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The Violence in the Name of God: Landscape of Radical Islamic Thought and Action in Indonesia

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#### Abstract

The thoughts and actions of religious radicalism in Indonesia are increasingly massive and hard to prevent. The existence of this group is neatly organized with the large followers, especially among young people. Their understanding of Islam is very textualistic. Their slogan conveys the enforcement of the caliphate or the law of Allah in the totality of human life both in society and a state. The presence of this group greatly threatens the existence of *ukhuwa Islamiyah* and *ukhuwa insaniyah*. The struggle against the threat in Indonesia requires a coherent and comprehensive strategy. The better religious understanding of current religious change and the continuous support from all parties; in terms of religious tolerance should be encouraged to stem the songs of *hardline* Islamic groups. The government must seriously increase preaching by preachers, especially those published on YouTube, and wellknown writings on various sites. In addition, the government must make serious efforts continuously; to support the interfaith dialogue and increase the public awareness about the dangers of radicalism in social and state life.

**Keywords:** *Violence, Religion, Thought, Action, Radicalism*

#### Introduction

The rise of the Muslim fundamentalist movement is rapidly changing the religious landscape and paving the way for religious intolerance. The emergence of fundamentalist groups, combined with communal tensions, created special risks and increased competition among Muslim leaders. It has led to local conflicts. Moreover, various religious groups have negative perceptions of each other. A coherent and comprehensive response must be taken by the government and religious organizations to maintain religious tolerance and avoid types of religious violence which has occurred in several countries in the Middle East, Nigeria and the Central African Republic.

Indonesia has experienced the significant sectarian violence. However, the emergence of radical religious groups risks raising the religious tolerance. Traditional Islam is increasingly being challenged by the emergence of a more violent trans-national Islamic ideology, such as *Wahhabism*. The current transformation is mainly promoted by educated youth Muslim in Middle Eastern countries. The disagreements among the Sufi leaders, traditional spiritual leaders and these newcomers were not only theological. The conflict between "ancient" and

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### Abstract

The thoughts and actions of religious radicalism in Indonesia are increasingly massive and hard to prevent. The existence of this group is neatly organized with the large followers, especially among young people. Their understanding of Islam is very textual-atomistic. Their slogan conveys the enforcement of the caliphate or the law of Allah in the totality of human life both in society and a state. The presence of this group greatly threatens the existence of ukhuwa Islamiyah and ukhuwa insaniyah. The struggle against the threat in Indonesia requires a coherent and comprehensive strategy. The better religious understanding of current religious change and the continuous support from all parties; in terms of religious tolerance should be encouraged to stem the songs of hard-line Islamic groups. The government must seriously increase preaching by preachers, especially those published on YouTube, and well-known writings on various sites. In addition, the government must make serious efforts continuously; to support the interfaith dialogue and increase the public awareness about the dangers of radicalism in social and state life.

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### Introduction

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Indonesia has experienced the significant sectarian violence. However, the emergence of radical religious groups risks ruining the religious tolerance. Traditional Islam is increasingly being challenged by the emergence of a more violent trans-national Islamic ideology, such as Wahhabism. The current transformation is mainly promoted by educated youth Muslim in Middle Eastern countries. The disagreements among the Sufi leaders, traditional spiritual leaders and these newcomers were not only theological. The conflict between "ancient" and

"modern people" is also a problem influenced by economics and politics in the Muslim community.

The changes have divided the Muslim community and resulted in local clashes between Islamic groups. The growth of fundamentalist groups in Indonesia combined by local communal tensions is a potential source of conflict (Nurish, 2020; Siddiq, 2019) In confronting the new forms of religious intolerance, initiative interfaith dialogue is weak, and scattered. It reaches only a small proportion of the population. However, religious change is not considered problematic by political and religious authorities in Indonesia.

