

A scenic view of a park with a pond, cherry blossom trees, and people walking. The image shows a large, mature cherry blossom tree in the foreground on the left, with its branches covered in pink flowers. A paved path leads from the bottom left towards the center, where a group of people is walking. In the background, there are more cherry blossom trees, some bare trees, and a tall evergreen tree. A body of water is visible on the right side of the image, reflecting the sky and trees. The sky is clear and blue.

“THE CONCEPT OF *AL-WASAṬIYYAH* AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ISLAMIC MODERATION”

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INTRODUCTION

1. The term *wasāṭiyyah* is used in the context of the Qur'ānic expression “*ummatan wasāṭan*”, which refers to the Universal Islamic Community or Nation having the attributes of justice, excellence and balance in order to serve as Allah's trustworthy “witnesses over mankind” (“*shuhadā' alā al-nās*”) in this world and in the Hereafter (Q. 2: 143). It can also be translated as “Justly Balanced Quality” or “Justly Balanced Nature” of Islam and the Islamic community. The more popular translation of the term, however, is “moderation.”

WHY WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT OF *WASAṬIYYAH* IN THE CURRENT WORLD SITUATION

2. (A) The mission of Islam as a peaceful religion which advocates inter-religious tolerance is being distorted by non-Muslim states, media, NGOs and religious fundamentalists in the world. The phenomenon of religious extremism as well as religious liberalism, among some Muslim groups, has also tarnished the image of Islam among non-Muslims in the West and the East. In Muslim societies, the concept of *wasatiyyah* has not been given the attention it deserves.

2. (B) Meanwhile the emergence of Muslim militant or sectarian (such as Shī`ah) groups, in the last three decades, in Sunni-dominant countries— such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Southern Thailand, Mindanao —which tend to ignore mainstream religious doctrines or viewpoints, or are bent upon bringing about socio-religious changes based upon their own visions of Islamic society, culture or state, has made it necessary for religious authorities and concerned Islamic scholars to promote the correct and balanced understanding of Islamic teachings.

2. (B) Thus the term “moderation” began to be widely used by political leaders in Western as well as Muslim countries – albeit with their own understandings and interpretations – to underscore the new global quest for a non-violent world and the need to stem the tide of religious radicalism and militancy.

THE QUR'ĀNIC MEANING AND CONNOTATIONS OF *WASAṬIYYAH*:



I. JUSTICE (*al-'adl*)

The term *wasatīyyah* is a verbal noun (*maṣḍar*) from the word *wasat* in the following *āyah* or verse of the Qur'ān:

وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ
وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

“And thus we have made you a JUST COMMUNITY (or Middlemost Community) that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you.” (Q. 2: 143)

5. According to Muhammad Asad, the "Middlemost Community" is "a community that keeps an equitable balance between extremes and is realistic in its appreciation of man's nature and possibilities, rejecting both licentiousness and exaggerated asceticism. In tune with its oft-repeated call to moderation in every aspect of life, the Qur'an exhorts the believers not to place too great an emphasis on the physical and material aspects of their lives, but postulates, at the same time, that man's urges and desires relating to this "life of the flesh" are God-willed and, therefore, legitimate...

- On further analysis, the expression "a community of the middle way" might be said to summarize, as it were, the Islamic attitude towards the problem of man's existence as such: a denial of the view that there is an inherent conflict between the spirit and the flesh, and a bold affirmation of the natural, God-willed unity in this twofold aspect of human life. This balanced attitude, peculiar to Islam, flows directly from the concept of God's oneness and, hence, of the unity of purpose underlying all His creation." (Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, p. 30)

6. It is reported by Imām Aḥmad on the authority of Abū Saʿīd al-Khuḍarī that the Prophet (Ṣ.ʿA.W.) interpreted the word “*wasat*” in verse 143 of *Sūrah Al-Baqarah*(Q.2) to mean justice (*al-ʿadl*). Justice requires being in the middle-most position between two or more opposing sides, without inclining to or favouring any of the sides, and not swayed by emotions, biases or prejudice in making judgements, decisions or solving disputes. Hence the connotations of “balance”, “equilibrium” or “moderation.”

