different times of the day particularly in the morning.

This phenomenon of the "return of the sacred" has been described, if not necessarily documented under all its manifestations by many authors for the countries under study. The causes of this upsurge in external manifestations of religiosity have been an object of wide speculation. There was no common explanation for this phenomenon that would apply to all Muslim countries and Muslim communities. It was attributed- among other variables- to a profound economic, social and political crisis in Egypt in the wake of the country's military defeat in the third Arab-Israeli war of 1967(Carlyle Murphy,2002,25-40), to a deliberate effort on the part of some clergymen to get Algerians de abide by correct rules of Islamic behavior (Servaine Labat 1995199-208), and to determination of the Malays to affirm their specific identity in the context of inter-ethnic competition for power and wealth in Malaysia (Roy F.Ellen in M.B.Hooker, 1988, 53-58). Some of these causes would probably apply to several countries, as the feeling of a profound moral and social crisis.

However, a legitimate question, in the context of a paper on the Islamist movement is the extent to which such "Apolitical Islam" relates to "political Islam"? Is it correct to include apolitical Islam as one of the components of Islamist movements?. The answer is not easy. It could be argued that it is from these apolitical masses that the sympathizers with and potential voters for the Islamist movement are found. It is also this collective adherence and strict observance of Islamic teachings which drives otherwise "secularist" governments, as those of Sadat ,Bhutto and Mahathir to make the effort to demonstrate their Islamic credentials in the face of a skeptical public in their respective countries.

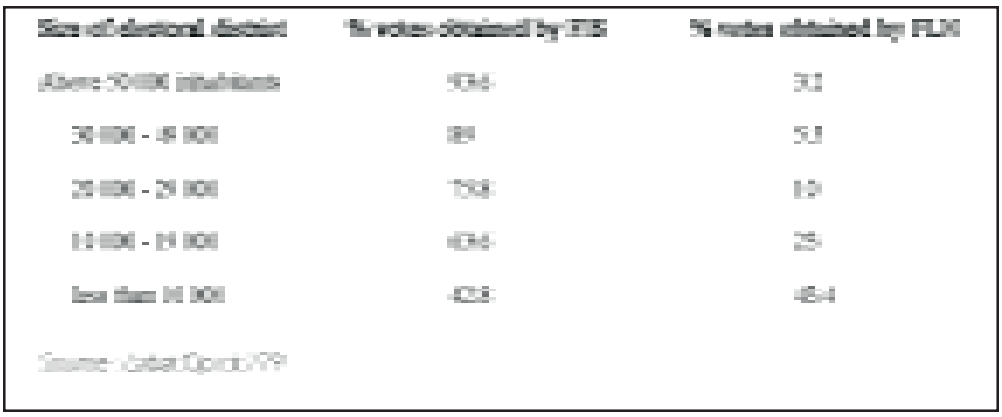
The Activists or the Mainstream Islamic Organization

Despite this presumed complexity of the Islamist movement, the public as well as specialists would tend to identify the Islamist movement in each of the four countries with one mainstream organization, believed to be "the mother organization" from which all other organizations split or founded by its former members. Thus the Islamist movement in Egypt is championed by the Muslim Brothers, in Pakistan by the Jamaat-e-Islami, known as Pakistan Muslim League, in Algeria by Front Islamique du Salut – Front of Islamic Salvation- and In Malaysia by the Parti Islam se Malaysia or the Islamic party of Malaysia. Such organizations are correctly described as mainstream for several reasons. They attract the largest number of members, compared to other Islamist organizations. They act as umbrella organizations, sponsoring other bodies undertaking activities in many varied fields. When they contest elections , they either come as second only to the ruling party in their countries, or even capture the majority of votes in fair and free elections. In fact, as it is well-known, one of these organizations did already defeat a ruling party in local and regional elections in June 1990. It was poised to capture the majority of seats in the parliament but was deprived of its electoral victory through a military coup d'etat that suspended indefinitely a second ballot in January 1992. This latter organization known as FIS remains banned in Algeria till the present time. Another mainstream organization , namely the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is also legally banned, although the Egyptian governments under Presidents Anwar El-Sadat-(1970-1981)- and Hosny Mubarak 1981 preferred to keep it in the "gray zone", allowing it to operate, contesting legislative elections as well as those of professional associations, while continuing to harass its members all the time. Finally, these organizations are considered mainstream as they adopt ideologies and policies accommodating the political system existing in their countries, not sharing the view of other Islamist organizations which do not see the point of participating in elections which they would not be allowed to win. They thus embark upon armed struggle as a way of seizing government power .

