

## Jihad as justification: National survey evidence of belief in violent jihad as a mediating factor for sacred violence among Muslims in Indonesia

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Many factors have been used to explain sacred violence. Regardless of the abundance of theories, two issues have emerged: lack of national-level evidence and lack of attention to the justification factor for the violence. We argue that belief in violent jihad serves as justification for sacred violence, and conducted two studies to address the issues. The first study provides narratives on violence justification. The second quantitatively tests the mediating role of belief in violent jihad on sacred violence. It was found that only violent jihad, but not religiosity, fundamentalism, support for Islamic law, or perceptions of unfairness predicted sacred violence.

*Key words:* fundamentalism, ideology, Indonesia, Islamic law, jihad, Muslims, sacred violence.

### Introduction

The violent side of religion has attracted the attention of researchers for a long time (e.g., Allport, 1954; Appleby, 2000; Kimball, 2002; Pearce, 2004; Schafer, 2004). In the Indonesian context, assertion of religion as one of the sources of violence has been evident (Karnavian, 2008; Muluk & Malik, 2009; Mulyadi, 2003). Analysis of the factors influencing sacred violence in Indonesia is thus relevant to instances of the same phenomenon throughout the Muslim world.

Yet even though religious violence seems to be a real problem, little attention has been given to it. Post-9/11 research has focused more on terrorism despite the suggestion that the use of terror is becoming less popular, even among radicals themselves (International Crisis Group, 2007; Ismail & Ungerer, 2009). On the other hand, some acts of violence can be seen to separate moderates from radicals, such as raiding discotheques or vandalizing houses of worship. We call this violence ‘sacred violence’ and even though it might be not as spectacular as bombing, its effects are potent. It is this kind of violence that we address in this study.

### Sacred violence: A literature review

The term ‘sacred violence’ has been used to cover a variety of religion-related violence (e.g., Milton-Edwards, 2006; Perlmutter, 2003), from terrorism, to suicide bombings, and

ritualistic crime. In this study, however, we are interested only in violence that is considered crime but is complicated by the use of religion as justification.

For the purposes of this study, we define sacred violence as violence that is principally a criminal action but is claimed to be based on religious ideals and is dedicated to defend what is considered sacred or to punish any violation of what is perceived as divine law. Some examples of sacred violence are forceful closure of the worship houses of other religions or forced disbandment of worship (see Bagir, Cholil, Saputro, Asyhari & Rahayu, 2011; Cholil, Bagir, Rahayu & Asyhari, 2009).

Before continuing, we would like to introduce a few differences between our concept of sacred violence and that of terrorism and hate crime. First, regarding the nature of the action, sacred violence is principally a criminal act. Raiding a discotheque because it is considered a ‘place of sins’ or throwing stones at a particular house of worship accused of not having a proper permit is not a distinct type of crime. Terrorism, on the other hand, has gained consensus as an extraordinary crime.

Second, regarding the purpose of the action, sacred violence – at least in its claims – is dedicated to defend what is considered sacred or to punish violations of God’s laws. Restaurants that happened virtually every year in several cities, including the capital city Jakarta. Hate crime, another type of violence, is less clear about the reason for the violence except that the selected target is often based on group membership (Krueger & Maleckova, 2003), while terrorism is often politically motivated.

We are not in a position to suggest that Indonesia has reached a critical level of radicalism. Problems do exist and challenges remain after the fall of Soeharto’s authoritarian regime. Yet we prefer to see the phenomena as part of the country’s democratization (Bünte & Ufen,

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2009) rather than attributing it to Indonesians' well-known religiosity.

As different as sacred violence and terrorism might seem, our assumption is that they share characteristics, which makes it possible for the literature on terrorism to be cultivated to gain an understanding of sacred violence. Of particular importance is that terrorism can be seen as a tool to achieve some goals (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2006) and we believe the same also applies to sacred violence. For example, the Cikeusik tragedy on 6 February 2011 in Indonesia, which took the lives of three Ahmadiyah followers, was an instance of sacred violence executed by radicals, who openly threatened to continue attacking Ahmadiyah if the government did not disband it. Here the violence acts as a leverage for radicals to apply pressure on the government.

Previous studies have attempted to unravel the origins of religious violence. Wellman and Tokuno (2004) and Yamin (2008) emphasized group role and identity to understand religious violence. According to them, religious violence is virtually inevitable because inherent in every religion is a tension where conflict functions to keep the group cohesive. A more psychoanalytical perspective was proposed by Jones (2006). He argued that one important factor in religious violence is the feeling of humiliation, which religion reinforces by promoting the doctrine of an omnipotent divine being. Sense of unworthiness relates to desire for reunification with the divine being and one of the ways to achieve this reunion is through martyrdom (Post, Sprinzak & Denny, 2003).