The movement and radicalism do not occur in a day. In the past, studies of terrorism have tended to predominantly focus on the individual level. Assuming the deviant behavior strongly associated with the dramatic consequences of terrorism. It must reflect mental or personality disorders. The thoughts drive some clinical explanations for terrorism and many people attempt to identify a unique terrorist profile. Currently, the assumption assumes that terrorism is seen as not a condition, but as a dynamic "process". Moreover, a lot of literature acknowledges the concept of radicalization started from oneself or is self-controlled, for example, someone's desire to reject certain groups. Most of the studies and official reports in this field regard radicalization as advanced interaction process between individual and external effects, such as the spreader and recruiter, the actions of public and social authorities, politics and economic situation.

### Genealogy of Religious Radicalism

Religious radicalism in connotative meaning is the idea and practice of religiously motivated violence and is not something new in Indonesia. It means that this country is experienced in dealing with such the actions. On the contrary, the basic question: Why the government is always confused by what is hitting this country? The impression religious radicalism has become a political commodity as a distraction to the issue. For example, the events in Banten and Temanggung, drastically reduced the incessant news which criticize the government performance. Until now, it has an unclear result of the investigation and law enforcement on the incidents. Almost all cases are neglected by religious radicalism. Besides it, we are shocked again by the acts of violence experienced by ulama or religious figures in this country.

Radicalism is generally understood as a social movement that leads to negative things. From the perception emerges the term extreme, anti-Western, anti-American, and terrorist (Turmudi and Sihbudi, 2005: 24). According to Khamami (2002: 6-7), the framework of radical Islamic thought is basically as follows:

1. Islam must be the basis of the State;
2. Sharia must be accepted as the constitution of the State;
3. Political sovereignty is in God's hands;
4. The idea of a nation-state contradicts the concept of people who do not recognize political or regional boundaries;
5. The principle of shura (musyawarah) is different from the idea of democracy.

### Radical Islam: Fundamental Islam

Radical Islam or also called fundamental Islam. The term fundamentalism was first used to address the American Christian evangelist, who in the nineteenth century seriously sought literal understanding, applied the Bible purely and rejected Darwin's theory which popular at that time. According to Burhanuddin (2016: 201), the first thinker introduced the use of the term fundamentalism to name a number of religious movements of Muslims, Leonard Binder. Binder states fundamentalism includes movements in the Muslim world that aim to build an Islamic political order, in which sharia is generally recognized and implemented based on Islamic law. A label according to Ismail Raji Faruqi (1978: 15-23) is a wrong act because the correct to name the awakening movement of Muslims is *Nahdallah*.

The roots of the Contemporary Islamic Fundamentalism rests on three figures, namely; Sayyid Qutb, Abu 'Ala al-Maududi and Hasan al-Banna. The figures manifested themselves in Islamic movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Islamic Jamaat in Pakistan. Then, the movement was continued by Hizb ut-Tahrir. The guideline held by Hizb ut-Tahrir, Sulhan Yusuf (2013) states that due to three things. First, the continuity of the previous Islamic movements which were considered failed. Second, a critical attitude towards the Islamic world divided. Third, the offer of a solutive thought in the form of the re-establishment of the Islamic State Khilafah. According to Samarah (2003: 6), Hizbut Tahrir is a political party having an Islamic ideology. Politics is its activity, and Islam is its *mabda*, which operates the Ummah, and they strive together to make Islam as the main cause, and guide them to re-establish the Khilafah system and enforce the law based on what Allah has revealed in the reality of this life.

In Hizb ut-Tahrir's view as in his book entitled " *Mengenal Hisbut Tahrir* " (2002: 1), there are four causes of the decline of Muslims. First, the transfer of Indian, Persian and Greek philosophies, as well as the efforts of some Muslims to compromise it with Islam, even though those have the fundamental differences. Next, there is the manipulation of Islamic teachings by people who hate Islam, in the form of ideas or laws do not originate from Islam, by the aim of damaging the image of Islam and alienating Muslims from Islam. In the other hand, the neglect of Arabic in understanding and implementing Islamic teachings, and the separation from Islam in the seventh Hijriah century. Whereas, Islam cannot be understood without Arabic. The last, missionary attacks and Tsaqafah (foreign culture), were followed by political attacks from Western infidel countries that lasted since the 17th century AD.

