The Construction of Jihad and the Level of Radicalism among Pesantren Leaders in Indonesia

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Abstract: The phenomena of extremism and radicalism that potentially lead to an act of terrorism still widespread in the world and becoming a global challenge. The purpose of this study was to identify and describe radical mindset among the Islamic school leaders in Indonesia. The subject of this study was 225 leaders of Islamic boarding school that is called *Pesantren* in West Java, Indonesia. Data were collected using survey and interview. The result of this study was that there are still elements of radicalism and fundamentalism in the mind of *pesantren* leaders when they constructed the meaning of jihad. The ambivalently or inconsistency also occurred in their mind. In the one hand they have supported the compatibility of democracy with Islamic teaching, but on another hand, they also supported the establishment of the theocratic caliphate. Some of them also still maintained the element of sharia law which contained discrimination and intolerant to be applied in Indonesia. This finding implies that reconstructing the Islamic teaching that more familiar with the value of tolerance, democracy, and modernity in all level of educational institution in Indonesia is badly needed in order to prevent the widespread of radical element as early as possible.

1 INTRODUCTION

Radicalism becoming a global challenge, including in Indonesia. McCauley and Moskelenko describe radicalization as a change in beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defense of the ingroup (McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008). Recently, there are some indications that religious radicalism that using Islamic tenet has reached an alarming level. They have influenced some educational institution. According to PRC (Pew Research Center), 4% or about 10 million of Indonesian people become the supporter of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria). From this research, we might assume that *pesantren,* the oldest Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, might also influence by radicalism. *Pesantren* leaders play critical roles. Their understanding of Islamic teaching still become the reference of society, because of their role as a cultural broker to their surrounding community. At another side, leaders can also be the main factors that lead individuals to join terrorist groups. (Kruglanski, 2002) have emphasized the importance of ideology and leadership in the process of radicalization.

Pesantren, particularly which affiliated with the Muslim largest organization *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), has no historical precedence of insurgency toward legitimate state and government of Indonesia. However, their choice to preserve classical Islamic books which their content are still condoning violence act prone to be misused by irresponsible people. Their understanding of some Islamic teaching such as jihad, sharia law, Islamic state was potentially able to be hijacked by radical group to justify their violence act to challenge secular state ideology of *Pancasila* (five principles consisted of believing in Almighty God, just and civilized humanity, the unitary state of Indonesia, democracy and social justice for all).

In the article *Pesantren Responses to Religious Tolerance, Pluralism and Democracy in Indonesia* Nurrohman concluded that *Pesantren* commitment to democracy is still high. However, their acceptance to pluralistic state based on *Pancasila* still be questioned as evidenced by their thought that it is impossible to build peace coexistence eternally with non Muslims or infidels. Although many argued that *Pesantren* promotes tolerance and pluralism,

nevertheless his study shows that some of their teachings tacitly supported violence act in the name of religion that will tarnish the effort of Indonesia to synchronize Islam, democracy, and modernity(Nurrohman, 2014). The purpose of this study was to identify the element and the level of radicalism among the *pesantren* leaders in west Java Indonesia

In his paper entitles: "Violent and Non-Violent Extremism: Two Sides of the Same Coin?" Alex P. Schmid (Schmid, 2014) presented 20 indicators for extremism that may lead to radicalism, among other are 1) Reject the existing social, political or world order. 2). Seek to overthrow the political system in order to (re-) establish the natural order in a society based on race, class, faith, ethnic superiority, or alleged tradition. 3) Are usually in possession of an ideological program or action plan aimed at taking and holding communal or state power. 4) Reject or, when in power, subvert the liberal-democratic conception of the rule of law; use the political space provided by it to advance their cause in efforts to take state power. 5). Reject universal human rights and show a lack of empathy and disregard for rights of other than their own people. 6). Reject diversity and pluralism in favour of their preferred mono-culture society**,** e.g. a worldwide Islamic state. 7) Reject democratic principles based on popular sovereignty. 8) Reject equal rights for all, especially those of women and minorities. 9) Adhere to a (good-) ends-justify (-any)-means philosophy to achieve their goals.10) Are unwilling to accept criticism and intimidate and threaten dissenters, heretics, and critics with death 11) Have fixed ideas and closed minds and believe there is only one truth – theirs. In its pursuit, they are often willing to face punishment or even death and sometimes actively seek martyrdom (Schmid, 2014)

