

Edited by
Najib Kailani & Munirul Ikhwan

THE NARRATIVES OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN INDONESIA

Educational Background and Individual Agency



PusPIDeP

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OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM
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PREFACE

In the post 9/11 the studies of violent extremism associated with Islam and Muslims have become one of the research topics that attract a lot of attention from researchers. Some of them focus their research on the backgrounds of radical and extremist educational institutions by examining educational networks and highlighting curricula and religious views circulating in the educational environment. They argue that religious educational institutions have cultivated radical and extremist ideologies. Consequently, pejorative views that portray Islamic educational institutions as the incubators of terrorism and religious extremism often influence counter-terrorism policies and image building by mass media in the West.

This excessive representation, which tends to be reductionist toward Islamic educational institutions, has in turn received a lot of criticism. Several scholars have shown convincing data that many people who study in Islamic educational institutions, which are associated with radicalism and extremism, do not necessarily become radicals or extremists. On the contrary, the facts show that many people are exposed to radical and extremist ideologies in educational institutions, which primarily do not teach religion such as public schools and universities.

In addition, other scholars view violent extremism within the political-economic framework. The political economic perspective argues that instead of educational institutions or religious ideology that expose people to radical and extremist views, vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds, experiences of structural marginalization, and uncertainty indeed lead people to become radicalized and extremist. Other observers point out that the economic background is not the only issue. The issue of identity search and shock as a consequence of globalization is also an important factor that makes someone involved and active in radical and extremist groups.

However, excessive attention to the figures and networks of radical and extremist educational institutions will lead to a generalization of representation and deny individual agency, while neglecting their religious educational background by highlighting identity and structural problems seems reductionist. Enriching previous studies, this book comes to shed some lights on the religious educational backgrounds of former convicted terrorists, returnees and deportees through their biographical narratives and individual agency.

The book in the hands of the readers is a result of research conducted by the research team of Center for Islam, Democracy and Peace Studies (PusPIDeP) in Yogyakarta in collaboration with School of Graduate Studies of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Center for the Studies of Islam and Society (PPIM) of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Convey Indonesia. Through in-depth interviews with 20 informants

from the backgrounds of former convicted terrorists, and the returnees and deportees of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in West Java, Central Java and East Java, this book shows that their religious educational backgrounds appear to have significantly facilitated them to become radical and extremist when mediated by structural problems, identity, social linkages, and ideology.

The outcomes of this study would not have existed without the involvement of ideas and sacrifices from many persons. First of all, we would like to thank the research team involved in this research; they are Prof. Noorhaidi Hasan, Najib Kailani, Munirul Ikhwan, Ahmad Rafiq and Nina Mariani Noor. Without the dedication and seriousness that they have devoted to conducting research during the Covid-19 pandemic, which is currently sweeping the world as well as the hard work and dedication of PusPIDEP's management team: Najib Kailani, Munirul Ikhwan, Erie Susanty and Subi Nur Isnaini, who had overseen this project from the beginning to the end, this book will not reach the hands of the readers.

In addition, the role and participation of the research assistants in each province has made this research handy and smooth. We would like to sincerely thank Anas Aijuddin and Aflahal Misbah (Central Java), Halya Millati and Lukman Hakim (East Java) and Ardi Putra Prasetya and Selvi Maharani Pujiani (West Java). We also thank Mr. Faisal of Omah Ijo who had facilitated us during our research in Central Java.

We would like to thank Convey Indonesia and PPIM

of UIN Jakarta for giving trust to PusPIDeP and School of Graduate Studies of UIN Sunan Kalijaga as partners in this Convey research project, especially Prof. Jamhari Ma'ruf and Dr. Ismatu Ropi, Dr. Didin Syafruddin, Fikri, Dani, Abdalla and Narsi who facilitated and were intensely involved in the design of this research.

In addition, PusPIDeP would like to thank friends and colleagues who have given some remarks during the workshop for research preparation, and the presentation of the research results. We also want to thank Dr. phil Suratno, Dr. Noor Huda Ismail, and Dr. Haula Noor for their comments and discussion during the workshop for research design. Criticism, suggestions and remarks from Dr. Suhadi, Dr. Iklilah, Prof. Raihani, Aysha Rizki Ramadiaz, and Nava Nuraniyah during the workshop and presentation of the research results were very meaningful for us to sharpen data analysis and to build arguments.

Finally, we do hope that the presence of this book can enrich the discussion on radicalism and religious extremism, which specifically sheds some lights on individual narratives and agency in relation to the religious education of former convicted terrorists, ISIS returnees and deportees. Happy reading!

February 26, 2021

Najib Kailani

PusPIDeP Yogyakarta

GLOSSARY

- Women's Agency : women's active involvement in a group or movement supported by their individual capacities. In Islamic militant movements, women are actively involved, for example, in spreading the ideas of radicalism and extremism, inviting their relatives and friends to carry out jihadi actions.
- Agency : an active subject who has an individual capacity to act independently in determining his own life choices.
- Al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* : loyalty and love for Islam, and to escape oneself from and hate those who are hostile to Islam.
- Amaliyah : Islamic practices. In radical groups, this term is often used to refer to several important actions such as actions to forbid wrong (*nahi munkar*), suicide bombings, direct physical *jihād* or war, indirect jihad by providing material and immaterial assistance.
- Baiat* : oath of allegiance to the leader.

- Deportees : ISIS sympathizers who had left Indonesia with the aim of joining ISIS, but on their way they were caught by a local government, such as the Turkish, and then were deported to Indonesia.
- Digital native : children born as the “native speakers” of the digital languages of computers, video games, and the Internet.
- Digital immigrant : people who are not born in a digital culture, but have begun to enter the digital world because of the media revolution.
- ESQ : Emotional Spiritual Quotient; a training program initiated by Ary Ginanjar Agustian with the goal of character building through the combination of human’s three potentials: intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligences.
- City guerrillas : jihadi actions carried out not in a country in conflict by searching for and attacking the enemies who are in their own territory or country.
- Halaqah* : an Islamic study forum where participants sit in a circle and the

teacher gives instruction on Islam from a certain Islamic book. This study forum is generally open to the public. It is just that the participants tend to be limited because the locations chosen are generally a corner of a mosque or other special places, in contrast to public learning a square or other wider places.

Islamic heroism : an understanding, belief, attitude or action that prioritizes courage in upholding truth and justice based on Islamic norms or teachings.

Hijrah : literally defined as migration from one place to another. In the case of jihadi groups, *hijrah* is defined as migration from an infidel country to an Islamic state. In practice, *hijrah* has different forms: some interpret it in a physical form, such as moving from Indonesia to ISIS; others interpret it in a non-physical form, such as taking allegiance to the caliph while still living in an infidel state, like the case of ISIS in Indonesia.

Islam kaffah : a doctrine about the idea of perfect Islam.

- Jamaah Jihad : an Islamic militant group based in Surakarta with around 50 members and starting its operation around 2010/2011. The group, which was led by Sigit Qardhawi, is a transformation of Tim Hisbah in Surakarta.
- JAD : *Jamaah Ansharut Daulah*; a jihadi extremist organization founded by Aman Abdurrahman.
- Jl : *Jamaah Islamiyah*; an Islamic militant organization operating in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, which is officially declared as a forbidden organization.
- LDK : *Lembaga Dakwah Kampus* (Campus Proselytizing Unit); a student activism unit that focuses on religion and proselytization.
- Life narrative : a research approach that emphasizes the subjective experience of an informant by exploring his life stories from childhood to adulthood, especially important stories that are closely related to the focus of the research.

- Maksiat (immorality) : behavior that is contrary to Islamic teachings or norms.
- Napiter : Former convicts of terrorism who are affiliated with all Islamic militant groups, except ISIS.
- MMI : Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (Indonesian Mujahidin Council); a radical Islamist organization that was formed in 2000 and served as an umbrella for Islamist and jihadi groups at the beginning of the Reformation Era.
- MTA : Majelis Tafsir Al-Qur'an (Council for the Interpretation of the Qur'an); an Islamic organization that focuses on education and *da'wa* founded by Abdullah Thufail in Surakarta in 1972.
- Nahi munkar : An Islamic doctrine that prohibits immorality. In the jihadist groups, the practice of this doctrine is transformed into a frontal and radical movement manifested in raiding places of immorality or other acts of *amaliyah* such as suicide bombings.

- NII : Negara Islam Indonesia (Islamic State of Indonesia); an Islamic militant group, which was initiated by Kartosoewirjo and attempted to establish an Islamic State in Indonesia. After its founder was executed, NII splits up into many groups.
- ISIS : Islamic State of Iraq and Syria; the caliphate state declared by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in mid-2014.
- Returnees : ISIS sympathizers who have left Indonesia and succeeded in joining ISIS in Iraq and Syria, but managed to return to Indonesia.
- Rohis : Kerohanian Islam (Islamic spirituality); an extracurricular activity in high school that focus on religion and *da'wa*.
- Salafis : Muslims who call for a 'return to the pure Islam' by practicing the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition in the literal sense, and following the religious model of the first three generations of Muslims. In practice, they are divided into many models as a result of different

interpretations in applying the pure Islam. Among the many models mentioned by some researchers are purist, political, and jihadi Salafis.

Sīra : a branch of Islamic scholarship that discusses the history of Islam with the main focus on the hagiography of the Prophet Muhammad.

Sweeping : an action carried out by a group of people in a convoy heading to a certain location with the aim of eradicating things that are considered contrary to norms. In the case of jihadi groups, they collectively raid the places of immorality with the aim to stop immoral practices in those places.

Syahid : holy death guaranteed with heaven because someone dies while defending his religion.

Taghut : a term used to denote an object of worship apart from Allah. In the context of Islamic religious politics, this term is also used for tyrannical rulers and their ranks who ignore and even stand against the absolute power and law of God.

Takfīr / takfiri : an Islamic teaching or doctrine that easily accuse other Islamic groups with different understanding of being infidel, especially those who do not will to make Allah's law the main law. In the political context, this doctrine launches the accusation of infidelity against the state and all agencies under the state that do not employ God's law as the state law.

Tim Hisbah : a local Islamic militant organization in Surakarta founded by Sigid Qardhawi etc. in 2008. The organization, which consisted of mosques young activists, was active in carrying out the "*nahi munkar*" movement in the community by sweeping the places of immorality. Two years after its establishment, this organization split into two groups: one group led by Sigid Qardhawi changed to Jamaah Jihad with its *takfīr* doctrine, while the other group remained in the old style of movement as it was originally founded, "*nahi munkar*".

Ukhuwwa Islāmiyya : An Islamic teaching or doctrine that emphasizes brotherhood among Muslims without considering national and regional boundaries.

TRANSLITERATION

Consonants

| | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|-----------------|
| ء | ’ | ز | z | ك | k |
| ا | a | س | s | ل | l |
| ب | b | ش | sh | م | m |
| ت | t | ص | ṣ | ن | n |
| ث | th | ض | ḍ | و | w |
| ج | j | ط | ṭ | ه | h |
| ح | ḥ | ظ | ẓ | ي | y |
| خ | kh | ع | ‘ | ال | al and ‘l |
| د | d | غ | gh | ة | a (in construct |
| ذ | dh | ف | f | | state: -at) |
| ر | r | ق | q | | |

Vowels

| | | | | | |
|---------|----|--------------------|------------|----|----|
| Long | آ | ā | Short | ا | a |
| | إي | ī | | ي | i |
| | أو | ū | | و | u |
| Doubled | يـ | iyy (final form ī) | Diphthongs | أي | ai |
| | وـ | uww (final form ū) | | أو | au |

CHAPTER

I



INTRODUCTION

RADICALISM AND EXTREMISM IN INDONESIA: RELIGIOUS EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND INDIVIDUAL AGENCY

Munirul Ikhwan and Najib Kailani



Democratization in post-1998 Indonesia has opened wide doors for individual and association freedom. This development necessitates an intensification of contest between various powers which in turn displays the fragmentation of political and religious authority (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996; Salvatore and Eickelman 2004; Turner 2007). One of the implications of this new era is the emergence of religious-based radicalism and extremism triggered by jihadi *fatwās* (religious legal opinions) from religious leaders in the Middle East, communal conflicts involving the killing of Muslims, and the victory of global jihadism's influence, which under certain conditions can transform into jihadism and terrorism (ICG 2004). Indeed, not all acts of terrorism were inspired by new movements that emerged during the Reformation Era. The jihadi movement also emerged from the background of old

clandestine movements during the authoritarian New Order government (1966-1998). These old movements were led by religious figures with clear affiliations of Islamic educational institutions, such as Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir with the Al-Mukmin Islamic Boarding School of Ngruki in Sukoharjo, Central Java. This fact then raises the question about the extent to which Islamic religious institutions and education contribute to fostering radicalism and terrorism.

A survey conducted by Center for Islamic and Community Studies (PPIM) of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah in 2017 showed that a large number of students (58.50%) had radical religious views since they were in school or university (Saputra, Nisa, et al. 2018). However, the survey does not provide a clear answer from where and how these students possessed radical religious understanding. The PPIM's survey in the following year linked the radical views of students with the "religious views of their educators" - 56.90% of teachers had intolerant opinions, and 46.09% had radical opinions (PPIM 2018). Once again the survey does not provide a definite answer whether radicalism (and extremism) has a causal relationship with the background of Islamic religious education. Nevertheless, the numbers above indicate an alarming condition related to socio-religious life in Indonesia after the 1998 Reformation. The above survey also provides an explanation as to why radicalism and terrorism emerge and receive sympathy from a number of Indonesian Muslim communities: the educational "environment" has become the initial context. The survey above also partly helps us to answer why the Islamic State of

Iraq and Syria (ISIS) led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (2013-2019) manages to attract hundreds of Indonesians to join Syria and instills sympathy among a number of Muslim citizens in the country.

Several previous studies seem to emphasize the affiliation to religious education institutions to explain the emergence of radicalism and terrorism (ICG 2002). However, the relationship between the perpetrators of radicalism and terrorism and the background of Islamic religious education still leaves important questions. Martin van Bruinessen (2006), for example, questions the causal relationship of religious educational institutions with the religious tendencies of their alumni. He explores how the modern boarding school of Gontor could produce figures who had contrasting religious views, namely Nurcholis Madjid who was known as a liberal Muslim scholar, and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir who was known as the leader of Muslim jihadists. Mark Woodward et al. (2010) even rejects the causal relationship between religious education in Indonesia and the emergence of radicalism and extremism, which actually appears in public universities among students who experience "re-Islamization" -through informal channels- but detached from the tradition of religious learning in general.

Linking radicalism and extremism exclusively to religious educational institutions is an unfair generalization. Farish A. Noor, Yoginder Sikan, and Martin van Bruinessen (2009) are correct in their critique of studies that always link 'radicalism', 'militancy' and 'fundamentalism' to the exclusive

role of *madrasas* (Islamic schools) and *pondoks* (Islamic boarding-based schools). According to them, this viewpoint is very narrow because it seems to negate the other roles of *madrasas* or *pondoks* in providing affordable education and bridging religion and modernity. In other words, the exploration of the religious educational background of individuals exposed to radicalism and terrorism through biographical narratives tends to be neglected in existing studies, including the study by Noor, Sikan, and van Bruinessen above. Excessive attention to figures and networks of radical and extremist educational institutions will lead to the generalization of representation and deny individual agency. Meanwhile, ignoring their religious educational backgrounds by highlighting identity and structural problems also seems to be reductionist.

Radicalism and extremism in Muslim societies can be formed from the life process of the youth in claiming youthfulness. The youth are often seen as a social construction that has certain socio-psychological characteristics as well as certain habitus —ingrained habits that are produced by certain perceptual schemes and thoughts in responding to something (Bourdieu 1977, 18). They are often seen by elite groups as “the future of the nation”, but under certain conditions they are also seen as vulnerable to radicalism and fraud (Harrera 2006; Bayat 2010; Bayat and Herrera 2010). Religious processes during the youth period are important to see how adults’ religiosity is formed. In the Indonesian context, the social, economic and political situations as well as

the perceptions about a dysfunctional state contribute to the rejection (16.44%) of religious figures—who tend to have exclusive and radical religious views—against the idea of a nation-state (Kailani, Ikhwan, and Suhadi 2019). However, this rejection is not only motivated by radical and extreme religious ideology, but also as part of the efforts by a number of religious leaders outside the government to negotiate their position before the state (Hasan 2019).

Terror perpetrators with religious backgrounds who emerged during the Reformation Era and the interest of a number of Indonesian citizens to join ISIS still become puzzles for policymakers and researchers in the social, religious, political and educational fields. What context motivates them and makes them consolidate themselves to commit acts of terror and ‘treason’ has raised questions that require answers, which are not simple. Reading Abu Bakar Ba’asyir, for example, we need to look not only at his educational background, but also the context of his youth, as well as the political position he took against the state. Another aspect that constitutes our question is, of course, those former convicted terrorists who have experienced existentialist experiences.