Regarding the divisions of the Muslims and the existence of Hizb ut-Tahrir, according to Dale F. Eickelman (1998: 161-162) in his book "Muslim Political Expression" that the parts have been ingrained (divisions in the form of nationalism and groups, pen). Thus, the most part of Islamist groups never called out the restoration of the caliphate. Instead, they sought to establish an Islamic State or Islamic order within their own national society. However, the main exception to this pattern is the Hizb Al-Tahrir AL-Islami (Islamic Liberation Party)

which emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Jerusalem in 1952. Its leader, Taqi Al-Din Al-Nabahani (1905-1977), believed that only by re-creating an Islamic State a Muslim way of life can liberate itself from the bad influence of Western political and cultural imperialism. In addition, only by the improvement, the Islamic State caliphate will be able to maintain itself against the divisive forces of imperialism, nationalism and secularism. For the restoration of the caliphate is "an obligation for all Muslims in the world". It is urgent to carry out political agitation, and Hizb Al-Tahrir becomes the vanguard party that will advance the revolution of the Caliphate.

One thing that cannot be denied, the Koran is much more tolerant than the attitude of a few Muslims who are intolerant of differences. The few Muslims suffer from fundamentalist disease. It is important that this fundamentalist group is very poor, regarding the sociological map of Indonesia which is not simple. Therefore, they take a shortcut by implementing Islamic syari'at through perda-perda (Regional Regulations). They imagine in the way; God will bless Indonesia. In fact, what is even stranger, the fundamentalists are a group of people who are anti-democratic, but they are even crazier when they use democratic State institutions to channel their political ideals (strange and miraculous). The fact is very contradictory, for them the clash between theory and practice is not a problem. If we understand it more deeply, this is actually a form of dishonesty from groups which claim to be defenders of God. In theory, "democracy is forbidden, in practice it is used, the important thing is the ideals and goals are achieved.

Thus, the re-Islamization of society in the Muslim world has not stopped yet. They are heralding the rebuilding of a great sovereign Islamic caliphate for all Muslims around the world including Indonesia. The pseudo-delusions of this neo fundamentalist group or borrow Mohamed Arkoun's term are called *unthinkable* in contemporary Muslim thought (Arkoun, 1994: 13).

According to Oliver Roy (2005: xiii-xiv), the delusions of this fundamentalist group strongly emphasize the idea of an Islamic revolution. This Islamist movement has rejected the legitimacy of traditional Islam. In Iran, the theory of *velayat e faqih* asserts the revolution leader not only gives a power to unquestioned religious leaders, but also subdues the traditional religious leader to someone, who had the power during his political career. In Afghanistan, the term "Taliban" or students studying religion, means that traditional scholars or thinkers have lost their rights in favor of young people whose religious knowledge is still superficial. Yet, they have power in the name of law, group and shari'ah, without bother mastering the science of interpretation or philosophy of the Quran. This new radical group criticized the traditional culture in the Muslim world (NU) which according to them were bid'ah practices (*tahlilan*, spirit prayer, grave pilgrimage and others). Furthermore, they prohibited music, poetry and customs. The presence of these radical groups more appears and spreads in public campus mosques, and currently they expand the movement to mosques in the village.



### Radical Islamic Organizations in Indonesia

After 1998, reformation in Indonesia, many religious movements and thoughts have emerged that play a dominant role in national issues, whether liberal in style such as the Liberal Islam Network or radical patterns such as Laskar Jihad (LJ), Front Pembela Islam (FPI), Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), Jamaah Ikhwan al-Muslimin Indonesia (JAMI), and others. The main leader of LJ is Ja'far Umar Thalib, FPI is Habib Rizieq Shihab, MMI is Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, JAMI is Al-Habshi. In addition, there are Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), Forum Umat Islam Indonesia (FUI), Laskar Mujahidin (LM), Gerakan Pemuda Islam, FKASWJ, 17 Forum Betawi Rembug (FBR), and many others. There are also radical fundamentalist groups in the regions, for example Forum Pemuda Islam in Surakarta, Komite Persiapan Penegakan Syari'at Islam in Banten, Gerakan Penegak Syari'at Islam in Yogyakarta, Lembaga Pengkajian Penerapan Syariat Islam in Pamekasan, Lembaga Pengembangan dan Pengkajian Syariat Islam in Sukabumi, Front Thoriqatul Jihad in Kebumen and others (Afadlal, 2005; Fatmawati, Noorhayati, & Minangsih, 2018).