Bilveer Singh made the characteristic of radical Islam in Indonesia like this: 1) using literalist approach towards religion with religious teachings being interpreted strictly based on the written word. 2) A romantic importance attached to religion, with the unseen past viewed as good tradition and the ideal type that should be re-created; 3) Hold the view that there should be no new interpretation or *ijtihad* of what has been stated in the Holy Koran. 4) Believes in the unconditional absolute truth, with any other view treated as heretical. A believer of such "wrong" views can be classified as a postate or *murtad*, and labelled as a traitor to the religion; 5) Practices exclusivity, where working with adherents of other religions (*kafirs* or infidels) is considered *haram* or forbidden. Many Islamist hardliners will not even cooperate with Muslims who do not share their views, viewing them as *jahiliyyahs* (ignorant) or worst still, as *kafir harbi* (enemy infidels), which

traditionally only described non-believers operating in a conflict zone 6) Sees justification in the use of violent jihad to realize their beliefs. Radical Islamists believe that violence carried out for religious causes is legitimate. 7) Adopts Islamist radical ideology in political discourse. All issues are described purely in religious idioms with Muslims' persecution as the common theme; 8) Virulently opposed to Westernization and democracy, as these are viewed as un-Islamic; 9) Resists liberalism, pluralism, and secularism as being antithetical to Islam; 10) sharia-minded, and aims to create a *Darul Islam* (Abode of Islam) as a prerequisite to *Darul Salam* (Abode of Peace), where Islamic law or Sharia would determine the rules of society(Singh, 2011).

Many scholars try to explain radicalism from outside factor. In his paper *Exclusivism and Radicalism in Schools: State Policy and Educational Politics Revisited*, Abdallah said that the growing exclusiveness in educational institutions is associated with the influence of an intolerant curriculum, exclusivist teachers, the Islamist movement in schools, and Islamic school environments penetrated by radical movements from the outside (Abdallah, 2016). However, research which focused on personal aspect like describing or constructing the the process of mind of Islamic school leaders particularly *pesantren* was not found or still rare. This study was focused to identify the level of radicalism base on the psychological and theological process. In this article, we used the staircase model proposed by (Moghaddam, 2005) to identify the level of radicalims among *pesantren* leaders.

There is a substantial body of literature concerning the radicalization process that describes stages through which people pass in the transition from 'normal' lives to active engagement in terrorism and other forms of political violence. Fathali Moghaddam (Moghaddam, 2005) used staircase metaphor in explaining how individuals or group grow and climb step by step until he or she becomes radical or even terrorist. On the ground floor, perceptions and feelings of relative deprivation dominate. Some individuals from among the disgruntled population will climb to the first floor in search of solutions. Those who reach the first floor seek ways in which to improve their situation and achieve greater justice. If they do not see possibilities, they are more likely to keep climbing. The most important transformation that takes place among those who reach the third floor is a gradual engagement with the morality of terrorist organizations; these individuals now begin to see terrorism as a justified strategy. In his article: *Staircase of Terrorism and Deradicalization*

Strategies Moh.Yasir Alimi said that there are stairs before someone becoming really terrorist. According to him, the roots of terrorism are the violent ideology that nurtures hatred and justifies violence. The violent ideology is normally packaged and sold as religious speeches that provoke hatred against the West, non-Muslims, religious minorities and Muslims with different religious orientations. The result of these speeches is *takfiriah*, or apostatizing others or fellow Muslims and justifies taking their lives and property. They even regard mosques of their enemies as appropriate targets to be destroyed. The characteristics of *takfiriah* include examining the errors of others, emphasizing the compulsion of religious laws, the *jahiliyyah-ization* of the current regime, and the use of violence. These kinds of people inhabit the third floor of the terrorist building. The higher the floor they inhabit, the more tolerant they are of violent means. Living on the second and first floors are those provoking hatred without justifying the use of violence. The fourth and fifth flour inhabited by actor and facilitator of terrorist activities (Alimi, 2011) In his article: *The Development of A Jihadist's Mind* Tawfiq Hamid described three psychological stages base on his own experience involved in jihadist radical group base on Salafi Ideology. The first stage was initiated by hatred of non-Muslim or dissenting Muslims. In the second stage, suppression of his or her own conscience, and in the third stage is the acceptance of violence in the service of Allah or accepting violence without guilt (Hamid, 2007). To identify the level of radicalism, the staircase metaphor proposed by Moghadam and Alimi will be used in this study. Constructing this level is important to know or to differentiate which ones of their opinion that have or easy to be misused by radical movement. It also can be used to predict the potential violence and the level of intolerance toward diversity among them.

Jeremy Menchik (Menchik, 2016) divided the level of intolerance into full intolerance and semi-intolerance. Full of intolerance can be identified by the existence of persecution. The actor actively persecutes the target in order to eradicate it from society. This may include violence or conflict, and certainly, includes organization and mobilization against the target. Semi-intolerance can be identified by the existence of discrimination. The actor works to maintain strict, hierarchical boundaries between groups but does not mobilize violence. The actor violates boundaries and restricts the autonomy of the target.

