

The Anatomy Of Radical Islamism In Contemporary Indonesia: *Towards A More Workable Deradicalization Project*

Masdar Hilmy¹, Alimuddin²

¹Sunan Ampel State Islamic University Surabaya

²State Islamic University Of Sultan Syarif Kasim

KEYWORD

Islamic Radicalisme
Deradicalization
Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This article seeks to provide a general overview of the picture of radical Islamism in contemporary Indonesia and relates it with the a more workable deradicalization project. The wrong measures taken by the authority in countering radicalism is due mainly to the fact that most of them understood the complex reality of radical Islamism from single monolithic approach wrong. The anatomy of radical Islamism forms two major parts; flesh-and-blood (soft-ware or ideology of radicalism as the spirit) and skeleton (as the hard-ware of radicalism). Based on such an anatomy, the deradicalization must be carried out in two major ways; soft approach and hard-approach. The soft approach of deradicalization must address two things as follows; 1). Mainstreaming religious moderation and; 2). Creating structural equilibrium in Muslims' life.

Corresponding Author:

Masdar Hilmy
Sunan Ampel State Islamic University Surabaya
Email: masdar.hilmy@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

It is not sufficient to see and analyse the reality of Radical Islamism from one single monolithic approach. This is due to the fact that Radical Islamism comprises a complex and multifaceted reality. One of the approaches used in analysing Radical Islamism is Weberian—later called as cultural perspective—in the sense that the reality of Radical Islamism is regarded or even reduced as a matter of ideology perse. This approach tends to see the complex reality of Radical Islamism from intrinsic perspective. In this context, religion with all its dimensions such as textual understanding, ideology, belief and values is treated as the major source of Radical Islamism. In other words, this approach is overwhelmed with anything related to religion. As a result, it cannot go beyond religion.

To see a complex and multifaceted reality from single monolithic approach can result in an academic reductionism, i.e. a kind of simplification about a complex reality. This reductionism can lead to a series of fatalities, from misunderstanding to the adoption of policies towards Radical Islamism. Due to this reason, it is necessary to see the reality of Radical Islamism from another perspective, that is, from structural approach. This approach is used to see the reality of Radical Islamism from extrinsic aspects such as opportunity structures, socio-political deprivation, poverty and the like. Religion is not treated as an autonomous factor in triggering radicalism. Ideology is likewise not autonomous in the making of Radical Islamism. Ideology forms only one aspect in the complex and multifaceted reality of Radical Islamism. There are other intervening variables as described above that contribute to the birth and development of Radical Islamism. Those extrinsic aspects, more often called as structural factors, are not less important in the making of Radical Islamism.

In the dialectics of cause-and-effect relationship, the structural factors are the creator of cultural ones, and not vice-versa. The ideology of Radical Islamism is born as a result of the existence of structural factors. This paper argues that the ideology of Radical Islamism will never die as long as the structural factors are there, creating opportunity for agents in developing the ideology of Radical Islamism. Due to this reason, it is not academically wise to see the complex reality of Radical Islamism from single monolithic perspective. One needs to utilise structural perspective in order to gain a more comprehensive picture of Radical Islamism.

Two Components Of Radicalism

On the basis of the above introduction, it can be argued that the reality of Radical Islamism is two-fold: intrinsic and extrinsic, text and context, religion and beyond religion. The two are integrated into one inseparable entity: Radical Islamism. Despite the fact that many has attributed religion as a single factor in the making of Islamic religion, factors outside religion play no less significant role. The dialectics of the two has formed a flesh and blood as well as structure of Radical Islamism. The ideology of Radical Islamism as resulted from the understanding of the Qur'an and Hadis will not operate at the practical level if there are no structural factors at work that create opportunity structures for particular agents in building arguments for Islamic.

