# The Islamic World Today and the Language of Jihad

Hassan Ko Nakata

## 1. Introduction

Today I would like to talk about the reason for the distortion in the discourse on jihad in the contemporary world, both in the West and in the Islamic world.

My viewpoint and approach are completely different from Prof. Mori's and also from Prof. Kohara's. So you can observe here how among followers of different religions, opinion and character can co-exist in this CISMOR panel.

The current language of jihad in the Islamic world is structurally distorted. I attribute this to two factors: one is external and the other is internal. The external factor is the spread of an apologist theory, which can be seen as a defensive reaction to the domination of Western discourse, a script full of blandishments and smiles. On the other hand, the internal factor is the suppression of Islam by autocratic regimes, which have cut up the Islamic world into states that are like highly coveted and jealously guarded pieces of pie.

## 2. Pathology of the Pragmatics of Western Discourse

In this present world, Western discourse is full of hypocrisy, deception, and equivocation: it covers up acts of slaughter, exploitation, and discrimination with all sorts of flowery words like "human rights," "peace," "democracy," and "equality." Consequently, the Islamic world is forced to use empty words like "Islam is a peaceful religion," or "Islam is democratic." As a reaction to palpable falsehoods, these words ring hollow with such a heavy emphasis on "violence" and "autocracy" as well as the birth of radical extremists who advocate armed struggle. It is not just that the language is distorted but that the truth is sacrificed. Islam is neither a "peaceful religion" nor a "violent religion." Rather, the Islamic ethos does not reduce Islam to such simple formulations. This is a lesson that can be learned from traditional Islamic studies.

With regard to the external factor distorting the language of jihad, we need to study the pragmatics employed by the Christian culture of the Western camp. This culture touts sentiments, practiced by no one, like: "If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also," and "if anyone would take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well." Without elucidating the pathology of Western pragmatics, any amount of "semantic" discussion of

Islamic cultural vocabulary, like "jihad," will only amplify misunderstanding. The problem lies not in the Islamic world, but in the Western one. Since the time for this presentation is limited, I will not discuss this issue in greater detail here.

## 3. Suppression of Islam by Autocratic Regimes in the Islamic World

What I mean by the second, internal factor—the suppression of Islam by autocratic regimes—is not only the absence of political authority with legitimate (from the Islamic viewpoint) governance in today's Islamic world, but also the existence solely of autocratic regimes that oppress any movement to establish legitimate government, that is, the caliph system. This distorts the language of jihad because those in power under this arrangement dare not address the absence of a caliph, even though the supreme power of a caliph is central to jihad. Obviously, whether or not a caliphate exists clearly determines the form of jihad.

As a result, all language of jihad focuses on a defensive jihad, which can be exercised in the absence of a caliph. Nevertheless, distortion of this language is unavoidable because it is impossible to discuss such issues as the right of command in defensive jihad and the obligation to support jihad against invaders without bringing up the absence of a caliph.

To speak truthfully about the realities of jihad, it is necessary to ensure freedom for academic discussion of a legitimate political order in Islam.

## 4. House of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*) and the Rule of Law

In the Islamic view of the world, the Earth is divided into the House of Islam (*dar al-Islam*) and the House of War (*dar al-harb*). The House of Islam refers to those lands where the Islamic community, headed by a caliph, is responsible for internal and external security, its public spaces are governed by Islamic public law, and its private spaces are entrusted to the autonomy of pluralistic religious communities, including Roman Catholics, Protestants, Greek Orthodoxies, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and so on.

According to the Islamic view of the world, legislative power is vested exclusively in Allah, the creator of the universe, and the ruling of human beings by human beings is simply a usurpation of divine nature. In this sense, the House of Islam is the sole law-abiding land where true law rules. In contrast, the external world, in spite of the appearance of law and order, is a lawless world; this is the House of War, where the law of the jungle—the survival of the fittest—prevails. Therefore, jihad is a means to protect and expand the House of Islam, that is, the lands under the rule of law.

In Iraq, where unlawful torture, cruelty, and slaughter by the U.S. Forces are commonplace, the sentence handed down by martial court to Specialist Charley Hooser, found guilty of the murder of an Iraqi translator, was imprisonment of only three years

(January 22, 2005). That is just an example. Most such crimes are a matter of connivance and are overlooked. Hence, that is unworthy of the name "law" which punishes a murder with only a three-year prison term, even in the case in which the "guilty" judgment was officially declared by a court. It would be more appropriate to call a world where such a judgment goes unchallenged a lawless zone. Thus, Islam divides the world into the House of Islam, ruled by the true Law (Islamic law), and the House of War, a lawless zone, and believes it to be the mission of Islam to defend and expand the House of Islam. Jihad is a means to achieve this.

