Understanding Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia from Social Psychological Perspective

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Abstract—This study focuses in scrutinizing Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia in particular from social psychological perspective. This study was significant to be conducted in Indonesia. It is because this study used theory of N3 that has been deemed as new theory in understanding Islamic radicalism. This study uses qualitative method with 50 participants and 5 of them as main subjects. Data was collected through interview, review of statements from those concern to radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia, both in social media and mainstream mass media. The data was analyzed through qualitative analysis in particular thematic analysis with some steps that used in qualitative studies. The study concluded that there are three factors influencing individual in joining radical group and terrorism in Indonesia. The three factors are need, narrative and network. Need was related quest for significance, narrative as tool to justify radicalism and terror, and network as vehicle in maintaining the ideology and recruiting some new members. This study supported the theory of N3 (Need, Narrative and Networks) that proposed by Kruglanski and colleagues.

Keywords: Islamic radicalism, social psychological perspective, need, narrative, network

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite popular disagreements among social scientists in particular those are experts in radicalism and terrorism issues about the definition of terrorism[1] and their claims that ''one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter,'' there is general agreement among them that terrorism has become a serious problem in many parts of the world and that every endeavor must be made to end it[2]. For the purposes of this article, terrorism is defined as politically motivated violence that is perpetrated by individuals, groups, or state-sponsored agents and intended to bring about feelings of terror and helplessness in a population in order to influence decision making and to change behavior[3].

Terrorism is depicted in this article as a problem, especially because many major international terrorist groups work to weaken rather than to strengthen democracy and because terrorism distracts people and resources from paths blazed by growing grassroots pro-peace, pro-democracy movements in different parts of the world. Contemporary terrorism is particularly dangerous because terrorists might gain access to weapons of mass destruction[4].

The emergence of violent Muslim vigilante groups in regions of Indonesia where there has been serious inter-religious conflict is one of the most conspicuous new phenomena in contemporary IndonesianIslam[5]. It can be said that inter-religious conflict such as in Moluccas and in other regions of Indonesia certainly happened or at least became increasingly fierce because of intervention of radical group members such as Laskar Jihad that led by Jakfar Umar Thalib, or other Islamic radical groups[6]. Some previous literatures on radicalism in Indonesia have mentioned about this intervention[7].

Therefore, International public concern toward Islamic Politic in particular since the World Center Trade attack become increasingly more fo[8]us to Indonesia. It is because Indonesia is one of the biggest Muslim country in the world that has charismatic position among other Muslim countries[9]. Besides, since independence of Indonesia there were huge Muslims who wanted to establish Islamic state and to practice Islamic jurisprudences in daily life. For non-Muslims and secular Muslims, the emergence and the existence of these groups can threaten their being in Indonesia and can undermine harmony that has been established since long time[10].

In actual, the Islamic phobia and the fear toward the emergence and existence of violent Muslim groups has been begun after Samuel Huntington released a thesis about clash civilization. In his thesis, Huntington insisted that Islam is a source of threatening for the West in Particular the United States of America[11]. Although some Indonesian Muslim intellectuals such as Azra has criticized this thesis but its influence toward the perception from those dislike Islam and Muslim is increasingly stronger[12].

In turn, the hate of some Muslim groups in particular that have many members graduated from Afganistan military training camp toward America and its allies become fiercer. They consolidated their selves in networks and groups such JamaahIslamiyah that was established by Abdullah Sungkar and Abu BakarBaasyir[13]. Lunges and acts of violence that JamaahIslamiyah members did in Indonesia have been witnessed by global public such as Bali bombing in

which about 250 people died and others injured. This tragedy has left deep sad in one hand and strong anger among people all over the world. It pushed people, nation states and international institutions to plan actions in order to counter radicalism and terrorism that threatened the world[7], [14].

Islamic radicalism in Indonesia can be traced to two relatively 'indigenous' Muslim political movements which date back to the 1940s – the Darul Islam movement and the Masyumi party – and to a number of more recent transnational Islamic networks[5]. These two trajectories can be deemed as initial processes where Islamic radicalism developed intensively to massive movement and shaped its self into radical Islamic group that have pivotal role in some violent act such as Bali bombing[15], [16].