The noun “*al-waṣṭ*”(literally, meaning the middle, the middlemost, the centre), according to the commentator, AbūSu`ūd, is “originally a name for something whereby the connection of all sides to it is of equal distance, such as the centre of a circle. Then the word is borrowed in order to describe the praiseworthy human qualities, by virtue of those qualities being in the middle of blameworthy qualities which surround it in the modes of excessiveness (*ifrāṭ*)and laxity (*tafrīt*).”(Al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-Khaṣā'is al-`Āmmah li-al-Islām*,1977).

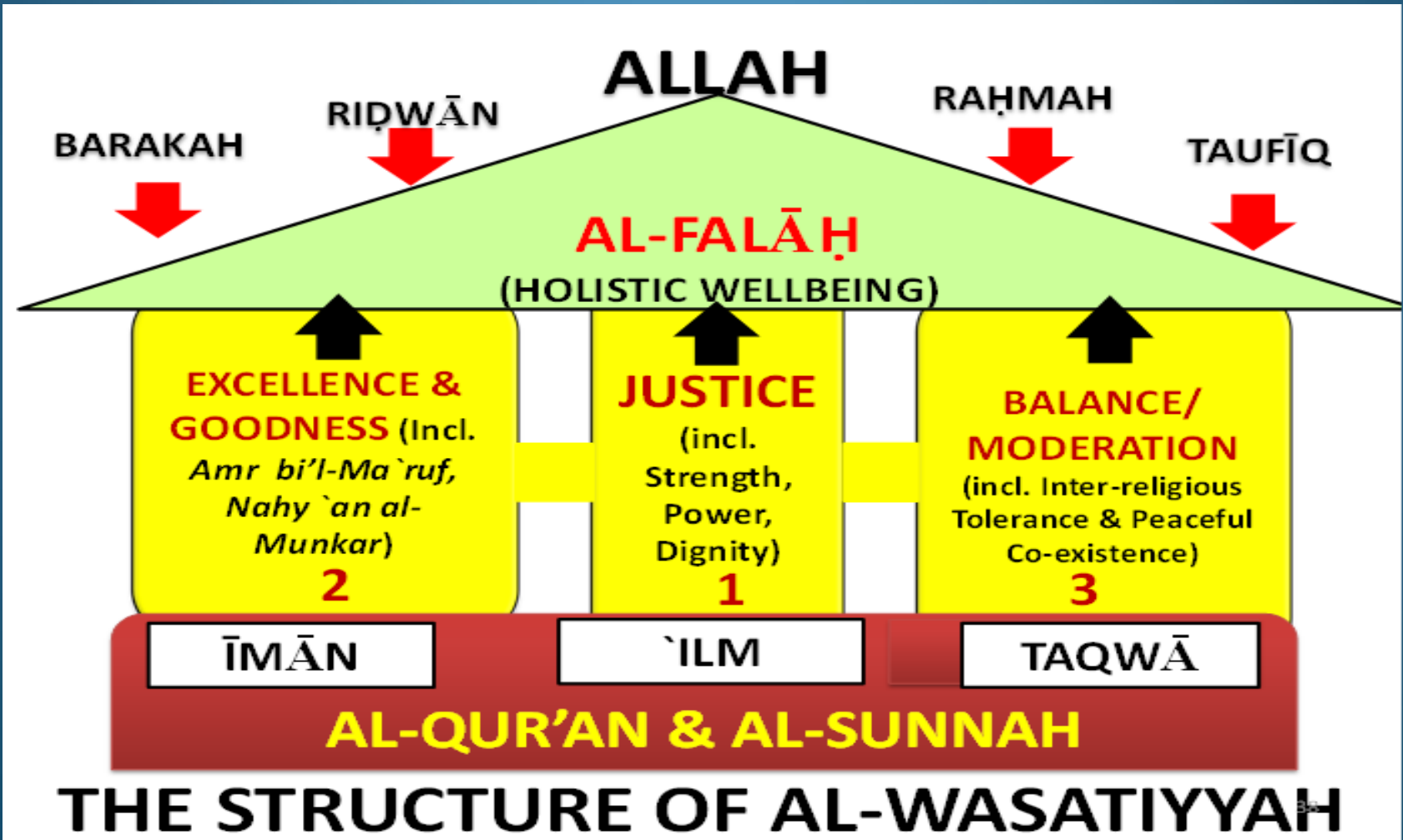
7. One of the wise sayings of the Arabs is "*Khairu al-umūr al-wasat*" (The best of affairs is the middle position). Therefore when it was said that the Quraish tribe is "*awsat al-'Arab*" in terms of genealogy and locality, it means that it was the best tribe, just as when it was said that the Prophet (Ṣ.'A.W.) was "*wasatan fi qawmihi*" it means that the Prophet (Ṣ.'A.W.) the noblest among his people genealogically. (Al-Qaraḍāwī, 1977). Hence the word "*awsatuhum*" in verse 28 of *Surah al-Qalam*(Q.68) has been interpreted by the Qur'an commentators to mean "the most just of them" (*a'daluhum*). This interpretation is confirmed by al-Imām al-Rāzī in his *Tafsīr* in which he says, "The most just place for deciding something is to be in the middle, because its judgement with regard to all its sides is the same and is equal." (Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*)