This study is based on assumptions that the more Muslims give their support for certain Islamic teaching legitimizing the use of violence, the more violence will happen and the more Muslims give

support to political ideology of radical group, the future of moderate, tolerance, inclusive Nusantara Islam and democracy in Indonesia are in danger.

2 METHODS

This research used mixed approach that combines quantitative and qualitative design (Creswell, 2009). The data collected was a combination of previous study with a new one. This is an approach is mention by Belcher (Belcher, 2009). She state that "approach old evidence in a new way or to pairs old evidence with old approach in a new way" Data was collected between 2007 -2010 in various *pesantren* in West Java. The subjects were 225 *pesantren* leaders consisted of 20 from Bandung, 100 from Cirebon, Indramayu, Kuningan, Majalengka and Ciamis, 105 from Tasikmalaya, Garut and Cianjur. All leaders are picked purposively base on the types of *pesantren* according to the ministry of religious affair (traditional, modern and semi modern). The data collected using semi structure interview and questionnaires. They asked about their opinion around jihad and terrorism, sharia law, and violence, political power, and Islamic state or caliphate. The data was analysed using content analysis. Their answers were code based on construction of their views on jihad and radicalissm base on the concept presented by Schmid (Schmid, 2014) and Singh (Singh, 2011). The level of radicalism derived from the concept developed by Fathali Moghaddam (Moghaddam, 2005)and Hamid (Hamid, 2007). The level of intolerance presented by Menchik (Menchik, 2016) was also used to determine the level of intolerance among them.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The combination of previous studies shows that most of the *pesantren* leaders (85%) disagree to equate *jihad* with war and violence act. But when they are asked on suicide bomb to destroy the interest of the West, some of them (16%) are condoning this act. Also, some of them still acknowledged that Osama bin Laden is an Islamic warrior. This study also found that some 33 % of them believe that Muslims are impossible to build eternal peace coexistence with non-Muslims or infidels. Concerning sharia law, violence and intolerance, this research revealed that most of the *pesantren* leaders (56%) supported the action

perpetrated by FPI (Islam Defenders Front). The significant amount of *pesantren* leaders (44%) allowing the death penalty for apostasy. Most of them tolerated the corporal punishment to be practiced in sharia law. They (55%) supported cutting hand for the thief. The significant amount of them (45%) not supported a woman and non Muslim to be head of state and 77% agree that Non-Muslims not allowed to be head of state in Indonesia.

Concerning intolerance, Most of them (75%) are intolerance toward the place of worship for Christians that will be built in their area. The resistance of *pesantren* leaders toward church building is very high as indicated by 86% of them supports Muslims who refuse to give a permit for Church building in their area. There is an indication of intolerance in religious social relation, the majority of them (81%) agree not telling Marry Christmas and attended the invitation to celebrate Natal.

Concerning political power, Islamic state or caliphate, this research revealed that the majority of *pesantren (78%)* leaders supported the idea to integrate religion and state and 96% agree that Muhammad PBUH (peace be upon him) besides prophet (religious leader), also head of state (political leader). Most of them (92%) also supported and defended the Unitary State of Republic Indonesia (NKRI) and accepted Pancasila as final ideology of Indonesian Muslim. However, most of them (78%) supported the idea to build caliphate

3.2 Discussion

From the result of the study, there are some elements of radicalism as well as inconsistency in the mind of *pesantren* leaders. For example, by rejecting non-Muslim as well as woman to be head of state, they actually reject universal human rights or reject equal rights for all, especially those of women and minorities that have been adopted by the constitution of Indonesia. For Schmid, it is an indication of extremism. Allowing the death penalty for apostasy is an indication that they justify the use of violent. The justification for the use of violent to realize their beliefs is also an indication of radicalism according to Singh.

Concerning inconsitency in their mind, it is clear that most of the *pesantren* leaders disagree to equate *jihad* with war and violence act. However, when they are asked on suicide bomb to destroy the interest of the west, some of them are condoning this act. They are might be not aware of how as a movement, Islamic radicalism and global jihad can both potentially and practically complicate the international security environment and far greater

threats for international security than belligerent states that act within the predictable norms (Roshandel,2009). Most of them also supported the action, including violence act perpetrated by FPI. In the article *Authentic jihad is about peace and coexistence,* Nurrohman (2007) said that what is needed in Indonesia now is not jihad in the sense of war or violent attacks. Although more difficult, jihad against poverty, corruption, human rights abuses and other crimes against humanity is what is really required.

Also, there is ambivalency in the concept of the state. On the one hand, they supported the concept of NKRI (Unitary State of Republic Indonesia) as well as the compatibility of democracy with Islamic teaching, but on another hand, they also supported the establishment of the theocratic caliphate. The idea of caliphate proposed radical group is criticized for its tendency to be a theocratic and opposed democracy. In his article Nurrohman (2007) said, considering the spirit of nationalism embedded in the heart of every Muslim in various nations, the idea to establish the caliphate as the sole theocratic political system for Muslims in the world is unrealistic if not utopian.