Some theorists go further by defining the steps to religious violence. For example, Savage and Liht (2008) proposed six steps of violent radicalization which are based on group affiliation as a strategy for coping with conflict of values. Their path was proposed specifically to explain the radicalization process among Muslim minorities who came (or whose ancestors came) to European countries as immigrants.

Moghaddam (2006, 2010) used a staircase metaphor to explain radicalization within a more global context. He emphasized identity, perceived injustice, and 'moral shift' as central themes. According to this model, radicalization is associated with not just an identity crisis in Islamic societies, but also a perception of unjust treatment. These processes result in a moral shift so that individuals change from endorsing the notion that 'terrorism is wrong' to endorsing the idea that 'terrorism is morally justified'. This shift was described by Moghaddam (2006) as the key change taking place psychologically, moving individuals from passive bystanders to would-be terrorists.

Overall, no matter what perspective one takes to explain sacred violence, two main factors emerge, i.e., fundamentalism and feelings of unfairness (e.g., Mendelson, 2008; Moghaddam, 2008; Rogers *et al.*, 2007). The former rep-

resents the ideological nature of sacred violence, while the latter refers to social context. This attention to both religious and secular factors, rather than focusing on either factor alone, allows for exploration of the dynamics between the two processes.

To the best of our knowledge, previous studies have not focused on our major concerns. First, rarely has any study used a national-level sample to test its hypotheses. Second, most studies tend to compile a list of possible factors rather than provide empirical evidence of a particular path to sacred violence. Third, owing to the lack of empirically demonstrated paths, scholars have experienced difficulties in spotting the central point without which sacred violence is unlikely to happen.

It is mainly with regard to the third concern that our work gains its importance. We argue that there is a mediating factor between all of the known predictors and sacred violence. This mediating role can be paralleled with Sidanius and Pratto's (1999) concept of legitimizing myth. In the same way that legitimizing myths (e.g., the divine right of kings) mediate between an individual's social-dominance orientation and support of social hierarchy in society, we believe that there is a factor that serves as a justification for would-be violence. To explore this possibility we will first provide a brief overview of some predictors of sacred violence.

## Fundamentalism

Hood, Hill and Williamson (2005) coined the term 'intra-textual fundamentalism'. Unlike previous identifiers of the characteristics of fundamentalism (e.g., Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Kellstedt & Smidt, 1991) they asserted that at the core of fundamentalism is the way in which fundamentalists see their sacred text as: (1) divine or inerrant; (2) self-interpretive; (3) privileged; (4) authoritative; and (5) unchanging. The relation between fundamentalism and religious violence can be seen in the context of terrorism (e.g., Ismail & Ungerer, 2009; Ramakhrisna, 2002, 2004; Tan, 2008), and social conflicts (e.g., Mulyadi, 2003; Pearce, 2004).

Silberman (2005) proposed five possible ways that fundamentalism could lead to violence. The first is related to certain values that religion advocates that are, in a sense, prejudicial. This is evident from research predicting prejudice using fundamentalism (e.g., Altemeyer, 2003; Laythe, Finkel & Kirkpatrick, 2001; Mavor, Macleod, Boal & Louis, 2009). The second is attributed to the so-called religion's 'authority' to justify immoral actions in the name of God. The third way is through de-sanctification. Fundamentalists often ask others to respect their belief and not de-sanctify it by, for example, not criticizing it, even though they themselves often do not respect others' beliefs. The

fourth deals with fundamentalism in relation to cognitive simplicity (e.g., Bertsch & Pesta, 2009; Saroglou, 2002a). Desire for simplicity impairs individuals' ability to take different perspectives and may lead to attribution bias or belief perseverance. All of these pave the way to violence or intolerance (Woolf & Hulsizer, 2003). Finally, fundamentalism can lead to violence through proselytization. In Indonesian history, proselytism is a sensitive issue, particularly in Islam–Christian relations, and has led to attacks against the houses of worship of other religions (Crouch, 2007).

## Religiosity

By religiosity, we refer to Glock and Stark's (1965) dimension of ritualistic religiosity. Early studies showed that entering a church (a ritualistic practice) was related to prejudice against various groups (see Denney, 2008). Negative stereotypes are in some cases potent enough to induce intolerance toward disliked out-groups (Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse & Wood, 1995). Practising religious rituals also serves to keep the image of God salient. Though having an image of a loving God can lead to good deeds, a terrifying God can lead to mistrust and violence (Jones, 2006; Mencken, Bader & Embry, 2009). In addition, religiosity, like fundamentalism, is linked to conformity (Saroglou, 2002b), and is therefore prone to violence as a reaction to a threat to group identity.

## Perception of unfair treatment

Moghaddam (2006) argued that people committing religious violence feel that the system treats them unfairly. Specifically, among some Muslims there is a belief of worldwide hostility from Westerners and Jews toward Islam (Lim, 2005; Mendelson, 2008). This perception encompasses three important factors: '*perceptions* of deprivation, *feelings* of being treated unfairly, and *subjective* sense of injustice' (Moghaddam, 2006, p. 46). By emphasizing *perceptions*, *feelings*, and *subjectivity*, Moghaddam asserted that terrorism has little, if anything, to do with real treatment or economic and social status (see also Krueger & Laitin, 2008; Krueger & Maleckova, 2003).