The ideology of jihad among the Islamists can be taken as a real example in explaining how the ideology of Radical Islamism is working at operational level. The word of jihad is of course everywhere that is easily found in the texts of Qur'an or Hadis. In so far as it is concerned, the word jihad means two things: generic and specific meanings. The generic meaning of jihad means any hard work or serious struggle in this life that is carried out in the name of Allah. It can apply in any aspect of life such as work, study, family or birth giving. The specific meaning of jihad refers to physical warfare (*qital*) among Muslims in defending their territory from the capture of non-Muslims. The warfare in this case is of course conditional warfare: if Muslims are fought by non-Muslims, or if the land of Muslims is confiscated by invaders.

The problem is, the word of jihad means only physical warfare for the jihadists. They argue that jihad means only *qital*, since the peaceful jihad as contained in the Qur'an and a Prophetic Hadis has been abrogated by the so-called sword verses (*ayat al-sayf*). They believe that the physical warfare is the authentic meaning of jihad. There is no peaceful jihad in Islam. This understanding is believed by some jihadists such as Imam Samudera and his colleagues when going off the Bali bombing in 2001, or Santoso with his Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT). They in general hold such a kind of jihad in secrecy and disseminate it in an underground manner. Despite the fact that they can use online media to spread their ideology of jihad, they tend to disseminate it by person-to-person way in order to avoid the identification by the authority. In today's context, such an understanding is influenced by the theological arguments made by the fighters of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

In addition to jihad, there are more other words in the spectrum of the ideology of Radical Islamism such as *taghut*, *kafir*, *hijrah*, and others. Those words create the ideology of Radical Islamism embraced by the Islamists. Those words serve as the foundation upon which the theological arguments on being radical are built. In the long turn, they form the wall of virtue and standardized piety for being radicals. Alternative forms of piety are blocked by the stringent code of conduct maintained by the ideologues of the Islamists. They derived their arguments from the normative texts in Islam; the Qur'an and Hadis. In doing so, they of course adopt the most literal way of understanding. They treat the verses of the Qur'an and Hadis sayings as they are. That is why it is understandable that there is no reasoning and logical interpretation (*ta'wil*) for them in understanding the religious texts. They treat the texts as a closed code of piety where interpretation is unnecessary.

In the configuration of Radical Islamism, the ideology forms the flesh-and-blood component whereas the structural aspects form its second component, i.e., the skeleton one. Both components contribute to one another in making of the complete body or whole anatomy of Radical Islamism. As mentioned earlier, such structural aspects as poverty, socio-political deprivation or deprivation, high rate of unemployment among Muslims, the grievances of Muslims around the globe especially in the conflicting areas such as Palestine, Syria, and other parts of the world, are among the most tremendous recipes that form the structural component of Radical Islamism. With the help of online media such as email, whatsapp, twitter and the like, news on the grievances of their fellow Muslims around the world can easily and rapidly be delivered and circulated. In order to multiply the sympathy effect, the circulation of Muslims' grievances is sometimes made up with hoaxes.

In Indonesia, socio-economic disparity among Muslims can fuel the degree of intensity of resistance among the Islamists. As far as the data are concerned, 90 percent of wealth in this country is circulated in a limited segment of minority groups such as the ethnic Chinese. On the other hand, the rest of the wealth comprising only 10 percent is contested by 90 percent of population which consists Muslim majority. As a result, this socio-economic gap can create jealousy among Muslims to the minority group. This situation can be an immediate fuel to provoke enmity and hatred among Muslims to the Chinese. The gubernatorial election of Jakarta in 2017 where society was divided into the two camps proved to support this thesis. The socio-economic deprivation has served as the most effective ammunition to create negative sentiments among Muslims to win Anies Baswedan over the Chinese Basuki Tjahaja Purnama or Ahok as the governor of Jakarta.

The rise of Radical Islamism in the future cannot be underestimated. The swelling number of gini-ratio and demography bonus can be among the most important factors behind the rise of Radical Islamism. The gini-ratio

represents the economic gap between the wealth people and the poor ones. If it is unresolved, the gini-ratio can lead to the grievances of the poor. On the other hand, the demography bonus symbolizes the explosion of productive generation in number. This can mean two things: either blessings or calamity for Indonesia. The government must help young and productive generation to find their potencies in maximize them towards a productive goal for better Indonesia. Otherwise, the explosion of young productive generation will result in disasters for the country.

