The Deradicalization of Islamic Boarding Schools towards Pluralism Based on the Interpretation of Inclusiveness in the Theme of the Verse of Jihad

Itqon Futhna ‘Izi¹, Andri Nirwana. AN² Waston Waston¹ Saifudin Saifudin¹

¹Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia
²Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Objective: To find out the ways and opportunities for deradicalization efforts among the Islamic boarding school community towards an understanding of pluralism based on an inclusive interpretation of the theme of jihad verses

Research method: This study used a qualitative approach, with a descriptive-analytical method sourced from existing research to be developed and compared with different variables.

Results: One of the results of an inclusive interpretation that can be used as the basis for the deradicalization process of the Islamic boarding school community is that of M. Quraisy Shihab in his tafsir of Al Misbah. In this book, jihad is interpreted with a broader meaning that jihad has meanings: 1) exerting one's all abilities and 2) being serious. In his tafsir, he also stated that the types of jihads are 1) jihad against lust, 2) jihad against demons, 3) jihad against infidels, 4) jihad against polytheists, and 5) jihad against hypocrites. The deradicalization process of the Islamic boarding school community can be done by enlightening the exclusive meaning of jihad that the meaning of jihad is only a matter of war to a more inclusive and plural meaning of jihads.

Impact: This research provides views on deradicalization efforts for the Islamic boarding school community based on a more inclusive meaning of the verse on the theme of jihad.

Keywords: Deradicalization, Inclusive Interpretation, Jihad, Islamic Boarding School

1. INTRODUCTION

Radicalism or violence in the name of religion is not a new thing in Islamic history. Actions and thoughts of radicalism generally appear related to political issues, leading to the symbolism under the name of religion [1]. It is a historical fact that existed in the early days of Islam. Radical groups at that time were represented by the khawarij. The group that was born out of disappointment with the arbitration decision that harmed Ali bin Abi Talib understood that the dispute could not be resolved by human decisions but should be from Allah's decision by returning to the law of the Qur'an and Hadith. Therefore, they had the motto Laa hukma illa illah (there is no law but Allah's law). They then assumed that Ali bin Abi Talib, Amr bin Al Ash, Abu Musa Al Asyari, Muawiyyah, and others who agreed and accepted arbitration had disbelieved and left Islam because they were not ruled according to the law of the Qur'an. This infidel status makes their blood lawful to kill, which in the end, in historical records, Caliph Ali bin Abi Talib succeeded in killing.

The thoughts and actions of khawarij radicalism did not stop with the killing of Ali bin Abi Talib. The khawarij continued their rebellion against the later Islamic powers, both the Umayyad and Abbasid Daulahs. The radicalism of this group was not only in the aspect of action but also in thought. The label of polytheists or infidels could land on anyone who did not agree with their group. In fact, those who agreed but did not want to emigrate to their area were labeled the infidel and called it “dar al-harb” so that they could be killed and fought [2]. Azylumardi Azyra, in his book, calls the behavior of the khawarij as isi’rad, namely religious executions, not a jihad [3]. Finally, this pattern of thought continues to exist and evolves in the present context in Indonesia. It can be found in the presence of radical actions in bombing hotels, places of worship, and terrors.

The radicalism that occurs in Indonesia today is also often associated with the role of...
Islamic boarding schools. In a place that ideally represents the teachings of Islam, rahmatan lil alamin, it is suspected to be an area for planting seeds of rationalism, which certainly contradicts Islamic values themselves. The ideology or way of thinking taught in Islamic boarding schools is the main factor causing understanding and acts of rationalism. This way of thinking is due to the exclusive and narrow meaning of the verse of jihad, which defines jihad as only a matter of physical struggle. It must be admitted that one of the practices of jihad is physical combat, but there is a jihad that is greater than war, as the Prophet Muhammad said when he returned from war. "We are returning from the smallest Jihad to the greatest jihad, namely the jihad against lust."