8. It should be pointed out that it is this aspect of *wasāṭiyyah*, i.e. the quality of “balance” or “moderation” which, understandably, receives the most attention today. As a consequence the qualities of “justice” and “goodness” or “excellence” as fundamental criteria of WITNESSING OVER MANKIND are being neglected, sidelined or forgotten. “Balance” or “moderation”, we wish to remind our Muslim public as well as the political elites, must not be misunderstood as justification for indulgence (*tasāhul*), carelessness or an excuse to be negligent in performance of religious obligations.

- With regard to performance of religious obligations, the nature of moderation in them is clearly defined and stated in the Sunnah (the normative statements and practices) of the Prophet (ﷺ). It is, therefore, the duty of objective and qualified Muslim scholars to make the necessary corrections or clarifications. Otherwise, “moderation” could be understood as a license or permission given by religion to be lax in the performance of religious duties.

GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE CONCEPT

From a comprehensive understanding of the concept of *wasatīyyah* as constitutive of the core qualities of JUSTICE, EXCELLENCE and BALANCE as mentioned above, it is possible to present the comprehensive and holistic meaning of the Qur'ānic concept in the following illustration, on the next page. It is our humble attempt to simplify the intellectual discourse on the concept and to convey its holistic and inter-related nature.



10. In explaining or elaborating the concept of *wasatiyyah*, we believe it is important not to forget the issue of fulfilling the role of being A) “witnesses unto mankind” and B) “enjoining all that is good/ right and prohibiting all that is bad /wrong” which are made obligatory upon the Muslim community, being designated by Allah SWT as “The Just and Best Community brought forth for mankind.” It should be remembered that the Prophet (S.‘A.W.) had warned that dire consequences would befall Muslim communities who fail to fulfill or neglect the obligation of “enjoining all that is good/right and prohibiting all that is bad/evil”.

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- To fulfill this key “civilisational witnessing” and leadership mission, the Muslim community has to also strive for comprehensive excellence in religious and worldly sciences, in the spirit of absolute and uncompromising monotheism (*Tauhīd*), fulfilling the Divine Trust (*Amānah*), performance of comprehensive worship of Allah (*ʿIbādah*), vicegerency (*Khilāfah*) and desiring to spread the mercy of Allah (S.W.T.) to all the worlds (*Rahmatan li al-`alamīn*). This point has been stressed by innumerable reformist Muslim scholars over the centuries, particularly after the period of colonization by Western powers until the present.