These organizations are willing to adapt their ideological platforms and tactics to changing conditions in their own countries. The Muslim Brothers in Egypt declined to participate in elections before the Revolution of July 1952, and opted for the status of an association rather than a political party. Its leadership maintained this position throughout the 1970's after the release by the late President Anwar El_Sadat of its

leaders from prison. However, they decided since 1984 to contest parliamentary elections and would like restrictions on the formation of political parties included in the Law of Political Parties in Egypt of 1977 to be lifted, so that they would be recognized as a party.2 The Muslim League of Pakistan was allegedly opposed to the establishment of the state of Pakistan in the early years of the Pakistan Republic, but it changed this position later. The PAS in Malaysia moved to emphasize less religious questions following its electoral defeat in 1986. Finally , even the FIS of Algeria , while banned by the Algerian government, came in 1998 to condemn armed struggle which was launched by many of its members following the indefinite postponement of a second round of elections in 1992.

Definitely, FIS of Algeria was electorally the most successful of Islamist organizations. It won the majority of votes in all electoral districts which have more than 20 000 inhabitants, including of course the large cities. It got the following results



The big electoral districts included 28 of the 30 big cities of Algeria. FIS emerged after these elections as the most popular party among urban population of the country. Its electoral successes were repeated a year and half later when legislative elections were held. FIS got 47.27 % of the vote and 188 seats in the first round of that election in 1991. It needed only twenty eight seats to be able to get an absolute majority in the 430 members People's Assembly if a second round were held on January 12, 1992. The Algerian military command , concerned that its material and political privileges would be lost if a second round is won by FIS, it overthrew President Shadli Benjedid and postponed indefinitely the second round and outlawed FIS.

The military rulers of Algeria did not allow the electoral process to be restored until 1995, making sure that FIS would not be legalized again even after they agreed to release its leaders from prison.(Labat, op.cit.223). However, other Islamist parties were allowed to contest presidential and legislative elections held since the restoration of the electoral process in 1995. In the last of these elections, two of the Islamist parties authorized by the Algerian government , namely the Movement of the Peace Society and the Movement of Islamic Renaissance got 7% and 0.6% of the seats in the Popular National Assembly respectively corresponding to 38 and 1 seats . This share of the 380 seats of the Assembly was far less than their share in past legislative elections when the first had 69 deputies and the second 33 deputies in the Assembly elected in 1997. (www.electionworld.org) Judging by these results, one would say that support for these parties is declining in Algeria. FIS remains outlawed.

Mainstream Islamist parties in Pakistan are only second to FIS in terms of their electoral successes. They constitute the largest bloc in the National Assembly of Pakistan. Three of them control no less than 46.4% of the seats in the Assembly elected in 2002. The largest of these is definitely the Pakistan Muslim League(Quaid-e-Azam) which got 25.7% of the seats (69 out of 342) , followed by the United Action Council of

Pakistan with 11.3% of the seats (53) , and the other faction of the PML led by former prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (9.4% and 14 seats). Dissensions among these parties do not allow them to turn their parliamentary majority into a coalition government with two other smaller Islamist parties as well as other parties that could agree with them on a common program. (electionworld.org).

The two other Islamist organizations in Malaysia and Egypt fare less well in elections , though for different reasons. The PAS of Malaysia got only 15.8% of the seats (7 out of 219 in the last legislative elections in that country held on March 21, 2004. The Muslim Brothers won 17 out of 444 seats in the People's Assembly elections held in Egypt in October-November 2000. It is true on the other hand that the two parties come second to the ruling parties in the two countries, namely the coalition known as Barisan Nasional led by UMNO in Malaysia and the National Democratic party In Egypt. Although there were some complaints about fairness of elections in Malaysia, these elections would be judged to be far fairer compared to elections in Egypt characterized by the heavy handed methods used by security forces which even prevent people from going to vote in electoral districts with large support for the Muslim Brothers. Besides, PAS had overwhelming support in three states in Northern Malaysia and it could run governments in different periods in these states. Muslim Brothers in Egypt have not been allowed to turn their overwhelming local support into control of local administration in any district again due to heavy handed methods used by security forces.