For this reason, this study used a qualitative approach with descriptive-analytical methods sourced from existing research to then be developed and compared with different variables.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 Islamic Boarding School Community Condition

Islamic boarding schools generally grow and develop from different traditions and cultures or local cultures, as evidenced by the cultural differences within the Islamic boarding school environment. It can be seen from the humble attitude of ustad and santri in responding to different perspectives and cultures, teaching methods, book materials with different ulama perspectives, and a tolerant attitude towards community traditions. Therefore, it is not surprising that Islamic boarding schools are touted as a means for the general public to learn about multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is similar to pluralism, a value system or policy that assesses social diversity based on the willingness to tolerate other groups of different ethnicity, gender, and religion [4].

Islamic boarding schools also teach a middle attitude (Tawasuth). In short, the Islamic boarding school community is strongly encouraged to develop a moderate attitude and stay away from words and behaviors that lead to violence and the most righteous and self-defeating attitude. Therefore, Islamic boarding schools are used to seeing other groups of different ethnicities not as threats but as partners and partners in supporting morality, social ethics, and community empowerment to create a better life in the Islamic boarding school community.

Currently, Islamic boarding schools are more integrated in terms of pluralism. In fact, now, Islamic boarding school is a pillar of a cosmopolitan and egalitarian attitude. These last two attitudes are the main attitudes that are always practiced in Islamic boarding schools, both modern and traditional boarding schools, both resided and non-permanent boarding schools.

In general, the education in Islamic boarding schools is in the form of traditional education by prioritizing the basic teachings of Islam as the material taught. Some of these materials are such as Tawhid/Aqidah, Al Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh, Ushul Fiqh, and ways of worship in line with the demands of the Qur'an and Hadith. This educational model has developed since Islam entered Indonesia for the first time. The existence of this history has resulted in Islamic boarding schools becoming an undeniable original culture of the Indonesian nation. Islamic boarding schools also grow and develop in an open and tolerant Indonesian culture. It created the identity and tradition of the Islamic boarding schools as an organization based on local wisdom that upholds the values of simplicity, openness, and togetherness [5].

This tradition exists in the community due to a long history in community life. Among the factors that cause Islamic boarding schools to have a tolerant and open-style tradition are; first, Islamic boarding schools grow and develop with the community with the reality that occurs in it, making Islamic boarding schools have a relationship with social aspects in the community. Second, Islamic boarding schools reflect the culture in society. Third, the values and teachings of Islamic boarding schools can be adapted to the community environment, where the understanding of Islamic boarding school religion follows the understanding of Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaah by referring to the mu'tabara books by medieval, classical scholars, which tend to be flexible and not rigid [5].

In forming an Islamic boarding school education system, Islamic boarding schools have social and intellectual cultural provisions formed from a habit carried out continuously until it gives birth to a pattern. The pattern is the smallest part of a series of a system. Meanwhile, the system is part of a larger culture. Culture, as an aspect that overlaps with and regulates other components of Islamic boarding schools, affects the style of the existing educational system and model. For example, a culture of openness, tolerance, and simplicity allows for an open, tolerant, and simple education model and system. The Islamic boarding school education culture then became the basis for the wider community's acceptance of the Islamic boarding school itself. Over time, the Islamic boarding school has also undergone many changes so that its educational culture, which is known to be grounded and deeply rooted in society, has also undergone many shifts. Recently, Islamic boarding schools have indeed received a negative stigma, and even their role has been questioned by several
parties since the notion of radicalism and terrorism is rampant in the country [5].

2.2 Causes of Radicalism

Radicalism lately is often associated with destructive movements or actions, such as explosions, murder of souls, and theft of property. This radicalism has several contributing factors, such as social, economic, environmental, educational, and political factors. In addition, radical actions often arise from limited religious understanding, feelings of depression, hegemony, psychosocial insecurity, and local and global injustice [6]. The followers of this movement are mostly rural residents who have migrated to cities or communities of lower social status. This movement is widely followed by the younger generation of Muslims, who grew up under a secular nationalist system of government [7].