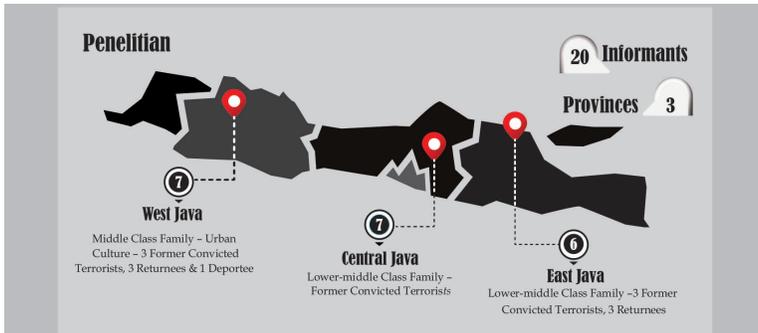
For this reason, this study attempts to look more closely at whether the background of religious education in schools and universities always has a causal relationship with the religious trends of their alumni or not by answering the following questions. Why are some Indonesian Muslims attracted to extremist ideologies and compelled to join radical organizations or ISIS? What are the educational backgrounds

of those former convicted terrorists, Indonesian jihadists who returned to their hometowns (hereinafter referred to as “returnees”), and ISIS deportees? To what extent have their educational backgrounds —both formal and informal— contributed to inculcating or facilitating the growth of extremist and jihadist ideologies within themselves? What are the sources of knowledge that become the important references for those former convicted terrorists, ISIS returnees and deportees? To what extent do their individual narratives and aspirations help orient their religious knowledge? And to what extent do women’s agencies play a role?

Methods and Approaches

Radicalism and extremism are complex issues that do not stand alone. To look more closely at how religious education contributes to shaping individuals, who have been exposed to radicalism, this study uses a qualitative in-depth interview method to explore the history and narratives of their lives. First of all, data collection is carried out through a desk study by exploring information available in media, relevant previous studies, and the results of investigation report (*Berita Acara Pemeriksaan*, BAP). This study involves 20 informants consisting of 13 (thirteen) former convicted terrorists, 6 (six) returnees, and 1 (one) deportee who come from the three provinces of research location: West Java, Central Java and East Java. To protect the privacy of the informants, this book does not mention the real names of those informants; instead, this book uses a pseudonym in its discussion.

West Java is chosen because of its association with an important base for the DI/TII (Darul Islam/ Indonesian Islamic Army) movement. Central Java, especially the Greater Solo in academic studies, is often associated with the center of radical and extremist Islamic movements. Central Java is the base (or the place of origin) of well-known terrorists who become the members of the Pesantren Ngruki and Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) networks. Meanwhile, as for East Java, although generally known as an enclave for the followers of a moderate Islamic organization, NU (Nahdlatul Ulama), a church bombing in 2018 and the presence of several terrorist cells such as Amrozi and friends show the importance of East Java's position as a basis of terrorist networks.



Map of Research and informants

This study employs a life narrative approach that delves into the life history of former convicted terrorists, returnees, and deportees by exploring their educational backgrounds, life aspirations, individual narratives, and their worldview. This study situates individuals (former convicted terrorists, ISIS returnees, and deportees) as agents who

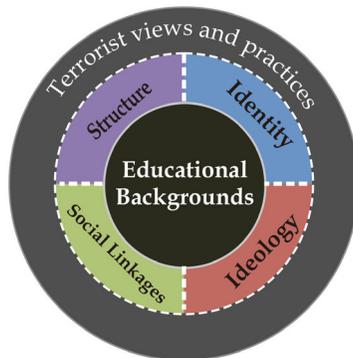
engage in violent acts and religion-based extremism within the framework of narrative theory and argument about the 'self', which is incomplete, fractured, and ambivalent. The theoretical debate over the idea of an incomplete 'self' has attracted the attention of many scholars. Anthropologist Katherine P. Ewing (1990) argues that an individual never actually experiences wholeness, but is always in a moment of ambivalence and inconsistency.

Ewing builds her argument from the study of James W. Fernandez (1986) about religious movements whose members selectively choose religious ideas or about situations to present an experience of stable wholeness even though its components are inconsistent. Ewing, on the other hand, argues that individuals often experience moments of inconsistency that occur due to life aspirations that are not in line with culture or due to a specific momentum that the individual responds to. This moment of inconsistency is always in the process of becoming, negotiating, or adapting to the situation that surrounds him. Ewing's view differs from the argument of symbolic anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz who positions symbols as representations of culture or characteristic concepts about self or individual.

Ewing's argument is further developed by Samuli Schielke (2009) with an articulation that specifically observes the experience of being Muslim. Schielke shows that being pious is not always linear with ethical self-improvement. Being pious is also shaped or influenced by one's life aspirations such as disposition to remain a good Muslim —by

following the instructions of the Qur'an and the Sunnah— on the one hand, but on the other hand, he is still an individual who falls in love, wants to prosper, etc. This momentum is what makes individuals always in a situation of inconsistency, ambivalence and fragmentation. In the context of this research, inconsistent, ambivalent and incomplete 'self' can only be portrayed through the life narratives of individuals who are involved in extremist violent ideology.

The narrative theory is very representative in shedding light on people who are involved in religion-based extremist movements. This theory seeks to understand and analyze how the violent ideology operates at the individual level and how 'individual agency' has a major influence on temporal and contextual acceptance. Several scholars have used this theory in studying vulnerable groups such as women and the radicals and extremists, as in the research by Samina Yasmeen (2007) on Laskar e-Taiba in Pakistan, and that of Minako Sakai and Samina Yasmeen (2016) about women's agency and womanhood.



Theory Illustration

Based on field findings, this study proposes a theoretical argument that educational backgrounds and religious knowledge significantly contribute to make individual exposed to radical and extremist ideologies and encourage him to engage in religion-based terror activities only when mediated by structural factors, identity, socialization or social linkages, and ideology. In other words, these four factors play a major role in shaping and directing certain religious understandings towards the radical religious ones and religion-based terrorist acts.

Religious Education Mediated by Other Factors

Based on data and an analysis of the informants' individual narratives which include family and educational backgrounds, social networks, and structural awareness, this study views that the religious educational background of former convicted terrorists, ISIS returnees, and deportees does not necessarily expose them to radical and terrorist ideologies without the mediation of driving factors. In this case, structural factors, identity, social networks, and ideology significantly orient an individual toward radical religious understanding, extremism, and religion-based violence.

Structural problems such as poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment also encourage individuals to look for ways of resistance that accommodate their aspirations. In the context of the death of leftist criticism, radicalism and extremism have become alternative ideologies of resistance for them (Hadiz 2020). Ideology, which generally plays a

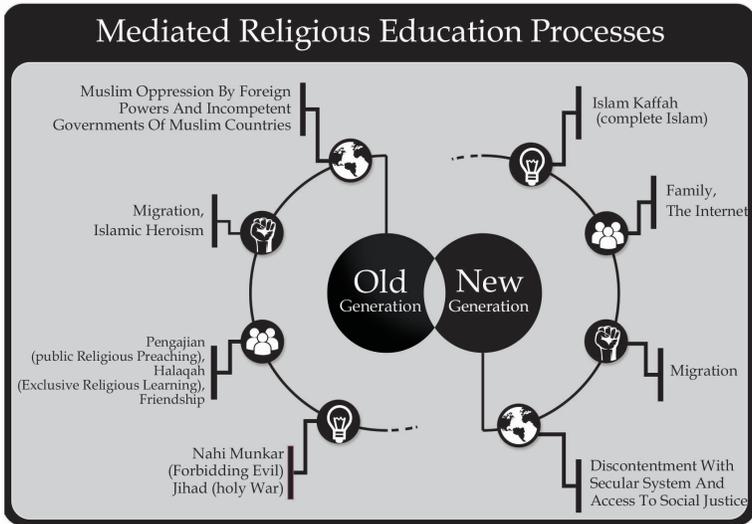
central role in the recruitment process for members of radical movements, is considered to only strengthen a framing that is built on disenchantment with social, political, and economic conditions. Experiences as victims of injustice, discrimination or marginalization that make individuals lack access to economic, social, educational, health and political resources also lead individuals to radical movements, especially among the youth who are still in the process of finding their identity. The youth who are in the transition phase of age growth are more prone to experiencing an identity crisis which causes them to experience what is known as cognitive opening, a micro-sociological process that brings them closer to the acceptance of new, more radical ideas (Wiktorowicz 2005).

In addition, moral shock is also one of the pathways leading to radical and extremist understandings. The factors above are able to make individuals become radical when they meet social linkages that provide them with religious education in the form of knowledge indoctrination. The styles of religious education they receive from formal and informal institutions are mutually interrelated, and expose them to radical and extremist understandings when mediated and supported by structural factors, identity, social linkages, and ideology.

It should be noted that the educational background referred to in this study does not only include formal education—such as schools, madrasas, universities and Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*)— but also informal education—such as public religious preachings (*pengajian*), exclusive religious

circles, social linkages, and the internet. Formal religious education actually does not directly encourage individuals to be exposed to radicalism and extremism if we take into account the structure of the curriculum of formal religious education in general. However, certain informal religious learning channels in schools, universities, or Islamic boarding schools also introduce students to radical Islamic movements and ideologies through individual teachers or lecturers, Rohis (Islamic religious activities in school), or students' religious proselytizing communities such as Campus Proselytizing Unit (*Lembaga Dakwah Kampus, LDK*).

The role of such institutions as schools or universities represented by teachers and lecturers is very significant in stemming or even fostering radicalization practices within the schools' environment. Indoctrination is sometimes also carried out by individual teachers in the teaching-learning processes or through extracurricular activities. The existence of Rohis as part of extracurricular activities in schools can be an entry point for the infiltration process of radical, intolerant, exclusive, and anti-human rights views. In certain contexts, even the anti-Pancasila views can be penetrated by radical groups through these informal channels. At the university level, the students' religious proselytizing communities can be important routes for the regeneration processes of some radical groups in campus. Through their regular meetings, radical activists carry out coaching that leads to indoctrination and regeneration.



However, we need to consider these former convicted terrorists, returnees and deportees not merely as objects of indoctrination of radical and extremist ideologies, but rather as agents. As agents, they have the individual capacity to act independently in determining their own life choices. It seems that Islamic religious education in formal institutions has not been fully capable of exploring students' religious aspirations, individual narratives, and agency. This condition encourages them to look for channels of informal religious education outside schools, universities, or Islamic boarding schools, which they deem fit their individual aspirations and narratives. In the midst of the identity crisis and the structural problems that they encounter, and the inability of formal religious education to capture their aspirations, a number of students are looking to informal education outside. It is in this context that radicalism and terrorism have developed more.

Among former convicted terrorists, for example, formal Islamic religious education is deemed incapable of accommodating their individual religious aspirations regarding, for example, heroism in Islam. They then look for outside sources of education until they find a narrative that “fits” their aspirations. Heroism in Islam is then translated as involvement in the actions of *amar makruf nahi munkar* (commanding right and forbidding wrong). Their involvement in these actions answers a question on the idea of ‘intact’ Islam (*kāffa*), which is not sufficient only to be ‘known’, but has also to be ‘put into practice’. This encourages them to become involved in raids on ‘immoral’ practices and places. At the next level, this heroism can also be realized in *jihād* (war). The justification for *jihād* is deduced from their understanding that the livelihood of the Prophet Muhammad after the age of 40 was not trading, but *jihād* or war.

Another aspect that needs to be considered in this research is the turning point of former convicted terrorists, returnees or deportees, namely the moment when they have stopped or decided to leave the circles of radicalism and terrorism. Individuals, as Katherine P. Ewing (1990) argues, actually never experience wholeness, but always face moments of ambivalence and inconsistency. What factors make radical individuals and terrorists quit their old ideology can be seen from the factor of the individual’s incompleteness. The above points need to be answered in order to unravel the tangled threads of religion-based radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia as considerations for the efforts to create best

practices for religious learning both in formal and informal educational institutions and in the wider community.

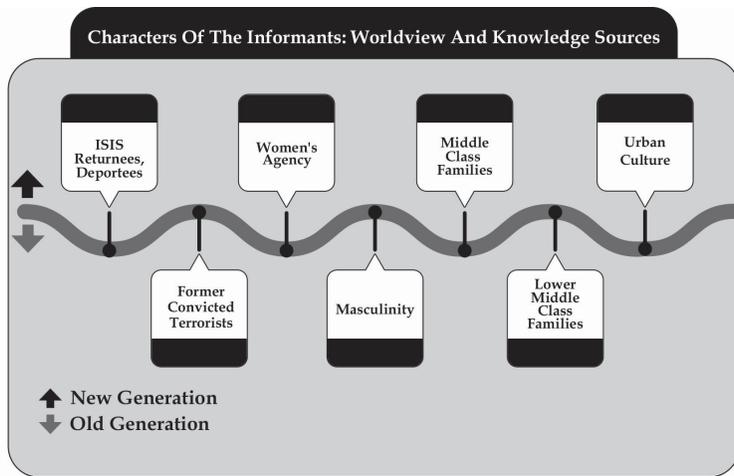
Generational Issues

This research finds two generations of individuals who have been exposed to radicalism and terrorism. This generational difference is seen from their worldviews. The old generation's worldview is much more shaped by their social linkages, while the new generation's is more influenced by open information related to their religious aspirations. The first generation is dominated by the informants from among those former convicted terrorists. In general, they come from the background of lower middle class families. They were exposed to terrorist ideologies through social linkages: public religious preachings, exclusive religious circles, and friendship. Middle and lower social class does not exclusively make individuals radical. Social linkages do shape their structural awareness and introduce them to radical and extremist ideologies. The distribution of this old generation is relatively prevalent, although Central Java appears to be a strong base for this generation. Although they have been released from prison, they seem to still hold strong extremist and radical ideologies. They still believe in a sacred mission regarding the necessity of establishing an Islamic state (caliphate), war against the infidels, and resistance against any elements of *tāghūt*.¹

1 *Tāghūt* is a term used to denote any objects of worship other than Allah. In the context of Islamic religious politics, this term is also used for tyrannical rulers who ignore or even oppose Allah's absolute power and law.

A teacher in a religious learning circle (*ḥalaqa*) is an important figure in orienting this old generation of extremists. Besides, reading books circulating within their social linkages also has a significant influence. Each book contains the ideology and interest of the author who wants the readers to believe in the same ideology. The variety of readings circulating in their social linkages includes *Tarbiyah Jihadiyah* (Jihād Education) by Abdullah Azzam, *Murtad Karena Hukum* (Apostate because of Law) by Abdul Qadir bin Abdul Aziz, *Mimpi Suci di Balik Jeruji* (Holy Dreams Behind Bars) by Ali Ghufroon Nurhasyim Mukhlas At-Tenjuluny, *Sekuntum Rosela Pelipur Lara* (A Roselle the Healer of Sorrow) by Imam Samudra, *Senyum Terakhir Sang Mujahid* (The Final Smile of the Mujahid) by Amrozi bin Nurhasyim, *Al-Wala 'wa al-Bara'* (Loyalty and Disloyalty) by Muhammad Sa'id al-Qahtani, and books by Aman Abdurrahman such as *Seri Materi Tauhid* (Series on Tawḥīd Lecture) and *Akidah Para Rasul* (the Faith of the Apostles).

Meanwhile, the new generation is dominated by ISIS returnees and deportees. They generally come from wealthy families and urban culture. Family networks and the Internet are the important contexts that make them exposed to radicalism. Family becomes the first field for the spreading of radical propaganda. This can be seen from the fact that there is a kin relationship among those exposed to radicalism as happened in the context of West Java. When a family member is exposed to radicalism, he becomes an agent of radical groups in recruiting and indoctrinating other family members.



This new generation of radicalism obtains information about radical understandings and movements through the Internet. They tend to be more “independent” in learning extremist ideas that they access from the Internet. Their high curiosity led them to seek knowledge from the Internet sources, such as digital books (e-books) and videos containing radical contents on the Internet. Social media also becomes a channel that connects them with radical group networks. Currently, social media is indeed the most effective means for spreading radicalism. Extremist groups optimize the use of social media to incite and recruit young people to be exposed to radicalism and to engage in the acts of violent extremism, among others, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). ISIS is very active in using the Internet to spread radical propaganda and to recruit members. Ironically, videos on *bay‘a* (pledge of allegiance) to the radical group of ISIS in Indonesia are indeed performed by the youth, school and university students.

Among the returnees and the deportees, family and internet-based religious information accommodates their individual aspirations in responding to structural and identity problems. ISIS is seen not only as a prospect for a better future, but also as an answer to structural problems in Indonesia. The transformation of a new identity through the consumption of religious information from families and the Internet encourages them to do something meaningful in their lives, namely migrating under the banner of ISIS. For them, religion is a direct return to the Qur'an, and the story of the Prophet Muhammad is an example of the triumph of Islamic politics. This position makes the construction of the knowledge they acquire has a romanticist and reformist character.

Between the Doctrines of *Ukhuwwa* and *Takfir*

Chapter 2 examines the educational backgrounds of former convicted terrorists in Central Java. In this chapter, Najib Kailani, Munirul Ikhwan, and Aflahal Misbah highlight the doctrines of *ukhuwwa* and *takfir* as the basis for the jihadi activism, which become a central discourse within their networks. There are some basic differences regarding the ideology held by each of JI, ISIS, and Tim Hisbah in arousing the spirit of *jihad*. JI builds its jihadi ideology on the doctrine of brotherhood among Muslims (*al-ukhuwwa al-Islāmiyya*), which also includes global Muslim brotherhood. There is a strong desire from former JI convicted terrorists to rise up and fight against countries that oppress Muslims in Muslim-

majority countries. This model of jihad is seen as a form of retaliation or defense against their oppressed fellow Muslims. This retaliation actually has nothing to do with treason against the state or against the Indonesian government. The fact that JI's jihadi actions are mostly carried out in Indonesia is because they feel that they are unable to reach out those foreign countries. For that reason, they target the state symbols and foreign citizens of 'Western' countries such as Australia and the USA who happen to be in Indonesia. They call this kind of attack a form of "urban guerrilla".