Azumardi Azra (2002) states such groups or organizations are called "radical salafi" that persistently uphold pure Islam or authentic Islam. These groups can be categorized as "radical salafi" groups. They are oriented towards upholding and practicing "pure Islam", "authentic Islam" practiced by the prophet Muhammad and his companions. They are called "radical salafi" because they tend to take hard approaches and methods to achieve their goals, rather than peaceful and persuasive approaches and methods.

Likewise, Said Aqil Sirajd (2009) states radical fundamentalism groups struggle to uphold ideals that cover life issues in general. For example, family or other social institutions, struggling with a certain value or identity framework taken from the legacy of the past or new construction. Moreover, this group also struggles against certain enemies appear in the form of a religious community or social order considered deviant. They believe that their struggle will be approved by God. The religious and political influence from the Middle East to Indonesia could be the trigger. Since Islam entered the archipelago, the relationship between the Indonesian people and the Middle East are very strong. This transmission is possible because the Middle East's position as a center and a reference for Muslims, whether for hajj, pilgrimage or study. From these activities, various forms of networks emerged, priesthood, preaching movement, and political movement networks (Rahman and Moh. Shofan, 2010: 116).

The religious understanding of fundamentalist-radical groups according to Komarudin Hidayat (1996: 137), is very literal towards Islamic teachings, a very strong belief that Islam is the only solution to solve various crises in this country, the tireless struggle to enforce Islamic law, resistance to groups which distinct understanding and beliefs, and almost without reserve rejection and hatred of Western. The early years of reformation, various radical Islamic groups were increased, in line with the progressive democratic transition process. In the midst of unfavorable social conditions, as well as the outbreak of religious conflicts in several

areas, has provided opportunities for radical Islamic groups to play a dominant role in national issues.

Radical Islam also commonly called fundamentalist Islam. It has many different legal thoughts from mainstream Indonesian Muslim thinkers such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Among the legal thinking that has become a national issue and has made a radical label for the movement are about the source of law, the state or the Islamic caliphate and jihad.

The main theme which is most visible in this revivalist movement is to restore the Koran and Sunnah as the main references in religious life. The analysis observed the Islamic revivalist doctrine is the result of monotheism. It means the only source in Islamic teachings is only the Koran and the Sunnah because both are the holy words of Allah. Therefore, whatever it is in the Koran and hadith cannot be developed through reason. On the contrary, it must be understood and practiced as it is.

The logical consequences of monotheism in Islamic revivalism are (1) a rigid and textual understanding of the Koran and the Sunnah by eliminating the role of reason in interpreting texts, (2) rejection of Islamic practices are mixed with cultural elements and innovative worship techniques. Then, judged to be heretical, shirk or khurafat, (3) rejection of blind religious imitation (taqlid), (4) it is easy to justify disbelievers to ideologies that are not in line with the group. According to Bubalo and Greg Feally (2005), this understanding is considered to be affiliated with the thoughts of Ahmad bin Hanbal

The concentration of other Islamic revivalist movements is the establishment of an Islamic caliphate, an Islamic state and the enforcement of Islamic sharia. The enforcement of Islamic law is mandatory for every Muslim in all aspects of life. The conception of togetherness and brotherhood (*ukhuwah*) and the benefits achieved by the entire *ummah* and the universe (*rahmatan li al-alamin*) resulted in the emergence of the need for the organization of the world community in one command called *khilafah Islamiyah*. Such power can be formed easily through the initial steps of realizing an Islamic state throughout the world (*Imamat*).

