

Looking into God's Heaven: Theological Constructs of Islamic Radicalism in Post New Order Indonesia¹⁾

Masdar Hilmy

“Your cries o babies with no heads ... got smashed onto the walls of Palestine ...
your screams o Afghanistan babies ... calling me with no arms ...
having been executed by damn bombs ... belong to the Satan America and its allies ...
at what time your parents have been going through Ramadhan!

Here I am, your brother ... here I am, coming with a chunk of bombings ...
will retaliate for your hurt heart ... will retaliate for your bloods ...
blood for blood ... life for life ... qishash!!”²⁾

Introduction

It is widely accepted that Islamic radicalism in Indonesia forms only a minority amidst its tolerant and moderate Muslim population.³⁾ Following the Bali bombing in October 2002, much of their underground activism has been decimated and more Muslim hardliners have been arrested by the government. Nevertheless, to assume that the Muslim hardliners no longer pose serious threats is theoretically misleading. The suicide bombing in front of the Australian embassy on 9 September 2004 provided clear evidence that the Muslim radicals are capable of organizing and executing a major operation within a large urban center, despite the fact that the perpetrators are derived from “the tiny minority of the Muslim radical minority.”⁴⁾

Abundant scholarly studies on Islamic radicalism in post New Order Indonesia have considered various theoretical perspectives and angles. Most of these works, however, do not answer satisfactorily the following two questions; (1) What constitutes Islamic radicalism, and (2) What turns radicals into *jihadists*. As a result, these studies suffer from unfocused theoretical arguments on what the term “radical” means. They seem to lump together all aspects of Islamic radicalism into one single term: “radical”. Put slightly differently, these studies are unable to provide a wide-ranging identification of Islamic radicalism, distinguishing the “moderate” radical to the most extreme violent one.

Secondly, these studies accentuate the structural aspect of Islamic radicalism rather than the “non-structural”. At best, most of them cannot avoid the analysis of Islam and the state, faith and politics and the like.⁵⁾ These studies are of the opinion that the history of Islamic radicalism in Indonesia is inseparable from the history of Darul Islam (DI) which tried to Islamize the state in the 1950's.⁶⁾ This type of analysis usually stems from the presumption that there is no way the (re)Islamization process can take place outside

the structure of power, i.e. the state level. This “structural” school of thought, as one may call it, cannot go beyond the state analysis while at the same time it ignores the fact that society is another target of Islamic radicalism.⁷⁾

By all accounts, preliminary findings have been expounded by ICG in its latest research which tries to make a careful distinction between the two camps within Indonesian Islamic radicalism; *salafi* and *salafi jihadist*, two different entities that have usually been lumped together as “radical” by the previous studies.⁸⁾ The ICG defines the *salafi* as “a Muslim reformist movement aiming to return Islam to the purity of the religion as practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and the two generations that followed him.”⁹⁾ The *salafi jihadist* is defined as “the radical fringe of *salafism* determined to target Islam’s enemies through violence, aimed in particular at the United States and its allies.”¹⁰⁾

This paper seeks to elaborate the theological constructs of Islamic radicalism in post New Order Indonesia, both pure *salafis* and *salafi jihadists*. This paper will present the Muslim radicals’ ideas on specific theological matters in their own words. This paper, therefore, does not aim to explain, for instance, what Islam says about jihad, suicide bombing, violence, and so forth.

Establishing God’s Law: Beliefs System of Islamic Radicalism

The venture of all types of Islamic radicalism, including the *jihadist* groups, starts from the creed that the establishment of Islamic realm based on the Qur’an and Hadith is regarded as a holy duty. The main principle is that no man-made entity is allowed to rule human being, but God’s law. It is firmly believed by the radicals that democracy is considered to be novelty (*bid’a*) which is not allowed in Islam and, hence, must never be tolerated. In Indonesia, one of the main agendas of the Muslim radicals such as Abu Bakar Ba’asyir, the spiritual leader of the Indonesian Council of Muslim Holy Warriors (MMI), is to replace Pancasila, a national ideology of the state, with Islamic *shari’ah* (Islamic law).¹¹⁾ They believe that the *shariah* is a complete and supreme law (*nizam shamil, manhaj al-hayat*) which is universally applicable at any time and space (*salih li kulli zaman wa makan*), including for those who live outside of the House of Islam (*dar al-Islam*). Pancasila, democracy, socialism, and capitalism must be rejected not only because they are man-made entities but also because they represent human’s revolt against God’s law.¹²⁾ The radicals believe that it is only through God’s law that a just and harmonious social order can be achieved. In order to maintain God’s law on earth, a struggle (*jihad*) is imperative in order to “decontaminate” Islamic practice from pagan, anthropomorphic threatening accretions. On the basis of the Qur’anic injunctions, the radicals believe that they are created by God as the best community to command which is good and prohibit which is bad (*amr ma’ruf wa al-nahy ‘an al-munkar*).¹³⁾