## 5. Jihad for the Sake of the House of Islam or the Rule of Law

Therefore, jihad can be classified into defensive jihad for the defense of the House of Islam, and offensive jihad for its expansion. Defensive jihad thus becomes the duty of all Muslim residents of a land invaded by heathens. Defensive jihad does not require an order from a caliph, and an invasion by heathens automatically obliges Muslims to join a defensive jihad. The declaration of an offensive jihad, on the other hand, can only be made through the supreme power of a caliph. Before exercising an offensive jihad, one must first expound on the teachings of Islam to one's enemy and persuade him to accept Islam. If the enemy agrees to accept Islam, the land is peacefully integrated into the House of Islam, and its residents are assured of life, fortune, and honor, where they enjoy the same rights and are subject to the same duties as other Muslims. If the enemy refuses to convert to Islam, taxes are levied. Heathens are not obliged to commit themselves to Islamic ideology or to defend *dar al-Islam*, but they are still assured of life, fortune, and honor, like any other Muslim, and they can enjoy religious autonomy as long as they pay their taxes and don't disturb the public order. A war is declared only after the request to pay taxes is turned down.

Allah is the eternal Lord and the Lord of the Earth, and so the entire Earth belongs to Allah. The lands where Islamic teachings are practiced are called the House of Islam. The House of Islam is also a "house of refuge" (*dar al-hijrah*), to which all those Muslims who groan under the illegitimate oppression and rule of the House of War may migrate in search of Islamic justice. Thus any "country" that exiles its brother Muslims as illegal foreign workers cannot be a part of the House of Islam. It is therefore a mistake to assume that a legitimate Islamic political order can be established under the current territory-based "nation-state" framework. The restoration of the caliph system will only be possible when all of the community (*ummah*) across the entire House of Islam choose one caliph beyond the framework of the modern nation-state of the West.

There cannot be a consistent language of jihad unless there is theoretical discussion on an Islamic political order, as outlined above, as well as the freedom of speech to analyze the Islamic world based on the theoretical framework of Islamic law.

## 6. Territorial Nation-State as the Enemy of Islam

Nation-states in the Western sense cannot exist in and of themselves. Territory-based nation-states can only exist within a nation-state system. A nation-state cannot define itself as such by any attribute proper to that nation-state. What makes it a nation-state is mutual recognition among "states." In other words, it is the nation-state system that brings the state into existence.

Earlier, I classified the oppression of speech by dictators, one of the two main factors distorting the language of jihad, as internal. However, in fact, this is not an issue within the Islamic world alone. Just as the nation-state system establishes territory-based nation-states, it also makes dictators dictatorial. For instance, Saddam Hussein is now accused of crimes against humanity; however, while he was actually committing crimes against humanity—killing civilians with chemical weapons and murdering prisoners of conscience—Western countries not only abetted him in his crimes but also accorded him full state honors as a chief of state. The West gave him the money, sold him weapons, helped his relatives line their pockets, and permitted him to carry out the abuses of dictatorship and tyranny. Every dictator in the Islamic world is more or less the same.

Therefore, any criticism of dictators in the Islamic world should be directed to the West as well. The issue of oppressive dictatorial regimes is primarily an issue within the Islamic world, but behind it is the nation-state system of the West. Unless the West resolves the issues of the nation-state system, the distortions in the language of jihad will never be corrected. Osama bin Laden's "jihad against Jews and Crusaders" is a perfect example of the distortion in the language of jihad, born of issues inherent in the territory-based nation-state system.

## 7. Idolatry of the Leviathan as the Enemy of Humanity

Territorial nation-states divide the one Earth into national states, subdivide the one humankind into many different peoples, confine the people of a nation within national borders, and prevent other peoples from entering. These states force schooling on their people's children to instill ideology, concentrate violent force in the military and police, and enslave people's bodies and spirits to such an extent that they can't even awaken to the reality of their subordination. Territory-based nation-states are alien to the traditions of any religion. Due to the behavior of the Americans, the violent nature of the nation-state system has now become tangible in everyone's eyes. Islam, on the other hand, delivers a harsh criticism of every aspect of the nation-state system, covering religious, cultural, social, and economic issues. And jihad is present in every expression of criticism.

The battle against a nation that claims to be the final arbiter of good and evil—that is to say, the battle against the Leviathan, which is worshiped as a "mortal god" on Earth—is an

issue for every religion and all mankind. But in particular it is a sore spot for Christianity and Islam, both of which assert themselves as universal religions. As the creator of this monstrous Leviathan, Christianity is aware of its danger and has devised various ways to domesticate it. Successful examples include the principles of separation of church and state, human rights, and a secular constitution. They have served their purposes to some extent, but, unfortunately, mankind has come to a point where we cannot deal with the issue of the territory-based nation-state system simply through makeshift solutions that cover up the heart of this issue: idol worship.

## 8. Conclusion

It is a most pressing task of religious studies to fully examine Western discourse, so full of blandishments and smiles, and the earthly god Leviathan that has been created by this discourse for its own support. In pursuing this important analysis and elucidation, we should go back to the context of Christian divinity, and I believe that the study of the language of jihad will serve as a catalyst for this.