In Indonesia, there are a lot of ISIS followers that are motivated by the promise made by ISIS advertisement to experience a prosperous life in Syria. According to the report made by the Police authority, there are at least 1000 Indonesians were going to Syria to build their dreams. Some 500 people however chose to return to Indonesia because they found the reality in Syria was not in line with the promise they got prior to their departure. Some 130 people were dead in the conflict between ISIS and the US-supported local authority. Upon their arrival in Indonesia, they are unified under JAD (Fajar.co.id, 14 May 2018). The perpetrators of bombing attacks in three churches in Surabaya in 2018 are among those returning families; they are Dita Oepriyanto's family (his wife and four kids), Tri Murtiono's family, and Anton Ferdiantono's family.

As reported by the Police authority, a series of atrocities carried out in Surabaya in 2018 is not triggered by economic factor; all of them are among the haves. Their atrocities deliver a message of retaliation against the tyranny done by the US military force and the Syrian government towards their ISIS compatriots in Syria. They launched a martyrdom act as a sign of solidarity and existence among the ISIS supporters in response to the bombardment of the US army towards ISIS in many parts of the Middle East. After the Surabaya attacks, ISIS claimed its responsibility behind the terror. This indicates that it is the deprived condition of fellow terrorists elsewhere, especially in the Middle East, that can drive a series of terrorist acts in many parts of Indonesia. This proves that a sociological deprivation among Muslims can result in a series of atrocities as a symbol of mechanic solidarity among fellow terrorists as well as the retaliation towards what their perceived enemies have done to fellow Muslims in other parts of the world.

Spectrum Of Radical Islamism

The reality of Radical Islamism in Indonesia consists of a large variety of spectrum, ranging from the "moderate" or "mild" radicalism to the most vigilant or violent one. In this context, it is not easy to identify that someone has been infected by the virus of radicalism only from the physical appearance such as dress-code, beard or black node on someone's face. The physical appearance sometimes traps anyone with wrong judgement. Women with burqa or niqab do not necessarily indicate that they are radicals. They are conservative in terms of dress-code, but their conservativeness does not automatically indicate they are radicals. In order to become a fully radical, a woman with burqa might need just one more "click" by having one step further in subscribing the radical ideology. This can be proven that almost all wives of terrorists are women with burqa. But be mindful, not all women with burqa are radicals. In an NU-affiliated pesantren in Gresik, for example, the female santris are required to wear burqa in order not to immerse themselves with the male santris. It must be acknowledged that there is no indication whatsoever that they subscribe radical ideology. This dress-code is made just for the purpose of separation of female santris from the male counterparts their pesantren.

Another type of peaceful radicalism can be seen from the subscription to the khilafah ideology among some university students (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia/HTI). It seems that non-Islamic affiliated universities have served as the breeding ground for the growth of khilafah ideology. Even though the membership is not big, the followers of this kind of khilafah ideology cannot be neglected. This is due mainly to the fact that they are militant enough in the process of caderization and dissemination of khilafah ideology through limited religious gathering called *Tarbiyah* circles spread over secular universities such as UI, ITP, IPB, UNAIR, Brawijaya University, UNESA and the like. The circles usually target young recruits from senior high school students through the units of Islamic activities (kerohanian Islam/Rohis). Through their circles, the caderization is designed to prepare all members in order to enter university stage. In universities, they are trained by their seniors with integrity in Islamic values and identity. Upon their graduation, they enter into another kind of caderization to equip them in order to prepare all members into different areas such as BUMN, university lecturers, banks, all ministerial posts and so on.