By accepting to contest elections and to abandon the use of armed struggle in their quest for power, such parties do not meet one criteria of radicalism. It is true that opponents of these organizations often accuse them of either engaging in violent resistance to their governments or being sympathetic to other Islamist groups who tend to use armed struggle as a method of action. Such charges were leveled at the Muslim Brothers, PAS and also FIS immediately after the annulment of the legislative election of 1991-1992. However, none of these charges have been proven in the last decade for the MB and PAS , and probably also for FIS since the amnesty announced by President Bouteflika since he came to power in 1999.

The ideology of these groups has gone through a major transformation since they came into being. All of them seem to accommodate themselves to the existing political system in their own countries, although they remain committed to the goal of establishing an Islamic state, where Shari'a is the major , if not the unique , source of legislation. It is the ambiguity surrounding their interpretation of Shari'a which mobilizes their opponents and turn important sections of the middle classes against them , to the point of welcoming an authoritarian government rather than seeing them in power. This is particularly the case in Algeria, Egypt as well as Pakistan.

The most recent statement of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt of their ideas of reform comes a long way from their past statements , not only of the 1940's , but even those of the 1970's in which they rejected party systems. The statement declared by Mr. Mahdi "Akef, the new General Guide, asserts commitment of the Brothers to a number of principles including respect of the popular will, alternation of power through the ballot box, freedom of establishment of political parties, people's representation through an assembly elected regularly for a definite period of time, freedom of opinion "within public order and morality and fundamental foundations of society". Their ideas on economic reform as explained in that statement are close to the welfare state known in Capitalist countries in which state ownership is limited to public utilities and "vital establishments". The statement explains rights of women , without recognizing the principle of complete equality between men and women. It does the same also when it considers the status of Copts, who should have the same rights and obligations as Muslims. Very little of this part of the statement could be considered radical. Definitely, liberal critics of the Brotherhood would have liked them to state unequivocally their respect for equality of the sexes and the principle of citizenship as a basis for defining rights and duties of all the people who belong to the national community with no distinction as to sex or religion. Qualifying freedom of opinion to be within "public order and morals and fundamental foundations of society" leaves the door open for restricting such right when its exercise is arbitrarily viewed by the government to be in violation of these limits. However, critics of the Brothers found most disturbing the declaration by the Brothers that their goal is" to strive to establish "Allah's Shari'a" since it is the Brothers' belief that it is the only effective way out of all the domestic and external problems suffered by Egypt. This goal could be attained "the formation of the Muslim individual, the Muslim home, the Muslim government, and the state that would lead all Muslim states , to bring them together, restore their glory, recover their lost territory and stolen land, and carry the banner of the religious call so that the world would be a happy place under Islam's good and teachings". (Ikhwan online, march 3, 2004).

All such statements leave much room for interpretation, and overlook the right of Non-Muslims to lead their own lives according to their own beliefs in a Muslim country. This view was already expressed by Mr.Hussein Abdel-Razeq, Secreatry General of the leftist Tajammo' Party in Egypt. Dr.Essam El_Erian, a leading spokesman of the Brothers replied to this critique arguing that political parties and movements of the country should emphasize what they have in common, while maintaining each their specific views on other matters. (Al-Ahali, March 2004).

This kind of ambiguity is to be found as well in the political platforms of the mainstream Islamist organizations in other countries . Thus, the site of the Pakistan Muslim League explains the political framework of Islam to be based on three principles of "towhid (Oneness of Allah), risala (Prophethood) and Khilafa (Caliphate). The last of these principles means :"representation. Man , according to Islam, is the representative of Allah on earth, His vice-gerent: that is to say, by virtue of the powers delegated to him by Allah, and within the limits prescribed, he is required to exercise Divine authority"(jamaat.org/islam/humanrightsPolitical.html).