The emphasis on the concept of solid brotherhood at the same time also implies that there are some limitations or special rules in *jihād*. These rules seem to define the criteria of opponents or enemies: they only attack foreign or non-Muslim countries, and they should not attack unless they have been attacked. They also prohibit attacks on places of worship, whether run by Muslims affiliated with other organizations or non-Muslim places of worship, because the acts of jihad that they do are only a form of defense and retaliation against the oppressed Muslim brothers.

Meanwhile, the doctrine of *takfīr* is very popular among the ISIS sympathizers and the members of Tim Hisbah. *Takfīr* has become popular since the early 2000s, and marks the shift of jihadi movement into a new direction. Thus, this movement is different from that of JI, which is based on the doctrine of *ukhuwwa Islāmiyya*. The doctrine of *takfīr* does not only target non-Muslims but also Muslims who are considered not practicing Islamic law according to their version. Based on

this view, all those considered infidels will be judged as lawful that their blood is to be shed, their property to be confiscated, and their honor to be removed.

Although the objects of disbelief are very broad, the attacks are commonly directed mostly towards the state and all people who work under the state agencies, especially the police. This can be seen from the attacks carried out by Team Hisbah. In addition to church attacks, they also have attacked mosques in the vicinity of the police station or mosques that are inaugurated or funded by the government, such as the mosque at the Cirebon Police Headquarter and the Pancasila Mosque in Surakarta. Apart from carrying out attacks on the state or people under the state agencies, they are also no longer willing to participate in activities organized by the state such as elections.

The *Pesantren* Context and the Returnees' Humanitarian Mission

Compared to those from Central Java, the educational backgrounds of the informants from East Java are quite diverse. In chapter 3, Nina Mariani Noor and Mohammad Yunus show the unique context of individuals exposed to extremism in East Java, namely their educational background of *pesantren* which become the initial context for their encounter with radicalism and extremism. Several informants had studied at Islamic boarding schools such as Pondok Modern Gontor Ponorogo (a former convicted terrorist, Abu Dzar), Al Islam Tenggelun Islamic Boarding School, Lamongan (a former

convicted, terrorist Aris), and Pondok Pesantren Umar bin al-Khattab Surabaya (a former convicted terrorist, Gafar Saleh, and a returnee, Wahyu Faza Syafa'at). However, the extent to which the pesantren curriculum contributes to the seeding of radical and extremist understandings poses a question that cannot be easily answered clearly. In this regard, we may only say that the “environment” of pesantren in East Java seems to have helped introduce santri to radical and extremist Islamist literature such as those written by some figures from Muslim Brotherhood (MB; Hasan al-Banna and Said Hawwa), Abu A'la Maududi —a well-known Islamist ideologue from India— and *Tarbiyah Jihadiyah* by Abdullah Azzam —an ideologue of al-Qaeda— through bookstores and friendship networks in pesantren.

This chapter also points to a unique activism of returnees. The returnees from East Java come from wealthy families. Their departure to Syria was motivated more by a call to be involved in a humanitarian mission. This means that they actually did not have strong motivation to stay because they did not bring their families with them. Previously, they had been exposed to radical ideology through the religious learnings of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, Abu Fida, and Abu Tholut. These regular religious learnings also shape the returnees' view on the Indonesian state. Pancasila as the basis of the Indonesian state is seen incompatible with the Islamic teaching because Pancasila is not God's law. This background explains why they became sympathetic to ISIS, although doubts still exist when seen from the way they left for Syria

(without their families).

A turning point occurred when the humanitarian mission was not in accordance with what East Java's returnees had imagined. Under ISIS, it turned out that they had to be involved in war games and involved in the task of securing territory. Violence and killings that took place everywhere prompted them to think about returning to Indonesia. They began to question the true nature of Islam as the grace for all universe (*raḥmatan li 'l-ʿālamīn*) and to question the legitimacy of the caliphate in ensuring political, economic, and security stability.

The Sacred Pedigree of the Former Convicted Terrorists and Women's Agency among the Returnees

In chapter 4, Ahmad Rafiq focuses on the sources of knowledge among former convicted terrorists, ISIS returnees, and deportees. Rafiq attributes this source of knowledge to generational differences. West Java's former convicted terrorists come from an old generation of extremists where social linkages play an important role in ideological indoctrination. Living in an urban culture, they are indeed familiar with digital media including the Internet, and come to know the information circulating in these media, yet in this case they act more as 'digital immigrants' (Prensky 2001a; 2001b) who must confirm this information through the authorities within their social linkages.

Meanwhile, the new generation —dominated by the returnees and deportees— rely more on digital media and

family networks to acquire religious knowledge. In general, they do not have a strong background in religious education. Their curiosity about Islam encourages them to independently search for some information about Islam through the Internet to confirm the information from their family environment. In this chapter, Denok is described as an individual born as a digital native², who has been actively using the Internet since she attended junior high school in 2010. She received the initial information about ISIS from her uncle, a deportee and 'ideologue' in her extended family through social media Telegram and WhatsApp. She eventually searched for the information about ISIS in more detail on the Internet, Facebook, and Tumblr. She obtained the fast and parallel information about Islam from digital sources that depicted justice, prosperity, and the order of life under the banner of ISIS. To her, ISIS appeared to answer questions about an ideal and just state that she did not find from the portrait of the Indonesian state.

Denok's interest in ISIS certainly does not stand alone, but is built on her previous personal religious awareness. Since junior high school, she has been actively surfing and looking at photos of her friends who, she thinks, are "elegant" when wearing a headscarf on their Facebook page. She began to be motivated to change her physical appearance and began to actively read literature about the history of the Prophet

2 The term "digital native" is introduced by Marc Prensky (2001a) in his study on the need to consider a suitable learning method for children born as the "native speakers" of digital computer languages, video games, and the Internet. They were born in a different context from the previous generation, digital immigrants, who never imagine a fun learning by watching television or games.

Muhammad. She felt that she already knew how the leadership of the Prophet and his successors was, and then imagined just leadership in realizing people welfare. She compared the results of her reading with what she understood about the socio-political conditions in Indonesia as broadcast through digital media, which, according to her, displayed a lot of injustice. In this context, her sympathy for ISIS is built from knowledge and advanced reading in digital media, especially the accounts of *daily muhajirah* and *paladins of jihad* on Tumblr, which were quite active in posting the life situation in Syria.

What is interesting about this chapter is also the discussion about women's agency. The urban culture helps explain how this women's agency come into being. This is perhaps what distinguishes the new generation from the old generation of radicalism and extremism, which is very masculine. Denok, who obtained a lot of information about ISIS from the Internet and discussion with her uncle, began to persuade and influence her parents about the ISIS propaganda. She persuaded her family by providing an understanding on the Qur'anic argument about *hijra*, which she quoted from Surah an-Nisa (4): 97-100.³ In addition, she also conveyed to

3 QS. (4): 97. Surely those whose lives have been taken away by angels in a state of wronging themselves, they (the angels) asked, "What is wrong with you?" They replied, "We are the oppressed people on earth." They (the angels) asked, "Was Allah's earth not spacious enough, so that you can migrate on the earth?" So those people will have Hell as their home, and it is the worst place to return to.

98. Except for those who are oppressed either men, women, or children who are helpless and do not know the way out (to migrate).

99. So they, hopefully Allah will forgive. And Allah is Most Pardoning, Most Forgiving.

her family all the worldly pleasures and luxuries promised by ISIS if they were willing to migrate to Syria. Denok's success in inviting a number of her family members, including her parents, asserts the agency of woman, which we do not find among the old generation of extremists.

100. And whoever migrates in the way of Allah surely will find throughout this earth a vast place of *hijrah* and bountiful (sustenance). Whoever leaves his house with the intention of emigrating because of Allah and His Messenger, then death befalls him (before reaching the destination), then really, the reward has been determined in Allah's side. And Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.

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CHAPTER

II



PERFORMING ‘THE FIELD ACTION’ COMPLETELY ‘ :

Former Convicted Terrorists and the Narratives of Mediated Religious Education in Central Java

Najib Kailani , Munirul Ikhwan, and Aflahal Misbah



Introduction

Central Java is recognized as one of the most significant hub of terrorist networks from the alumni of Afghanistan jihadists, Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), and the Hisbah Team. Some of the popular figures include Abu Bakar Ba’asyir, Umar Patek, Dulmatin, Abu Rusydan, Abu Tholut, and Sigit Qardhawi. The important location of Central Java in the issue of religious extremism and radicalism has in turn attracted many scholars to examine it in detail.

Some scholars have interested in analysing the ideology and network of Islamic State of Indonesia/Indonesian Islamic Army (NII / TII) and the formation of Jama ah Islamiyah (JI) in Indonesia and they have linked their analysis to the significant

location of Islamic Boarding School or Pesantren Ngruki and its two main figures, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Abdullah Sungkar. Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki is associated as the centre of religious violent extremism not only in Indonesia but also in Southeast Asia. The alumni of Ngruki terrorists then called "Ngruki network". This network began to consolidate itself in the late 1970s as an opposition movement against the government (New Order) and secular symbols of the state. This network grew in significant number in the early 1980s , before two of its central figures, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir moved to Malaysia in 1985 (ICG 2002 , Ismail 2007, Feillard and Madinier 2011, Solahudin 2011, Bruinessen 2013, Wildan 2013).

In addition, other studies have highlighted the political economy and identity problem. In his study on religious violence in Indonesia, John T. Sidel (2006: 13-17) underscores the relationship between the phenomenon of mass riots that occurred in the end of Suharto's New Order, racial and religious based conflicts including in Central Java, Ambon and other Post New Order religious violent extremism with the uncertainty and vulnerability experienced by Muslim to Western-secular domination from colonialism to the market economy and under siege mentality on Jewish and Christian penetration. This situation stimulates resistance identity through the narrative of Islamism (Hasan 2008).

Meanwhile, Vedi Hadiz (2020) argues that although it is not a dominant voice, since the New Order the discourse of the establishment of an Islamic state continuously

reverberates in Indonesian public sphere. Hadiz suggests that the aspiration is significantly related to two reasons: the absence of channelling the voice of marginalized groups when left discourse was annihilated by the New Order and the result of official religion policy as an effort to eradicate communism in Indonesia.

Substantiating his main argument on 'Islamic populism' (2016) in Indonesia and the Middle East, Hadiz argues that the rise of Islamism in Central Java is related to the conversion of *abangan* groups to devout Muslims (Hadiz 2020). He maintains that the socio economic background of the lower middle class from experiencing marginalization, feeling uncertainty and structural vulnerability have stimulated these 'new Muslims' to seek for channels to resonate their aspiration and resistance through the discourse of jihad and the commanding good and forbidding wrong (*amar makruf nahi munkar*) movement.

Robert Hefner in his article entitles "Where have All the Abangan gone? Religionization and the Decline of non-stand arid Islam in Contemporary Indonesia" (2011) suggests that the disappearance of *abangan* groups in Indonesia cannot be separated from the practice of state religionization or more precisely the Islamization promoted by the state at the end of the New Order. Hefner (2000: 84) states that in the first two years of the New Order, it had banned more than a hundred mystical organizations that were closely associated with *abangan* groups as the main supporters of communism in the Old Order era. According to him, this ban has been enhanced

the conservative Islamic discourse which is in line with the idea of eradicating local Islamic expressions.

In modern Indonesian history, Central Java is recognised as the basis of *abangan* group. Stephen C. Headley's ethnographic study (2004) on Islam in Central Java presents a thick description about the encounter of Islam and local tradition in which realised through the practices of *abangan*. Prior to the political revolution in 1965, Central Java was a the main basis of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) which the *abangan* was its main sympathizers (Wildan 2013). After the fall of the New Order in 1998, Central Java becomes the main basis of the secular nationalist party, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), which has always dominated the local parliament won local election in Central Java .

The gender aspect is also an important unit of analysis used by researchers to portray religious radicalism and extremism. The narratives of violence through sweeping, training camp and bomb-making are associated with discourses of masculinity. However, recent studies have also shown the role of women as an important agency in the discourse of radicalism and religious violent extremism (Nur aniyah 2018, Duriesmith and Ismail 2019).

In addition, the educational background of the terrorist has long been in the spotlight of the observers. The fact that the majority of people who have radical and extremist views coming from diverse religious education such as *madrassa*

and *pesantren* have stimulated scholars to examine the madrasa networks and their curriculums. Some scholars have investigated the network of Al-Mukmin Ngruki which has extended beyond Surakarta like Al-Muttaqien in Jepara, Darus Syahadah in Boyolali, Al-Islam in Lamongan and Lukman Hakiem in Johor (ICG 2003) and the their curriculum as well as Salafi network in Indonesia (Hasan 2008. Wahid 2018). Meanwhile, Diego Gambetta and Steffen Hertog (2016) have paid their particular attention to the link between education and violent extremism. They locate education as an important variable in understanding violent extremism .

After 9/11, most of counter-terrorism policies focus on *madrasa* and Islamic boarding schools. They tend to represent madrasa and pesantren as simplistic as an incubator of terrorists. As a result, the counter terrorism policies emphasis on the supervision and control of Islamic schools. This in turn enhances to the unpleasant image of Islamic education (Noor, Sikand and Bruinessen 2008: 11). However, some scholars indicate insignificant relationship between religious educational background with the views and behaviours of violent and religious extremism.

Martin van Bruinessen (2006) in his study of the contrasting views shared by two alumni of modern Islamic boarding school Gontor, Nurcholis Madjid, who is known as a liberal Muslim scholar, and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, the prominent leader of the Indonesian combatants disputes the inherent relationship between religious education in Indonesia and the emergence of radicalism and extremism. The similar

position was also shown by Mark Woodward (2010). He refuses the causal relationship between formal religious education with the emergence of radicalism and extremism. He argues that many students who have attracted to Islamist ideas have experienced “re-Islamization” (Ismail 2004) on campus through various channels including informal Islamic study channels. Thus, they become detached from the tradition of religious learning in general.

Nevertheless, an exploration of religious education background narratives of the ex-terrorists tend to be overlooked in the existing studies. Paying too much attention to figures and networks of the radical and extremist educational institutions will lead to generalization of representation and deny the particular location of individual agency. Meanwhile, ignoring their religious education background by highlighting identity and structural problems seems to become reductionist. In order to enrich the previous studies, this chapter aims to examine the religious education background of former convicted terrorist in Central Java through exploration of their narratives and religious aspirations.

The data in this chapter are drawn from our interviews with 7 former convicted terrorists. All of them are males. These informants are chosen based on their variations in generation and affiliation. Some of them are associated with the second Bali bombing, Jemaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), Tim Hisbah and Aman Abdurrahman network. Some informants seem to become

our interlocutors where the conversation was conducted in more intimate and relaxed. In addition, we also confirm the interviews with information in the media and analysis of Investigation Report (BAP) of terrorism cases in Indonesia. In order to protect the privacy of our informants, their names are disguised as part of research ethics.

This chapter consists as follow: first it describes the socio-economic backgrounds of the seven informants and then explores their efforts in learning Islam and their exposures to Islamism through social networks and informal education . Then, it presents their narratives and life aspirations. The description is situated within social and structural problems in order to link their interest in violent and extremist ideology. Lastly , this chapter investigates the sources of religious knowledge from the seven informants.

This chapter demonstrates that religious education background does not necessarily stimulate a person to become radical or extremist. We argue that religious education background will be significant in making a person will have radical religious views and encouraging him to engage in terrorist attack only if it is mediated by structural factors, identity, social networks, and ideology. Religious education background is basically something dormant. Dissatisfaction towards state policy and public justice, identity crisis, and social networks have stimulated their religious education knowledge to expose to the violent and extremist ideology or pushed them to find a new ways of spirituality in religious marketplace according to his individual aspirations .

The Biographies and Socio-Economic Backgrounds

The seven former convicted terrorists that we interview in this study were largely coming from lower socio economic background. Two of them grew up far away from their parents. Irsyad has a Hadrami family background in Pemalang. He has been left by his father since he was in junior high school. His father had to work in Saudi Arabia for 13 years. He lived with his mother who opens satay stall to cover their everyday needs. Meanwhile, Ariel had far afield from his parents since he was in grade two in primary school. His parents migrated to Karawang in order to seek their fortune by selling chicken noodle soup. Ariel stayed with his grandfather and grandmother in Wonogiri until he finished junior high school. Afterwards, he continued his study at senior high school and stayed in the MTA (Majelis Tafsir Al- Qur'an) Islamic boarding school in Surakarta .

Another story is coming from Nanda and Aji. While both of them were not left by their parents to move out to cities or go abroad, their parents are not able to support their education up to higher education level. Although Nanda's family is relatively coming from middle class family, his grandfather was military official and his uncle was a businessman in Solo, he mentioned that his father was a musician and his mother, a converted Muslim, was a stall vendor in traditional market only able to pay for his education up to Junior High School. As a result, Nanda had to look for jobs in order to cover his school expenses from senior high school to university. Nanda told us that he has inherited her father's talent as evident from his interest

in music and dance. Meanwhile, Aji only completed his formal education until senior high school. His brother, who only received primary school education had dedicated himself to finance Aji's education because his father already passed away earlier.

Unlike the four former convicted terrorists as mentioned above, the three following former convicted terrorists are having government official family background. Johan's father was not a civil servant, but worked as a military official in the Dutch colonial era, while one of his brothers worked as a civil servant in the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration in Jakarta. Meanwhile, Anjasmara and Ayus were born from civil servant family. Anjasmara's father was a civil servant and active in Muhammadiyah. He was appointed as a school principal. Meanwhile, Ayus's father worked as a civil servant at the Karanganyar Regional Revenue and Tourism Office. After retired, Ayus's father was active in farm. In short, it can be said that they were not high-rank government official families.