11. Towards achieving that ultimate goal, it may be useful for Muslim religious scholars and aspiring young Muslim leaders committed to pursuing the ideals of *wasatīyyah* to consider the eight recommendations given by al-Qaradāwī in his work on the Islamic Renaissance (2002). The eight recommendations are:

1. Facilitation (*al-taisīr*) in the giving of formal legal opinion (*al-fatwā*), and emphasizing glad tidings (*al-tabshīr*) in Islamic propagation (*al-da'wah*) efforts.
2. Combining the principles of the Pious Ancestors (*al-salafiyyah*) and the requirements for renewal (*al-tajdīd*), or combining authenticity (*al-aṣālah*) with contemporary requirements (*al-mu'āṣarah*).

3. Balancing between the permanent principles (*al-thawābit*) of Islamic law and the changing conditions (*mutaghayyirāt*) of the time.
4. The coupling (*al-muzāwajah*) of religious duty (*al-wājib*) with the social reality (*al-wāqiʿ*) (or understanding of the social reality).
5. Engaging in dialogue (*al-ḥiwār*) and coexistence (*al-taʿāyush*) with other people, and practicing tolerance (*al-tasāmuḥ*) with those who differ.

6. Adopting the principles of consultation (*al-shūrā*), justice (*al-'adālah*), freedom of peoples (*ḥurriyat al-shu'ūb*) and human rights (*ḥuqūq al-insān*).
7. Being just and fair (*inṣāf*) to women, liberating them from the oppression of customs inherited from eras of backwardness, and from the oppression of foreign customs coming from the civilization of disintegration.
8. Presenting Islam as a balanced, integrated civilizational mission (*risālahḥaḍāriyyah*), for the revival, liberation and unification of the *Ummah*.

ISLAMIC MODERATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

- With regard to subject of Islamic moderation which is one of the dimensions of *wasatiyyah*, it is instructive to study the phenomenon as an aspect of the Malay culture in Muslim Southeast Asia. We believe there are several aspects of Muslim culture and behavior in the Malay-Indonesian communities which reflect Islamic moderation, but they have not been getting the attention of the Western media in their desire to prop up the scripted narrative of Muslim extremism and militancy. At this point it may be useful to study the results of an important international survey which was conducted to find out what the one billion Muslims really think about the West in 2009 (www.gallup.com/press/104209/Who-Speaks-Islam-What-Billion-Muslims-Really-Think. Accessed 26 April 2011).

- What the survey does not reveal, however, is that the Muslim communities in Southeast Asia or in the Malay-Indonesian world are, relatively speaking, among the most tolerant and accommodative Muslim communities in the world, despite the Western media's tendency to sensationalise or exaggerate news about the incidents of Muslim violence or militant attacks. This is the view of several Western scholars and social scientists who have studied the peoples and cultures of this part of the world.

- If there are exceptions, as in the case of the Moros in Mindanao, in southern Phillipines, the Patani Malays of southern Thailand, or the Acehnese Indonesians in Indonesia, these are due to the long bitter history of injustice or oppression by the central government, or aggressive Christian evangelisation in Muslim dominant areas, or the infiltration by external militant elements who do not represent the wishes and aspirations of the masses or the elites.

- In the Malay-Indonesian world, the Muslims have for a very long time been living together with non-Muslim minorities of various ethnic groups. They have learned to coexist harmoniously with the “others”. They have also accepted the democratic political system adapted to local conditions, in which Islam is allowed – as in the case of Malaysia and, to a certain extent, in Indonesia – to play an important cultural and political role within the framework of the national constitution and national ideologies.

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COUNTERING EXTREMIST OR MILITANT TENDENCIES AMONG MUSLIM GROUPS

- To assist the Muslim leaders and organizations in countering the militant or extremist tendencies among the youth or religious groups, we believe it is useful for them to consider undertaking what al-Qaraḍāwī has described as the seven necessary changes that Islamic movements and activists should undergo. (Al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-Ṣaḥwah al-Islāmiyyah*, pp. 10-52) .
- They are as follows:

I. CHANGING FROM FORM AND OUTER APPEARANCE TO REALITY AND SUBSTANCE

- The substance of Islam is not about “growing the beard and lengthening it; shortening of the robe; carrying the *miswāk* (teeth-cleaning stick); joining one’s foot with other’s foot in prayer; placing the hands on the chest or above the navel; eating while seated not while standing; forbidding all kinds of songs or music; making the wearing of the *niqāb* (face cover) obligatory for women, etc.” The substance of Islam as an ‘*aqīdah* is *Tawḥīd*, that of ‘*ibādah* is sincerity, that of *mu‘āmalah* (transaction) is truthfulness, that of *khuluq* (character) is mercy, that of *tashrī‘* (legislation) is justice, that of ‘*amal* (work) is perfection, that of *adab* (ethics) is spiritual consciousness, that of ‘*alāqah* (human bonds) is brotherhood, and that of civilization is balance.

2. FROM TALKING AND BICKERING TO GIVING AND DOING

- Muslims have to overcome several negative habits such as: looking for the mistakes of others, instead of self-criticism and welcoming constructive criticism from others; preoccupation with useless polemics or idle talk on non-vital issues; and saying or advocating things which are not supported or followed by appropriate actions. The deeds that are required cover both the affairs of the world and the Hereafter. In carrying out those good deeds, Muslims must resist the temptation of despair because the results of those well-intentional efforts may not be realized within a short period.

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- They should not be engrossed in utopian idealism or be discouraged by the *hadîth* regarding the gloomy signs of the Last Day, because the Prophet (Ṣ.A.W.) has said that; If the time of the Last Day has come, while one of you has in his hand a seedling and he still has the opportunity to plant it in the soil before the final hour, then let him plant it. (*ḥadîth* narrated by Anas b. Málík and reported in the *Musnad* of Ahmad (Vol. 4, p. 41) and in the *Saḥíḥ* of al-Bukhárî (in *Adab al-Mufrad*, p. 486).

3. FROM SENTIMENTAL (ÑÉÏFIYYAH) AND CLAMOUROUS ATTITUDE (GHAUGHÉIYYAH) TO RATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC ATTITUDE

- It is true that being sentimental or emotional is a common trait of being human, but this trait should not be allowed to dominate over the intellect or reason. Allah (S.W.T) demands His servants and vicegerents always to be just in dealing with fellow creatures and not to be influenced by the destructive emotion of base desires:
- *O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) the rich or the poor, for AllÉh can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you swerve, and if you distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do. (Q. Al-Nisa' 4: 135)*

- In this regard Muslims need to change from the emotional thinking and behaviour syndrome to; the realistic, neutral, objective and rational attitude” (*Al-nazāh al-Nāqlīyyah al-mawlā’iyyah al-īyādiyyah al-waḥdāniyyah*) in assessing matters, evaluating works, interpretation of events, interpretation of history, perceiving of supporters and adversaries, defining of positions to be taken and in decision making.(p. 106.)

- The scientific spirit and thinking based on knowledge (*al-tafkîr al-ʿilmî*) should dominate the Muslims' relationship, standpoints and affairs of life so that; we look at things, personalities, deeds, issues and standpoints with a scientific view, and we produce our tactical and strategic reports on the economy, politics, education, etc. with a scientific outlook and spirit – away from the lack of sound preparation (*irtijaliyyah*), subjectivism (*dhîʿiyyah*), exible mindset (*infiʿiyyah*), sentimentality (*ʿiḥsiyyah*), clamorous inclination (*ghawghʿiyyah*), arbitrariness (*taʿakkumiyyah*), and the attitude of trying to look for justifications for improper actions (*tabrîʿiyyah*).

- These negative traits predominate our environment today and colour our dispositions and demeanour to a large extent. Whoever among the decision makers managed to free himself from following personal desires or the desires of his group or party, would find that his greatest concern was to follow what would fulfil the desires of the masses, not what would fulfil their true interests, secure their future in their small homeland, big homeland and biggest homeland. (p. 106.)

CHANGE FROM PREOCCUPATION WITH THE SUBSIDIARY AND PERIPHERY TO THE PRIMARY AND FUNDAMENTAL.