The doctrine of the establishment of a state or power in the Islamic world creates a clear barrier between the power/ state of Islam and the infidels. MMI's formula is an Islamic state. It is a country that applies Islamic sharia. So the ideas of secularism, pluralism and liberalism in their various forms and flags, as well as various streams, such as nationalism, communism, socialism and democracy are real infidels. They are contrary to Islam and exclude their adherents from Islam because they are against the word of Allah "*and that this is My way who is straight, then follow him; and do not follow (other) ways, for they scatter you from His ways. That is what Allah commands you to be devout.*" (Surah Al-Anam 6: 153).

The teaching is often socialized by radical Islamic groups is jihad. The name of the organization also uses the word meaning jihad, namely mujahidin. Jihad according to them is obligatory because it is an attempt to achieve the ideals of the state or Islamic power in the world. The teachings of jihad are clearly written in point 5 of the Yogyakarta MMI Charter, calling on Muslims to mobilize *da'wah* and



*jihad* throughout the world for the sake of establishing Islam as *rahmatan li al-'alamin*. In the characteristics of MMI point 4, is stated you must be disciplined in carrying out *da'wah* and *jihad*. It is based on the word of Allah Almighty: *Verily Allah loves those who fight in His way in orderly ranks as if they are like a solidly composed building.* (Surat ash Shaff, 61: 4)

The teachings of Radical Islamic thought are actualized by the activities of the mujahidin army by focusing on security activities, long march, self-defense, health training, roll climbing, war training and others with the main motto of *da'wah* and *jihad* for the enforcement of Islamic *shari'at* towards *izzatul Islam wal muslimin*. The doctrine of *jihad* was also implanted in al-Mukmin Ngruki Islamic Boarding School by making credo "*hubb al-maut fi sabilillah*" (love to die in the way of Allah: war) and keeping away from "*hub al-dunya wa karahah al-maut*" (love of the world and hate to die)..

### **Radical Islamic Violence in Indonesia**

The majorities of writings discuss the contemporary development of Islamic radicalism in Southeast Asia and also understand the actions of hard-line Muslim activists as an effort to achieve goals. They are the application of *Shari'a*, the establishment of an Islamic state or the establishment of a caliphate. The writings of David Wright-Neville (2004), as quoted by Eric Hiarij (2010: 132), classify Muslim activists in Malaysia and Indonesia as *activists, militants and terrorists*. He uses this category to distinguish three kinds of action agendas; between actions aim to simply change political policies to make them Islamic nuances; not only to change policies, but also to replace political hierarchies are more pro-Muslim; and to make radical changes to the existing social order by using violence. Forms of action often have nothing to do with the goals of the movement. Protest is a term widely used in the social movement studies tradition to describe the forms of collective action, used by activists to fight for their demands. Protest is an unorthodox method, whose validity can be questioned, intended to influence the socio-political process, maintain or change the institutionalization of prevailing power relations. Instrumentalist bias is the main issue of this concept.

Actions such as strikes, blockades and rallies are entirely described as means of achieving the goals of the movement, either to promote or impede certain policies or to champion a structural transformation. Yet, protest can also be understood as a reflection of collective identity. Whereas, observers know a movement by seeing and reading the protests it takes, activists use their actions to accentuate their existence.

The form of collective action of radical Islamic groups varies considerably, from the use of force and deadly attacks to mass marches and peaceful protests. In the last eight years, the revival of this movement has been identical, among others, with a series of bombs and explosions in various places in the country. The use of lethal means is not a new phenomenon in Indonesia's hard-line Islamic tradition.

Table 1: Actions of radical Islamic violence in Indonesia

Target	Location	Time
Istiqlal mosque	In Jakarta	In April, 1999
The residence of the Philippine Ambassador	In Jakarta	In August, 2000
Thirty-eight Churches (Christmas Eve Bombings)	In Riau, Jakarta, Jawa Barat, Jawa Tengah, Jawa Timur, Nusa Tenggara Barat	In December, 2000
HKBP and Santa Ana Church	In Jakarta	In July, 2001
Atrium Mall	In Jakarta	In August, 2001
Petra Church	In Jakarta	In November, 2001
United States Embassy Warehouse (A grenade explosion)	In Jakarta	In September, 2002
Seri Club and Paddy's Café (Bombs in Bali I)	In Bali	In October, 2002
US Government Consulate Building	In Bali	In October, 2002
Philippine Government Consulate Building	In North Sulawesi	In October, 2002
United Nations Building	In Jakarta	In April, 2003
Soekarno-Hatta International Airport	Jakarta	In April, 2003
Parliament Building Parking Lot	In Jakarta	In July, 2003
J.W. Marriot Hotel	In Jakarta	In August, 2003
Australian Embassy Building	In Jakarta	In September, 2004
Nyoman's Cave, Mandega's cave and R. Aja's restaurant (Bombs in Bali II)	In Bali	In October, 2005