In addition to the middle to lower family economic background, the former convicted terrorists are also have not any *santri* family or have not religious education background. It could be found in their names, which are not Arabic names. In other words, their initial encounter to Islam was not from their nuclear family environment but they took it from outside. Accordingly, it is not surprising when they have to teach their own parents to perform Islam such as praying. Indeed, Ayus told us that his father did not

express his sympathy for Islamic activism. In short, their nuclear family for these former convicted terrorists did not provide any significant context of their religious preferences. Their family simply aspires their children to become a good person and finding a proper job after completing school such as civil servant.

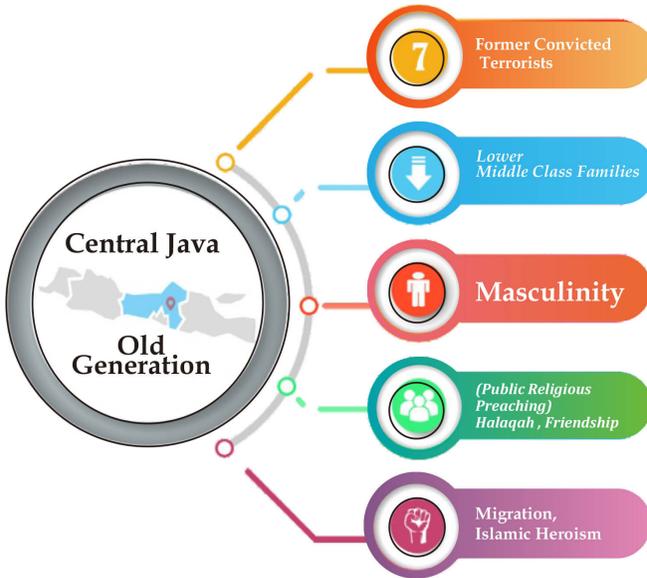
Knowing Islam and Islamism in Secondary and Higher Education

Most of our informants in this study took their primary education in public schools before continuing to secondary in private schools. Johan obtained his primary, secondary and tertiary education in public school in Kediri and Kertosono Nganjuk. Although he grew up in Kediri which is recognised as the basis of Nahdhatul Ulama, he claimed that he began to learn Islam when he was in senior high school. He attracted to learn Islam outside of school environment. He began to attend Islamic study groups held by various religious groups including NU, Muhammadiyah, Hidayatullah, and Jamaah Tabligh. In 1996, Johan continued his study in concentration of management at Darul Ulum University (UNDAR) Jombang. UNDAR was his main choice because besides being close to his house, UNDAR itself was enjoying its popularity at that time. During his study, Johan remained active at Islamic study groups organized by various Islamic organizations and groups.

A similar story could be found in Aji and Ariel's educational background. Both of them completed their

study in public schools. Aji finished his primary school at SDN Notokusuman Solo (already closed) and SMP Negeri 6 Surakarta. He missed his school for a year because he did not pass entrance exam at vocational school (STM) he wanted. Realizing that schooling is important for his future and based on his friend suggestion Aji then continued his study at SMA Islam 1 Surakarta which managed by the Al-Mukmin Ngruki Foundation. During his training Aji stayed in a dormitory managed by SMA Islam 1 Surakarta. He admitted that he had begun to get to know Islamist movements such as the Islamic State of Indonesia (NII), Jamaah Tarbiyah and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) through his teachers at the school. This encounters, in turn has formed his religious consciousness and finally swore to become the Islamic State of Indonesia (NII) member through a female teacher who taught him physics.

Meanwhile, Ariel completed his education at SDN 2 Jatiroto and SMP N 2 Jatiroto. Ariel was recognised as smart student. He actually can go to a public high school, however, he decided to continue his study at senior high school majoring natural sciences at SMA Majelis Tafsir Al-Qur'an (MTA), a private school owned by an Islamic study group concerning on quranic interpretation based on modernist perspective in Semanggi, Solo. Since living in the dormitory, Ariel has begun to get to know MTA's Islamic teachings more closely, which he thinks are simple : they don't present complicated arguments and debates .



Nanda and Irsyad are examples of former convicted terrorists who continued their junior and senior high school education in private schools. After completing his basic education at public school SDN 100 Selembaran Solo, Nanda continued his training in private school namely junior high school, SMP Al-Islam Solo and senior high school Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta majoring in Social Studies. Nanda getting to know Islamic teachings including Muhammad sayings (*hadist*) and the history of Muhammad Prophet during his study in the junior school Al-Islam. At that time he claimed that he learnt Islam through memorization and understanding. Nanda told us that when he studied at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 he felt far from religion. He started to mingle with street punk and his rebellious spirit began to take shape. He claimed that he was one of the senior high school students who took to

demonstration during the decline of the Suharto regime in 1998. Nanda began to study Islam in depth when he worked in a textile company named Batik Keris and studied Diploma in Accounting at the Surakarta School of Economics. Prior to his interest in learning Islam, he attended ESQ (*Emotional Spiritual Quotient*) trainings popularised by a self-help guru Ary Ginanjar which was part of the programs offered by the college. Nanda fascinated with Ary Ginanjar's trainings which combine Islam and management knowledge. Since then he was curious to study Islam from one to other mosques.

Meanwhile, Irsyad continued his training at junior high school SMP Muhammadiyah and SMA Muhammadiyah 4 Belik Pemalang majoring in social studies after completing his education in elementary schools in Randudongkal Pemalang. He began to learn to recite the Al-Qur'an with his father who had studied Islam from al-Irsyad school and was a quranic teacher in the village they lived. However, Irsyad claimed that he began studying Islam intensively when he was student of SMA Muhammadiyah especially when he stayed in dormitory. According to him he attracted with the Muhammad sayings (*hadist*) and the history of Muhammad prophet (*sirah*) lessons. However, his intensity of studying Islam decreased when he went to Yogyakarta to study at Yogyakarta Accounting Academy (AAY), recently renamed Yogyakarta Technological University (UTY).

Irsyad who had to work in order to cover his needs finally dropped out from college. He then moved to Solo and worked

in his uncle's printing business. One day he had a conflict with his uncle that made him to resign and look for another job. He had a casual job as a driver and until he became a *takmir*, someone who organise mosque activity in Semanggi. From the mosque, he began to intensively attend and organize Islamic lectures which presenting various religious teachers (*ustadz*) including the Islamist from Solo. He in turn started to participate intensively in various Islamic study groups in various mosques in Solo including the Marwah mosque, Al-Ikhlash mosque, and Istiqomah mosque. Some of the *ustadz* that delivered Islamic sermons were Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, Abdurrahim Ba'asyir, and Abdullah Manaf.

Other former convicted terrorists, Anjasmara, took his primary education in private schools such as SD Muhammadiyah, then he continued to junior high school SMP N 1 Surakarta, finished his senior high school at SMA Al Islam 1 Surakarta. During his school days, Anjasmara admitted that he enjoyed listening to KH Zainuddin MZ's Islamic sermons because he considered him as a humorous figure so that his Islamic teachings were easy to understand. He also curious to read history books which were displayed in his father book shelf especially on Indonesian history on fighting colonialism such as Imam Bonjol, the Prince of Diponegoro and Soedirman or national heroic war stories. Until senior high school Anjasmara's religious sentiment was conventional. After he completed school years, however, particularly when he was appointed as the branch chairman of Young Muhammadiyah (*Pemuda Muhammadiyah*) Semang

gi and chairman of sub-district youth mosque organisation his religious passion began to churn. Anjasmara started to attend Sigit Qaradawi who is eager to raid the place under the banner of forbidding the wrong (*nahi munkar*).

Among the seven informants that we interviewed Ayus is the only informant who attended public schools from elementary to middle school namely SDN Tawangmangu, SMPN 3 Popongan and SMAN 1 Karanganyar). Meanwhile, Ayus, who seemed introvert began to know the Islamic State of Indonesia (*Negara Islam Indonesia*, NII) when he studied senior high school from an underground Islamic study circle (*halaqah*). But he said that he was not interested in joining with NII at that time. Yet he tended to resist because of NII doctrine about “*takfiri*” namely judging all people including Muslims who were not joining NII and in line with this group as infidels. He cannot accept the label of infidels for himself and his parents. In order to find the religious answers which made him uncomfortable Ayus went to Solo every Sunday to attend Islamic sermon delivered by Ustaz Abdullah Manaf at the Istiqomah mosque in Penumping Solo. When he attended university, especially in Islamic Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah Faculty UMS (Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta) Ayus began to intersect with a wider range of Islamic groups, including Tarbiyah, Salafi, NII congregations, and certainly Muhammadiyah which became the campus standard curriculum. During his college days, he was also active in the executive halaqah of the JI network.

From Identity Issues to Social Networks

Youth is a crucial period for someone to question himself and his future. This is a phase for someone to find identity and determine the orientation of his life. The attention of the former convicted terrorists to take a particular path of understanding and religious ideology is part of their efforts to answer the questions of their youth in transition. The tendency of young people to choose the path of religion (Islam) can be explained in the context of the current of Islamization that began in Indonesia since the 1990s where the idiom of piety has become an important and popular narrative among young people. In this case, the senior and undergraduate education stages is an important phase that needs to be considered in order to determine the trajectories that make young people choose the path of cosmopolitanism or religious-based radicalism.

Johan called himself a bad boy during senior high school. At the same time, the religious environment around him seemed to make him wonder about his quest for the religious and meaning of life. He irritated with questions about how to perform Islam in a proper way which is based on foundational texts Al-Qur'an and hadist. Because he grew up in the traditional Islamic environment or Nahdlatul Ulama, the Islamic rituals referring to NU tradition was his first answer about this question.

However, he was not satisfied with the religious authority of NU. He found that NU's religious justifications cannot answer his questions regarding the postulates of his usual practices, such as the practice of *yasinan* and other

rituals. This situation prompted him to look for another sources of Islamic study groups which might be able to answer his religious quest. During his secondary education Johan began to become active in several religious communities and Islamic study groups as his effort to find the proper way to perform Islam correctly. He told us that he did not limit himself to certain communities or religious organizations. He attended a wide range of Islamic study groups conducted by various groups and organizations such as Muhammadiyah, Hidayatullah, Jamaat Tabligh, and NU.

Johan's curiosity to learn Islam across religious communities continued when he studied in UNDAR. He claimed that he had just found his religious answer after completing his study at UNDAR. At first, he attended a public sermon in Kertosono, Nganjuk, East Java. He then became interested in the Islamic study session delivered by ustaz Subur because it taught about Muslim brotherhood (*ukhuwwah*). The Islamic study group emphasizes on the importance of Muslim brotherhood which is not limited to the surrounding environment or one country. He became attracted to this Islamic study group and finally suggested it to open a special halaqah in his village. Once the request received, Johan then attended the *halaqah* intensively.

Furthermore, Johan had to move to Semarang in 2002. He then brought the Islamic study group to Semarang. In that city Johan opened a Padang restaurant in a second shop plus house building. He used the second floor as a place for Islamic study group. Apart from Islamic study group at his

place of business, Johan also participated in two different *halaqah* simultaneously: one was general in nature and the other was specific. The difference between the two lies in the system and nature of the study. Public sermon was open to everyone including his wife, while special *halaqah* was only attended by certain member. Johan told us that his wife did not know about the other *halaqah*. The special *halaqah* was designed in stages like a school and the participants have passed the test and this is what made him involved in the Noordin M Top terrorist network.

As mentioned above, Ayus's passion in learning Islam began when he was still in senior high school. He shocked when he met NII activists who considered him and his parents as infidels if they did not join it Ayus eventually seek a more appropriate Islamic study group. Feeling that he could not find a suitable Islamic study group in his area Karanganyar Ayus decided to look for it in Solo. About the second or third grade of senior high school Ayus and his younger brother rode a BMX bicycle from Karanganyar to Solo to attend ustaz Abdullah Manaf's regular Islamic study group at the Istiqomah Penumping Solo mosque. The great distance that they had to reach in order to learn Islam explains their serious efforts to study at Islamic boarding school. He mentioned that his father wanted him to go to public school in order to get a job as a civil servant. By taking the Faculty of Islamic Studies at UMS he had negotiated his aspirations with his father.

However, Ayus felt that the Faculty of Islamic Studies in UMS did not meet his aspirations to learn Islam. In campus,

he engaged with various Islamic groups such as Tarbiyah, HTI, and Salafi, but he still feels unsuitable. He was not interested in these groups, especially Muhammadiyah style Islam, which he considered was unable to fulfil his religious aspirations. As a result, he was more interested in joining the special *halaqah* which linked religion to his individual aspirations.

Ayus mentioned that he finally found that Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) network was fit with him. Interestingly, he just realized its name after being arrested and jailed. The *halaqah* consists of a limited number of people (6 people) and the Islamic study group held at night especially after Isya prayer. The Islamic study group was led by several *ustaz* especially JI ideologues including Abu Dujana. The *ukhuwwah* doctrine of JI helped him find the path of 'field action' (*amaliyah*) that he wished for. Conflict in Poso and Ambon which provided a narrative of the Muslim oppression by Christians as well as the inability of the government to handling the conflict, further stimulated Ayus's determination to involve in activities initiated by JI. Another thing that made him anchored with JI *halaqah* is the ability of JI ideologues to present 'actual interpretation' (*tafsir waqi'i*) namely the interpretation of the verses of Al-Qur'an that is connected with the reality faced by Muslims today. In addition, he thought that JI's method of conveying Islam could accommodate the aspirations of each individual in the *halaqah*.

On the other hand, Aji has another story. When his teacher let him know that his Islam was not recognised because he lived in non-Islamic state, he finally decided to join and vow (*baiat*)

with the NII. By declaring himself to join NII he had moved from pagan state (NKRI) to Islamic State (NII) in the same area. His intention to vow with NII cannot be separated from his first experience in contact with the Islamic movements in the past times during his efforts to seek for identity. As a member of the NII, he attended an exclusive *halaqah* which was followed by only a few people. However, this made him to passionately attending Islamic study groups outside Islamic classes at SMU Islam. Although he actually received various Islamic teachings at religious classes such as tauhid, akhlak (ethics), Islamic jurisprudence, Al-qur'an, hadith, and the history of Muhammad Prophet, Aji began to actively join extracurricular form of regular Islamic sermons held every Sunday outside school activities such as Abu Bakar Ba'asyir in Marwah mosque Semanggi.

By attending these different Islamic study groups, Aji's knowledge developed significantly. He began to rethink the NII doctrine which considers all Muslims outside NII to be infidels, including his parents, and Abu Bakr Ba'asyir because they were considered to have not completely migrated to NII as something vague. For NII, the only way to move was to take allegiance and be loyal to NII. He also began to wonder why NII claimed as a country but it did not have the area to be definitive, and was not known clearly who is its leader. Meanwhile he saw the compulsory donation of 2.5% continued to be required for all members of the NII was not clear in management. The above irregularities prompted Aji to leave NII.

After graduating from senior high school Aji worked in an electronic shop in Semarang. However, after a while he returned to Solo because he felt that Semarang did not offer any dynamic Islamic study atmospheres as in Solo Raya. In 2007, Aji finally joined the new *halaqah* led by Sigit Qardhawi from the mosque youth association. In the *halaqah* he had not only learnt Islamic teachings but also the practice of performing 'field action' (*amaliyah*) namely the practice of commanding right and forbidding wrong (*amar makruf nahi munkar*) in the community which implemented through an act of sweeping against the drunk and gambling. Aji claimed that Sigit was the person who most influenced him in shaping his personality. He was impressed by Sigit's courage in fighting evil among the community, including his courage in confrontation with a group of thugs in Solo. Since then, Aji has always followed Sigit, including joining "Jamaah Jihad" which formed by Sigit after his meeting with Aman Abdurrahman, the founder of Jamaah Ansharud Daulah (JAD).

As similar as Aji, Anjasmara decided to join the Hisbah Team because he admired to Sigit Qardhawi. Although he was the Chair of Pemuda Muhammadiyah Semanggi, Muhammadiyah's Islamic path did not satisfy his religious aspirations. Together with Sigit he involved in the formation of the PIS (Semanggi Islamic Association) which consist of mosque youths and former thugs. These communities often collaborate with PIJ (Islamic Association Joyosuran) a group that formed by the religious leaders of Ma'had Ali An-Nur in order to carry out commanding right and forbidding

wrong in the community such as drinking, gambling, and so on. Anjasmara then often invited Sigit to deliver Islamic sermons in religious events, until finally he joined the Hisbah Team of Sigit Qardhawi which was headquartered at the al- Ansar Semanggi mosque where Anjasmara is recently the mosque imam. However, Anjasmara decided to leave when Hisbah Team's orientation changed from conducting commanding right and forbidding wrong to a jihad movement with has a takfir doctrine.

For Ariel , MTA was indeed the initial context for his intensive introduction to Islam. Stayed in Islamic boarding school of MTA Ariel appointed to take care of the cooperative of SMA MTA, and helped in organizing Islamic study groups in MTA headquarter. Ariel felt bored running his routine at MTA, so in 2007 he decided to look for a community of friends outside MTA. Starting from chatting in a coffee shop, he began to realize how complex the religious landscape in Semanggi is. He was trying to follow any Islamic teachings held in Semanggi, in addition to Islamic teachings of the MTA. He became more and more interested in Islamic studies outside MTA because they were considered capable of providing a more comprehensive understanding than in MTA which tended to be instantaneous and only suitable for adults. In addition, he also considered that Islamic studies outside were more participatory in society than MTA, which only focused on doctrine and theory.