Islamic radicalism in some extent threatened religious harmony and moderation that has been developed collectively by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, moderate Muslim intellectual and leadersthroughout history of post Independent Indonesia[17]. It must be noted that moderate Islam has been special characteristic of Indonesian Muslims that all international elements strongly approved. Therefore, in most experts' opinions, Islamic radicalism although with minimal number can break that good special characteristic of Indonesian Muslims[18].

In order to prevent Islamic radicalism, it is pivotal thing to understand the pathways or the processes through which Muslim individuals become radical. It was certainly studied by some experts of the radicalism and terrorism what factors explained emersion radical individuals or radical group among communities including Muslims. Some experts concluded that terrorism was strongly influenced by ideology in particular trans-national ideology that imported from East Central area of Muslim populations through some students coming home to Indonesia. but it can also be carried out for material gain[19].

But this opinion is debatable and not accepted by some experts of the radicalism and terrorism in many universities both in Indonesia and out of Indonesia. It is because many facts supported that the ideology is not the only factor that affected to join terrorism. Some researchers insisted that in many cases the ideology was not proven as factor that pulled individual to involve in radicalism and terrorism movement. Instead of attractiveness of the ideology, social relation can be deemed as pivotal factor that pushed individual to join the radical group[20][21].

In many research areas, the social relation was proven to be the pivotal factor in explaining some behaviors such as prejudice and cooperation among groups. It was concluded that positive relation among group can lessen prejudice in one hand and enhance cooperation in other hand[15]. In the field of psychology of the group process it was mentioned that social relation among people was crucial factor for joining the groups[22].

A. Radicalism and Terrorism: Personal and Social Factors

It can't be denied that radicalism and terrorism were issues that related to personal factor and social factor. It must be noted also that radicalism and terrorism are about group and intergroup processes, therefore individual dynamic, group process and dynamic of intergroup relations has to be concern if we want to understand radicalism and terrorism from social psychology perspective[23]. Some experts divided social factor into group factor or organization factor and external environment factor such as that related to political factor[24]. Personal factor consists of many characteristics and personalities that were easily to be influenced and drove to radicalism and terrorism trap. In one interview I have conducted with former member of JamaahIslamiyah in Pekanbaru, Idris, told me about the way his small cell or group recruited a bomber who then conducted mass destructive act in Bali. He said that senior member of the group usually recruited new member with weak personality such as who has personal problem or daily life problem. He insisted that Imam Samudera had special skill in identification new potential recruitment including who served as bomber. Is only needed about three hours to influence the potential recruitment to join the group and then to receive new special task in conducting "amaliyah" or act of terror.

Abdurrahman Ayyub who served as recruitment and preaching division in the zone of Australia or sometime this zone called as mantiqahukhra (other zone), agreed with this Idris opinion that almost all members of JamaahIslamiyah in particular who graduated from the Afganistan Central of Military

Training. The Central Military Training where AA got special education and training in military skill including in recruiting management. According to AA it was easy to identify potential young to be member of the group because he and his colleagues were skillful in recruiting new member after having training in Afganistan bit of years.

In this context, Moghaddam a social psychologist who concerned to radicalism and terrorism issues wrote also that the crisis of personal identity that experiences by individuals contributed to tendency to join into terrorism group. He certainly noted that there are steps or periods that he symbolized with stairs to terrorism in which individuals have to passed before entering to what he called as point of no return. In this point, individuals who experienced long process in the trap of radicalism would not able to leave it. They have to go on the process until they reach a highest level in which they found their selves as martyrs or *syahid* or in other word, they have reached what people said, point of no return. Usually, when individual arrived at this point, he hardly leaves it since he would find many obstacles and difficulties to find new identity in a new surroundings[25].

According to the social sciences in particular social psychology, identity crisis related to some disturbances and stresses that individuals experienced

in their life and made them lose their selves and awareness. The individuals who experienced crisis identity would be easily influenced and indoctrinated, therefore some recruiters of the group terrorist very aware of this thing, and use it as a basis in recruitment and looking for new members[26], [27].