The document of the Pakistan Muslim League goes on to say that this understanding of Khilafa is the point of departure of democracy in Islam. But it hastens to add that there are differences between Islamic democracy and Western democracy." the latter is based on the concept of popular sovereignty, while the former rests on the principle of popular Khilafa. In Western democracy the people are sovereign; in Islam sovereignty is vested in Allah and the people are his caliphs or representatives. In the former, the people make their own; in the latter they have to follow and obey the laws (Shari'a) given by Allah

through his Prophet. In one, the government undertakes to fulfill the will of the people; in the other the government and the people have to fulfill the will of Allah"

Many Muslims have no problem being governed by the Will of Allah. The problem is that the interpretation of this will is not a matter of personal knowledge of and aptitude to understand God's teachings. Experience has demonstrated that in many Muslim countries few clergymen claim to have the monopoly of such privilege. Their interpretation led to serious violations of rights of Muslims. The Example of Wilayat Al-Faqih in Iran is quite eloquent in this regard.

In another part of this statement , the explanation of rights of non-Muslims living in a Muslim state renders their status to be far inferior to that of a full citizen.

"Islam has also laid down certain rights for non-Muslims who may be living within the boundaries of an Islamic state and these rights necessarily form part of the Islamic constitutions. In Islamic terminology, such non-Muslims are called ***dhimmis*** *(the covenanted), implying that the Islamic state has entered into a covenant with them and guaranteed their protection"*

The statement does indeed say that the dhimmi's life, property and honor are to be respected and protected

"in exactly the same way as that of a Muslim citizen. Nor is there difference between a Muslim and non-Muslim citizen in respect of civil or criminal law"

The statement stopped short of recognizing complete equality between Muslims and non-Muslims who share life in the same country. Nor does it mention equality in political rights.

It would not be difficult to find the same ambiguity in platforms of either FIS or PAS. This point has been well-elaborated in other writings and there is no need to elaborate it further for these two organizations in this paper.

The mainstream organizations strive to present themselves as poly-class organizations. Although they do not use the class terminology, they like to be seen as integrative bodies, the authentic representative of the Islamic Umma, with no distinction as to the social status, color or language. However, in practice they are more representative of certain sections of their societies than others. In Egypt, the Muslim Brothers have a major constituency within the middle class with its two fractions, the educated professional people as well as private entrepreneurs. Professional syndicates of medical doctors, engineers, scientists and even lawyers and associations of university professors have been strong bastions of the Brothers.(CPSS, 1995).

In Pakistan, similar groups seem to be sympathetic to the Muslim League. The directory of the League gives a list of organizations and associations "conforming with Jamaat –e-Islami". These include religious scholars, boy students and girl students, lawyers, farmers, religious boy students, business community homeo doctors, workers and agril scientists.(Ibid.www.jamaat.org/directory/affiliates.html.

As for Malaysia, PAS appeals more to certain categories of Malays, particularly in the states of Kelantan and Terengganu, characterized by slower economic development compared to other states (J.C.Yong Liow, 2004, 362).Finally in Algeria FIS found much support within the Arabic speaking lower middle class and urban poor (Labat,178-185).

Islamic Militants

The fourth component of Islamist movements is truly radical in both ideology and methods of action. Islamists who belong to this trend do not accept any compromise with Western-style parliamentary systems, as they do not believe in elections as the way to realize their ideal of a Muslim society. They tend to view non-Muslims as enemies of Islam who should not be trusted. They believe that they should be either eliminated from Muslim societies or accept an inferior status. In their ideal Islamic state, teachings of Islam are strictly interpreted, with those who deviate from such teachings subject to punishment.

Examples of such groups abound in the four states under study. They include several groups in Egypt, the two most famous ones are the Islamic Group and the Jihad Organization. They were preceded by the Technical Military College group(1975), the Group of Muslims, otherwise known as Takfir wa al-Hijrah (1977). They gave rise also either to splinter groups, or groups of their members acting under different names. In Pakistan, the best known of these groups are the movement of Mujahedeen, Islamic Armed Jihad and Jaish Mohammed who operate mostly in Kashmir. Armed Islamist groups in Algeria made their presence felt even before the rise of FIS, but they became more active in the 1990', following cancellation of the legislative elections of December 1991-January 1992. The most active of these groups were the Armed Islamic Movement (MIA), the Army of Islamic Salvation (AIS), the Armed Isalmic Group (GIA) and finally the Salafi Group for Call and Fight. Even in Malaysia, some Islamists took up arms against other ethnic minorities in the country. Malaysian Islamist radicals of this type were mostly members of the Islamic Group which operates in several countries in South East Asia and another group known as Al-Ma'unah.