One of the underlying assumptions for the establishment of the Islamic state is that there is a strong correlation—which is presumably set and controlled by God—between the state of physical nature and human nature, society and morality which brings about the cosmology of Islamic radicalism.¹⁴⁾ Social order can only be maintained by upholding God’s law. On the contrary, social disorder and ailments are but a symptom of the individual’s moral transgressions on God’s law, both on inside Muslim community as well as outside. The same assumption is used in understanding the natural law of the universe by arguing that within the level of obedience to God both the harmony and disharmony

of the nature can be found. This means that all catastrophes in this world [e.g. tsunami, earthquake, hurricane, flood, famine, long drought, and other physical destructions] are believed to be the direct consequence of human's disobedience to God. For the radicals, the only way of overcoming this disharmony is by returning to the authenticity of Islam, which consists of the Qur'an and Hadith in the very literal sense. Any moral illness that can cause the degradation of human dignity can only be cured by Islamic precepts and norms.

Along with the establishment of the Islamic realm, the radicals develop the doctrine of the inerrancy of the authoritative text with its approved commentaries, consisting of the Qur'an, Hadith, and the *sharia*. In order to function well, they require some "flesh-and-blood" authority to interpret these texts in adapting to the social changes and challenges. The need to employ a stringent literal understanding of the texts among the radicals does not imply that interpretation is not required, especially amidst the rapidly changing realities of their time. With regard to this need, religious authority is an integral element as a supreme body to endorse the application of God's law at the praxis level.

Authority is vested in a limited number of individuals. Scholarship and formal training may play an important role in the selection of the leaders, but the crucial factor is charisma: that special heavenly grace (*baraka*) that sets one man (virtually never is it a woman) apart from the rest of the "enclave" members. That man is to combine virtue, decision-making ability, and mastery of the tradition. It is interesting to note that although Sayyid Qutb had considerable renown as a Qur'anic scholar (being the writer of *Signpost on the Road*), memoirs written by his disciples stand out in relief his personality traits such as simplicity, stringency, courage, and the like, to be crowned by martyrdom at the gallows.¹⁵⁾

The beliefs system of Islamic radicalism in Indonesia has been forged through various ways, either in the sense of the availability or the absence of the authoritative persons. In the case of pure *salafis*, local authority seems to be sufficient in making the mindset of Islamic radicalism. This local authority has been represented by such charismatic figures as Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, Ja'far Umar Thalib, Habib Rizieq, and many others. For the *salafi* jihadists, the making of radicalism can be traced from an intellectual genealogy where Afghan *jihadists* veterans play significant roles. Among the most venerated mentors of the *salafi* *jihadists* are international *jihadists* such as bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Mullah Omar, Abdullah Azam, and the like.

When Violence Becomes Sacred

By and large, there are two ways of establishing the Islamic realm. The first is by means of a peaceful way of transformation as advocated by such radicals as Abu Bakar Ba'asyir.¹⁶⁾ He advocates the application of *Shari'ah* in all aspects of polity; constitution and legal system, banking system, and other aspects of public life. As an ex-political activist of the Islamic Masyumi party, Ba'asyir tends to use politics in its wider sense as a means of exercising his Islamic ideology. This reminds us of what Mawdudi, a well-known Muslim ideologue of the twentieth century from Pakistan, advocated in Islamizing state and society. Although Mawdudi's ideological elaborations included the appropriation of the modern political myth of revolution, this appropriation remained more semantic than pragmatic.¹⁷⁾ More importantly, both of them did not endorse

violence as the means for achieving the Islamic revolution.

The peaceful way of transforming Islamic values takes various methods, one of which is, *da'wa* (propagation). The radicals who focus on this method emphasize personal piety. For this group, the priority is for individuals to practice a pure understanding of Islam on the basis of the Qur'an and very selective Hadith. This entails not only propagation and individual piety, but a program to eliminate any popular practices which they consider as inauthentic Islam. The second method is advice (*maw'idhah diniyyah*) based on religious injunctions. It is widely accepted, not only among the radicals but also among the Muslims, that *ulamas* (religious scholars) are responsible to advise leaders about Islamic legislation and regulations. The third peaceful method is *uswah hasanah* (exemplary deeds) to be followed by the rest of the Muslims. This peaceful method is applied from the verse saying that Muslims should call others to the path of God by means of *hikmah* (wisdom) and *maw'idhah hasanah* (good advice), and they shall debate over certain matters in a proper manner. In addition, there is a verse in the Qur'an saying that Muslims were born as the best community whose responsibility is commanding which is good and prohibiting which is formidable.¹⁸⁾ In a Hadith, the Prophet is reported to say: "Whoever of the Muslims encounters bad conduct (*munkar*) of others, he is responsible of changing this conduct by hands (power), if it is unlikely, then it should be done by oral advice, and if it is still unlikely, then it should be done by his heart. But this is considered to be the weakest manifestation of belief in Islam."¹⁹⁾

The second way is by means of violent acts. In this context, there are two different attitudes among the radicals regarding the use of violent methods in bringing about the social change they might wish. The first attitude is derived from what the ICG refers to as *salafi* radicals who consider the use of violent methods as a last resort after the gradual and peaceful means are not successful. The *jihadist* radicals, however, accept without any reserve the use of violent methods in executing their ideology as it has been practiced by some fringe of radicals in Indonesia such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and the Bali Bombing perpetrators. They argue that the use of violent acts to eradicate "evils" on earth is considered as jihad, a holy duty, as a manifestation of the Qur'anic doctrine: "commanding which is good and forbidding which is abominable" (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*).

