Chapter 7

Tackling Islamic Terrorism and Radicalism in Indonesia by Increasing the Sense of Humanity and Friendship

Idhamsyah Eka Putra
Persada Indonesia University, Indonesia

Dimas Okto Danamasi
Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia & Universitas Atma Jaya, Indonesia

Any Rufaedah
Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia & Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia

Reisa Suci Arimbi
Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia

Sapto Priyanto
Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

In regard to the rise of Islamic terrorism and fundamentalism, this paper aims to (1) explore the ways in changing jihadists’ mind and behavior; that is, by guiding them away from “war situation” and by persuading them to conduct good deeds and to relate Islam to daily life such as by giving sermons on peace or helping others. To the convicted terrorists, the authors present the project findings showing that developing dialogs about humanity and peace could increase the level of cognitive complexity through which it can lead them to be more positive to others. (2) The authors also discuss religious fundamentalism and how to deal with it. Two studies revealed that although eliminating religious fundamentalism is almost not possible, there are still ways to lead them to have positive perceptions toward other religious groups. One of them is to make the fundamentalists believe that Muslims and Islam perceive non-Muslims in a positive way, instead of in a negative way.

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INTRODUCTION

A recent report from the 2015 Global Terrorism Index (Combs, 2015) shows that Islamic terrorist groups are on the rise and have become a global threat. Before that, in early 2002 the United States Government declared that Southeast Asia is positioned as the second most vulnerable region toward terrorism (Acharya & Acharya, 2007) and (Tan, 2003). It is important to note that such acts of terrorism emerged in developed and developing countries, and also in Muslim and non-Muslim countries.

Due to its global and widespread movement, these terrorist groups require more personnel or new members. It is important to keep in mind that, although the current Islamic terrorist groups seem to be clustered and downgraded into cells, they keep a liaison to bridge with each other. This factor has made the terrorists connected and probably remained cohesive. Muslims targeted for recruitment and supporters are derived from fundamentalists, people who are convinced that Islamic state is the solution for social issues and see the Quran as the main source of truth and reference (Putra & Sukabdi, 2014).

Based on a social psychological approach, this paper aims to (1) understand the jihadists’ mind and behavior in how they were involved in terrorism activities and why some of them decided to disengage from such activities and accept a peaceful path of Islam, and (2) discuss religious fundamentalism in Indonesia by demonstrating how jihadists can be led to have positive perceptions toward other religious groups. Here, the authors will present and elaborate those points in separate sections.

The phenomenon of Islamic terrorism can be studied through many perspectives. For example, socio-historical approach will look into the history of radical and hardliner Islamic groups movement and try to find the momentum why these groups emerged. Political scientists may start to find issues happening in local and global levels and how the political interest of these Islamic groups is in contradiction to other groups, causing political battles between hardliner Islamic groups and other groups. On the other hand, social psychologists hope to explain the psychological aspects and social context on why Muslims are willing to engage in or support acts of terror.

THE RISE OF ISLAMIC TERRORISM IN INDONESIA
AND HOW TO DEAL WITH IT

The Rise of Islamic Terrorism Globally and in Indonesia

Studies regarding Islamic terrorism have found several factors which encourage a group to perform terror, both through violence or threats of violence. Several studies have found that acts of terror can be triggered by failure of the modern global economy in improving the welfare of countries with predominantly Muslim population. Other studies have claimed that the rise of terrorism is due to, among others, dominance of national identity on top of Islamic identity, disagreement toward certain political systems (i.e., democracy), Israeli occupation of Jerusalem, clash of Islam with other religions, and the power of secular government: see (Moghaddam, 2008) and (Robinson, Crenshaw, & Jenkins, 2006). Those issues are believed to have caused shame and have eliminate feelings of compassion in terrorists (Abdel-Khaelek, 2004) and (Rothschild, Abdollahi, Pyszczynski, 2009). Terrorist groups feel that Muslims must be liberated from these adverse conditions. They believe that attacking in the name of Allah and religion is an honorable struggle to achieve the welfare of Muslims (Kruglanski, Chen, Dechesne, Fishman, & Orehek, 2009) and (Venkatraman, 2007).
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