He finally found a community that focuses on the importance of religious 'field action' (*amaliyah*) namely Hisbah Team. Ariel's interest in this group arose when he

heard of Team Hisbah's success in killing the number one thug in Joyosuran Solo, named Kipli. Ariel who heard this news finally started leaving MTA in 2009/2010 and decided to join the Hisbah Team. With his young age, he feels comfortable with the Hisbah Team because it feels like he was actually practicing Islam. According to him, in contrast to MTA the Hisbah Team's commanding right and forbidding wrong movement was able to have a direct impact on society. The thugs began to decrease drastically and many repented, some of them even joined the Team Hisbah. He felt that the religious field action (*amaliyah*) commanding right and forbidding wrong was in accordance with his youthful soul who wanted to do something for his religion. Together with his friends, he actively participated in sweeping convoys of places of considered 'immorality', expressing their youthfulness.

As mentioned above, Nanda found his way to perform *hijrah* when studying at Akademi Akuntansi Surakarta, especially in fourth semester between 2003 and 2004 when he took part in the ESQ (*Emotional Spiritual Quotient*) of Ari Ginanjar at Shahid Hotel in Solo for three days. Nanda was interested in the program due to the idea that successful life is based not only on the aspect of intellectual intelligence but also more important is emotional and spiritual intelligence. The program brought Nanda to return to the religious lessons he had learned in junior as well as senior high school. Since then, he became more religious and more diligent in practicing Islam such as reciting the Al-Qur'an in his business stall selling electronic devices such as handphone after Maghrib

prayer. This new condition then facilitated him to explore more experiences in learning Islam. The story started when his friend the sales of cigarettes, which invited him to attend a regular Islamic study groups in the mosque of Baiturrahman delivered by Ziyad, a former convicted terrorist of Marriott bomb. The content of his Islamic sermons were actually a general Islamic teachings such as calling to become a pious Muslim by following the sunnah, Muslim obligations, to practicing Islam and the history of Muhammad prophet related to *jihad*, the era of ruler tyranny. He claimed that there was no particular teachings led to the terrorist ideology.

Nanda had an adventurous spirit. In addition to Ziyad's Islamic study group, Nanda also went to Purwosari area in order to join Abu Tholut's Islamic lessons. Abu Tholut was trained in Afghanistan and an expert in bomb assembly. At that time, Nanda did not know about Abu Tholut. He mentioned that his sermon was also relatively general Islamic teachings. As a result, Nanda regularly attended Abu Tholut's Islamic study group, even up to two times a week starting after Isya prayer to nine o'clock in the evening. Moreover, he was also active in attending public sermon in Solo, such as in Semanggi. Almost every Sunday, he stated that he often attended various religious event such as book launching and discussion some of them were *Millah Ibrahim*, *Mutad Karena Hukum*, and *Tarbiyah Jihadiyah*, which in turn shaped his heroic spirit.

After participating in many Islamic lessons, Nanda's appearance began to change. He began to wear

a robe, maintained a long beard and wore ankle pants (*celana cingkrang*). With his new appearance, he even dared to initiate new movement at his workplace, Batik Keris. He made his own *halaqah* and taught his co-workers what he knew about Islam. Having a little educational background from Islamic institutions such as Al-Islam and Muhammadiyah much equipped himself about Islam. Yet he was a good public speaking that he learnt when active in the theatre. Unfortunately, Nanda mentioned that the *halaqah* only existed for a short period because his *halaqah* affected to work. As a result, his boss did not happy with him because he invited all of his colleagues to perform ashar prayer in congregation during the working hours. Insisting on his stance, Nanda was eventually moved to a less strategic position as an officer of warehouse.

Consequently, Nanda did not care about his study at university and his work career, in contrast he was more active in attending Islamic study groups. He was only interested in jihad. This interest was motivated by his understanding from the *sirah* (history of Muhammad Prophet and his companions) readings which he concluded that the main job of the Prophet Muhammad after receiving the message (*wahyu*) was jihad or war. He claimed that his reading materials indicated that the Prophet Muhammad cover his need through *ghanimah*, wealth taken by force from an enemy in times of war not from trading profits as before the prophetic era. This individual aspiration was finally captured by the terrorist network. Nanda who was quite intelligent and

creative was finally recruited in the bomb training with Rocki Sahputra. He then trained other people, among them the eight people involved in the bombing at the Cirebon Police Headquarters in 2011.

The narrative of Aji, Ariel, Anjasmara and Nanda regarding the charisma of Sigit Qardawi and the Hisbah Team who was active in carrying out the commanding right and forbidding wrong presents a strong portrait of the discourse of masculinity in the minds of these former convicted terrorists. The heroic acts of jihad appear to be in line with the search for the identity of young people who emphasize masculinity as an important expression in their social interactions. This view of masculinity has recently become one of the most important concerns that scholars have explored (see Duriesmith and Ismail 2019).

From Structural Problems to Extremist Ideology

Identity problems which finds its firth in social networks as mentioned above eventually led these former convicted terrorists in their young age to the awareness of structural problems. They began to have an awareness of the existence of foreign powers which want to control the Islamic world and exploit Muslim societies. Conflicts and wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia, and the Southern Philippines Moro involving Western countries, superpowers and their allies formed their understanding about the significant of global Muslim solidarity. Domestic conflicts such as Ambon and Poso shape their awareness of the inability of the Muslim state and government to take action as well as increase their motivation

to carry out resistance in the name of jihad. This awareness is increasingly fostered by the conspiracy information circulating on their social networks. In this context, religious-based extremism becomes an ideology that not only covers the expression of their resistance, but also determines the steps to achieve it.

Broadly speaking, the seven former convicted terrorists of Central Java in this study are having joined to two groups of jihad : Jemaah Islamiyah (Johan, Ayus, Irsyad) and Hisbah Team (Nanda, Ariel, Anjasmara, and Aji). From these two groups, they accepted the ideologization of jihad. This jihad is an ideological umbrella of resistance to structural problems. If JI provided more response to structural problems initiated by foreign powers, Hisbah Team associated the structural problems with the inability of the Indonesian government to establish morality, to manage conflict, and 'defend' the Muslim rights. This affects to the target jihadi operation of each network. JI is more targeting symbols of foreign powers in Indonesia, while Hisbah Team is targeting symbols of the state such as police.

The global Muslim Brotherhood (*ukhuwwah Islamiyyah*) is an entry point for JI's ideologies that have succeeded in arousing the spirit of Johan and Ayus' spirit of jihad. This ideology is simultaneously juxtaposed with the narratives of the condition of Muslims or Islamic countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq which are oppressed by Western countries such as America and its allies. These narratives were built in, among others, through books such as the *Tarbiyah Jihadiyah* and

video pieces that were distributed during the Islamic lesson by the ideologue. These narratives are able to stimulate the spirit of jihad of Johan, Ayus, and other congregants to rise up against countries that oppress Islamic countries. This kind of jihad is considered as a form of retaliation or defense for Muslim brothers who are oppressed, and have nothing to do with the Indonesian government.

The inability of JI members to reach the territory of foreign countries has encouraged them to commit acts of jihad in the country by bombing of foreign symbols in Indonesia. They admitted that they were not targeting the Indonesian state and government, but Western countries such as Australia and America which are considered to have oppressed Islamic countries.

The Bali bombing case in 2002 is an example of the JI's field action. They targeted nightclubs in the area of Legian Bali. JI actually wanted to target the Australian warship that was leaning in the port of Benoa Denpasar. The guard was so tight that they were unable to reach it. After conducting their reconnaissance, they concluded that many Australian soldiers came to the nightclubs every day. The bombing was finally directed at the nightclub so that many Australians became victims.

For JI activists, the bomb victims were not ordinary civilians, but soldiers. In its development, the targets of bomb attack were not only soldiers, but also foreign civilians from America and Australia, such as in the second

Bali Bombing case in 2005 in Kuta and Jimbaran. According to Johan, this development was motivated by the development of narratives of the oppression of Westerners against Muslim civilians. JI built the opinion that foreign civilians must also feel because foreign soldiers oppressed civilians in Muslim countries. JI views their strategy as a war against infidels or countries that have oppressed Muslims. However, the location is not in the conflict area, so it is called “urban guerrilla”.

The emphasis on the concept of the strong Muslim brotherhood has simultaneously impacted to the limitations or specific rules in jihad. These rules determine who were the target of the bombing such as Western, may not attack if they have not been attacked, and may not attack places of worship whether from Muslims affiliated to other organizations or non-Muslims. In other words, the jihad that took place was only a form of defense for oppressed Muslim brothers or retaliation against oppressive foreign and infidels .

On the other hand, the doctrine of *takfir* is the entrance to the ideology of Indonesianjihadist Indonesia who attacked the symbols of the state and the government. Prior to the emergence of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the modern era the doctrine of takfir was well known through the NII and the Salafi. Former convicted terrorists joined in Hisbah Team were getting to know the doctrine in 2005/2006. In those years, a number of Indonesian jihadists began to adopt the doctrine as a justification for their action.

The *takfir* doctrine is of course different from the *ukhuw wah* doctrine which is popular among JI activists. *Takfir* does

not only target non-Muslims, but also all Muslims who are deemed not to uphold Islamic law. Based on this view, everyone who are justified as infidels judged lawful blood, his property is permitted to be taken. Although the target of *takfir* is very wide, the average target of attack is more directed at the institutions of state and people who work under or associated with state institutions, especially the police. This can be seen in the late retaliatory attack conducted by Hisbah Team targeting mosques in the police station such as mosque in Police station of Cirebon, or mosque officially opened or funded by the government such as Pancasila mosque in Surakarta.

Apart from carrying out attacks on state symbols, they also refuse to participate in activities organized by the state such as the General Election, Presidential Election and local elections even though they previously participated. In fact, they also do not want to perform *salat* behind those who support the general election. Aji for example, mentioned that he should repeat his *salat* when he knew the *imam*, or someone who lead the *salat* prayers participated in the election that he saw from there his blue mark on his finger.

In other words, awareness of structural problems and dissatisfaction with the policies taken by the state prompted them to seek an ideological umbrella. In the context of the disappearance of critical left groups in Indonesia, Islam appears as an idiom used to show resistance to structural problems (Hadiz 2020). In this context, we can understand why radicalism and extremism emerged as an umbrella for the ideological resistance of the former convicted terrorists.

In addition, these former convicted terrorists are not always loyal to a radical group. Anjasmara is an example former convicted terrorists which decided to separate from the Hisbah Team when the team changed the orientation towards jihadi after a meeting of Sigit Qaradhawi with Aman Abdurrahman, the founder of JAD. Meanwhile, Ariel was still holding out, but he began to hesitate when he gets an assignment from Sigit to learn to make bombs. When Hisbah Team otherwise involved in many acts of field action (*amaliyah*) such as mosque bom in Police station of Cirebon in 2011 and the situation in Solo is not safe, Ariel said goodbye to Sigit. He flew to Medan, married a Medan girl, and joined the Riski Gunawan terrorist group, which is a specialist terrorist network of hackers. Ariel was interested in this group because previously he was offered to move to Syria at a time when the ISIS had not yet declared a caliphate. Prior to leave for Syria, Ariel already caught.

However, understanding radicalism and extremism in Indonesia from a structural perspective alone is unable to fully explore and explain the phenomenon of former convicted terrorists who have the courage to die in the path of jihad. The case of Aji and 50 of his colleagues who are determined to declare “ready to die” to Sigit Qardhawi is difficult to explain only from a structural perspective. Even after leaving prison, Aji still aspires to be martyred like Sigit if the opportunity comes. The imagination of an angel waiting in heaven became a narrative that he firmly believed in. Thus, structural resistance has transformed to become ideology.

Sources of Knowledge

The source of knowledge of former convicted terrorists in this study is beyond the nuclear family. Middle schools and colleges are the initial context for their introduction to Islam and Islamism. Agencies of young people who are becoming aware of environmental problems have encouraged them to seek sources of religious knowledge in the “free market” outside formal educational institutions, either in the form of general recitation in mosques or in exclusive *halaqah*.

Among the mosques they have visited are the Marwah Semanggi mosque, the Al-Ikhlas mosque, the Istiqomah Penumping mosque, the Baiturrahman mosque, the Arafah mosque, and the A l-Ansar Semanggi mosque. In general, *ustaz* or religious figures that they attended their lectures most often or most impressive coming from the salafi group, JI, and Hisbah Team. They include Abu Bakar Ba’asyir, Subur, Abdullah Manaf, Zainuddin (Iskarima), Rasyid Ridha, Abdurrahim Ba’syir, Nu’aim Ba’asyir, Abu Dujana, Abu Tholul, Ziyad, and Sigit Qardhawi.

Some *ustaz* have succeeded in seriously orienting the religious views of these former convicted terrorists. In other words, a number of former convicted terrorists have a particular reference religious figure which causes them to join jihadist groups. *Ustaz* Subur acted as a liaison between Johan and Noordin M. Top. He was a figure that Johan really respected. Therefore, when he moved from Kediri to Semarang, he still chose Subur as his main teacher. Even though he was following the general and special teaching time in Semarang,

he was more interested in *Liqa* ‹ which suggests the jihad lessons which was delivered by Ustaz Subur. For Johan, Subur was the most impressive figure because of his charismatic character, calm, not being rushed, and “honesty and seriousness in providing material between theory and practice.” For Johan , Subur was not an orator or motivator, and when he gave a lecture he appeared as he was. However, everyone who listened to Subur’s Islamic sermons could immediately attracted to him.

Abdullah Manaf is an *ustad* referral of Ayus. From Abdullah Manaf, Ayus involved in more intensive follow-up studies and led himself to take an important position in the JI movement in the IT field. For Ayus, Abdullah Manaf was a very impressive figure because his lecture was explosive, insightful, detailed explanations, and was able to elaborate on the description of the situation of the Muslim community at that time very well. For Ariel , Sigit Qardhawi is the leading figure of ustaz. Ariel impressed with Sigit who openly opposed and prevented forbidding wrong in Solo. As similar as Ariel, Aji also admired Sigit Qaradhawi. Aji said that Sigit was a simple figure and did not seek the world, "so that Allah hastened his martyrdom." Sigit also regarded as one of the figures who have brave souls and defender of the Muslim. With this viewpoint, Aji claimed that he was heavily influenced by Sigit in the views and movements of jihad.

Meanwhile, for Irsyad, Abu Bakar Ba’asyir was a teacher who he admired most. For him, Abu Bakr Ba’asyir was a gentle and honest person . HIS Islamic sermons seemed straight

forward, simple and easy to understand. He claimed that he knew Abu Bakar Ba'asyir's personal story and his biographical story. So he considered that the government's treatment of Ba'asyir was a big mistake. Irsyad is quite close to the Ba'asyir family. This can be seen from the context that caused him to enter into the terrorism network. He entered because of his close relationship with Nu'aim Ba'asyir, one of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir's nephews.

Orality has indeed become an important means of transmitting religious knowledge among radical and extremist groups. Johan and Ariel are examples of former convicted terrorists who rely on oral sources for their religious knowledge. However, some of the former convicted terrorists were not enough to simply rely on oral sources. To enrich their insights they also read some literatures that are mentioned in their Islamic study groups. Nanda, Irsyad, Ayus and Aji are the examples of former convicted terrorists who love to read books. Their ability to read literatures can be explained by their role as lecturers in certain *halaqah*.

Among the important literatures that became the main reference and was able to arise the spirit of jihad among the former convicted terrorists was *Tarbiyah Jihadiyah* written by Abdullah Azzam. This book is the first book that Aji read when he was passionate about studying Islam in high school. Although he also read other literature written by Hasan al-Bana, and Sayid Qutub (*Ma'alim fi al-Thariq* especially) Aji felt that only *Tarbiyah Jihadiyah* had influenced him a lot

in joining the jihad movement. According to him, this book is able to have a big impact on the readers when they want to empty their mind and heart like an empty glass. For him, this book is very encouraging because it is taken from the lectures and direct experience of Abdullah Azzam. This contains its own values and spirit, which can “really pound the young men’s chest” to carry out jihad.

Ayus also made the same assessment. He was very impressed with Abdullah Azzam’s book because it contains stories and direct experiences of jihadists who actually «have lived a good life but still want to find the hard ones» by way of jihad. Apart from *Tarbiyah Jihadiyah*, Ayus has also been active in reading Islamic books since attending a study at the Istiqomah Mosque. The book which was first read in college is work of HM. Rasyidi who counter Harun Nasution’s thoughts. Right-wing Islamic books that were widely excluded at that time did not escape his attention, such as publications containing the oppression of Muslims. He did not even limit if the books to be read should be according to the group. He read *Ma’alim fi Tariq* which is widely circulated on the Tarbiyah network, and *Kitab at-Tauhid* (Salih bin Fauzan al-Fauzan), *al - Usul at - Tsalatsah* (Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab) and *al Wala wal - Bara* (Muhammad Said al-Qahtani) which is widely circulated among Salafi. He got these books from various places such as the book seller in Penumping, behind Sriwedari, and in the library. The books above were also read by Aji, especially the Salafi books as a source for delivering Islamic lessons.

The above readings are also known by Irsyad. When he was active as organizer of the mosque, Irsyad often read Islamic books in the library, especially *al-Wala' wa al-Bara'*. This book had given him a lot of understanding of Islam such as, *tauhid*, Islamic law, heretics, infidels, and unnecessary. Irsyad used to discuss his reading with his friends who came from various Islamic groups, such as those affiliated with PKS and those who thought like the ISIS. At that time, his friends from PKS did not want to be invited to a discussion because according to him the PKS people had accepted democracy while *al-Wala' wa al-Bara'* rejected democracy. Unlike his friends who are from PKS, when discussing with his friends who think like ISIS, Irsyad was actually affected. At that time, Irsyad's view changed significantly when looking at the state, state institutions, or state apparatus. An example is his view of civil servants who according to him are infidels.