The membership of HTI consists of Muslims from moderate organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah. Ismail Yusanto, its spoke person, is derived from NU background. It is reported that a significant number of NU background members in some areas chose to embrace this organization since their membership in HTI can give a sense of authenticity in their Muslimhood. Another segment of HTI members is derived from Muhammadiyah community. It can be argued that HTI has served as the big umbrella that unifies members of both organizations. The rest membership of HTI belongs to new santris from abangan background. They can be united on the basis of single platform, i.e. khilafah ideology, which is not found elsewhere in both NU and Muhammadiyah.

Even though the existence of HTI was banned by the government through PERPPU No. 1/2017, it is suspected that the subscription to khilafah ideology did not end. Most of them are believed to hide their identity by keeping themselves low profile. As soon as they get the opportunity to resonate their true identity, they will do so by aggregating

old modalities they have gained. While they will keep silent until the right time comes, some of them might choose to drop their identity in order to cut off their membership from HTI. This particularly happens to the floating mass of HTI members whose affiliation to this organization is not as strong as their elites.

In the middle of the spectrum lies the Salafi-Wahabi community. They strongly endorse the purification of religion by returning to the Qur'an and Hadis in their purest form. They do not practice culturally embedded festivals and rituals such as *tahilan*, *slametan*, *kenduren* and the like. They argue that those rituals are not prescribed by religion. That is why they are considered innovation that are forbidden in Islam. Including in this thread is Jama'ah Tabligh based in Magetan East Java, Majlis Tafsir Al-Qur'an (MTA) based in Solo, and some other parts of Central and East Java. They are practicing the most stringent form of religious rituals and activities. In some parts of Central Java and western part of East Java, the membership of MTA tends to swell into significant number. This is the case due to the fact that in public point of view, they represent the most authentic version of religion so that they are able to win the minds of laypeople.

The Jama'ah Tabligh and MTA as a form of Salafi movement can gain their high profile in the so-called Mataraman areas where the Abangan community are based. In those areas, the Abangan community do not have a strong defence mechanism so that their followers are easily infiltrated by the Salafi way of religiosity. The Islamization carried out in every corner of life such as schools, offices and hospitals and the like contributes to decrease the membership of Abangan community. The children of Abangan do not follow the way their forefathers have done in religious life. Some of them are even successful in making their parents Islamized by dropping the Abangan way and becoming practicing Muslims. According to Ricklefs (2013), the decreasing number of Abangan on the one hand and the increasing number of the Santris on the other indicates the success of deepening Islamization among the Javanese community.

The third spectrum is occupied by vigilant and violent segment of Radical Islamism. Including in this segment is the Jihadis movement carried out by Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), Mujahidin Indonesia Barat (MIB), Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT), Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid, Jamaah Anshorud Daulah (JAD), and ISIS-affiliated individuals. Each group represents its own agenda to establish an Islamic state. All of them have the same aspiration to replace the existing Pancasila state. Even though some of them have the same name, they do not necessarily feel obliged to be unified under a single thread. Maman Abdurrahman's MIB, for instance, do not have a structural link with Santoso-led MIT even though they carry the same name on each organization. Likewise, the JAT has its own agenda which is not linked to JAD. The fact is that all of them hold the same Jihadis ideology in order to achieve their agenda.

Now all Jihadis organizations above have been rolled up by the government and all leaders such as Abu Bakar Ba'ashir and Maman Abdurrahman have been taken to trial. The new trends replacing the organization-based Jihadist groups are growing now: ISIS-affiliated individuals who pledged their allegiance to Abu Bakar Al-Baghdadi, its spiritual leader. It is reported by the Police that most of them are affiliated to JAD. The stabbing to the late Minister of Politics, Law and Security Wiranto by Abu Rara (Syahril Alamsyah) indicates that he is a part of JAD syndicate. He was obsessed of doing *amaliyah* (martyrdom act) since his fellow compatriots such as Abu Zee with other eight members of JAD have been captured by the Densus 88 (Detik.com, 11/10/2019). He himself with his wife was finally rolled up by the Police authority.