- If action and concrete contribution, rather than talking and disputing, have to be part of the new agenda of Muslim reawakening, it may be asked “What field of action – from the intellectual (*al-Ñamal al-fikrÊ*), the educational (*al-Ñamal al-tarbawÊ*), the movement-oriented (*al-Ñamal al-ÍarakÊ*) and the social (*al-Ñamal al-ijtimÉÑÊ*) – should be given prior attention, since all the above-mentioned areas of action are part and parcel of the work that Muslims have to be involved in?” To al-QarÉÏÉwÊ prior attention has to be given to “the field of thinking and culture (*maidÉn al-fikrwa al-thaqÉfah*) and the field of “education and character development” (*al-tarbiyahwa al-takwÊn*).

- Ideological tolerance (*al-tasÉmuÍ al-fikrÊ*) is another aspect of Muslim tolerance which needs to be cultivated in order to overcome the problem of bigotry or exclusivism. This tolerance, especially among Islamic groups or movements, requires the attitude of looking at what is being said, rather than who says it; the readiness to admit one's own mistakes or weaknesses; welcoming constructive criticism from within or from outside of one's group, self-introspection in order to correct possible mistakes or review previous decisions; willingness to withdraw from a particular position for the sake of achieving unity or consensus, and showing sincere appreciation of the good or the positive in other people's ideas or actions. (Al-QarÉÏÉwÊ, *al-ØaÍwah al-IslÉmiyyah*, pp. 226-240)

CHANGE FROM VIOLENCE AND RANCOUR TO GENTLENESS AND COMPASSION

- Bearing in mind that the methodology of Islamic propagation (*al-daʿwah al-Islāmiyyah*) is based on gentleness (*al-rifq*). (“Verily Allāh is gentle; He loves gentleness in all affairs.” *ḥadīth* reported by Muslim on the authority of ʿĀʾishah. See *Ḥaṭīb Muslim, Ḥadīth* number 2593. See al-Qarāfī, *al-Ḥaṭīb al-Islāmiyyah*, p. 279) tenderness (*al-līn*), graciousness (*al-riqqah*), compassion (*al-raʿmah*), dialogue in the best possible manner with “the other”, and that Islam is a religion of compassion (*dīn al-raʿmah*), Muslims who use violence in promoting the cause of Islam are in fact violating the teachings of Islam and do great disservice to it.

- Unfortunately groups which espouse the use of violence in the name of Islam have appeared in Muslim countries and one of the reasons for the emergence of this phenomenon – dubbed as “Neo-KhawÉrij” by al-QarÉÌÉwÊ – is traceable to their faulty and defective understanding of *jihÉd* (*khalalfÊfiqh al-jihÉd*), changing wrongdoings by force (*fiqhtaghyÊr al-munkar bi-al-quwwah*), fighting or revolting against the rulers (*fiqh al-khurËjÑalÉ al-ÍukkkÉm*) and accusing others of disbelief (*fiqh al-takfir*).
 – Faults in the understanding of *jihÉd*.

- Those who espouse the violent approach are mistaken in assuming that it is obligatory to fight the disbelievers even though they are at peace with the Muslims. In this regard they are guilty of transgressing the limits imposed by AllÉh (S.W.T), as stated in the Qur'Én, "... And fight in AllÉh's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression, for verily AllÉh does not love aggressors."(Q. *Al-Baqarah*2: 190.) This verse, contrary to the claim of some of the militants, is not abrogated and the categorical statement that "verily AllÉh does not love aggressors" is a permanent principle in Islam.