Discourses on radical websites managed by fundamentalist groups indicate that this concept of unfairness is widespread in Indonesia (Hui, 2010). The relation between perceptions of unfairness and fundamentalism, based on our understanding, can be bidirectional. Owing to strong religious identity, fundamentalists tend to have strong Islamic solidarity. On the other hand, personal experience of injustice can also lead individuals to become radical.

## Support for Islamic law

According to Amal and Panggabean (2004), there are several reasons behind the desire for the formalization of sharia law. Those reasons fall into two categories: ideological and socio-political-historical. The ideological motive is based on the belief that sharia is an obligation for all Muslims. The second reason is more secular. Today, triggered by such events as the occupation of Palestine and feelings of economic and/or political powerlessness, some Muslims may see sharia as a strategy to escape disadvantageous conditions. This perspective gets its rationale from the belief that it is because Muslims have abandoned God's laws that such disadvantages occur (Habeck, 2006). Radicals believe that if Muslims live according to God's laws, nothing bad will happen. If something bad happens, there must be something wrong spiritually that needs to be fixed. This type of reasoning provides powerful fuel for the desire for sharia law, especially in Muslim countries where it is not already in place.

It is from this desire to fix things that violence can occur. Yet history has shown that support for sharia does not ignite violence instantly. Violence and war, as actions dedicated to 'fixing things', were mostly waged under the banner of jihad. We turn to it now.

## Belief in violent jihad

Though moderate Muslims encourage a more peaceful interpretation of jihad, some scholars have argued that the traditional view of jihad is indeed about fighting and war (Cook, 2005; Habeck, 2006). Cook referred to some verses of the Qur'an and claimed that whenever any verse talks about jihad, most of them refer to it as fighting in the name of God. Abdallah bin al-Mubarak, one of the most committed Muslim fighters, emphasized that jihad 'together with the pure intention of the fighter, wipes away the believer's sins' (Cook, 2005, p. 15). This can explain why radicals never see their action as wrong or sinful. Rather, they see it as something necessary to achieve eternal blessings. In some cases, the theological background of violent jihad is combined with more secular motives. Sayid Qutb, for example, declared regimes in Muslim-majority countries today as *jahili*<sup>1</sup> society and encouraged their overthrow because 'although they believe in the Unity of God, still they have relegated the legislative attribute of God to others and submit to this authority' (Sageman, 2004, p. 13). For jihadists, disobedience among Muslims to God's commands is the reason why Islam is powerless before its enemies (Habeck, 2006).

Yet the Qur'an, *hadith*,<sup>2</sup> and many Islamic thinkers also have another concept of jihad. This involves 'greater jihad' (*al-jihad al-akbar*), as opposed to 'lesser jihad' (*al-jihad*

*al-asghar*), which refers exclusively to physical struggle. Greater jihad emphasizes self-control and is a spiritual struggle to move the self closer to God. This concept is embraced by some Western scholars studying Islam (e.g., John Esposito, Carole Hillenbrand) and modern Muslims who see the concept of holy war as no longer appropriate for the present time (Cook, 2005).

It is reasonable then to consider violent (or lesser) jihad as a primary mediator of sacred violence. Fundamentalism, the perception of being treated unfairly, religiosity, and support for Islamic law have little chance in igniting sacred violence if the individuals' understanding of jihad is an internal spiritual struggle rather than an external war. We therefore argue that a particular conception of jihadi ideology – namely the violent one – is the critical ideological trigger for sacred violence in Muslim societies.

In the next section, we provide two studies to address our concern. First, we present a qualitative study on how two radical groups in Indonesia (the Islamic Defender Front<sup>3</sup> and the Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid<sup>4</sup>) justify sacred violence. Second, we attempt to build a model for the relation between the predictors described above and sacred violence. We hypothesize that the relationship between the variables and sacred violence will be mediated by violent jihad, and suggest that it is the crucial point for sacred violence.

### Study 1: How radicals justify violence

Study 1 provides readers with an insight on how radical groups justify their violence in light of their concept of jihad. This study is based on interviews with the groups' elites. This study also serves as the launching point for the following study. While Study 2 is quantitative and based on a national representative sample, Study 1 has only a handful of sources, with data obtained from in-depth interviews. Even though the sample cannot be said to be representative of radical groups overall, we suspect that the narrative itself is general. The interview content allows readers to understand how the groups think, and how their thinking leads to sacred violence.