With regard to the use of violent methods by the radicals, the question would be: why do the radicals advocate and perpetrate violent acts? In Najib Ghabdian's view, there are four possible answers to this question. First, structural reasons would possibly justify their violent acts. These *jihadist* radicals exist in political and economic environments characterized by extreme political repression and economic deprivation and disparity. Second, it has something to do with the way the radicals understand their sacred texts which is usually literal. Third, they function with one-sided, often paranoid understanding of the world, particularly in relation to the way they construct and perceive their "enemy." Fourth, transformation of *jihadist* worldview and ideology by means of massive volunteering of young Muslims around the world to fight with their fellow Muslims against the foreign occupation in the land of Muslim countries. This transformation took place through sending young Muslims by *jihadist* organizations all over the world into the land of Islam regarded to be the battlefield of jihad such as Afghanistan.²⁰⁾

The debate between the *jihadist* radicals and the *salafi* over the use of violence centers around two points; the first is the significance of violence and the second is the theological construct for the justification of violence. For the first radical group, oppressive political rulers or infidel powers will not surrender until confronted with power. They believe that Islam urges believers to resort to jihad to fight what they consider evil, a term which is defined as attitudes, acts, behavior transgressing the law of God as sanctioned in the Qur'an and the Prophet's tradition. The only way to uphold the superiority of Islam is by punishing whoever transgresses God's law. All transgressors, in the radicals' conception, are thus identified as God's enemies, no matter whether they are fellow Muslims or, let alone, non-Muslims (*kafir*). In today's Indonesian context, the Western hegemony has become the prime target of the *jihadist* violent acts in retaliation for perceived aggression by the West, or what the radicals more frequently term as a "Christian-Zionist conspiracy," against Muslim around the world.²¹⁾ To justify this they cite a verse of the Qur'an 2: 120, "Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion."²²⁾ Most Indonesian radicals, in the ICG's prediction, would not go too far.²³⁾

The *salafi* group, however, sees the use of violence as counterproductive in the midst of the Islamization process by giving justification to regimes or foreign powers for continued repression and hegemony. This group tends to see the use of violence as rooted in the "ambition to dictate, control and correct individual behavior, and takes the form of occasional punitive actions against individuals or groups regarded as 'bad Muslims.'"²⁴⁾ Regarding the doctrine of jihad, they regard it as the last resort and it is restrained by several strict considerations and conditions, including weighing the benefits against the great cost, refraining from excessive violence, and having overall respect and compassion for human life.²⁵⁾

Later on in its development, the violent method executed by the *jihadist* radicals has been coupled with "irregular war" or terror against all infidels (*kafir*), particularly the US and its allies.²⁶⁾ The violent method was not necessarily accompanied with killing as many innocent people as possible. Basically, terror or violence without victims was considered successful if the message was able to be delivered to, and understood by, the radicals' enemies.²⁷⁾ It was not until the September 11 did the dramatic change occur in the execution of violent methods by the *jihadist* radicals. Not only were violent acts executed against innocent casualties, but this also involved as many life casualties as possible. A series of suicide bombings in Indonesia, since the Bali bombing in 12 October 2002, Marriot hotel blast in 5 August 2003, and the bombing in front of the Australian embassy in 9 September 2004, has shown how central the violent mentality of the *jihadist* radicals is.

The concept of violence in the minds of *jihadist* radicals never solely means crime; it is a self-fulfilling prophesy in search for God's favor. Killing, therefore, never solely means murder; it signifies a holy duty of upholding and defending Islam against their enemies. That is why maintaining the existence of an enemy in the radicals' conception is necessary in order to reconfirm the truth they hold. For Indonesian *jihadist* radicals, the US is perceived to seek only to oppress, divide, and further colonizes the land of Islam. The US international policy in the case of Israel-Palestine conflict, its invasion to Afghanistan and Iraq are but the legitimate rationale for the execution of violent acts against the US with its

allies, be they military or civilians. Their enemies are, therefore, sociologically and politically constructed on the basis of textual justifications.²⁸⁾