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- (This is affirmed by IbnTaymiyyah in his “*QÉÑidah Fê QitÉl al-KuffÉR*” (The Principle in Fighting the Disbelievers). Al-QarÉÈÉwÊ, *al-ØaÍwah al-IslÉmiyyah*, p. 299.) It is true, however, that the Muslim *Ummah* was given permission by AllÉh (S.W.T) to fight (*qitÉl*) those who aggressed against the Muslims, or transgressed against their holy places or against the weak or oppressed servants of AllÉh (S.W.T) as indicated by the following verses:

- It should be reiterated that fighting can never be used as a means of coercing people to embrace Islam, because faith has to be acquired through the exercise of free personal choice, otherwise it is rejected. (See Q. *Yūnus* 10: 99; Q. *Al-Baqarah* 2: 256; Q. *Hūd* 11: 28.) Moreover it is in accordance with the wisdom of Allah (S.W.T) that a plurality of religions exists, for Allah (S.W.T) – while desirous that human beings submit to the religion of Islam after providing ample guidance for human beings to accept the religion of Allah (S.W.T) and believe in Prophet Muḥammad(Ṣ.‘A.W.) and the Qur’an – leaves it to human beings to choose to come to the Truth on the strength of their own rational reflection, decision and free will.(See Q. *Yūnus* 10: 99; Q. *Hūd* 11: 118-119.)

- Some of the militants also make the erroneous claim that there is a verse in the Qur'ān which they call “the verse of the sword” (*āyat al-saif*), which allegedly abrogates more than a hundred verses of the Qur'an. Not only are they unable to agree on which verse is “the verse of the sword”, nor are they right in assuming that an abrogation has occurred. The verses they refer too are mainly from *Surah al-Tawbah* and a few verses from *Sūrah al-Anfāl*, but these verses have to be understood in the context of the legitimate causes which led to the fighting and wars between the disbelievers and the Muslims in Madinah. Even then the Muslims were asked to abide by the terms of treaties they entered into and to incline to peaceful resolution if the adversaries so desired.(Al-Qarġġwġ, *al-Øalwah al-Islġmiyyah* , pp. 302-304.)

- It is important for Muslims to understand the distinction between *qitāl* (fighting) and *jihad* (striving), since both words have been used as though they mean the same thing. The first point to bear in mind is according to the Qur'an, every Muslim believer is that required to strive hard or struggle for the cause of Allah (S.W.T).

- The comprehensive scope of *jihÉd*, in the above contexts, encompasses the meaning of “striving hard against the lower self and evil desire” (*mujÉhadat al-nafs*), “striving hard against Satan” (*mujÉhadat al-shaiĒn*), “striving hard against iniquities or injustices and reprehensible actions” (*mujÉhadat al-maĎÉlim wa al-munkarÉt*) in society and “striving hard against the [Meccan] polytheists” (*mujÉhadat al-mushrikĒn*). These striving efforts involve the use of the intellect, the tongue, the pen, the body, wealth as well as weapons – if need be – according to the dictates of the particular circumstances

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- (It is common nowadays to hear Muslim leaders referring to the urgency of improving economic conditions of the Muslim community as “economic *jihÉd*” or “*jihÉd* against poverty”. Scholars and intellectuals also describe the importance of intellectual development of the *Ummahas* “intellectual or educational *jihÉd*.” See, for example, Muáammad Ali Haji Hashim, *Business Satu Cabang Jihad* (Business as a Branch of *JihÉd*), Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publications, 2003.)

Faults in the Understanding of Changing Reprehensible Things (*Taghyīr al-munkar*) by Force.

- In trying to change reprehensible situations or wrongdoings in society by the use of force, since it is a moral and religious responsibility of Muslims to change any reprehensible (*munkar*) condition or act, first “by hand”, then “by the tongue”, and finally “by the heart” – but that is the sign of the weakest faith – militant Muslims tend to forget the conditions which eminent religious scholars have laid down regarding the ways by which the moral transformations are to take place. Based on what Imam al-Ghazala has discussed in his *Iḥyā’ Ulūm al-Dīn*, the steps to be taken to bring about the change of reprehensible situations vary and are gradualistic in nature, the most severe being the use of coercion and warfare. This method is not permissible except for those who possess power stronger than the perpetrators of reprehensible acts. Nor is it permissible to bring about the change which results in a more reprehensible situation than the earlier situation or more or less the same as the previous *munkar*. The principle in Islamic jurisprudence is that a harmful situation cannot be eliminated by another harmful situation of the same kind or bigger than the earlier one.