Nanda is perhaps the portrait of a former convicted terrorits who was most familiar with jihadi books. Apart from *Tarbiyah Jihadiyah*, Nanda also admitted to reading *Millah Ibrahim* (Abu Muhammad Ashim al-Maqdisi translated by Aman Abdurrahman), *Murtad Karena Hukum* (Abdul Qadir bin Abdul Aziz); *Mimpi Suci di Balik Jeruji* (Ghufron / Mukhlas), *Sekuntum Rosela Pelipur Lara A* (Imam Samudra), and *Senyum Terakhir Sang Mujahid* (Amrozi). These books influenced Nanda a lot during his engagement in the jihad movement in addition to his understanding of war as the Prophet's main duty where he understood from reading the history of Muhammad prophet literatures. According to him, this understanding is what his colleagues in terrorist networks have learned.

Conclusion

The biographical narratives of our seven former convicted terrorists informants as described above show that there are similarities in socio-economic background and school of thought. All informants were coming from lower to middle socio-economic background and non-practicing Islam properly or *abangan*. In addition, most of them are getting to know the narratives of jihad from informal education channels through social networks. Some of them have started to get to know jihadist organizations such as NII in formal education circles through teachers who were already affiliated with the NII organization and school extra-curricular activities. However, they generally obtained a “maturation” of religious knowledge of jihad through the Islamic study groups they attended in mosques and limited as well as exclusive *halaqah*.

Apart from attending Islamic study groups, several informants actively sought knowledge through Islamic literature available in bookstores and mosque libraries. Central Java, especially Surakarta and its surroundings, is the basis for many Islamic book publishers. PusPIDeP research findings in 2017 (Hasan 2018) indicate the availability and accessibility of the ideological Islamic books such as Sayyid Qutb, Abdullah Azzam and Al Maqdisi in Surakarta.

Socio-economic, cultural affiliation and social networks of the former convicted terrorists have provided an important context how their religious knowledge finds a significant articulation. The understanding of field action (*amaliyah*)

which means commanding right and forbidding wrong through sweeping the places that they called as immoral places and acts of terror bombing is in line with the scholars analysis who relate it to political-economic discourse the search for identity and also the issue of masculinity.

The absence of channels to convey the aspirations of these marginalized groups after the loss of leftist discourse in Indonesia finds its momentum through the heroic narrative of Islamism and discourse of *takfir*, the history of Muhammad prophet and jihad. Here lies the significance of the religious education of radical and extremist groups. The background of religious education which is mediated by structural problems, social networks and the search for identity in the informants' biographical narratives finds momentum in what they call as field action (*amaliyah*).

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CHAPTER

III



**AN EMPTY SPACE IN EDUCATION
AND THE SPREAD OF RADICALISM:
A Study on Former Convicted Terrorists and ISIS
Returnees in East Java**

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Introduction

This chapter describes the educational background and its relationship with the awareness and radical attitudes of former convicted terrorists and the returnees of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in East Java. Research on radicalism among Muslims in East Java cannot ignore their religious culture. In several academic studies, East Java is often referred to as the main base for Islam and Muslim society affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which has strong roots in Islamic traditions and embraces Pancasila as the state foundation (Geertz 2006, Dhofier 1999). East Java is also home to other Islamic trends like Muhammadiyah and Salafism.

Nevertheless, East Java is also seen as a fertile ground for the emergence of radical Islamic tendencies. For decades, since the New Order regime, Islamic radical trends, commonly referred to as Islamism, have emerged and been successful in establishing strong networks in East Java. As Martin van Bruinessen (2013) observes, after the fall of the New Order Islam in Indonesia has undergone a change in a more conservative direction. This tendency also applies to some Muslims in East Java. Several radical Islamic networks, which are presumed to be thriving such as Indonesian Mujahidin Council (MMI), Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), Darul Islam/Islamic State of Indonesia (DI/NII), and Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) constitute those organizations and networks that spread across several cities in East Java, such as Lamongan, Surabaya, Malang, Jember, and some other areas.

Academic studies on religious radicalism attempt to link the background of religious education to the radical tendency of the terrorists (ICG 2002), in the sense that religious education constitutes a factor behind the formation of radical Islamic tendencies. However, Bruinessen tries to argue that educational institutions are not the determining factors in the birth of this trend (Bruinessen 2016). This is proven by the Gontor Islamic Boarding School as a religious educational institution that has succeeded in creating such figures as Nurcholis Madjid, who is known as a progressive Muslim, and at the same time, in educating Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, who is known as a terrorist perpetrator.

In the context of East Java, former convicted terrorists and ISIS returnees came from diverse religious, educational backgrounds, from madrasas, traditional and modern Islamic boarding schools, public schools, and religious and public universities. This fact shows that the educational institutions of these various types have contributed to the emergence of radical Islamic tendencies. A number of these institutions share a point of convergence regarding the radical potentials of their alumni.

This fact certainly explains that educational background is not the only determining factor—not to mention the primary determinant—for a Muslim to be progressive or radical. Nevertheless, religious educational institution cannot be overlooked as a factor for the emergence of radical tendencies among some Muslims. And this is the important issue that this chapter attempts to observe, namely about the form of relation between religious education and radical tendencies among Muslims—by focusing on former convicted terrorists and ISIS returnees. Moreover, this leads to an attempt to investigate how religious education is experienced by its alumni so that it gives them a knowledge capital—either when used as a basis for justification or as a background for the development of radical awareness.

Based on research conducted on three former convicted terrorists and three ISIS returnees in East Java, we come to an idea that the initial encounter of these informants with some radical Islamic movements took place in both formal and non-formal educational institutions such as Islamic

boarding schools, madrasahs, schools, secular and religious universities. In pesantren and schools, they commonly took the initiative to read books by Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Said Awwa, Abul 'A'la al-Maududi, and Abdullah Azam —both in their original texts and their translation. These books were read outside of the official school hours at their educational institutions. In schools and universities, they generally obtained the information and awareness about radical Islam through such organizations as Rohis and LDK. In addition, they actively attended regular public religious preachings held at mosques.

This explanation confirms the findings in previous studies that *santris* (students of religious schools), school students, and university students gain access to religious knowledge not only through textbooks available within formal institutions. They seek to deepen their knowledge by reading books outside of formal learnings intensively, so that they can give big influence from their efforts to understand Islam (Hasan 2018). The above figures inspired them to choose a path to be radical Muslims. After graduating from *pesantrens*, they looked for radical Islamic networks through their acquaintance with other alumni.

The religious learning by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir is an important meeting point for the efforts by former convicted terrorists and returnees with pesantren and public schools backgrounds in order for them to find a space for getting in touch with tendencies of Islamic terrorism. The data we have obtained from our research informants show that the religious

learning by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir has fertilized extremism. They consider that this religious learning not only provides knowledge and networks of radical Islam, but also motivation that confirms their tendencies. This religious learning also gives them access to organizations and associations, which offer practical engagement with radical Islamic activities.

Apart from religious learning (*pengajian*) and reading activities, social media provides access to the formation of a radical Islamic identity. For some informants, the emergence of their tendency towards radical Islam stems from watching the coverage of suicide bombings on television and YouTube or other sources on the Internet. Gary Bunt is of the view that after the events of September 11, 2001, the Internet has become a window for Muslims to see the activities of other Muslims around the world (Bunt 2003). This confirms what had happened in Indonesia, especially in East Java, in the 2000s.

The Bali Bombings were a critical moment that succeeded in generating enthusiasm for jihad in the name of Islam. More than that, some of the informants even got the desire to become terrorists when they were still in elementary school. During these phases, the desire to become terrorists constituted a condition for the process of religious education, which in turn was sharpened by personal quests to find terrorist networks and momentum in a more complex context.

Considering the explanation above, this study views that the religious education obtained by former convicted

terrorists and returnees does not automatically generate radical Islamic awareness. Religious knowledge obtained from educational institutions becomes a relatively neutral stock of knowledge that can emerge and be framed toward radicalism when it meets conditions outside of the educational institution that correspond to their radical Islamic aspiration. Such an Islamic tendency arises from ideology, friendship networks, or religious identities that constitute an Islamic projection.

In this chapter, most informants generally come from the older generation with lower-middle-class backgrounds, and some others come from the younger generation, who relatively have different patterns. Friendship networks connecting them with terrorist groups, human sympathy, and economic problems are conditions that made them choose to be a part of radical and terrorist networks. Some of them even decided to affiliate themselves with ISIS, or went to Syria and joined the jihadists. They were initially called to join to express their human sympathy.

Some other informants coming from the younger generation are those young people who are worried about their identity and future, and require that their youthfulness be recognized. This restlessness is then used to project religious knowledge obtained from educational institutions toward radical Islam with an argument that this tendency is an opportunity to display their identity as young Muslims who possess high ideals of Islam which in many ways are heroic in nature. In the radical Islam projection, *jihād* is a heroic act

that has become aspirations and dreams that may fulfill their aspiration.

Based on the explanation above, this study argues that although religious education is not the only determining factor for the emergence of radical tendencies, it becomes a condition that allows an individual to become radical. The search for knowledge outside of formal education by former convicted terrorists and returnees indicates that there are empty spaces in informal education that cannot fulfill their Islamic aspiration. Moreover, this education was unable to satisfy the heroic imagination that projects their awareness to find an identity. Its most important contribution is its ability to provide a stock of knowledge ready to be ideologically framed to provide arguments and religious propositions that assert their determination to be involved in radical Islamic movements.

Informants' Educational Backgrounds and Biographical Sketches

As mentioned in the introduction, there are six informants interviewed in this study. The six interviewees consist of three male former convicted terrorists and three male ISIS returnees. Unfortunately, we cannot reach another targeted informant, a female one, for an interview. This section attempts to provide a brief overview of their profiles.

Among the informants, Abu Dzar (b. 1968) is the oldest. Born in Surabaya to a religious and knowledge-loving family, his father was a mosque manager (*takmir*) and former member

of the National Police, while his mother was an alumnus of the Darul Ulum Islamic Boarding School, Jombang. He entered the Pesantren of Gontor in 1979, and when he graduated in 1984, he was sent as a teacher to the Pesantren of al-Mukmin, Ngruki. Before leaving for the Middle East, he studied at Sunan Ampel State Islamic University in Surabaya. Before graduating from the university in 1985, he left for Syria to learn Arabic in Damascus. Afterward, Abu Dzar went to Jordan for two years to study at *Kulliyat al-Mujtamā' al-Islāmī*. He had also been to Pakistan and Afghanistan between 1987-1988 to study religion as well as military training in camps. This intellectual adventure provided Abu Dzar with the opportunity to pursue undergraduate scholarship at Umm al-Qura University in Mecca, in the field of theology until 1996. Currently, he is completing his Master's studies at the graduate program at Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya taking a major in Islamic Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam*, PAI). Based on this educational background, it can be said that Abu Dzar is an academician.

This alumnus of Umm al-Qura showed his interest in radicalism since he was a student at the Gontor Islamic Boarding School, Ponorogo. Starting from his sympathy for Muslim Brotherhood's scholars such as Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, apart from studying religion in several Middle Eastern and South Asian countries, Abu Dzar also participated in military trainings and developed his radical thinking. He had learned from Abdullah 'Azzam, Muhammad Qutb, and Mahmud al-Khaffaji. This father of five children had

also joined NII, JI, and ISIS. He was once involved in a terrorist case because he hid the terrorist kingpins, i.e., Dr. Azhari and Noordin M. Top. Furthermore, he was also an actor behind the declaration of ISIS in Surakarta. Abu Dzar is known as a terrorist of three eras.

Like Abu Dzar, Aris (b. 1982), born in Lamongan, came from a relatively religious family. His father is a graduate of school for educating religious teacher (*Pendidikan Guru Agama*, PGA), and his mother has kin relation with the family of Amrozi. Aris was educated at the Pesantren of al-Islam in Tenggulun, Lamongan, until lower secondary education, and then continued his education at Secondary Technical School (Sekolah Teknik Menengah, STM). Currently, he is studying at STIE YPBI Madura, majoring in Islamic Religious Education on Ali Fauzi's recommendation. Aris was once active in JI's terrorist network due to his connection with the teachers-alumni network of the Tenggulun Pesantren, shortly after his graduation from the pesantren. He still participates in radical public religious preachings both face-to-face and through the Internet.

Aris, who shows a humble character, has an exceptional ability in building networks, both personally and through Facebook. He played a major role in recruiting jihadi groups in Medan and Poso; as a liaison for prospective soldiers who would take part in military trainings, an operator for weapons purchase and delivery, an assistant in hiding fugitives, and a manager of the main jihadi website and chat forums. Besides,

Aris is also a fundraiser. Apart from donors, some of the fund was also collected from several charity boxes placed in mosques and minimarkets.

In late 2013, Aris helped connect individuals from various groups wishing to go to Syria. He was arrested on June 19, 2014, and eventually sentenced to a reasonably light sentence, four years and ten months in prison. Aris spent his time in prison from 2014 to 2017. Based in Jatirogo, Tuban, the man called 'Aris Tuban' is now working as a writer, researcher, and correspondent for counter-radicalism content at ruangobrol.id. Early in 2021, he had just published his first book (Setyawan 2020). The book recounts his experience when he fell into the abyss of terrorism.

Unlike the previous two informants who have a pesantren background, Gafar Saleh (b. 1980), who was born in Panggul, Trenggalek, is a D1 graduate in informatics at ITS, Surabaya. While studying at the university, he also attended religious studies at 'Ma'had Umar bin Al-Khattab, Surabaya. Furthermore, he had also participated in several religious gatherings like those of JI in Magetan, the *tarbiyah* activities of PKS in Sidoarjo, those of FPI in Paciran, and the gatherings in the Tafaqquh Fiddin Foundation supervised by Ustaz Abu Fida in Surabaya. Gafar also had contact with several radical organizations such as FPI, MMI, and MIT. His close association with Islamist groups led him to work as a news reporter in several Islamist media such as Muslim Daily, al-Muhajirun, Arrahmah, and al-Mustaqbal.

In 2011 Gafar was arrested for carrying explosives, and was caught again in 2014 for the same criminal charge. After being released from prison at the end of 2019, the father of two began to change his social environment by more frequently attending Jamaah Tabligh's public religious gathering at the Temboro Pesantren in Magetan, East Java, while pursuing his new hobby, archery. He sometimes participates in counter-radicalization programs held by BNPT (National Counter Terrorism Agency) as well.

Unlike the previous informants who have formal ties to political organizations, Syamsul Mubarak (b. 1982), originally from Jember, is an informant who grew up in NU's traditional religious culture. He even owned an official membership card of the Youth Movement of Ansor. He spent his primary, lower and upper secondary education in Jember. In 2000, he moved to Malang to study Law at Merdeka University (UNMER) of Malang. During his university education, Syamsul was active in LDK, HMI, and BEM. He had contacts with various radical networks such as MMI, NII, and JAT. He also joined the Muslim Lawyers Team (TPM) to assist Ustaz Abu Bakar Ba'asyir's terrorism case. The peak was when he decided to leave for Syria with the aim of aiding humanitarian missions for six months in 2014. Three years after returning from Syria, he was arrested by Densus 88.

During his childhood, for one year Syamsul attended religious education in a pesantren in his village, precisely at Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School. He followed a public religious learning held by JAT and another one by Salim

Mubarok Attamimi (read: Abu Jandal). He had worked in Magistra Utama Malang and the Firdaus Training Center Foundation. Now he works as an owner of a fruit candy, “Calina Candy”, and as a distributor of student worksheets (*Lembar Kerja Siswa*, LKS) in Malang. Syamsul currently initiates the foundation of Fajar Ikhwan Sejahtera (FIS) together with Head of East Java’s Regional Task Force to give trainings for former convicted terrorists in East Java.

Like most of the previous profiles, Wahyu Faza ‘Syafa’at (b. 1991), originally from Bangil, is a person who lives in the midst of a religious family. Wahyu’s father is an alumnus of the Al-Irsyad Islamic Boarding School in Bondowoso and owned a Tahfiz Islamic boarding school, while his mother is a housewife. Both of his parents come from Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, Wahyu almost spent most of his education in public institutions: a state elementary school in Bondowoso and Bangil, State Junior High School 1 in Bangil, State Senior High School 1 in Bangil, and bachelor studies in Informatics Engineering at Muhammadiyah University. He only attended Islamic religious education in Ma’had Umar bin Khattab in Surabaya. Currently, Wahyu manages his business in herbal medication, help to develop small and medium levels of micro enterprises (*Usaha Mikro Kecil Menengah*, UMKM), and is an active member of Fajar Ikhwan Sejahtera (FIS).

This man with six brothers had joined ISIS and had been to Syria with Abu Jandal in 2014 for eight months. His interest in radicalism has emerged since his childhood. It started when he watched a television broadcast about the 9/11

tragedy at the World Trade Center, USA. Because of his deep empathy for Muslims at that time, Wahyu desired to carry out a humanitarian mission. That was his main goal when he traveled to Syria. Meanwhile, he decided to leave radicalism after he got into prison in 2016 and was rehabilitated there.