Beside personal factor, it could be said that social factor had also pivotal role in radicalization process. As mentioned above, social factor could be divided into two sub factors, both organizational factor or intragroup dynamic factor and external social dynamic factor such as political factor[21]. Therefore, the combination between personal factor and social factor must be seen as one inseparable aspect in understanding the radicalization process. This point is important to remember because whatever behavior is always influenced by these two factors including terror behavior or radical tendencies[28], [29].

The process of radicalization that Moghaddam depicted in his articles indicated that personal factors and social factor are intertwining each other. For example, he said that the radicalization process begins from identity crisis that very personal in shape and continued with intensive interaction among members of the group including intensive communication between seniors and juniors or between leaders and followers. It is certainly very socially in shape[25]. This theorizing of social behavior that influenced by the combination of personal factor and social factor has been discussed by social psychologists from long time ago since it was established as formal science[30]. Many studies found that social factor was stronger factor that personal factor, it was because social factor has power to force individual in leaving his ideas and then following public or group ideas[31].

II. METHOD

This study used non experimental design with qualitative method. The study used interview and document reviews including that loaded in social media such as YouTube as tools in collecting data. More than 25 inmates were chosen to be participants. Interview was done between 2014 and 2019 in jails where terrorism inmates have been detained or out of the jail for those released and re-socialized among new environment of Muslim communities, whereas documents review was done to some documents or literatures related to radicalism process including YouTube in which direct statements of some experts or suspected terrorist were listened in maximal attention and transcribed. The data then analyzed through qualitative technique analysis.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Radicalism Process Among Indonesian Terrorism Inmates

Based on qualitative analysis that was done in this study, there are several basic concepts that has been found from the data. These concepts are found in several words that eventually referred to one meaning. From these concepts there are that depicts personal need such as quest for meaning and social relation or social network. These two concepts are bridged or moderated by narrative or ideological tenets that served as a fuel or even as foundation for those acts of terror and violence.

B. Quest for Significance

One upon a time, an inmate of terror case was interviewed and asked about why he decided to join the terror act, he answered.

"I want to be meaningful for my Muslim brothers and sisters in some countries like Afganistan and Palestina. They are victims of the infidel people in particular the infidel governments that hated Islam and Muslims. I couldn't sleep in convenience if they are suffering and killed because they are Muslims." (interview with Ali Imron)

To be a meaningful is a psychological need that must be fulfilled by everyone, or in other concept it is called quest for significance. This kind of need is related to desire to matter, desire to be someone and desire to have respect[29], [32]. In many literatures of psychology and social sciences, many theorists have used some constructs or concepts to be labeled as universal human motivation such need to esteem, achievement, meaning, competence, control, power, social network and so on.[33]Quest for significance or meaning is essential need that exists in every human being. Quest for meaning depicts an identity that everyone must has to have[34].

Need to meaning and to be meaningful is one fundamental tenet in Islamic teaching for example it was explained in many religious lectures that the best people is who most beneficial to other. This tenet is based on the Prophet Muhammad saying but it is misunderstood by some individual in particular who has involved in radicalization process or join in radical Islamic group such as JamaahIslamiyah[35].

In general, who has involved in radicalism and terrorism movement, to be a meaningful is understood to defend other Muslims even in other countries and places to face enemies such as in Afganistan, Myanmar or other Muslim countries experiencing tyranny. Usually they used violent tools or ways to defend and counter, because this is the only to combat the powerful enemies and the divided them into two kind of enemies. First, far enemy that hostile Muslims and Islam all over the world. It is certainly that whom they mean with far enemy is United States of American government because in their opinion the government of Uncle Sam is the only responsible party for the suffering of Muslims in many countries particularly in Afganistan, Palestina, Irak and so on[36].

Will to meaning and to be meaningful is usually followed by will to help. In social psychology, this concept is in one level with the concept prosocial behavior in more specific it related to the concept of altruism or readiness to help others with selflessness[37]. This kind of behavior in particular was found in terrorism phenomenon and supported by some interviews with terror inmates when they were

asked what motivated them to join radicalism and terrorism networks. It was usually they answered to help Muslims in many Muslim countries.

C. Social Network

Through the interviews that was conducted with some participants among former members of JamaahIslamiyah key concepts that depicted social network were found. This social network has pivotal role in the process of radicalization in Indonesia particularly JamaahIslamiyah. Social network is important in recruitment and augmenting new members[6], [38]. NA a former and leader of member of JamaahIslamiyah told that he has involved in long journey of violent jihad because of good relation between his teacher and Abdullah Sungkar and also Abu BakarBaasyair. He was a student of Islamic school or Pesantren in Malaysia when his teacher offered him to participate in military training in Afganistans[39].