The Centrality of *Jihad*

In its etymological sense, jihad comes from an Arabic root *j-h-d*, the basic meaning of which is striving or effort. Jihad is frequently used in classical texts with the closely related meaning of struggle, and very often, fights. Jihad does not originally mean “holy war,” a term which is frequently misunderstood by many in parallel with its counterpart in Judeo-Christianity tradition as “Crusades” or “Just War.”²⁹⁾ Muslims themselves have disagreed throughout the history of Islam about the meaning of the term. Even though jihad is never explicitly used to mean warfare in the Qur’an, its connotation under *qital* (literally, fighting) is understood by the Muslims as a theological basis for warfare against the enemies of the early Muslim community. This word is usually cited from the Qur’anic verses, “striving in the Path of God,” and has been variously interpreted to mean moral striving and armed or physical struggle. The aim of jihad, as frequently understood by the majority of Muslims, is to attain the complete supremacy of Islam, as one can learn from the Qur’an.³⁰⁾

It has to be acknowledged that jihad has become one of the most important vocabularies in the dictionary of the radicals which has frequently been employed as a theological basis to justify their violent actions. In Indonesia, jihad has been interpreted in various ways, depending on which camp one subscribes to. Given the commonality of jihad doctrine among all radical wings, they differ over whether jihad must be seen in generic or specific sense. For the pure *salafi* radicals, jihad tends to be defined in broader terms as taking whatever actions considered necessary to improve the quality of one’s own faith, even though there is a certain context when jihad must be understood as holy war. The *jihadist* radicals, however, define it merely as fight or battle (which is in Arabic literally means *ghazw* or *qital*) against all enemies of God in order to maintain Islam as the only true and supreme religion.³¹⁾ Both groups agree that jihad must be waged against non-Muslim powers that oppress the Muslims all over the world, and thus not against fellow Muslims.

In relation to the juridical status of jihad in Islam, whereas *salafi* radicals put jihad as a collective obligation of the Muslim community (*fard kifaya*), *salafi jihadists* place it as an obligation of each individual Muslim (*fard ‘ayn*), thus it is not different from other religious obligations in Islam such as prayers, almsgiving, fasting, and pilgrimage to Mecca.³²⁾ The *salafi* radicals argue that it is only in emergency situations, when the *dar al-Islam* comes under unexpected attacks, that all Muslims have to participate in jihad. Under normal circumstances, however, an individual Muslim need not take part as long as other fellow Muslims carry the burden for all in defending the realm of Islam. This theological stance is based on a classical concept of Islamic jurisprudence which was developed within the first three centuries of Islam.³³⁾

The *salafi jihadists*, nevertheless, base their argument on the perception that the Muslim community all over the world is under the threat of the Zionist-neo-crusaders conspiracy. This condition is perceived to be a sound justification to wage jihad for all Muslims against all enemies of Allah.³⁴⁾ In justifying jihad as an individual obligatory, Imam Samudra, a mastermind of the Bali bombing, quotes a verse of the Qur’an as follows:

“Fighting is prescribed upon you, and ye dislike it. But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye love a thing which is bad for you. But Allah knoweth, and ye know not” (QS. 2: 216). Samudra describes those *mujahidin* (Muslim warriors) who take part in the front line of the battle as *ahl al-thughur* (the warriors of front guard). During the time of the Prophet Muhammad, he adds, when the status of jihad became individually obligatory, all Muslims were classified as *ahl al-thughur*. During the Tabuk war, for instance, there were three companions of the Prophet who reportedly deserted from the war, and the Prophet gave them a gentle punishment by excluding them from communication with other companions. No body from *ahl al-thughur*, Samudra asserts, has not gone into battlefield. All of the founders of four Islamic law schools, Ibn Taymiyyah and his disciple, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, are said to have fought against non-believers following their predecessors.³⁵⁾

Another debate raised by the *salafi* and *salafi jihadists* centers around whether jihad must be waged defensively or offensively. Basically, the *salafi* camp tends to see jihad in defensive terms, rather than offensive ones. As in the case of religious conflict in Maluku, they perceived the Muslim community to be under attack of non-Muslims, and performing jihad in this region must be seen as obligatory.³⁶⁾ The *jihadist* camp, however, tend to see jihad in offensive terms (*hujumi*). Imam Samudra and Imam Mukhlas, the other Bali bombing perpetrator, argue that the best form of defense is attack.³⁷⁾ The aim of jihad, moreover, is not merely to protect other fellow Muslims, but also to destroy any obstacle in the way of upholding Islam and to strike fear into the hearts of all enemies of Allah, among whom all hypocrites, idolaters, and *kafirs* should be included.

The question is, until when should the jihad be waged? Until there is no *fitnah* (oppression), and until all human beings in the world profess the truth of Islam or they convert to Islam, says Imam Samudra.³⁸⁾ To justify his theological stance, he quotes a verse in the Qur'an, “And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevails justice and faith in Allah altogether and everywhere; But if they cease, verily Allah Doth see all that they do” (QS. 8: 39). He also quotes two Hadith of the Prophet, “I (Muhammad) was sent by Allah approaching to the Day of Judgment by sword until Allah is the only God worshipped and there is no associate with Him” (as narrated by Bukhari-Muslim). Another Hadith is that “I was sent by Allah to fight against all humans until they profess ‘*la ilaha illa Allah*’ (there is no God but Allah), if they have already uttered it, verily Allah will secure their properties and blood, except for the right of Islam, and their reckoning of Allah” (as narrated by Bukhari-Muslim).³⁹⁾