Similar to Wahyu, who came from a Arab family (read: Saudi Arabia), Danang Barokah (b. 1978) from Surabaya also has Arab blood, Yemen. He comes from a wealthy family, from a family of entrepreneurs. His father and mother manage a dressmaking business. Currently, Danang is managing his business in Muslim fashion after having worked in the state-owned ship manufacture of PT PAL and having experience in auto air conditioning service.

Danang attended his elementary education in the Al-Irsyad Elementary School in Semampir, then went to the Mujahidin Junior High School in Perak, and the Trisila Senior High School in Undaan; meanwhile he pursued his higher education at the Sepuluh November Institute of Technology (ITS) in Surabaya, taking a major in Shipbuilding Engineering. He has never affiliated himself with any Islamic organization. Nonetheless, he diligently participated in religious studies held by the Salafists, and then public religious gathering by Abu Bakar 'Ba'asyir and Abu Thalut at the Sabilillah Islamic Mosque. From these two teachers, his sympathy for the three Bali bombing prisoners—who were sentenced to death—grew. In 2014, he decided to leave for Syria with Abu Jandal and joined ISIS.

Education and Access to Radical Understandings

Looking at the informants' profiles above, it can be seen that their educational backgrounds are very diverse, ranging from Islamic boarding schools associated with radical organizations and movements, Islamic boarding schools that never teach radicalism, to formal public schools. Two of the six informants received their education in Quranic sciences at Ma'had Umar bin Khattab in Surabaya. As for the rest, some are former students of the Al-Islam Pesantren in Tenggulun Lamongan, where the three Bali bombers came from, while the other is a former student of the Gontor Pesantren in Ponorogo who later served as a teacher at the Pesantren of Ngruki in Sukoharjo.

In their claim, two informants (Wahyu and Gafar) got access to books with radical views, like that of Abdullah 'Azzam, entitled *Tarbiyah Jihadiyah*, when they studied at Islamic boarding school. However, they did not get the book from their teacher but from their fellow students in the dormitory. Meanwhile, an informant who is an alumnus of the Gontor Pesantren (Abu Dzar) admitted that he became interested in radicalism when he read many books of Muslim Brotherhood, which that he got from a bookstore of the pesantren. He loved reading and consumed books from such Islamic movement scholars as Abul A'la Maududi, Said Hawwa, and Hasan al-Banna. This passion peaked when he entered his final year of education at the Gontor Pesantren. Before leaving for the Middle East, he studied at IAIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Before his graduation in 1985, he went to Syria and

studied at a school of Arabic language in Damascus. Later, he left for Jordan for two years to study at *Kuliyat al Mujtama' al-Islāmī* (Faculty of Muslim Society). He went to Pakistan and Afghanistan between 1987-1988 to study religion as well as involved in military training camps. Afterward, he received an undergraduate scholarship at Umm al-Qura University, Mecca, in the field of Islamic theology until 1996.

The second former convicted terrorist (Aris), better known as Aris Tuban, is still related with the family of Amrozi (one of the Bali bombers). His parents sent him to study at the Al-Islam Pesantren in Tenggulun Lamongan until his lower secondary education from 1995 to 1998. During his lower secondary education, Aris began to get acquainted with books by Syeikh Abdullah Azzam, which were sold within the al-Islam Pesantren by some fellow students. For Aris, the most impressive books were *Tarbiyah Jihadiyah* and *Di Bawah Naungan Surat At Taubah* (Under the Shade of Chapter At-Taubah).

“I was there for three years, rather short. Yes ... indeed there I came to know these thoughts. There at the time [I came to know], for example, the books of Shaykh Abdullah ‘Azzam, available there. So (the books) became the students’ reading material. Just like the Javanese proverb, *witing trisno jalaran soko kulino* (the beginning of love comes from frequent [sight]). Because I often saw [them], so I became curious.”

After three years, Aris finally graduated from the pesantren and continued his studies at a Secondary Technical School (STM). Between 1999 and 2002, due to its teachers’ involvement in JI’s special operation units, the al-Islam

pesantren became a center of jihadi activity. Many of JI's initial bombing operations —the 2000 Christmas Eve bombing, an assault on the ambassador of the Philippines in Jakarta, and the Bali bombing itself—were partly planned or started from Lamongan (IPAC 2015). At that time, Aris no longer studied at Al-Islam because he had already sit at STM between 1999 and 2002, but he still attended public religious preachings organized by religious teachers, who were the colleagues of his teachers from Al-Islam (Setyawan 2020, 48). The seeds of radicalism that he had got since lower secondary education were fertilized. The two former convicted terrorists (read: Abu Dzar and Aris) were connected, and directly involved in terrorist activities.

Meanwhile, Gafar, the third former convicted terrorist, completed his formal education from kindergarten to upper secondary education in Trenggalek. All of the basic education levels he took are public schools: TK Wonocoyo 3, SD Wonocoyo 3, SMPN 1 Panggul, and SMA 1 Trenggalek. After graduating from upper secondary education, Gafar continued his study of the D1 level in Informatics at ITS Surabaya, which he completed in two years. He took a training of Qur'an memorization and learned Arabic at Ma'had Umar bin Khattab in Surabaya, up to the third level (three years). He also studied in Malaysia for eight months. If Abu Dzar and Aris began to be exposed to radicalism through the books they read, Gafar experienced this directly through public religious preachings (*pengajian*). He himself admits that he is not typically a person who loves reading. He says "he most frequently attended

religious forums than reading books. While joining MIT (read: East Indonesian Mujahidin),” he continues, “I received material from public religious preachings in the forms of teachings and fatwas from Santoso, Aman Abdurrahman, and Abu Bakar Ba’asyir.”

Gafar’s involvement in terrorist acts was as an explosives carrier in January 2011 when the Operasi Cipta Kondisi (Operation for Condition Creation) was carried out in front of the Magetan Police Headquarters, East Java. Because of the case, he was sentenced to two years and three months’ imprisonment, and was paroled on July 11, 2012. Afterward, he acted as a transporter of pipe and tupperware bombs through JNE package delivery to Wajo, South Sulawesi, in 2014. In addition, he was active as a news reporter in several Islamist media mentioned above (read: Muslim Daily, Almuhajirun, Arrahmah, and al-Mustaqbal). He learned a lot about journalism from Muhammad Jibril, a son of Abu Jibril.

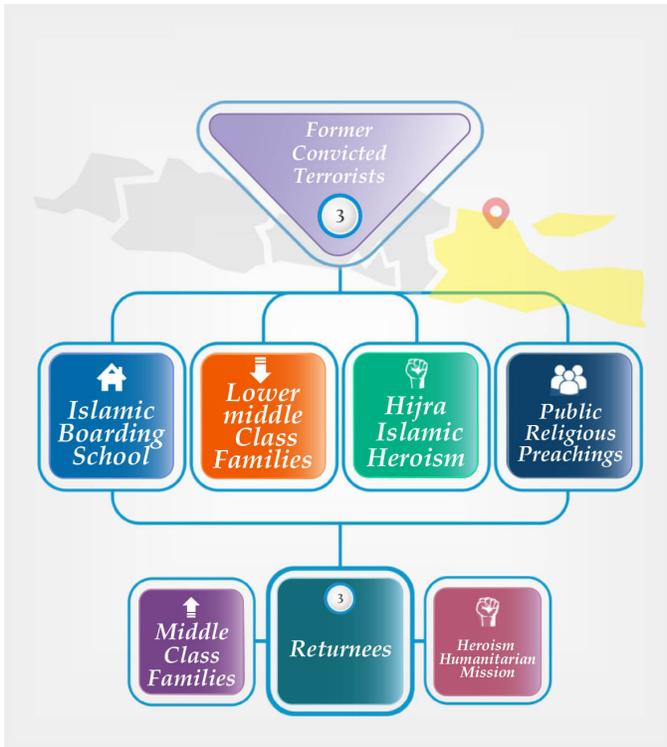
From the educational backgrounds of the three former convicted terrorists above, it can be concluded that when they started to be exposed to and participate in extreme movements, their educational background did not reach the level of higher education; except probably Abu Dzar, who had studied at IAIN, and then moved to Syria (read: Damascus). Like the others, Gafar only had a D1 degree from ITS of Surabaya. This is in line with what Sidney Jones (2014) has stated that the educational background of MIT’s followers tends to be lower than that of JI’s followers.

Once again, those three former convicted terrorists were not exposed to radical understandings from formal education, but from books they accessed within the pesantren environment—those books were not taught in the curriculum. This acquired understanding later found its way after they attended extremist public religious preachings and joined radical organizations.

Jihad with Humanitarian Aid: Islamic Heroism?

In this study, as explained at the beginning of this chapter, we were able to interview three ISIS returnees. Their age ranges from 30-40 years old. Their educational backgrounds also vary. It can be said that these returnees come from the younger generation of terrorism who came to know their radical understandings from the Internet.

Syamsul, a law graduate, received his formal education from elementary, lower and upper secondary education in Jember. Then he completed his studies in law at UNMER Malang from 2000 to 2004. As mentioned before, in his childhood he learned religion in his hometown; later he studied at the Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School for a year. There little Syamsul came to know radicalism. However, at that time, he did not realize that the Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School had close ties with NII. During his studies at universities, he was active in LDK, HMI, BEM, MMI, and JAT, and had been in contact with the Muslim Lawyers Team (TPM) to assist Abu Bakar Ba'asyir's terrorism case.



Danang, who is of true Arab descent, was pushed by his family to be a religious person. His family prioritizes *amar makruf* than *nahi munkar*. Although almost all of his basic education was completed in Islamic schools (read: SD Al-Irsyad in Semampir, SMP Mujahidin in Perak, and SMA Trisila in Undaan), he pursued his higher education at the Sepuluh November Institute of Technology (ITS) in Surabaya, majoring in shipbuilding engineering. He was considered a diligent child, so that he was twice awarded with the Supersemar scholarship and a German scholarship. Initially he wished to continue his studies at the Air Force

Academy, but due to economic difficulties, he chose to study shipbuilding engineering in 1997, instead. Meanwhile, Wahyu, who is of an Arab descent (his parents originally come from Saudi Arabia), spent all of his basic education in formal public schools. Afterward, he studied informatics engineering at Muhammadiyah University of Malang. Because of his desire to learn Arabic, Wahyu studied Arabic at 'Ma'had Umar bin Khattab Surabaya.

The three returnees in this research as discussed in this chapter all left for Syria through Abu Jandal's recruitment. This happened when those three attended public religious preachings by the later mentioned person, whose real name is Salim Mubarak Attamimi. Those three admitted that they were interested to come to Syria to provide humanitarian assistance. For that reason, these three returnees consider that what they did by leaving for Syria is not at all a terrorist act because they were helping Syrian Muslims who were being oppressed.

According to Syamsul, "at that time there was no news about ISIS." "So," he continues, "the point is that I want [to do] a humanitarian mission." Therefore, he thought that "if I died there, there was an intention to help my brothers there, and God willing, at that time the death would be the death of a martyr (*syahid*)."

As a graduate in law, he decided to go to Syria for six months from 2013 to 2014 only after careful considerations. For him, what he did was not against the law. He does not

wage a jihad war but helped fellow Muslims who were in trouble, and there was no legal prohibition against helping fellow Muslims.

Syahrul never regretted what he had done. He says:

“Do I regret it? No. What I mean is... all of that was a process, Brother. So who knows my intention... I said (wanted) to go to Syria. Who determines the acceptance of human deeds (amal) is human. My intention was for the sake of God, so I never regretted having been to Syria. However, if bad things are implemented, this is dangerous. Even I myself will reprimand and prevent those (bad things), including to declare fellows who have professed shahāda of apostasy.

Danang is likewise. Until now, he has never feel sorry that he had been to Syria. For him, the goal was to provide humanitarian aids. The two persons (Syamsul and Danang) were united by a heroic desire based on the stories of the companions of the Prophet. Danang says, “I have no regret. Instead, I am grateful because I went there to help fellow Muslims.” The argument used to affirm his position was that because he “wanted to follow the the prophetic tradition to help fellow Muslims” and then return to Indonesia.

Wahyu also expresses the same reason. His departure to Syria was to provide humanitarian aids for the oppressed Muslims. However, when he arrived there, he was asked to practice arms taking-up. Even so, he did not mind it. Instead, he felt proud because since he was a child, he had the desire to take up arms for jihad, and later became a sympathizer for ISIS.

Wahyu left for Syria only after two weeks of his meeting with Abu Jandal. At that time, he was offered whether he was interested in going to Syria to help Muslims there or not. He, without hesitation, expressed his interest in the invitation because of his tendency to help as his parents taught him at home. He said, “Muslims are like one body. So, because of this I wanted to go. Until finally, three months before I left, I (actually) never had any plans to go. “

Judging from their educational background, these three returnees received general basic education in public schools. All of them had also studied in institutions of higher education, and all studied secular knowledge, not religious one. Even so, they were exposed to radical ideas at different ages and through different processes: Wahyu was exposed from television, Syamsul from the Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School, while Danang from public religious circles that he attended. What is interesting about these differences is that all of them shared the same heroic projection. They were young people who were called by a sympathy for humanity united by Islam. A more detailed explanation about the socialization that shaped the radical thoughts and attitudes of the informants from East Java will be discussed in the next section.

Socialization Toward Finding Identity: An “Empty Space” in Education, Religious Forums, and Friendship Networks

The above discussion about the educational backgrounds of former convicted terrorists and ISIS returnees in East Java

shows that formal education does not directly contribute to the formation of radical thinking. Only one informant came to know radicalism from the school he attended. Even so, this understanding only flourished when supported by certain contexts, the context of public religious preachings as well as the contexts of friendship and socialization. This section will elucidates further the socialization or the environments and networks that influenced the radical thoughts and actions of those six informants due to the vacant role of religious and formal education in providing sufficient access in their search for identity.

As a former convicted terrorist of three eras and the most senior one, Abu Dzar began to gain radical understanding while studying in Gontor, but this did not immediately lead him to follow radical movements. After leaving Gontor, he served at the Al-Mukmin *Pesantren* in Ngruki, and there he met Abu Bakar Ba'asyir. His knowledge grew and strengthened when he went to Syria. It did so when he migrated to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Mecca (which was under the hegemonic influence of the Wahhabis). This educational adventure enriched his understanding and gave him the ethos to actualize it as an everyday practice (*amaliyah*).

Abu Dzar's understanding, which was initially not accommodated and not monitored by his teachers, finally found coordination with that of DI/NII, which shared the same idea. Since then, from 1985 to 1986, he began to be involved in acts of terror by joining an organization that aimed to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia. In early 1993, NII split,

and some of its members formed JI (Setyawan 2020). Abu Dzar's friendship networks finally came closer to people with radical views, so this made him always involved in radical movements —for example, in 2004, he hid two terrorist leaders, Dr. Azahari and Noordin M Top from Malaysia. After leaving prison, Abu Dzar was unable to get out of the terrorist network. When ISIS emerged, he co-declared it in Surakarta in 2014. That case led him to return to prison, where he was finally released in 2017.

As a person who started to get exposed to radical views when he was a teenager from his education in junior high school and then in technical secondary school (STM), Aris began to participate in Rohis activities organized by PKS. Besides, he also attended public religious preachings by preachers from Pondok Al-Islam Tenggulun. Since then he had come to know individuals from Islamic movements. In 2003-2004, when the Bali bombers were imprisoned, Aris became a sympathizer who visited them in prison. He even became more diligent in attending religious forums held preachers, the sympathizers of the trio Bali bombers. These activities eventually made Aris a JI cadre.

In 2007, Aris wandered outside Java and had many contacts with JI cadres and Ambon jihadi alumni. This adventure brought him to more places and friends that supported his radical views. Besides, as a person who is proficient in internet-related matters, he took more part in managing jihadi forums on the Internet. Moreover, he also began to act as a broker for the purchase and delivery

of weapons needed for *jihad*. Aris deliberately chose to work behind the scenes, not to go directly into the fields of jihad because from the beginning he only wanted to play a role that did not require him to leave his family. During his involvement, Aris was able to gain access to communicate and learn directly from Imam Samudra.

As a person who diligently participates in public religious preachings in mosques or more exclusive religious circles (*halaqahs*), Gafar has attended public religious preachings held by the Jamaah Tarbiyah in Porong Sidoarjo, by JI in Magetan, and by FPI in Paciran. From these public religious preachings, he finally became connected with radical activists and terrorists, who introduced him to the practice (*amaliyah*) of jihad as described in the previous section. Actually, he had been affiliated with Muhammadiyah, but when studying at university, he joined MMI and was invited to take care of its charity institution. There, he was taught journalism. After the three Bali bombers were executed, Gafar worked for MMI's media front. This role required him to go to the field to cover directly, and this took him to Pattani, Brunei Darussalam, and the Philippines, as well as Saranggani, Ambon, and Poso. Gafar was also active in FPI, though briefly. When MIT was formed, with the invitation of Sabar Subagio alias Daeng Koro, he joined it and was given military training. He learned Islam directly from Santoso (the founder of the Mujahid Indonesia Timur).

Though coming from a family of NU background, at university Syamsul lent more support to NII before he joined

MMI. When the latter was not strong anymore, he joined JAT. In his confession, he began to be attracted to radical organizations' ideology since he lost in debates about the infidels, the wicked, and the wrongdoers (*kafir, fasik, and dzalim*), those who do not submit to the rule of Allah.