### Methods

*Participants.* For the purpose of data gathering, in March–April 2010 the authors interviewed a total of nine people from both groups (six from the Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid [JAT] and three from the Islamic Defender Front [FPI]). One figure from both JAT and FPI was a top official with direct access to the group's leader. We tried to make the sessions as informal as possible. The JAT and FPI were chosen because they are both radical yet based in different cities. The JAT is based in Surakarta, a city in

Central Java, which was once also one of the bases of the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia) while FPI is based in Jakarta, the Indonesian capital. It was our expectation that choosing groups from two different historical and geographical areas would provide richer narratives.

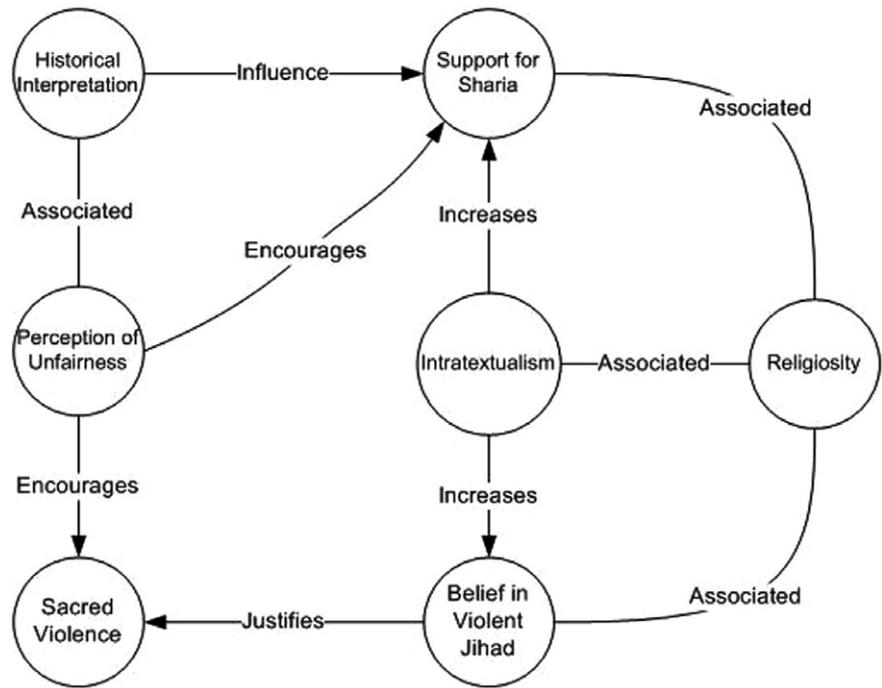
*Procedures.* The interviews were unstructured to allow greater flexibility in exploring the sources' thoughts. Each interview lasted 60 to 120 minutes. The interviewers were guided by four main questions: (1) What concept of jihad does the group hold?; (2) How does the group see the relation between Muslim and non-Muslims nowadays?; (3) How does the group see the Al-Qur'an and its teachings?; and (4) How does the group see sharia and its relevance to the modern world? We did not ask about involvement in sacred violence because news was abundant about such actions by the groups; nevertheless, the issue did emerge during the conversations.

The recorded conversations were then transcribed. The process of coding and analysis were carried out with NVivo 7 (Richards, 2005). No *a priori* coding scheme was applied and thus the coding and the model were built from more of a bottom-up approach. As for the types of relationship between concepts, we distinguished four kinds of relationships aside from *Justifies*, which refers to justification. *Associated* relation suggests that two concepts are related without clear causality; a mutual presence might best describe this kind of relationship. *Influence* refers to conditions under which one concept affects the other concept but the effect itself is not clear (could be increasing or decreasing). *Encourages* is more circumstantial and can be paralleled with Kruglanski and Fishman's (2006) term 'contributing factors'. The origin concept reinforces the target concept in more specific circumstances, compared to the *Increases* relationship type, which suggests a more direct relation.

### Results

In the final coding result, our variables of interest were found to be the concepts that encompass the radical groups' discourse. One concept (historical interpretation) needed to be added, however, because of the constant reference by our sources.

Figure 1 depicts our conceptualization of the relationship between variables. Intratextualism increases support for sharia and belief in violent jihad. Any scripture – not only the Qur'an – contains commands. Literal reading of scripture will logically be related to interpreting the commands as law that must be applied regardless of time. The significance of belief in violent jihad, on the other hand, is evident from statements by at least two of our sources: 'Heaven is indeed under the flash of sword', which referred to a hadith,



**Figure 1** The qualitative model of violent jihad as a mediating factor in sacred violence based on radical group interviews.

and ‘If we interpret the Qur’an correctly, there is no such thing as jihad against poverty . . . (or) jihad against stupidity. That is not jihad’. These statements support our concept of the role of belief in violent jihad.