What these groups have in common is their relatively small size compared to the mainstream Islamist organizations in their own countries. Their members are mostly younger than those who join the mainstream organizations. The two features are dictated by their involvement in armed struggle. They are often subject to harassment by authorities, perhaps with the exception of Pakistani groups that operated in Kashmir until very recently when the Pakistani government of General Musharraf started to restrict their activities in the aftermath of its reconciliation with India.Members of a large organization involved in armed struggle are easily identified by security forces. Old people are not usually fit for the kind of armed activities which are undertaken by members of these organizations. They are also more reluctant to engage in such activities. They have more to lose, in terms of job, wealth , family support and loss of freedom at an advanced age. The study by Nemat Guenena of the Jihad members in Egypt of the 1980's indicated that out of 101 individuals who were tried by Egyptian State Security Tribunal 44.55% were students, and 24.75% were professionals.

Workers accounted for 14.85% and farmers for no more than 1.98%. The three other categories included shopkeepers(5.96%) Police and military (3.96%) and unemployed (3.96%). Most of them were between 20-30 years of age , with 42.57 % being between 20-25 and 34.65% between 25-30. Those who were younger than 20 years were only 8.91% while those older than 30 were 12.87% (N.Guenena,1986).

Similarities among these organizations probably are limited to these two features. An examination of their social backgrounds and ideological stands suggests more differences than commonalities. The leaders of Egyptian groups tended to come from middle class backgrounds, with university education. Their rank and file could come from more modest backgrounds, with the majority of them coming from some of the poorest regions of Upper Egypt. Accounts of the social background of Algerian militants of MIA,AIS or GIA suggest that they come from much poorer background, in Northern Algeria with the latter including not a small number of former criminals.(Martin Stone,1997,189, Olivier Roy, 1994,48-59).

Egyptian militants, as well as their Pakistani fellows were originally influenced by ideas that were articulated by both the Pakistani Abul A'ala Maudoodi and Sayyid Qutb. Maudoodi coined the term Hakimiyyah-Government of God, which was borrowed later by Sayyid Qutb. This concept means that the truly legitimate government in any Muslim country is that of Allah, ruled by the Islamic Shari'a. A secularist government is thus viewed to be usurping the authority of God, and should therefore be removed, by the force of arms, in a holy jihad, if necessary. Local influences and interpretations were added to this basic notion. Shaikh Omar Abdel-Rahman now in prison in the US and young leaders of Al-Jihad incorporated ideas that had originally been expressed in the late 13th century by the Muslim scholar Ibn Taymiya, who was calling on Muslims to fight the Mogul invasion of their countries, (Sayyid Ahmed,1991, Qutb, 1981) Besides such ideas, Pakistani militants were moved also by nationalism in their fight against the Indian troops in the Indian controlled part of Kashmir. Traditions of the fight against the French influenced Algerian militants in the 1990's as well as the will to force the Algerian government to restore the legality of FIS(Stone, 179).Finally, notions of ethno-nationalism inspired actions by Malayan militant groups.(Von Der Mehden, 184-185). It is important also to distinguish several ideological stands within the Islamist militant faction of the Islamist movement. One strand believes that the major thrust of the movement should be the fight against impious governments in Muslim countries, governments that claim to respect Islam, but they do in fact, according to this strand, deviate from the teachings of religion and even persecute Muslim activists. Another strand would direct its energies against fellow Muslims, who are seen to be disregarding the instructions of Islam, and who engage in un-Islamic behavior such as drinking alcohol , gambling , even mixing with girls in public places or allowing their women to go out into the streets unveiled. The third trend is to be manifested in Muslim countries with large non-Muslim population or which are ruled by a foreign non-Muslim power. Armed struggle in the latter case would be directed against members of the minorities or non-Muslim foreigners.

Conclusions

This brief analysis of the different components of the Islamist movement has demonstrated the complexity of the movement , in terms of its composition, structure, ideology and methods of action. It makes it abundantly clear that it would be misleading to assimilate all factions of the Islamist movement in any country with the militant faction that opts for the use of armed struggle in its quest for power. Such faction does not draw large numbers of Muslims. Its views on religion and its methods are usually abhorred by the majority of Muslims.