Ambivalency can represent that there is a cognitive dissonance in the thinking of some leaders of pesantren. Cognitive dissonance refers to a situation involving conflicting attitudes, beliefs or behaviors. This situation can produce a feeling of discomfort and furthermore lead to an alteration in one of the attitudes, beliefs or behaviors to reduce the discomfort and restore balance. *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Festinger, 1957) assumes that person strives for internal psychological consistency for function well in the real world. A Person who experiences internal inconsistency will feel psychologically uncomfortable. As a result, he or she motivated to reduce the cognitive dissonance by changing parts of the cognition, to justify the stressful behavior; or by adding new parts to the cognition that causes the psychological dissonance; and by actively avoiding social situations and contradictory information that is likely to increase the magnitude of the cognitive dissonance. If combined with Moghaddam theory, that the reason for someone to jump to the higher level is the feeling of injustice, so somebody who experiences the feeling of injustice has a potential to migrate to another level. If measured by concept or theory presented by Alimi, Hamid, Moghaddam, and Singh the element of radicalism occurs in the mind of some *pesantren* leaders when they constructed the meaning and manifestation of jihad. For Alimi, Hamid and Moghaddam, who used the stage or staircase metaphor, some *pesantren* leaders have entered the first or second stage in their staircase. If

measured by two categories of intolerance presented by Menchik, there is a semi-intolerance in the mindset of *pesantren* leaders as indicated by the existence of discrimination, particularly for non-Muslims and women.

4 CONCLUSIONS

From this research, it can be concluded that there is still ambivalency in the mind of *pesantren* leaders when they constructed the meaning of jihad and have entered the first or even the second stage of radicalism. This finding implies that *pesantren* was not immune from the infiltration of radical ideology. If not aware, in the future, some leaders, can potentially jump to the next level. Therefore the implication of this study is we suggest for pesantren leader or government to make an early warning system about indication of radicalization in pesantren. Also, government should design a model of reciprocal communication to pesantren leader. For further study, this research must be expanded to make an instrument that the government, researcher or pesantren leader it self, can identify the level of radicalization.

Implication of this study for ministry of religious affairs that in the future, they should make a prevention program. Prevention to radicalization process can be done by a system of education represents an approach, in which tolerance and equality are promoted within society at large. Reconstructing the Islamic teaching in all level of an educational institution in Indonesia is badly needed in order to prevent the widespread of the radical element as early as possible. Further research can be directed to detect an intolerant curriculum, exclusivist teachers, the Islamist movement in schools, and Islamic school environments penetrated by radical movements from the outside and how all of them contributed to creating the ideology of hatred.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: The staircase metaphor of radicalism and terrorism.

Fifth floor	Specific individuals are selected and trained and those selected are equipped and sent to carry out terrorist acts
Fourth floor	Recruitment to terrorist organizations takes place on the fourth floor, where potential terrorists learn to categorize the world more rigidly into "us-versus-them" and to see the terrorist organization as legitimate.
Third floor	Those who reach the third floor is a gradual engagement with the morality of terrorist organizations; these individuals now begin to see terrorism as a justified strategy.
Second floor	Individuals who reach the second floor but still perceive grave injustices experience anger and frustration, and in some circumstances, they are influenced by leaders to displace their aggression onto an "enemy."
First floor	Those who reach the first floor seek ways in which to improve their situation and achieve greater justice. If they do not see possibilities they are more likely to keep climbing.
The ground floor	Perceptions of fairness and feelings of relative deprivation dominate. Some individuals from among the disgruntled population will climb to the first floor in search of solutions.

Source: Fathali Moghaddam.

Table 2: The stages of radicalism or terrorism.

Fifth floor	Specific individuals are selected and trained and those selected are equipped and sent to carry out terrorist acts
Fourth floor	Recruiting potential terrorist and categorizing the world more rigidly into "us-versus-them" and seeing the terrorist organization as legitimate.
Third floor	Examining the errors of others, emphasizing the compulsion of religious laws, the *jahiliah-ization* of the current regime, and the use of violence.
Second floor	*Takfiriah*, or apostatizing others or fellow Muslims and justifies taking their lives and property. They even regard mosques of their enemies as appropriate targets to be destroyed.
First floor	The violent ideology that nurtures hatred and justifies violence. The violent ideology is normally packaged and sold as religious speeches that provoke hatred against the west, non-Muslims, religious minorities and Muslims with different religious orientations.

Source: Moh Yasir Alimi.

Table 3: The psychological stage.

Third stage	Acceptance of violence in the service of Allah or accepting violence without guilt
Second stage	Suppression of one own conscience
First stage	Hatred of non-Muslims or dissenting Muslims

Source: Tawfiq Hamid.