Education is one of the factors supporting the existence of understanding and radicalism in Indonesia. Akbar S. Ahmed concluded that too narrow Islamic education could encourage the growth of chauvinism towards religion [8]. The exclusive and dogmatic teaching of religion has also created hatred and hostility towards groups outside of religion. The term “Zionists and infidel” seems to be a religious belief to oppose them. The ideology of jihad is also understood as a war against the infidel Zionists, which has added to the list of radical attitudes.

It is important to look at the model of religious education developed in Islamic boarding schools and whether it actually shapes students’ behavior that leads to violence or not in the process.

2.3 Relations of Islamic Boarding School and Radicalism

Radical religious understanding is often associated with Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Some community groups argue that the extremist perpetrators come from Islamic boarding schools based on the observation that the perpetrators are the Islamic boarding school community. It cannot be understood in its entirety and should be focused on the individual, not on generalizations. Azumardi Azra explained that radicalism comes from the word "radical". The word is aimed at the desire for rapid and total social or political change, which is carried out in a certain condition, person, or movement, often by choosing uncompromising and even violent means over peaceful methods [9].

Many studies on radicalism focus on explaining the process of radicalization, the impact of radicalism, and the reasons for a person's radical behavior. Then, it is concluded that beliefs, education, social conditions, and economic factors shape the radicalization process. Moreover, radical movements are often seen as a logical choice for a group of people to mobilize social movements related to the mobilization of resources and political opportunities limited within a certain framework, such as religion [10]. Discussions about radicalism also tend to pay more attention to the relationship between radicalism and religion [11]. Radical actions are always rooted in a religious dimension. Islamic radicalism, for example, has always been associated with the ideology of jihadism [12].

In addition, religion has an open space for radicalism and anti-radicalism in modern times. As Nottingham explained, religion is a cultural vehicle that allows people to adapt to their experiences and environments [9].

Among religious people (Islam), the radical spirit has different meanings. Jihad is part of this meaning. Although many argue that this interpretation is wrong, the production and reproduction of these concepts and discourses are widespread in society. The spirit of jihad does not just exist in a vacuum without being influenced by many factors. These factors include poverty, social and political boredom, collective fanaticism, and intertwined theological doctrines.

2.4 Relations of Religious and Radicalism

According to Scott Appleby, religious radicalism is an expression of divine anger against racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination; unfair economic policies, corruption, and government hypocrisy; oppression, organized violence, and security that threatens weak and small social groups, as a result of unequal state or private policies. Therefore, efforts to reduce religious radicalism (anti-radicalism) must address fundamental cultural, economic, and socio-political issues. An approach that does not touch the root of the problem makes it long and endless and will continue to proliferate in more varied forms, especially if using violent means to solve it [9].

Another part of religious radicalism is understood as fighting for religious beliefs. They do not compromise on this, and if necessary, it will be fought for with the help of anarchism and violence. Factors that cause religious radicalism include (1) misunderstanding or narrow understanding of religious teachings, (2) poverty, (3) social injustice, (4) political retaliation by using religious teachings as a motive to justify their actions, and (5) social inequality or jealousy over the success of others [13].

Furthermore, Dawam Raharjo put forward four theories behind the growth of radical Islam in Indonesia. (1) The influence of external transnational Islamic movements, such as Hizbut-Tahrir, Muslim Brotherhood, Islam Talibeh, Saudi Wahhabism, and Al-Qaida, aspire to promote Islamic law in every line of life. (2) The effect of
the euphoria of democratization in Indonesia is seen as an opportunity for the emergence of radical Islamic movements, which the Suharto government suppressed during the New Order era. (3) The failure to apply the democratic rule of law inspires the application of Islamic law, which is fundamentally contrary to the secular and democratic legal system. (4) The failure of the rahmatan lil alamin da'wah movement that is inclusive and tolerant of different religious beliefs has led to the development of an exclusive da'wah movement and intolerance of diversity [14].