The latest terrorist attack in Medan also shows the existence of Jihadist movement in this country. The *amaliyah* act was carried out by a young student named Rabbial Muslim Nasution (25 years old). He made the headquarter of Police as the symbol of "near enemy" of Islam as the main target of his terrorist act. As a result of this act, the Police have arrested 23 suspects. This indicates that the prevalence of Jihadist activities has spread all over Indonesia. They are not only concentrated in Java, but also in Sumatera and Sulawesi. In the discourse of radicalism, the *amaliyah* act by blowing oneself off is known as lone-wolf attack. In Indonesia, the lone-wolvers are not easily identified by the authority since they carry out their activities in a highly secret manner. Their network can be identified as the attack has completely be perpetrated.

Bringing Deradicalization Project On The Right Track

This part comprises the State policy in deradicalization project which is sporadically carried out so far. In my opinion, there are two strategies of deradicalization that need more emphasis in the future, in addition to more concerted efforts in employing the soft and hard approaches of deradicalization. The details are as follows.

1) The mainstreaming of Religious Moderation

What is meant by religious moderation is theological standpoints that strongly endorse and foster the moderate vision of Islam. The arguments of moderation as developed by contemporary Muslim scholars and clerics are however not adequately constructed on a strong theological foundation. The instant membership and subscription to radical ideology is partly attributed to the charms made by its ideologues on the basis of sound theological arguments; as if all radical activities, including violent acts and killings, are authentically allowed in

Islam. The radical ideology is firstly erected on the basis of hatred which is followed by *takfiri* attitudes among Muslims. The mainstreaming of religious moderation can be done by, among other things, deriving the esoteric and spiritual meanings from the exemplary deeds of *alsalaf alshalih* (previous predecessors) deeply rooted in classical tradition of Islam (classical *turath*).

The mainstreaming of religious moderation will work appropriately if it targets the laypersons and the exposed Muslims to radicalism. As a consequence, the ideology of moderation will not operate maximally among the already moderate Muslims. However, the case in Indonesia is on the way around: the mainstreaming of moderation is frequently conducted in moderate *pesantrens* belonging to either traditional Muslim organization (NU) or modernist Muslim organization (Muhammadiyah). Basically, the religious learning conducted in most of the *pesantrens* in Indonesia has adopted comparative perspectives that allow students to have moderate vision in their mind. As a result, most of the *pesantren* graduates do not need any further briefings regarding the necessity of moderate vision of religion. The learning system in *pesantren* is designed to better equip the mind and heart of the students with religious moderation.

The problem is that it is not easy to identify and formulate the middle-path theology. The formulation necessitates the high level of skills in digging the moderate vision out of the textual sources of Islam in order to give sense of religious authenticity. One of the reasons why radical ideology can easily attract a wide audience is that its ideologues can base their arguments on textual basis. Due to this reason, there is a sense of being authentic in believing and practicing the texts-based ideology. The questions need to answer are, among others, is that true that the Prophet and his Companions endorse the moderation in religion? If yes, what are the examples of moderation in religion as practiced by them in terms of tolerance towards the others? What are the textual arguments derived from the Qur'an and Hadis that can foster the moderation in religion?

2) Creating Structural Equilibrium in Society

The second strategy of deradicalization is by creating social equilibrium in society. In addition to moderation in religion, the creation of structural equilibrium in Muslim society can create harmony and peace. Radicalism in this context can be regarded as a form of disturbance against social harmony. It must be acknowledged from the outset that the membership in any religion is equivalent to a mode of production. As Iannacone has rightly put, "[T]he combined actions of religious consumers and religious producers form a religious market that, like other markets, tends toward a steady-state equilibrium" (Lawrence R. Iannacone, 1995: 77).

Without the intention of simplifying the reality of Radical Islamism, what happens to violent acts carried out by the radicals are triggered by disequilibrium as mainly pushed external forces. The resistance can take two forms; peaceful radicalism and violent-extreme one. The peaceful resistance can manifest in the thinking of Muslims in opposing this disequilibrium. If the peaceful resistance leads nothing but failure, Muslims can escalate their resistance into the violent one. The structural disequilibrium in this context consists of structural disturbances and turbulences such as social gap and dislocation, injustice, tyranny, political oppression and so on. This disequilibrium in the next turn can create opportunity structures which are utilized by particular agents, i.e. the ideologues, to construct the arguments against all odds. It is within this context that the ideology of Radical Islamism comes to exist.