Source: Tempo (on the 14th of Januari, 2001; on the 15th of February, 2001; on the 27th of October, 2002; on the 17th of August, 2003; on the 19th of September, 2004; on the 16th of October, 2005); ICG (on the 10th of October, 2001; on the 11th of December, 2002; and on the 22nd of February, 2005)

From the many cases think out a bad stigma against Islam, not only due to a misunderstanding of religious teachings. At the very least, there are two factors influence the emergence of the Islamic radicalism movement in Indonesia.

First is the internal factor. In this context, the emergence of reactions among Muslims, that in practice often shows the violent, intolerant face of Islam due to the political pressure of the government. Usually, the issue of religion when it is ridden by political interests and power, religion no longer becomes sacred and profane. The religion is often used as an excuse for truth to wreak lust. Besides it, Islam as a universal value order often does not get enough space for expression in the political field. Even in a certain level marginalized. This condition creates irony, because Muslims are the majority in this country. This resentment finally erupted

and got its moment in the reform era. As noted above, these reactions are often radical.

Second is the external factor. The factor relates to the globalization process. It requires socio-cultural interactions on a wide scale. In this context, Islam as a value system is confronted with a modern value order. At a certain point, it is not only incompatible with the values promoted by Islam, but also diametrically opposed. Finally, the process of global interaction becomes a contestation of strength, in which one another influences and even negates.

The emergence of radical groups in Islam is the result of socio-political developments which have marginalized and subsequently disappointed. On the other hand, these socio-political developments are not the only factor. Apart from these factors, there are other factors can lead to radical groups. For instance, economic disparities and the inability of some members of the community to understand the changes are happening so fast. Radicalism arises from a closed and textual understanding.

Radical groups always think about they are the group that really understand Allah (Al-Quran) and His Messenger (al Hadith). Therefore, they like to disbelieve others (*takfir*) or consider others as heretical. Judging from its history, radicalism has two forms. First is the radical in thought (often referred to as fundamentalism) and the last is radical in action which is called terrorism (Muhammad, 1997: 1).

The struggle they are doing is solely to restore the totality of this life, in the religious text (al-Quran) and religion (the thinking of *salaf* scholars) by ignoring the contribution of history, philosophy and human tradition. It was the original model for the Islamic revolution. As a unity of understanding and movement, religious radicalism cannot be faced with partial actions and policies. It takes comprehensive and integrated policy planning and implementation to counter their propaganda. Hence, the problem of religious radicalism stretches from upstream to downstream.

## Conclusion

Violence in the name of God is caused by the authoritarianism of the text. There are several texts or texts of the Koran seem to command violence. Such text is very dependent on readers. If we read the text in the spirit of violence, then it can be legitimacy of violence, and vice versa. Therefore, we must be careful in reading legal texts, especially those related to violence. The knowledge of history needed, *asbabun nuzul*, as well as good text-reading methods. Therefore, the sound of the text does not come out of context.

In the current situation of political freedom in the reform era, it seems the radical Islamic movement is free and free to sell the ideas without significant interruption from the state and moderate Islamic mass organizations. Moreover, they are also very militant in disseminating their ideas and teachings in open spaces without fear. At the same time, moderate Islamic groups, represented by Nahdhatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, seemed to run out of energy in maintaining and

nurturing Islamic moderatism. Their main defenses, namely the mosque for NU and the proceeds of charity for Muhammadiyah, were recently infiltrated by these radical groups.

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