2.5 Islamic Boarding School's View on Radicalism

There are two examples of the understanding of Islam that has led to a dichotomy between inclusive Islam (against extremism) and exclusive Islam (legitimizing extremism), which is related to sunnatullah (nature). In this case, people have the freedom to react to the two kinds of thinking according to their point of view. The existence of a radical movement is sunnatullah, which is based on historical facts of Islam, namely the emergence of groups that break away from the dominant group, which legitimizes violence in their political practice, such as khawarij, Shi'a, and others. The fact that the movement tends to be radical is well conveyed to know history. According to Al Muayyad Islamic Boarding School, the presence of radical movements is caused by various factors. In a small scope, it is due to the absence of family presence in their lives, so they fall into the life of motorcycle gangs. In addition, kitabs and books in Islamic boarding schools that teach violence are a form of radicalism [9].

Moreover, the main determinant of the emergence of radicalism in society is the provocative efforts of various mass media. According to some Islamic groups, this provocation is considered a violation of the truth they believe in, which then causes them to react in the form of radical actions or behaviors so that radicalism is understood as a form of resistance.

The forms of resistance of Islamic boarding schools to various forms of radicals are by understanding the concepts of Tasamah (tolerance), Tawassut (middle), and Tawazun (balance), cultural character education, anti-radical education, curriculum integration and values about radicalism and anti-radicalism, moral development (suluk), and deradicalization education models that focus on humanist traditions in shaping the personality and noble character of students. Also, the provision of relevant religious knowledge is needed, not understanding the Qur'an only as a textual one but in all aspects.

2.6 Inclusive Interpretation

The commentators, as the most competent parties, to interpret the Al-Quran, from ancient times to the present, continue to exert their efforts to interpret verse by verse of the Qur'an so that it continues to be relevant to all issues from time to time. The interpretation results are different for each commentator, along with their different perspectives on seeing things [15], including the verses of jihad. Some commentators interpret the verse with the theme of jihad exclusively, namely with the interpretation that jihad is only limited to taking up weapons as a justification for their ideology, and some interpret it inclusively that jihad can be interpreted in various forms without being limited by certain interpretations.

An interpretation result can be categorized as an inclusive one if the interpretation is not made a claim to the superiority of a particular ideology, and the interpretation result is in line with the concept of unity between groups. Inclusive interpretive reasoning opens the view of the possibility of truth in other ideologies or thoughts to foster a more plural and less singular paradigm. One of the interpretations of jihad verses that meet this category is the result of the interpretation of M. Quraish Shihab in his tasfiir of Al-Misbah.

The interpretation written by this contemporary commentator has a quite different view compared to some interpretations of other commentators, who tend to be radical and liberal in interpreting the jihad verse. Radical commentators tend to interpret jihad as merely a physical war with weapons, while liberal commentators interpret jihad as only fighting lust, temptations of the devil, and denying other forms of jihad [16]. Thus, this interpretation is considered capable of deradicalizing the Islamic boarding school community if the fruit of its interpretation is taught and inserted in every learning activity.

Furthermore, Tafsir Al-Misbah defines jihad very broadly. This book of commentaries with many volumes discusses the meaning of jihad, which is divided into at least two parts: 1) the meaning of jihad and 2) the forms and types of jihads.

2.7 Meaning of Jihad

In his interpretation, Quraish Shihab generally defines jihad with two meanings. First, it devotes all one's ability or is prepared to endure sacrifices to get what is expected. It is interpreted that way because in achieving something, the effort is needed to devote all his abilities and is ready to make sacrifices. According to Quraish Shihab, when interpreting the QS. Al Maida: 35 [17], a person in jihad must be able to devote everything he has, both physically and mentally, soul and mental, wealth and property. According to him, in jihad, one cannot be half-hearted. It means that he
must make totality in upholding the word of Allah. It is intended to get good luck, which is hoped for, both in this world and in the hereafter.