In constructing the concept of jihad, *salafi jihadists* have been very much inspired by Ibn Taymiyyah who calls jihad an individual obligation for all Muslims, and who says that if it is not possible to fight unbelievers without killing Muslims, then those killings are permissible. In addition, based on Abdullah Azzam's (a famous al-Qaeda's theoretician) influential twelve-volume series on training for jihad entitled *Tarbiyah Jihadiyah* (The Education of Jihad), Imam Samudra maintains that there are four steps of jihad. The first step is called self-control in which jihad is not yet commanded. All Muslims should be patient in facing all oppressions, mockeries and disdains of the unbelievers. This step has been experienced by some companions of the Prophet, Bilal bin Rabah and Yasir's family who have been tortured by their unbeliever bosses due to their conversion to Islam. The second step is when Muslims are allowed, not necessarily commanded, to

perform jihad as a self-defense if they are treated badly by unbelievers. This is based on the Qur'anic verses as follows: "To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged—and verily, Allah is Most Powerful for their aid. (They are) those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right, (for no cause) except that they say, "Our Lord is Allah" (QS. 22: 39–40). The third step is when jihad is obliged to be performed limitedly, only against those who fight against Muslims. This is inferred from a verse of the Qur'an, "Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits for Allah loveth not transgressors" (QS. 2: 190). The last step is when jihad becomes an obligation to fight all non-Muslims and idolaters. This happens when all of the three previous steps have been through, and the *jihadists* believe that this step is Allah's final pronouncement which has abrogated all truces and treaties of the Prophet Muhammad with the non-believers. This step has been deduced from the verse: "Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, from among the People of the Book until they pay the *jizyah* (poll tax) with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued (QS. 9: 29). Another verse is also referred to as "... And fight the pagans all together as you fight you all together ..." (QS. 9: 36).⁴⁰⁾

Jihad must be waged for the sake of other fellow Muslims in retaliation to the oppression and torture executed by all Allah's enemies. For the Muslim radicals, either pure *salafis* or jihadists, the Muslim community all over the world should be united in facing those aggressors because all Muslims are brethren to each other. Muslims are depicted as a unified body; if a certain organ suffers from injury the others must feel it. The empathy of other Muslims towards the oppressed and tortured ones must be shown in the form of transnational solidarity through jihad.

Looking into Martyrdom (*Istishhad*)

Death in the path of God (*fi sabil Allah*) serves as the last destination of the radicals' ventures.⁴¹⁾ This type of death, in the radicals' conception, qualifies as a highly honored death in which God promises an intimate encountering with Him and dating with angels in heaven. In Islam, as in other great religions, this doctrine is called martyrdom (*shahid*), and the process in which Muslims seek to die in this qualification is called *istishhad* (looking into *shahid*). The qualification of martyrdom is perceived by the radicals to be at the highest and most esteemed stratification of all deaths. With this qualification, martyrdom is the only type of death with which all radicals, especially the *salafi jihadists*, are obsessed. In Islam, all warriors falling down during jihad or the battle (*ghazwas*) against all enemies of Allah are believed to be martyrs. As in the case of jihad, *shahadat* has a sound and clear justification in the Qur'an, such as QS 3: 169 and QS 22: 58–59.⁴²⁾ From these verses it is clear that the radicals understand the concept *shahadat* in the sense of immortality or eternal life. These verses imply that those who are slain or die (*shahid*) in the jihad battlefield are not really dead; in fact they are to receive a dignified reward in the hereafter. The term *shahid*, the basic meaning of which is "witness," with its derivatives, occurs over fifty times in the Qur'an signifying its usage as witness here on earth to the oneness of God, the apostleship of Muhammad, and the truth of the faith. Witnesses are not in a category by themselves but together with those who have found favor with God such as the prophets, the righteous, and the truthful.⁴³⁾

In Islam, the ideal martyr is he who strives in the path of God “with his hand, his tongue, and with his heart.” Yet striving only with the heart is considered as the weakest of faith.⁴⁴⁾ This emphasis on outward struggle, however, does not imply wild and uncontrolled warfare. Rather, it advocates a regulated struggle for the good and against evil. While the ideal martyr in Islam is the one who falls on the battlefield, actual fighting is not an absolute requirement for martyrdom. Islam, moreover, has its martyrs who silently and bravely endure torture and death. It is believed that the martyr deserves an exalted station with God and he or she will carry the marks of his sacrifice with him to be displayed even in heaven.⁴⁵⁾