Other interesting relations are those between perception of unfairness, sacred violence, and support for sharia. Perception of unfair treatment that encourages sacred violence is related to radicals’ perception that Indonesia is the world’s largest Muslim country but Islamic law is not applied there. Consequently, there are many threats to Muslims’ morality. As one source put it, ‘(E)ven though this country is not an Islamic state, it is not a satanic state either. We must not let wickedness, barbarism, moral transgressions, or excessive liberalism persist. In short, anything (that is) against the Qur’an. We fight such things’.

As for the relationship between perception of unfairness and support for sharia, it cannot be separated from how radicals interpret historical events. There are two events that our sources consistently referred to: the occupation of Indonesia by the Dutch and the removal of the Jakarta Charter (Piagam Jakarta), the five principles underlying the nation. The occupation is seen as having destroyed early Islamic kingdoms. As one of our sources from FPI said, ‘We were once based on Islam . . . The (early Islamic) kingdoms implemented Islamic governmental system. So, it is nothing new . . . But how did that system disappear? After the coming of the Dutch’.

In the Jakarta Charter, there were nine words mandating Islamic law to be imposed among Muslims. These words, however, were set aside by a consensus between Indone-

sia’s founders in the name of national unity. Radicals see this as backstabbing: how could Islamic law be ruled out in a Muslim-majority country? In their words, ‘That (Jakarta Charter) was actually gentle agreement, how could it change on June 1 just in seconds? This is a betrayal, and this is the problem’. Or in the words of a JAT elite member: ‘Along the history of Indonesia, Islam is always lost, and forced to be part of democracy’.

The next, and probably the most interesting part of the model is the connection between belief in violent jihad and sacred violence. Above, we have cited that according to the groups, jihad as a war against poverty is not a jihad. They seemed unworried (or perhaps were not aware) that seeing jihad more as a war than a spiritual struggle would serve as ammunition for anti-Islam campaigns. One of our sources even said that in a sermon he challenged his followers to burn Ahmadiyah followers. Another source, when challenged by the authors that such a belief in jihad would only lead Islam to more wars and violence, answered, ‘(so be it), as long as this world is still ruled by evil’.

### Study 2: Verifying the model

In this section we test our hypothesis of the mediating role of jihad quantitatively. We use structural equation modeling, in which latent variables are represented by measured variables from the respective scale. There are six latent variables in the model: intratextual fundamentalism,

religiosity, perception of unfair treatment, support for Islamic law, belief in violent jihad, and sacred violence. We also include education and monthly income.

## Methods

**Survey and participants.** A representative national survey was conducted in March 2010 by the Indonesian Survey Institute, a prominent survey agency. Participants were 1320 Indonesian citizens, of which 1144 were Muslims whose data was analyzed. Cases with more than three missing answers were removed, leaving us with 934 participants. Those selected had voting rights in the election, namely everyone above 17 years of age or who had been married. The sampling technique used was multi-stage random sampling. Each respondent was interviewed by a trained interviewer. Quality control was done by revisiting 20% of the respondents. No significant errors were found during the quality control inspection.

Mean age was 39.9 years with a standard deviation of 13.4. The youngest respondent was 16 and the oldest was 97. Fifty-two percent of the respondents were male. Regarding education profile, 17% never completed elementary school, 49.7% never completed junior high school, 71% never completed senior high school, and 92% never or have yet to complete higher education. We also paid attention to the level of monthly income: 62% of respondents had a monthly income of less than 1 million rupiahs (about US\$111), 23% had an income of between one million and two million rupiahs, and the rest earned more than two million rupiahs.

Mirroring the situation in Indonesia, the majority of respondents only had low education. This affected our study. The most obvious impact was that we could not merely translate established psychological instruments and use them. We had to 'downgrade' the wordings to levels that could be understood even by the less educated respondents. In addition, in some instances, we also had to devise items not included in the original versions. Our guidance for such instances was to maintain the theoretical definitions of the instrument.

**Instruments.** The instruments used (in the order in which they were presented) were the religious practice scale, the sacred violence scale (Chusniyah, 2004), the Intratextual Fundamentalism Scale (IFS; Williamson, Hood & Sadiq, 2007), the unfair treatment scale, the support for Islamic law (sharia) scale, and the belief in violent jihad scale (Chusniyah, 2004).

The religious practice scale (REL;  $M = 3.11$ ,  $SD = 0.56$ ) had four items and tapped into religious routines. Items were: (1) Practicing mandatory *shalat* (prayer) five times each day; (2) Fasting during Ramadan; (3) Practising *shalat sunnah* (*shalat* that is encouraged but not mandatory); and

(4) Attending religious gatherings, such as religious council, religious preaching, or religious discussion. Answers ranged from 1 to 4 with 1 representing never and 4 always. The reliability was 0.703.