Second, jihad is interpreted earnestly. This meaning is in accordance with the basic meaning of jihad (ﬁghting earnestly) earnestly. It means that a person when doing jihad, must be serious with all his heart, not playing games. As Quraish Shihab’s interpretation of QS. Ali Imran: 142 [17], people will not know whether he will get the bounty of heaven or not, even though Allah does not know that there were also people who fought (sincerely) in the previous ummahs.

2.8 Forms and Types of Jihads

As mentioned earlier, jihad with a broad meaning automatically gives various interpretations related to the form of jihad. According to Quraish Shihab, the command of jihad in the Qur’an does not mention a certain type. The command of jihad, which is clear in the Qur’an, is only to confront the infidels and hypocrites. As emphasized in QS. At Taubah: 73, “O Prophet! Struggle against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be ﬁrm with them. Hell will be their home. What an evil destination!” (Surah At-Taubah: 73). However, the mention of this type of jihad in the Qur’an denies other forms of jihad. Quraish Shihab also mentioned that jihad has various forms:

The first is jihad against lust. Quraish Shihab categorized ﬁghting lust as part of jihad [17]. If one wants to get what he wants, be it worldly or hereafter, one must put aside one’s lust. If this lust is always followed, it will certainly lead to the abyss of humiliation and away from Islamic and human values. Therefore, the scholars believe that the most important jihad is the jihad against lust.

The second is jihad against Satan. Satan, according to Quraish Shihab, is the source of all evil. The way Satan misleads people is by tempting them to indulge their lusts. Allah conﬁrms that Satan is a real enemy of humans, who always tries to mislead and lead humans to enmity and humiliation. As in His words, “And so We have made for every Prophet enemies—devilish humans and jinn—whispering to one another with elegant words of deception. Had it been your Lord’s Will, they would not have done such a thing. So, leave them and their deceit” (Surah Al Anam: 112).

Thus, ideally, if a man wants to succeed in this world or the hereafter, he must make himself a mujahid who strives sincerely against all forms of temptations and tricks of the devil.

The third is jihad against the infidels. This variety of jihad has been clearly stated in the QS. At Taubah: 73. According to Quraish Shihab, this type of jihad is to take up a weapon against them. It is further strengthened by God’s command to be ﬁrm with them. Firmness here does not mean personal enmity with them, imposing their will, destroying their place of worship, or preventing them from carrying out their beliefs. However, the ﬁrm stance here is against their hostility or attempts to insult religious teachings and Muslims. It is even more important when depriving Muslims of legal rights [18].

Fourth is jihad against the polytheists. Jihad against the polytheists is categorized differently by Quraish Shihab due to looking at the context at the time of the Prophet ﬁrst. In the past, before the hijrah, the Prophet Muhammad was ordered to ﬁght against those who opposed his da’wah with gentle sentences, which touched the mind and heart, not with weapons. At that time, the situation of the Muslims was still very weak, and they did not yet have physical strength. According to Quraish Shihab, this type of jihad is a great (Akbar) jihad, namely armed jihad, with the Qur’an as His word, “So do not yield to the disbelievers, but strive diligently against them with this Qur’an” (QS. Al Furqan: 52).

Based on the explanation above, jihad does not always mean taking up arms. As did the Prophet Muhammad in the early days of Islam, jihad was carried out with Qur’an. According to Quraish Shihab, jihad with Qur’an is very relevant to the current context compared to jihad using weapons.

Fifth is jihad against hypocrites. Prophet Muhammad was ordered to do jihad against the hypocrites because he was often humiliated and abused by them. Hypocrites hide their enmity towards Islam and often pollute Islam with their extremism movement has become part of the life of Muslims. Awareness that radicalism in terrorism is a form of violence that is not related to religious teachings and must be fought for together [19]. The anti-extremism movement has become part of the life of the moderate Islamic boarding school community.
so that the spirit of learning and the lifestyle of the Islamic boarding school community is to avoid, prevent, and combat all forms of violence in the name of religion [9].