In Indonesia, pure *salafis* and *salafi jihadists* hold different views regarding the practices of self-martyring operation. The pure *salafis* tend to consider the practice of self-martyring as in the case of September 11 as novelty or innovation which is forbidden in Islam. Whereas the second group represented by such individuals as Imam Samudra strongly believes that self-martyring is an integral part of jihad which is strongly recommended for every adult Muslim to perform. Samudra calls the self-martyring operation as *istimata* (looking for death). In supporting his theological stance, Samudra quotes legal opinions of Muslim jurists such as Yusuf Qardawi who said that self-martyring operations are permissible only in specific area such as Palestine, and Nawaf Hail al-Takrari who said that these kinds of operation are not restricted to Palestine only. In addition, Samudra also bases his reasoning on the practice of *ahl al-thughur* by quoting a narrative of Sufyan ibn ‘Uyaynah, a religious cleric of the third generation of the Prophet (*tabi’un*) and the grand master of Imam Shafi’i, who is reportedly said that “if you encounter Muslims are in dispute one another (over a matter), follow the path of Muslim holy warriors (*mujahidin*) and *ahl al-thughur*.”⁴⁶⁾ In Samudra’s opinion, both have an exalted place beside, and closer to, Allah compared to those *ulamas* who only sit, learn and teach religious knowledge (*qaidin*) to students. He takes into account some contemporary *jihadists* as *ahl al-thughur*, such as Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abdullah Azam, Mullah Omar, Sulayman Aby Ghayth, and many others. In order to support his argument, he refers to a Qur’anic verse as follows: “Not equal are those who sit (at home) and receive no hurt, and those who strive and fight in the cause of Allah with their goods and their persons. Allah hath granted higher to those who strive and fight with their goods and persons than to those who sit (at home)” (QS. 4: 95).

The *salafi jihadists* who operated several self-martyring bombings in Bali, Marriot hotel, and in front of the Australian embassy would not perceive their death to be in vain. They are preoccupied with a belief that their death serves only as an entry point in the long passage to entering God’s heaven and dating with His beautiful angels. Due to this reason, it is no wonder that they name the executor of the self-martyring operations as a “groom” (they do not have “brides” as the executors are usually men) to signify that the self-martyring executors will be greeted by God’s angels in heaven.⁴⁷⁾ It is also reported that before the operation, a discussion to elect who will be the executor(s) is held, and an oath (*bay’at*) must be taken. Interestingly, it is also said that each *jihadists* involved in the operation expects to be elected as the executor. As soon as one is elected he will be delighted with the decision, and those who are not will cry for missing the invaluable moment in their life.⁴⁸⁾

In the view of *salafi jihadists*, self-martyring operation (*istimata* or *istishhad*) is different

from committing suicide which is forbidden in Islam. While self-martyring operation must be based on the intention to protect Muslims and to uphold Islam, committing suicide is a silly act which is based on frustration, and it has nothing to do with upholding religion. There is no reward for the self-martyr except for God's heaven, whereas the reward for those who commit suicide is hell. In addition, the self-martyring operation should include the following elements: (1) the operators must have a strong presumption that they are likely to be killed in the operation; (2) the operation is intended to topple down the enemy's morality; (3) the operation is intended to invoke the spirit of jihad and courage of the Muslims; (4) in the operation, the operator might be killed either by enemy's missile, or; (5) he might be killed by his own missile.⁴⁹⁾

Concluding Remarks

It is clear from the above description that the picture of Indonesian Islamic radicalism is not as simple as many have generally perceived. The categorization of the radical Muslims into two camps, pure *salafis* and *salafi* jihadists, have been quite important to understanding the reality of Islamic radicalism in post New Order Indonesia. It helps one understand more clearly what constitutes Indonesian Islamic radicalism. However, the question of how far this categorization represents the objective picture of Islamic radicalism in Indonesia undoubtedly needs further investigation. In so doing, abundant perspectives can be employed to approach the topic. Far from the ambition to provide a comprehensive picture of Islamic radicalism, the theological perspective used in this paper rests on an assumption that religious texts contribute significantly to shaping the mindset of the radicals.

Indeed, both pure *salafi* and *salafi* jihadists use highly selective textual sources which are mainly taken from their Middle Eastern mentors. Both agree with one another on certain points, but differ on other points. The intellectual origins of the pure *salafis* usually return to the texts written by the mentors of Muslim Brotherhood (*ikhwan al-muslimin*) such as Sayyid Qutb, Hassan al-Banna and Abu A'la al-Mawdudi. On the other hand, the *salafi* jihadists employ religious texts written by international contemporary jihadists such as Abdullah Azam with his translated twelve series on the training of jihad. These texts have been mainly transferred intellectually by the veterans of Afghan jihadists and they regard their mentors as *ahl al thughur*, ulamas whose *fatwas* deserve to be followed than other *ulamas*. These texts are easily accessible in Indonesia due to translation and publication efforts by some local publications.

The tendency of picking up certain religious texts instead of others does not happen without any precedence. This indicates that there is a process of natural selection among the radical fringes to contest a certain radical standpoint over others. This dynamic intellectual contestation happens mainly due to an open democratization process which has occurred after the collapse of the New Order regime. It enables everybody to access freely any radical discourses based on their own preference without any fear of being oppressed by the government as happened before. As a result, any religious meaning embedded in every religious doctrine such as jihad and *istishhad* has been contested and reproduced by radical groups from different angles. In the future, it is predicted that this contestation of meaning will continue to occur with a larger and more intense scale provided that it can be managed fairly by the government without necessarily interfering

in the process of public debates.