The next instrument was the sacred violence scale (VIOL;  $M = 1.34$ ,  $SD = 0.27$ ).<sup>5</sup> We intended to measure respondents' willingness or experience in committing sacred violence. For every item, respondents were asked if they ever committed the action. If they answered 'no', then they were asked if they would be willing to do it, given the opportunity. Answers were coded as 1 if respondents said they never did and were not willing to perform the action. Answers of ever did or was willing were coded as 2. We decided to use this coding because only a handful of respondents (less than 4%) answered in the affirmative. Items of this four-item scale included: (1) Raiding places considered as not complying to sharia, such as discotheques, prostitution complexes, and casinos; (2) Attacking the worship houses of other religions; (3) Attacking mosques and followers of Ahmadiyah according to MUI's fatwa that declared it as deviant; and (4) Expelling people who committed adultery from the neighbourhood. The reliability was 0.557.

The IFS ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 0.47$ ) was designed to focus on attitudes toward sacred text (Hood *et al.*, 2005). For technical reasons, we could only include three items from the original five items: (1) Because the Qur'an can never be wrong, it must be understood literally according to what is written; (2) Qur'an verses' meaning are already clear, they mustn't be debated; (3) To compare the Qur'an with other scriptures would be useless because the Qur'an is much nobler and holier. Options for answers ranged from 1 to 5, with 1 representing total disagreement and 5 total agreement. The reliability was 0.420. This is a low reliability for the scale, which has been known to have high reliability (e.g., Muluk & Sumaktoyo, 2010; Williamson & Hood, 2005). Such a low alpha may be attributed to its short length (Clark & Watson, 1995; Iacobucci & Duhachek, 2003). Spiliotopoulou (2009) suggested examining mean inter-item correlation when the scale is short. Our IFS had mean inter-item correlation of 0.194, which is in the acceptable range of 0.15-0.50 (Clark & Watson, 1995).

Perception of being unfairly treated was measured using a four-item scale (UNFAIR;  $M = 2.87$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ) that we developed. It was intended to tap into Moghaddam's (2006) social deprivation, unfair treatment, and injustice concepts. A response of 1 indicated total disagreement while 5 indicated total agreement. Items were: (1) In general, Muslims are unjustly treated by non-Muslims; (2) Nowadays, a lot of parties are trying to give Muslims bad moral influence; (3) The international campaign against terrorism is merely camouflage to attack Islam and its followers; and (4) In Indonesian politics, the voice of the non-Muslim minority

is more influential than the voice of the Muslim majority. Reliability was 0.736.

Support for Islamic law (SHARIA; M = 2.85, SD = 0.68) had five items and contained statements that have been politically controversial in Indonesia. Items included: (1) Appropriate punishment for thieves is hand cutting; (2) A woman can't be president; (3) We mustn't say 'Merry Christmas' to Christians;<sup>6</sup> (4) People committing adultery must be stoned to death; and (5) Muslims who convert to other religions must be killed. A response of 1 indicated total disagreement while 5 indicated total agreement. The reliability was 0.719.

Belief in the violent jihad scale (JIHAD; M = 2.79, SD = 0.65) was composed of four items. The main purpose of the scale was to measure respondents' agreement with the notion of violent jihad. Answering 1 represented total disagreement and 5 represented total agreement. Items included: (1) Jihad is to defend the truth of Islam with one's life; (2) Jihad is to wage war against infidels; (3) The attack on the World Trade Center in New York, America in 2001 by some Muslims was a form of jihad; and (4) Imam Samudera, Amrozi, Noordin M. Top<sup>7</sup> and Osama bin Laden were examples of people practising true jihad. The Chronbach's alpha was 0.692.

Principal component analysis suggests that the instruments were unidimensional with explained variances ranging from 43% to 56%. Table 1 provides the fit indices for the Confirmatory Factor Analysis on the instruments.

**Results**

To gain insight to the relation between variables, we conducted correlation analysis (see Table 2).

The next step was to test our hypotheses. We tested the model with LISREL 8.71 and initially included in it all possible relations (i.e., from intratextual fundamentalism, perception of unfair treatment, and religious practice, to support for Islamic law, belief in violent jihad, and sacred violence; support for Islamic law to belief in violent jihad and sacred violence; belief in violent jihad to sacred violence; and demographic variables of education and income to all other variables). However, to ease presentation, only significant paths are drawn in Figure 2. Income had no significant relation with any other variables and thus is not drawn. The model was also in reality a latent model, in which every latent variable was measured by the questionnaire items from the respective scale.

The model supported our hypothesis about the mediating role of belief in violent jihad. All variables go through it to reach sacred violence. Only violent jihad had a significant relationship with sacred violence. The goodness of fit for the model was acceptable with  $\chi^2 = 346.19$  (d.f. = 257; Sig. 0.00), RMSEA = 0.019 (Sig. 1.00), AGFI = 0.96, NFI = 0.95. The chi-square statistic was significant, but after considering all other goodness of fit indicators this should not be a big concern because it is known to be sensitive to sample size.