In addition, deradicalization is a strategy to overcome the problem of terrorism or radicalism, namely, to restore (repair or cure) the actors and other parties involved in these actions. It is the terrorists who are often indoctrinated or ideologized with the radicalism movement, which makes them victims of "radicalism" in the process. Deradicalization is also an attempt to reduce or cure radical levels [19].

One of the ways that can be done to deradicalize is to seek, for example, peace education as an effective means. This education takes place through direct learning, where the diversity (plural) of language, culture, race, ethnicity, and religion is regulated and respected. Here, students will be able to keep their distance from things that trigger hostility and division.

2.10 The Role of Inclusive Interpretation in the Islamic Boarding School Community

The exclusive meaning of the *jihad* verse is often used as a factor in the departure of radical understanding and behavior among the Islamic boarding school community. Acts and understanding of radicalism can be overcome with various forms of effort, and education based on moderation is one of them. This education proceeds by embedding the interpretation of *jihad* verses on a more inclusive basis. This effort comes because of the emergence of radicalism, which is often based on a literal interpretation of the *jihad* verse, one perspective, and minimal references, which suggests the validity of the use of violent measures [20].

In principle, efforts are needed to understand and reinterpret religious ideas that are more inclusive. Interpretation without considering its main purpose (*maqashidul Qur'an*) can be biased. Often, the interpretation of the Qur'an is forced to conform to certain ideological views. Therefore, there is a need for an effort to understand and reinterpret the verses of the Qur'an in their entirety on a more inclusive basis of interpretation.

The interpretation that *jihad* is not limited to acts of physical violence gives the Islamic boarding school community another option in practicing the verses of *jihad*. The meaning is that *jihad* can be in the form of fighting against lust, and Satan offers them the practice of *jihad* by refraining from committing immorality and damage and admonishing *makruf* *nahi munkar*. The interpretation that *jihad* can take the form of fighting hypocrites offers them to practice the verses of *jihad* through lectures, writings, or social media in the context of counter-narrative of all forms of destruction of Islam that they seek.

3. CONCLUSION

Deradicalization efforts: The radical understanding that emerges among the Islamic boarding school community is certain to start from a cause. The narrow meaning of the *jihad* verse and lack of references seems to be upstream of the misinterpretation or misconception of *jihad*, which leads to radical understanding and actions by the Islamic boarding school community. The Islamic boarding school education culture with a doctrine and exclusive system that emphasizes a one-way education pattern from a kyai as the center of the educational process [5] is also suspected to be a factor supporting the development of a radical understanding of the Islamic boarding school community. These various factors then foster an understanding that *jihad* is only a matter of taking up arms against people who disagree with them.

Seeing this reality, an effort to deradicalize the Islamic boarding school community is needed with the main narrative in the form of making inclusive the meaning of the *jihad* theme verse in the learning material. Efforts can be started from the awareness of the Islamic boarding school leaders that the interpretation of the *jihad* verse that they have understood so far is not quite right. Thus, it is necessary to reinterpret the interpretation of the *jihad* verses, which they have made as evidence. After growing awareness of it, an understanding of the meaning of a more inclusive interpretation can be brought and then transmitted to all elements of the Islamic boarding school community. Because with an Islamic boarding school education culture that adheres to a "one-man show" system, where obedience to the kyai is absolute (which automatically closes the space for new interpretations or other perspectives considered correct other than those conveyed by the kyai), there will be no significant change drastically, apart from being played by the leaders of the Islamic boarding school. Even more, this change in the interpretation and meaning of *jihad* is of a principle in nature, which may not be changed except by the leadership, kyai, or ustaz from the Islamic boarding school.

REFERENCES