To the question of what turns *salafis* into *jihadists*, no convincing arguments have been developed so far. ICG, however, has made a preliminary assumption that there have been defining moments throughout the history of Indonesia, often associated with domestic repression and violence, as a departing moment where the split between the two takes shape. ICG identifies three events which happened during 1998–1999 and which brought the split. The first was the February fatwa by the World Islamic Front, led by bin Laden, calling for attacks on Americans with their allies and interests in Indonesia, and a jihad against Christians and the Jews. The second was the fall of the Suharto regime (May 1998) and the return of JI leaders to Indonesia (late 1999), and the third was the outbreak of communal conflicts in Ambon (early 1999).⁵⁰⁾

It should be pointed out that the existence of *salafism* in Indonesia cannot be terminated, if one believes that the basic principles of democracy and multiculturalism need to be maintained in Indonesia. Instead, what needs to be done is to monitor the spread of the *jihadist* ideas in order to avoid the outbreak of *jihadist* operations. This has become one of the security concerns of the Indonesian government in dealing with several *jihadists* operations more recently. Dealing with *jihadism* itself, borrowing ICG's words, is "far too complex for simple, silver bullet solutions."⁵¹⁾ But, it is important to note that the spread of the *jihadists* ideas must be opposed by counter ideas supported by the *salafi* groups, not by moderate and, let alone, liberal Muslim thinkers.

Notes:

- 1) Thanks are due to Arief Budiman and Merle Ricklefs for their constructive comments on this draft.
- 2) A poem that Imam Samudra writes on the paper back of his book, *Aku Melawan Teroris!* (Solo: Al-Jazera, 2004).
- 3) Based on the most recent national survey undertaken collaboratively by the Research Center for Islam and Society (PPIM), the Liberal Islam Network (JIL) and the Freedom Institute, those Muslims who have ever taken part in any of three Islamist activities takes only 6.5% of the total population, those who have taken part in two of the three makes 0.9%, and 0.5% for those who have taken part in all of the three activities. The Muslim activists in this survey were asked by whether or not in the past five years they have been involved in; (1) boycotting all trading products or services regarded as "un-Islamic"; (2) raids in discotheques, night clubs, restaurants and hotels, and; (3) demonstrations in solidarity for other Muslims' suffering both in Indonesia and all over the world. For more detail information on this account, read, "Alienasi Islamis, Modal Kultural bagi Aktivis Islamis," *Media Indonesia*, 12 November 2004.
- 4) Based on the police department report, the masterminds of the Australian embassy bombing were allegedly the leftovers of the JI members who had been involved in the Bali bombing. They are Noordin Mohd. Top and Azhari Husin who are the most wanted by the police department, but the police haven't succeeded in arresting them. See, for instance, "Azhari Dicurigai Otak Peledakan," *Kompas*, 10 September 2004.
- 5) See, for example, Martin van Bruinessen, "Genealogies of Islamic Radicalism in Post-Suharto Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 10 (2), 117–154. See, also, Noorhaidi Hasan, "Faith and Politics: The Rise of the Laskar Jihad in the Era of Transition in Indonesia," *Indonesia* 73, (2002), 145–169.
- 6) See, for example, Bilveer Singh, "The Challenge of Militant Islam and Terrorism in Indonesia," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (March 2004), 47–68.
- 7) Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: the Search for a New Ummah* (London: Hurst, 2004), 3.
- 8) ICG Asia Report No. 83, *Indonesia Backgrounder: Why Salafism and Terrorism Mostly Don't Mix*, 13

September 2004.