The friendship between NA teacher and Abdullah Sungkar and Abu BakarBaasyir is a door to enter Islam radicalism network for NA. The friendship between his teacher and outstanding leaders of Islamic movement in Indonesia was a pivotal factor that pushed NA to join in long journey as Islamist activist, even brought him as leader in JamaahIslamiyah. In this context, it can be said that NA is a good example that depict about student-teacher relation as a way to enter extremist Islamist group.

Other former members of JamaahIslamiyah Ali Imron also said that he joined JamaahIslamiyah because of his elder brother, Ali Ghufron, was follower of Abdullah Sungkar and Abu BakarBaasyir. He sent a letter to his brother to inform him that he has strong desire to join jihad movement. Eventually, after waiting several months he received a response from his elder brother telling him that he was allowed to go to Afganistan military camp. Ali Imron insisted that Ali Ghufron as his elder brother has significant role for his involvement in JamaahIslamiyah. It is because his relationship with Ali Ghufron was very close and influenced his cognition. This kinship network in the context of radicalism and terrorism was found in many cases including in Indonesia.

Some terrorism inmates said that they involved in terror network because of their seeking to understand Islam and their effort to be good Muslim. W for example, was a skillful person in theft want to be a good Muslim on the basis of his close girls. So, he looked for a teacher who could teach him Islamic tenets and teachings but unfortunately he found a radical teacher. This teacher has taught him some radical tenets and principals of Islam.

D. Narrative on Terror

Beside the two factors that has been mentioned above, narrative on terror was assumed to explain radicalization process. Narratives that terror and terrorist would enter the paradise because terror is jihad and the terrorist is mujahid or jihadis. Although this understanding is absolutely wrong but it was disseminated among them.

One inmate terrorist in the special jail for terrorist in Sentul Bogor Jawa Barat, have told me that when he was active in the network of terror, he was indoctrinating by his leader or senior that paradise will be rewarded for those fought in the road of Allah, other word for jihad.

IV. CONCLUSION

There are three factors explaining why Islamic radicalism in Indonesia happened. First factor was psychological need and in particular it has been related to quest for significance. This psychological need, if it was reffered to the interviews with terrorism inmates and their statements in various media both social media and mainstream media, could be represented with some key words such as motivation. The importance of motivation could be seen and read in many literatures of the experts of radicalism and terrorism such as vengeance, adoration of the leader, money, the perks of paradise and in some extent, meeting with previous martyrs or syuhada. In Kruglanski words, all motivations with their variances could be categorized as particular need to quest significance and respect. According to psychologists including Kruglanski, this need has been universal and existed in every individual.

Second factor was ideological narrative as found in some interviews, statements of Islamic radical groups in various social media and mainstream mass media. This narrative was highly related to psychological mechanism of the terrorists and radicals individual of the groups in which it justified their terror actions toward the innocent people. For example, promise to paradise and marriage with nymphs. This ideological narrative of radicalism Islam could depict us with some factors that pushed or pulled them to gain significance. If these values have been advanced, defended and a sacrifice was made for those values, the group will repay them with veneration and respect, thus lending them the status of celebrities which basks in meanings particularly among internal group members.

The third factor was network. One of the experts who introduced network as crucial factor that influenced individuals to join in the radical groups or involve in radicalism and terrorism was Marc Sagemen, a psychiatrist and member of Central Intelligence of America (CIA) and has been deemed as an expert of radicalism and terrorism in particular that related to the concept of terror network. Marc Sageman wrote in particular about the role of terror network in advancing radical ideology and enhancing the role of terror group role in order to gain ideological goals of the groups.

The concept of radicalism and terror networks in particular among radical Muslim activists has been validated by Kruglanski and his colleagues in many scientific articles on radicalism process in psychological perspective. Kruglanski concluded that

networks have pivotal role in maintaining integrality of the ideology including new members' recruitment. Closed and exclusive networks was determined factors that justified individuals to act violence and terror toward innocent civilian publics.

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