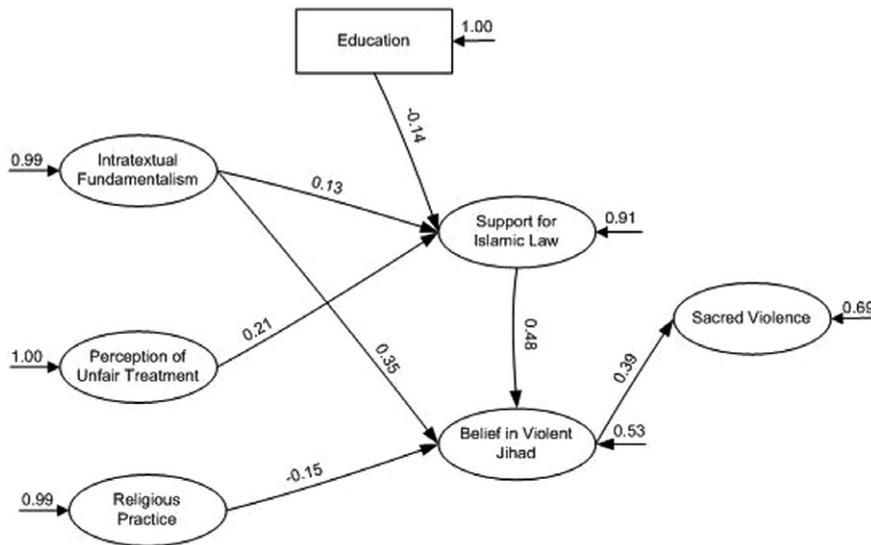
**Table 1** Fit indices of the confirmatory factor analyses on the instruments

	Chi-square (df; Sig.)	RMSEA (Sig.)	AGFI	NFI
REL	0.15 (1; 0.70)	0.00 (0.90)	1.00	1.00
IFS		the model is saturated		
UNFAIR	1.74 (1; 0.19)	0.028 (0.59)	0.99	1.00
SHARIA	6.56 (3; 0.09)	0.036 (0.68)	0.99	0.99
JIHAD	1.97 (1; 0.16)	0.032 (0.55)	0.99	1.00
VIOL	2.71 (1; 0.1)	0.043 (0.45)	0.99	0.99

**Table 2** Correlations between variables

	Education	Income	IFS	REL	UNFAIR	SHARIA	JIHAD	VIOL
Education	1	0.447**	0.008	0.016	0.008	-0.107**	-0.135**	0.005
Income		1	0.031	0.041	0.008	-0.021	-0.102**	-0.013
IFS			1	0.055	0.054	0.093**	0.191**	0.151**
REL				1	-0.013	0.036	-0.065*	-0.024
UNFAIR					1	0.213**	0.165**	0.121**
SHARIA						1	0.384**	0.266**
JIHAD							1	0.282**
VIOL								1

\*Significant at the 0.05 level, \*\*Significant at the 0.01 level.



**Figure 2** Standardized solutions for the model of violent jihad as a mediating factor in sacred violence.

To test for alternative models, we removed all mediating paths, so that what were left were paths from intratextual fundamentalism, perception of unfair treatment, religious practice, support for Islamic law, and belief in violent jihad to sacred violence (i.e., a linear model of sacred violence), and from education and income to all other variables. The goodness of fit for this model was  $\chi^2 = 394.01$  (d.f. = 263; Sig. = 0.00), RMSEA = 0.023 (Sig. = 1.00), AGFI = 0.96, NFI = 0.94. It must be noted, however, that the alternative model had been optimized by estimating error correlates among exogenous variables and subtracting them from the model. An unoptimized version of the model had  $\chi^2 = 1026.10$  (d.f. = 283; Sig. = 0.00), RMSEA = 0.053 (Sig. = 0.074), AGFI = 0.90, NFI = 0.86.

A chi-square comparison between our model and the unoptimized alternative resulted in a  $\chi^2$ -difference of 679.91 (d.f. = 26) which was statistically significant and lended support for our model. The optimized alternative, however, cannot be directly compared to our model because they are not nested. We chose instead to use Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC; Wicherts & Dolan, 2004). The BICs for the optimized alternative, the unoptimized alternative, and the proposed model were 995.88, 1491.18, and 989.10, respectively. Following suggestions from Raftery (1995), the BIC differences between our model and the two alternatives exceeded six, which means there is strong evidence favouring the model with smaller BIC, which in this case is ours.

## Discussion

The main aim of this paper was to suggest the mediating effect of belief in violent jihad for sacred violence. It was

achieved by examining interviews with radical groups as well as by using structural equation modelling. Our model supports the hypothesis by showing that none of the predictors had significant relations with sacred violence except belief in violent jihad.

From a theoretical perspective, our findings affirm the paramount position of jihad in religiously motivated violence. History has shown that most, if not all, violence committed by Muslims in Islamic history has been waged under the banner of jihad (Bonner, 2006). The role of jihad as justification also corresponds with Moghaddam's (2006) third floor at which the moral shift for terrorism happens.