The structural equilibrium applies also to economy. The movement of Radical Islamism spawned in many parts of the world can be considered as the Muslim resistance to the blockings of their access to economic sources. This can be seen, for instance, from the experience of Muslim immigrants to Europe. As reported by Jocelyne Cesari (2007: 59), the economic condition of Muslim immigrants in general causes for concern. The poverty and unemployment rate among them is higher than the majority of Europeans. In the Netherlands, for instance, the unemployment rate among Moroccan Muslim immigrants comprises 31 percent and 24 percent among the Turkish Muslim immigrants. In France, as reported by INED (Institute for National Demography of France), the unemployment rate among young Muslim immigrants is as twice as the unemployment rate among the non-Muslim immigrants in general.

The situation of Muslim immigrants in the UK is even worse. The unemployment rate among Muslim Bangladeshi and Pakistani background is three times higher than any most marginalised minority in this country. In some big cities of the UK, almost half Bangladeshi background immigrants are unemployed. In 2004, the highest unemployment rate among male Muslim immigrants reaches to 13 percent and reaches 18 percent among Muslimah immigrants. The unemployment occurs not only in working class society but also in high skill demanded jobs for educated persons.

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the explanation above, it is clear that Radical Islamism is a complex and multifaceted reality. It is not always easy to define as well as identify the reality of Radical Islamism unless one needs to employ a more comprehensive perspective. There are two major components of Radical Islamism; culture (ideology) and structure (all types of dislocation and deprivation). While culture forms flesh-and-blood component, structure form its skeleton component. This dual component leads to two forms of deradicalization project that must be carried out altogether at once; 1). Mainstreaming religious moderation and; 2). Creating structural equilibrium in Muslims' life.

REFERENCES

- Appleby, Scott. "History in the Fundamentalist Imagination" *The Journal of American History* 89, 2 (September 2002), 498-511.
- Bruinessen, Martin Van. "Genealogies of Radical Islamism in post-Suharto Indonesia", *South East Asia Research* Vol. 10, No. 2 (July 2002), 117-54.
- Dekmejian, Hrair. *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World* Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1985.
- Fealy, Greg. "Radical Islamism in Indonesia: The Faltering Revival?" Southeast Asian Affairs Singapore: ISEAS, 2004.
- Feillard, Andrée & Rémy Madinier, *The End of Innocence? Indonesian Islam and the Temptations of Radicalism*, Singapore: NUS Press, 2011.
- Hilmy, Masdar,. "The Politics of Retaliation: The Backlash of Radical Islamists to Deradicalization Project in Indonesia", *AlJami'ah* Vol. 51, No. 1 (2013CE/1434H): 129-158.
- _____, *Islamism and Democracy in Indonesia: Piety and Pragmatism*, Singapore: ISEAS, 2010.
- _____, "Manufacturing the 'Ontological Enemy': SocioPolitical Construction of anti-Democracy Discourses among HTI Activists in Post-New Order", *Indonesia Journal of Indonesian Islam* Vol. 03, No. 02 (December 2009), 341- 369.
- _____, *The Configuration of Radical Islamism 21 Samudra, Imam. Aku Melawan Teroris!* Solo: Jazera, 2004.
- Purwawidada, Fajar. *Jaringan Baru Teroris*, Solo Jakarta: KPG [Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia], 2014.
- Said, Edward W. *The World, the Text and the Critic* Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Schwedler, Jillian. "Political Opportunities and Coalition Building in a Transitional Polity," in *Quintan Wiktorowics Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004, 205-30.
- Sivan, Emmanuel. "Enclave Culture", dalam Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.) *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Wildan, Muhammad. "The Nature of Radical Islamic Groups in Solo," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* Vol. 07, No. 01 (June 2013), 49-70.