The relative importance of each of these factions varies from one Muslim country to the other, and even within the same country from one period to the other. Despite the perception conveyed by the world media, it is the activist mainstream faction which is mounting in influence in most Muslim countries at present. The militant faction has not been able to win power in most countries where it has been active. Definitely not in any of the countries under study. Moreover, it has been engaging in self-critique in some of these countries, notably in Egypt, where it has renounced its former methods of armed struggle, declaring that adoption of such methods was an error of judgment(Al-Sayyid, 2002).

The mainstream trend has made electoral gains in Turkey, Pakistan, Morocco, Bahrain, and Kuwait to name only few countries where it has emerged as the most popular political party or the second popular. It has not been able to make similar gains in other countries, because its members are continually harassed by their governments. Egypt is one of those countries where the government is concerned that once Islamists are allowed to take part in a fair and free election , they would increase their presence in legislatures and local elected bodies, if not achieve a landslide electoral victory.

Despite differences in outlook and methods of action, each component of the Islamist movement feeds the others. Apolitical Islamists would probably vote for activist Islamists. The establishment discourse on Islam, meant to discourage people from supporting activist and militant Islamists, renders their theses about the credibility of Islam as a foundation for the social, political ,economic and moral order more popular among Muslim masses. An activist could become a militant when peaceful political action by Islamists is banned by the government as was the case in Algeria in the aftermath of annulment of legislative election of 1991-1992. Militants also could move in the opposite direction to become leaders of mainstream movements, as the case of former members of the Islamic group in Egypt who became leaders of the mainstream Muslim Brotherhood adequately demonstrates.

It is not easy to suggest the conditions which give rise to each of these factions. Establishment Islam is definitely a reaction against the rise of activist and militant Islam. Three of the countries under study, namely Egypt, Algeria and Pakistan share a deteriorating socio-economic situation of their middle classes, with no prospect of any appreciable improvement in the near future. Two of these countries restrict activities of the mainstream Islamist movement, while the democratic process is on hold in the third country i.e. namely Pakistan. It is difficult to see how the accommodating ideology of the mainstream trend of the Islamist movement could gain more grounds under such circumstances. If the situation of the middle classes does not improve in these countries, their governments would most likely face a resurgence of the activities of militant Islamist groups in the years to come.

In this respect, it is very interesting that the only country of the four , where the mainstream Islamist movement has suffered a setback recently, is Malaysia, which is economically the most successful of the three four countries.

If the fortunes of the Islamist movement vary from one country to the other, it is wishful thinking to believe that such movement is going to vanish from the surface of the earth any time soon. Social scientists have long abandoned theories which suggested that secularism would accompany or follow modernization. At the time when US President is viewed to be newly-born Christian, and is supported by Evangelical groups, it would not make sense to dream that other peoples , who do not enjoy the material prosperity and post-modernity of US , would abandon their religions, or become less attached to it because this is conceivably the wish of US administration. An Islamist movement would continue to exist so long as there are Muslims. The accommodating trend in this movement would gain ascendance if the domestic and external conditions that favor the rise of the militant trend, disappear or are alleviated.

Finally, it is true that this paper did not consider one dimension of the Islamist movement , which some would quickly acknowledge as an integral component of it, namely its international connections. It is well-known for example that the Muslim Brotherhood is an international movement as well, with organizational links bringing its country chapters together. Osama Bin Laden has established in Afghanistan an “Islamic Worldwide Front to Combat Zionism and Crusdaders” and its actions have been tragically experienced in many countries, in Africa, North America, the Middle East and Asia. While

recognizing the importance of this dimension of the Islamist movement, it has not been possible to dwell on it in this paper, for the lack of reliable information..

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(Footnotes)

[1] This second post is held by a senior member of the clergy who is presumed to be an authority over religious affairs. His name in Arabic is Al-Ostadth al-Akbar , the grand professorr

[2] The Law of Political Parties in Egypt.No. 40 for 1977 bars the establishment of parties that discriminate among people on the basis of religion.. See The Government Printing Authority. Constitution of the Arab Republic of Egypt. Cairo-1991P.106, Article 4(Third)