- The first condition is that the situation to be changed by the force of authority or power has to be truly reprehensible or clearly forbidden (*Ḥarām*) and that there is no conflict of opinion among the Muslim leaders regarding its forbidden nature. The second condition is that the reprehensible situation has to be clearly seen or visible to the public; misdeeds done in the privacy of a private home or in complete secrecy do not warrant severely combative reactions.

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- The third condition is that the change agent must have the capability and the material or non-material resources to eliminate the *munkar* with ease. When one does not have the power or resources to bring about the change, then one should use “the tongue” (“*bi-lisānih*”) to address the problem. But those who have the legitimate authority (*sulṭān*) are duty-bound to carry out the responsibility of moral correction as is possible within the limits of such authority. (Al-QarĒĒwĒ, *al-ØaĀwah al-Islamiyyah*, pp. 310-313.)

- Considering that the malaise and the crises afflicting the *Ummah* are inherited from the long periods of civilizational decline, the age of Western colonialism and the years of secular governments and oppression, and, as such, are deep-rooted and extensive, effective social and moral transformation cannot be effected through superficial or fragmented efforts. The change involves ideas, concepts, values and standards; it embraces the domains of ethics and practices, cultures and traditions, institutions and legislations.

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- Before all that can happen, it is necessary that human beings change what is in themselves through constant orientation, continuous education, and setting good examples. When human beings changed what is in themselves, they become worthy of being changed by Allah in accordance with the invariable convention (of Allah (S.W.T)): 'Verily Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.

- We need to be reminded again regarding “the necessity of gentleness (*ḍarūrat al-rifq*)” in trying to overcome what is *munkar*, for the Prophet (Ṣ.‘A.W.) has enjoined Muslims to adopt gentleness as “Allah (S.W.T) loves that gentleness be applied in all affairs”, and in accordance with the well-known saying, “Whoever enjoins what is right then let the enjoinder be done in the right manner (*Man amara bi-al-ma‘rūf falyakun amruhu bi-ma‘rūf*)”. (Al-QarĒĒwĒ, *al-ØaĒwah al-IslĒmiyyah*, p. 317.)

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- It is the Muslims' duty to strive for their reform (*iṣlāḥ*) – as much as possible– by means of advice, propagation and guidance, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, with gentleness and wisdom and arguing in the best possible way; offering legal alternatives which are sound and implementable in the contemporary situation to replace the existing prohibited elements; conscientization and education of the people, and mobilizing them to steer the rulers toward peaceful change (*al-taghyīr al-silmī*), instead of civil strife and armed clashes (*al-muṣādamāt al-musallaḥah*).

- The development and growth of democratic institutions and political culture in ASEAN , together with the proper understanding and implementation of the principles of Islamic moderation , we believe, would ensure a more peaceful environment for all the peoples of Southeast Asian nations. In this regard, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore are in a better position to realize the goal of peaceful co-existence and inter-religious tolerance in the long run, because of the dominance of the mainstream tradition of moderation based on the harmonious fusion of Malay-Javanese culture and teachings of Islamic moderation.

- For this transnational and transcultural moderation to succeed in ASEAN and, indeed, in all Asian countries, leaders of all religious communities, not just Muslims, must be able to curb any rising trend of religious fundamentalism or aggressive evangelization into Muslim societies, as well as the trend of assertive or uncompromising secularism, or the movement which promotes exaggerated liberalism and freedom of individuals or groups in the name of democratic and fundamental human rights.

- As for Muslim political and non-political elites, their emphasis on moderation by Muslims should not lead to the dilution of the meaning and reduction of the scope of *wasatīyyah* for it stands for comprehensive and holistic excellence of the Muslim community, while Islamic moderation is a part of the holistic mission to actualize justice, excellence and balance. More study and research should be conducted by those elites towards closing the gap between words and deeds, rhetorics and substantive achievements, and ideals and realities. At any rate, the emergence of the discourse on *wasatīyyah* and moderation has made it more imperative for Muslims to review their covenant with Allah (S.W.T.) in light of the Divine commandment for Muslims to exemplify holistic and civilizational excellence.