As was described in the literature review, even though endorsement of jihad is based on scriptural verses and theological roots, secular factors are significant as well. Theological underpinnings refer to the belief that jihad is ordered by God and religion. Secular factors, on the other hand, refer to socio-political contexts in which jihad is used as a justification for violence.

These factors also manifested in our model. Intratextual fundamentalism as the theological root of jihad had a significant direct relationship with belief in violent jihad. In addition, fundamentalism also had a positive relationship with support for Islamic law.

It was interesting that perception of unfair treatment related significantly only to support for Islamic law. This may be caused by people's perceptions that implementation of Islamic law will improve the disadvantageous conditions Muslims experience today (Habeck, 2006). It was also shown that support for sharia law mediated perception of unfair treatment with belief in violent jihad. Broadly speaking, this suggests that belief in violent jihad among Muslims who feel unfairly treated

depends first on how strongly they support the implementation of sharia.

There are two ways to explain these findings. First, it is possible that those who believe in violent jihad also believe that jihad is ordered by God and is an obligation for all Muslims. That way, jihad itself becomes an undeniable part of Islamic law. Second, jihad might be seen as a way to achieve a goal (in this case seeing sharia implemented). This is parallel with Kruglanski and Fishman's (2006) suggestion that terrorism – a form of religious violence – can better be understood as a 'tool' rather than a 'syndrome'. According to this perspective, Islamic rules need to be manifested by any means necessary. Some groups believe that the best way to uphold Islam is through peaceful means, while others believe that peaceful means are unreasonable.

This preference of method raises a debate about the rationality of violence. Our model shows that anger that comes from the feeling of being treated unfairly is not related directly to violent jihad, but to support for sharia first as the escape strategy. This suggests the possibility of the rationality of violence as a means for achieving goals. The possibility that religious violence might be a rational choice has also been proposed by Turner (2006). In the context of civil war, Kalyvas (1999) used the Algerian case to show that massive cruelty could be motivated by rational thinking. However, the proposal of rational violence may not be easily accepted. Jones (2006), citing Victoroff (2005) and Moghaddam (2005), argued that what those radicals do can not be seen as rational. This paper, even though it provides some evidence toward rational explanations, is not intended to provide a definitive answer, but does contribute to the continuing debate.

Another interesting finding is related to the negative relationship between religious practice and belief in violent jihad. This can be explained by the notion of greater jihad and lesser jihad. Practising ritual as an internal spiritual struggle relates more to greater jihad than lesser jihad. This brings to mind Allport's (1966) concept of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. Respondents who practised their religion probably already felt assured. They did not think that it was necessary to reach God through violence, which is contrary to jihadists' belief that unity with God can only be realized through violent self-sacrifice.

Last, there are some points worthy of policymakers' attention. First, understanding jihad does matter. If individuals perceive jihad as a spiritual struggle they may be less likely to commit violence. It is thus necessary to encourage Islamic clerics to continuously promote this 'softer' understanding of jihad. Second, stakeholders must give proper attention to the dissatisfaction experienced by some Muslims today. Such dissatisfaction is vulnerable to being manipulated by radicals who will frame it in religious

terms. Third, we acknowledge that this work is preliminary and more work is needed to give a fuller understanding of sacred violence. It must be noted that one shortcoming of this study is its narrow focus on lesser jihad. Nevertheless, these limitations also open possibilities for future research. Future study examining greater jihad might find that support for greater jihad weakens individuals' willingness to commit sacred violence.

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## End notes

1. Being ignorant of God's guidance.
2. Records of Prophet Muhammad's life, saying, action.
3. The Islamic Defender Front (FPI, Front Pembela Islam) is a radical group infamous for their activities of raiding discotheques or forcefully closing the houses of worship of other religions. See International Crisis Group (2008) for a brief description of it and the JAT.
4. The Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT) is known for their sacred violence as well as their firebrand cleric, Abu Bakar Baasyir. The cleric is suspected as serving as *amir* (chief patron) of the terrorist group Jamaah Islamiyah.
5. A reviewer asked about the ethics of asking this scale. Surprisingly, only few (less than 7% on average) respondents did not answer the questions. Furthermore, violence described in the questions seem to be everyday discourse in Indonesia, about which people feel little hesitation to either openly condemn or accept.
6. On 7 March 1981 MUI issued a fatwa declaring it is *haram* (forbidden) for a Muslim to attend Christmas-related events. The fatwa itself did not explicitly talk about Christmas greetings but has been used nonetheless by some clerics to argue that saying 'Merry Christmas' is *haram*. Due to the fact that in Islam fatwa is taken as law, it is reasonable then to include the Christmas greeting controversy on our scale of SHARIA.
7. Imam Samudera and Amrozi were executed for their involvement in the Bali bombing while Noordin M. Top was the nation's top fugitive until his death in a police raid in 2009.

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