- 9) In Indonesia, the term is used interchangeably, either to mean Islamic schools where only religious subjects are taught, or to mean a religious movement that seeks to return what is considered by its adherents as the purest form of Islam as practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and the two generations of his companions (*sahabah*) after him. In this paper, however, the term *salafi* refers to the latter. Indonesian *salafi* scholars maintains that each generation is calculated to have lasted 100 years, so the *salafi* period covers the first three centuries after Muhammad's hijra or flight to Medina.
- 10) ICG, *Why Salafism*, 32.
- 11) Tim Behrend, "Reading Past the Myth: Public Teachings of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir," unpublished paper, 6. See, also, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, "Sistem Kaderisasi Mujahidin dalam Mewujudkan Masyarakat Islam," in Irfan Suryahardi Awwas, ed., *Risalah Kongres Mujahidin dan Penegakan Syari'ah Islam* (Yogyakarta: Wihdah Press, 2001), 79–90.
- 12) Tim Behrend, "Reading Past the Myth," 6.
- 13) See, the Qur'an, 3: 110.
- 14) Emmanuel Sivan, "The Enclave Culture," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby eds., *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 35.
- 15) Sivan, "The Enclave Culture," 51.
- 16) Idi Subandy Ibrahim and Asep Samsul M. Romli, *Kontroversi Ba'asyir: Jihad Melawan Opini "Fitnah" Global*, (Bandung: Nuansa, 2003), 39.
- 17) Said Amir Arjomand, "Unity and Diversity in Islamic Fundamentalism," Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby eds., *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, 184. See also Mumtaz Ahmad, "Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia: The Jamaat-i-Islami and the Tablighi Jamaat of South Asia," Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby eds., *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), 488.
- 18) Q.S. 4: 110.
- 19) Hadith narrated by Bukhari and Muslim.
- 20) Najib Ghadbian, "Political Islam and Violence," *New Political Science*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2000), 77–88.
- 21) ICG, *Why Salafism*, 1.
- 22) Samudra, *Aku Melawan Teroris!*, 160.
- 23) ICG, *Why Salafism*, 1.
- 24) ICG, *Why Salafism*, 1.
- 25) Najib Ghadbian, "Political Islam and Violence," 87.
- 26) For more detailed account on irregular war and terrorism in Islam, see, for instance, Tamara Sonn, "Irregular Warfare and Terrorism in Islam: Asking the Right Questions," James Turner Johnson and John Kelsay ed., *Cross, Crescent, and Sword: The Justification and Limitation of War in Western and Islamic Tradition* (New York and London: Greenwood Press, 1990), 129–147.
- 27) David C. Rapoport and Yonah Alexander eds., *The Morality of Terrorism: Religious and Secular Justifications* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982); cf. Aref M. Al-Khattar, *Religion and Terrorism: an Interfaith Perspective* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003).
- 28) Jonathan T. Drummond, "From the Northwest Imperative to Global Jihad: Social Psychological Aspects of the Construction of the Enemy, Political Violence, and Terror," Chris E. Stout ed., *The Psychology of Terrorism* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002), 55–58.
- 29) "War" in Arabic is "*harb*" or *ghazw*", and "holy" means "*muqaddasa*". As Bernard Lewis has pointed out, there is no word corresponding to holy war in classical Arabic usage. See, Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 71.
- 30) See, Q.S. 2: 193, 8: 39, 9: 33. Rudolph Peters, *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 10.
- 31) ICG, *Why Salafism*, 25.
- 32) Samudra, *Aku Melawan Teroris!*, 79 & 128–9.
- 33) For further information on jihad throughout the history of Islam, see, for example, Reuven Firestone, *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). See, also, Ayatullah Murtada Mutahhari, "Jihad in the Qur'an," Ayatullah Mahmud Taleqani, et. Al. eds., *Jihad and Shahadat: Struggle and Martyrdom in Islam* (Houston, Texas: Institute for Research and Islamic Studies,

- 1986), 81–124.
- 34) Samudra, *Aku Melawan Teroris!*, 69.
 - 35) Samudra, *Aku Melawan Teroris!*, 69.
 - 36) ICG, *Why Salafism*, 4.
 - 37) ICG, *Why Salafism*, 25. See, also, Samudra, *Aku Melawan Teroris!*, 133.
 - 38) Samudra, *Aku Melawan Teroris!*, 133.
 - 39) Samudra, *Aku Melawan Teroris!*, 133–4.
 - 40) Samudra, *Aku Melawan Teroris!*, 125–29.
 - 41) For further information on the doctrine of martyrdom in Islam, see, for example, Raphael Israeli, “A Manual of Islamic Fundamentalist Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Winter 2002), 23–40; cf. Israeli, “Islamikaze and Their Significance,” *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence* 9/3 (Autumn 1997), 96–112.
 - 42) In Sura 3 (Ali Imran) verses 58–59, God declares: “Those who leave their homes in the cause of Allah and are then slain or die—on them will God bestow verily a good Provision: truly God is He who bestows the best Provision. Truly He will admit them to a place with which they shall be well pleased, for God is all-knowing, most forbearing.” While in Sura 22 (al-Hajj), God says that “Think not of those who are slain in the path of God as dead. Nay, they live finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord.” See, ‘Abdullah Yusuf ‘Ali, *The meaning of the Holy Qur’an* (Beltsville, Maryland: Amana Publications, 1989).
 - 43) Mahmoud M. Ayoub, “Martyrdom in Christianity and Islam,” Richard T. Antoun and Mary Elaine Hegland eds., *Religious Resurgence: Contemporary Cases in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 70.
 - 44) Mahmoud M. Ayoub, “Martyrdom,” 75.
 - 45) Mahmoud M. Ayoub, “Martyrdom,” 75.
 - 46) Samudra, *Aku Melawan Teroris!*, 171.
 - 47) Syu’bah Asa, “Pengantin Darah”(Bloody Groom), *Tempo*, No. 30/XXXIII/20, 20 September 2004.
 - 48) This information is provided by Syafi’i Anwar, the executive director of the International Conference of Islam and Pluralism (ICIP), Jakarta.
 - 49) Samudra, *Aku Melawan Teroris!*, 183.
 - 50) ICG, *Why Salafism*, 26.
 - 51) ICG, *Why Salafism*, 29.