Meanwhile, as the youngest informant from East Java who come from a relatively wealthy family, Wahyu confesses that he started to get exposed to radicalism from elementary school. In his opinion, the events of the WTC 9/11 in 2001 influenced his thinking. At that time, there was a television station that continuously broadcast the 9/11 event. He watched it every time he came home from school. Apart from that, he also followed news about the Ambon conflicts. This exposure began to leave an impression on his mind about jihad. Curiosity led him to seek more information about jihad. And since he had access to a computer, he began to look for information and teachings on jihad by himself. This habit of surfing on the Internet continued until he went to university. Wahyu collected hundreds of videos about jihad in his computer. His passion for reading also led him to search for jihadist literature circulating on the Internet.

Wahyu got access to Abdullah Azzam's books in the original Arabic. His ability to understand these books in the original language was due to his ability in Arabic while studying at Ma'had Umar bin Khattab. In Malang, Wahyu regularly attended a public religious preachings, which was held twice a week in the Griya Shanta residential mosque. There, he frequently received material about jihad in Syria

from the preachers who instructed in the event. After that, he took part in a public religious preachings in which Abu Jandal taught, and finally became acquainted with him directly. This encounter made him so intense that when advised to go to Syria, Wahyu immediately agreed.

“I came to know him (Abu Jandal) not for a very long time, only two weeks. Always asked, ‘Have you had a passport?’ At that time, I wanted to go to my grandfather in Saudi [Arabia]. My extended family is still there. Coincidentally, I have already had a passport. He then continued by saying, ‘do you want to go to Syria?’ Of course, I want to .. ‘Okay, give me your passport!’ A week later I went with him.”

Danang experienced a slightly different pattern. Yet, in general the network pattern he experienced was not so much different from that of the previous informants. Coming from a family of NU background, when in junior high school, he learned the Qur’an from a teacher, who was invited to his house. In senior high school, he learned Salafism at Al-Irshad as his family did. Danang never learned in pesantren or participated in any Islamic organizations. He chose to attend public religious preachings at a mosque close to his house.

Among the public religious preachings that he participated in was that *pengajian* at the Mosque of Islam Sabilillah with where Abu Bakar Ba’asyir regularly instructed Islamic law, every month. He introduced him to radicalism for the first time. He also learned religion from Abu Tholut alias Mustopa alias Pranata alias Imron Baihaki, the leader

of JI's region III. Danang began to diligently and earnestly follow the instruction given by Abu Tholut after he witnessed the funeral of the three Bali bombers in Lamongan. These religious teachings brought him closer to radical thoughts, so when Abu Jandal invited him to carry out humanitarian jihad in Syria, Danang immediately agreed. While attending the funeral of the three Balinese bombers, Danang claimed to see three green birds flying. This sign made him even more convinced of the truth of carrying out jihad.

Even though the three returnees went to Syria at Abu Jandal's invitation, they did not go at the same time. The order of the departure for these three returnees began with Wahyu, Syamsul, then Danang. All of them left in 2014.

Those six informants (former convicted terrorists and returnees), if traced, have all joined or been connected with one —or more— radical organizations such as DI, FPI, NII, JI, MMI, MIT, and JAT. Once they joined the organization, the friendship networks also circled around those people from the same radical organizations. This further strengthens their radical ideology due to the support of the milieu, friendship, and radical organizations.

As seen in the description above, their intensive involvement in radical networks and activities is indirectly due to the existence of an “empty space” in their formal institutions. This empty space is a manifestation of these institutions' inability to provide access to their effort to fulfill their desire to seek deeper knowledge about Islam. This void

is also a failure to provide a space that allows them to find identities that would match their religious aspirations.

Muslim Oppression, Masculinity, and Being *Kaffah* Muslims

In this study, almost all informants state that their wives or families were not aware of their involvement in terrorist and radical acts. The social inequality that occurs in Indonesia and Muslim oppressions both at home and abroad are of the reasons for the informants in this study to take extreme actions. As Muslims, they feel to have an obligation to help other Muslims who were being oppressed.

This form of assistance is translated into different practices of jihad (*amaliyah*). Some of them chose to join physical jihad by joining terrorist movements or wars, but some others prefer to translate it by providing material and immaterial aids. The cases of the Bali bombing, the Ambon conflict, the Poso conflict, and the Syrian conflict became the fuel that ignited their enthusiasm to do *jihad*. This was enhanced with the existence of manipulations and corruptions happening everywhere. The choice of *jihad* with various methods became a channel for them to show the perfection of their Islamness. Through these methods, they tried to be true Muslims (*kaffah* Muslims). At the same time, these efforts are also intended to show their masculine side of being real male Muslims.

This masculine side is seen through humanitarian projection that emerged as a sympathy based on *ukhuwwah*

Islāmiyyah (Islamic brotherhood). This sympathy has been successfully gained not only at the national level but also at the international level. Caring for fellow Muslims is also severely conditioned by their masculine heroic desire. There have been attempts by former convicted terrorists and ISIS returnees to become jihadi fighters, like in the historical narratives they found in the early generations of Muslims. For them, friends were people who have a solid Islamic spirit and became continually active on the battlefield.

The religious tendency of the former convicted terrorist and ISIS returnees emerging from their sympathy and Islamic heroism was thoroughly kept in their everyday life. This can be especially evident in Syamsul's explanation below.

"The motivation used to be that I wanted religion to be practiced in all aspects. For example, Islam also regulates family matters, children, neighbors, society, politics, and law. I happen to be a graduate in law. In the past, there was the Jakarta Charter. How the corruption cannot not stop (occurring) because perhaps from a juridical perspective, there is no real effect. Hence, Islam should occasionally be given a space to deal with corruption. Sometimes I want to offer, this is Islam. But, sometimes we need many teachers, need to open up."

An interesting aspect that this research highlights is agency. All the informants do not want or do not let their families or wives know of their radical and terrorist actions. This fact seems to be the meeting point of masculinity

that brings together radical Islam experience among the informants. They kept away their wives and children from being involved in the activities they participated in. One of the former convicted terrorists even temporarily stopped all terrorist activities when his child was born, while one of the ISIS returnees made his wife and children a reason to ask for permission to return to Indonesia when he wanted to go home. This happened because he realized that what ISIS had done deviated from what he initially believed. This is obviously somewhat different from the Surabaya bombing case, which involved the whole family carrying out a suicide bombing operation.

Conclusion

The description above shows that the religious education of the former ISIS terrorists and returnees in formal schools is an essential element in the process of developing individual identity. However, this important aspect has a varying level. At the lowest level, educational institutions provided a space that allowed informants to acquire a stock of knowledge that could be transformed and framed into ideological knowledge, which could be used as the basis for their attitude when deciding to become terrorists. This is because the religious knowledge they acquired in educational institutions, howsoever, provided them with information about jihad, Islamic politics, and relations between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Religious knowledge has enabled the informants to reflect when they found national and international political situations that displayed the inequality and distress of Muslim citizens. At the same time, the religious knowledge in question also provided a space for them to continue their consciousness journey in search of identities that could not be found in their educational institutions.

In this context, apart from being an educational space that generates a stock of knowledge, religious education leaves an empty space that cannot meet the needs of the former convicted terrorist and ISIS returnees: such as practical behaviors related to human sympathy among Muslims and masculine heroism fulfilled through jihad and terrorist activities.

Undeniably, this empty space in religious education is not only supported by the two things above. Another factor that triggers the emergence of empty space is religious education's inability to provide a space that enabled them to form their identity according to their religious and young aspiration in the framework designed by those institutions. This failure, in turn, made them look for alternatives that made them radical.

At the higher level, religious educational backgrounds, especially those non-formal ones, provide direct access to the network of people who have been involved in terror activities and ISIS. This network is manifested through the alumni of educational institutions who have succeeded in engaging others in radical and terrorist activities. This, of course,

provides access for santri, students, and university students (former convicted terrorists and ISIS returnees) to get an instant picture about human sympathy and heroism. They did not get this projection from formal and informal learning. The display of sympathy and heroism —especially that expressing masculinity— appeared evident when shown by those who has been actively involved in radical networks. This in turn gave them a stronger motivation than just knowledge acquired in formal and informal educational institutions.

The inability of formal and informal religious education to facilitate sympathetic aspiration, religious heroism, and future clear prospects of the older and younger generations, represents an empty space that becomes a shared factor among a number of the educational backgrounds of the informants in this study. Therefore, religious education does not constitute the direct trigger for the emergence of radical tendencies. In this context, religious education is transformed to fuel radical sympathy and heroism because this tendency constitutes a void that fails to be filled in their respective religious educational institutions.

CHAPTER

IV



COMPETING THE SACRED PEDIGREE: Individual Agency Between Text and Authority

Ahmad Rafiq



One form of school exam questions is filling the gap with the command to fill in the dots or blank spaces with the correct answers. In school exam questions, usually the question maker provides several alternative choices, a kind of multiple choice to fill the empty space. The religious narrative and educational background of former convicted terrorists, returnees and deportees in West Java could be described as filling the empty space. Like previous studies, this research also did not find any direct relationship between the religious education background of the extremists, if it refers to formal education in schools or registered official educational institutions, with religious narratives that encourage people to engage in acts of terrorism, be it physical violence or involvement in the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The absence of the direct relationship indicates that there is an empty space between the formal religious education background and the religious aspirations of the informants which are triggered by many things around them, ranging from direct experiences, Islamic

literatures accessed, information from the authorities, as well as media provocation. In contrast to school lesson questions where the questioner provides alternative answer choices, in the case of informants in West Java, the gaps actually provide space for the presence of constructions of knowledge and non-formal education - and more dominantly informal education - to fill them. These constructions and institutions are what bridge religious aspirations into extreme religious acts that lead to acts of terrorism or simply being involved in supporting terrorism.

In Indonesian history, West Java which is the locus of this research, is generally one of the centers of the transformation of Islamism into a social activism during the early days of Indonesian independence. This understanding emerged in the form of the DI/TII movement carrying the idea of NII (Dijk 1983). According to Solahudin's notes the traces of this movement, can still be found today. Furthermore, this trail can be used to build a general map of the Islamist movement in West Java in the territorial category. The southern part of West Java is dominated by indigenous people and former enthusiasts of the Islamic State of Indonesia (NII) movement. Meanwhile, the northern part of West Java, including the Bodetabek area, is more dominated by urban communities, which are a mixture of local people and migrants (Solahudin 2011). Because of its nature as a buffer for the capital, the main motive for migration from outside which supports the formation of urban communities in the northern region is the political economy motive. This typology was not

intended as a territorial boundary that localized the former enthusiasts of the NII movement only in the South. However, this typology would like to show that when the remnants of the NII movement, whether in the form of agents or people who carry ideas, or their own understanding, move into the northern region, then these ideas and understandings will take on the symbols and characteristics of urban society in relative terms. For example middle and upper class agency, and the dominance of the influence of the development of information technology on personal or group decision making, and the emergence of women's agencies due to a more open public space (Castells 1997; Baumann 1999). All informants in this study reside in North West Java. Therefore, we can find the colour of urban society as above mentioned and help to explain the analysis of the research findings.

The notes in this section will not explain in detail the forms of violence or acts of terrorism and its violent networks that can be found in other research reports. This report will only describe qualitatively how the religious aspiration and violence narratives related to religious education background through mediations that could be found in the study, such as structural problems, identity, economy, politics, or even a family or domestic problems. The narratives were obtained from three groups of informants: former convicted terrorists, returnees and deportees which are pointing to how they find and fill the empty space as illustrated above. This narrative will start with former convicted terrorist, and then returnees and deportees.

Former Convicted Terrorist: Heroism, Identity, and Social Linkage

The stories of the former convicted terrorists in this case study share the same Islamic aspirations regarding the narrative of heroism, contestation of identity in urban spaces, and social linkage that mediates informal education in each case with religious narratives and social activism that contain violence to terrorism. The some part of the heroism narratives are the imagination and marker of masculinity that calls upon their moral and even physical and material responsibilities to fight for Islam. At the same time, the urban space provides for each person with an actual experience of their shaken Islamic identity, in addition to the issues of justice and Muslim humanity at the global level which are presented through reading and informal gatherings that 'call' solidarity among Muslims. In the context of social linkage, urban space may not have a distinctiveness compared to rural space because it also provides limited meeting spaces to answer personal and group religious aspirations that are apart from the construction of religious knowledge offered in formal educational institutions. The difference may occur in the construction of new knowledge that is used to fill the gap which is also formed by new industrial products, especially information technology. Some of these distances occur naturally due to the limitations of religious learning materials, but some are deliberately created because of the long-running interests of identity, economic, political, and even cultural contestation. The following three cases will explore about this topics in their respective accounts.

The first story: the alienation of religious aspirations and the narrative of heroism

The first case, Soleh who became a “media darling” because of his involvement in terrorism with its status as the country’s security apparatus. His first involvement in acts of terrorism namely since the provision of equipment until training of Muslim militias affiliated with the al-Qaeda network, has actually started since he was still an active police officer. By keeping his name disguised as the informant’s right, his story can be easily confirmed in many other sources which is open to public. His position as an active police status and conscious involvement indicate the strong construction of religious knowledge he has carried as well as the large distance to knowledge he must close.

He comes from a police family background who migrated to Depok (read Jakarta and its surroundings), Soleh completed his primary and secondary education in the urban environment of Jakarta and its surroundings. He claimed as a child who liked to fight as an expression of his manhood, continued until he entered high school at a vocational school in Jakarta. However, it was also in this school that he found a turning point. By keeping his previous violent narrative to claim his manhood through brawls, now he has turned to show his heroism to defend religion. It was at this vocational school that he began to be active in Rohis or Islamic organisation organized by students in school which reversed the designation of the persistent narrative of violence. Still in his teens in the early 90s, through Rohis activities he

was acquainted with Tarbiyah and jihadist Islamist literatures at that time. This religious background motivated him to continue his education to non-formal Islamic education institutions, Islamic boarding schools in one of the main bases of Nahdliyyin in East Java. He was briefly familiar with classical literature in various fields of basic Islamic studies, such as tauhid, fiqh, tasawuf and Arabic languages. At the same time, he still maintained the narrative of Islamism from the literature he read when he was active in Rohis. He even still remembers how his classmates saw him as strange because he read Sayyid Qutb's publications, an authoritative figure of al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun in Egypt who is one of the key references to the Tarbiyah movement in Indonesia. I call this point as the alienation of religious aspirations which will later become increasingly distant from their religious educational background and seeking to cover their distance elsewhere.

Only lasted about 2 years, Soleh returned to Jakarta without completing his education at Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*). In this research interview, he tried to remember and reflect, maybe that's why he could be different from other *santri* friends who were not easily tempted by new Islamic narratives outside the *pesantren*. His return was at the request of his parents for him to join the police, as were his father and siblings. At the same time, the spirit of Islamic education that is still maintained encourages him to continue his religious education in Islamic education institutions as well as da'wah institutions in the vicinity of his residence. This new institution is affiliated with Tarbiyah movement, where some

of the teachers were the founders of Tarbiyah movement-based political parties in Indonesia. He mentioned a number of names who became national figures of the party. In this institution, he «matured» the construction of his Islamic knowledge which refers to Islamism, but was not explicitly charged with violence and terrorism. This indecisiveness which then underlies him to enter into other informal institutions which he thinks are more assertive.

After being accepted as a member of the police in 1998, his involvement in *Tarbiyah*-based Islamic education institutions became a way for Soleh to remain active through informal education on the same ideological basis through *halaqah*. In this *halaqah* he even found a life partner, up to more than one. In a number of reports, this issue of marriage later became the cause of his accompanying dismissal from the Indonesian police, in addition to his involvement in military training and other terrorism-related activities. Along with the increasingly complex social reality and media information that he faced in the urban environment, he found new patrons through informal education which he thought were more able to provide answers to the actual problems he faced. The new patrons were no longer *Tarbiyah* but they were jihadists. These patrons were not really new if it refers to his experiences to senior high school when he firstly accessed to Islamist jihadists literatures such as Abdullah Azzam and Sayyid Qutb which managed his heroic path as Islamic. Up to this point, Soleh had been in a new social network and still accessed Islamist literature which accelerates his religious

knowledge to answer the problems of Islam and Muslims. The answers that he did not find from in Islamic educational institutions both formal and nonformal before including Tarbiyah's *halaqah*.

For Soleh, his personal experience and the information he received about the oppression of Muslims asked for answers that were more than just the knowledge of Islam he had so far. In interviews and in a number of media reports, Soleh mentioned about his bad experience when he had to negotiate his Islamic identity with his job which in fact sometimes contrasted to his religious position. However, he believed that it was not the only reason he finally involved in terrorism. The Islamic study groups or *halaqah* where he joined in including Tarbiyah emphasized their messages on propagating Muslim brotherhood and united in various places. Islamic identity is thus not only tested in his daily life which he assumed contradictory but also the passion and demand for one direction with Muslims all over the world, to strive together, even though what is meant by "together" can be interpreted in various ways. It can mean physical involvement wherever Muslims are oppressed and must be defended, such as fighting abroad, or building up the military force (read: militia) of Muslims in the country to defend the same rights.

In the identity contestation as mentioned above, Soleh involved to build and maintain internal strength in the country, without losing its relationship with the similar jihadist movement abroad. The reason made him active in the

establishment of Al- Qaeda at the Southeast Asian regional level based in Indonesia. From *Tarbiyah halaqah* Soleh in turn, actively moved to a new *halaqah* which circulated Islamist jihadist lessons, such as Islamic study groups led by Aman Abdurrahman and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir. Moreover, with a relatively adequate Islamic studies background he became actively recruiting people to fight for Islam by taking up arms, starting with the supply of weapons and finally being active in military training in Aceh where he had served as an active police officer. This military training also led him to become a convicted terrorist in 2010.

In religious aspirations, Soleh can fluently explained some religious authorities and literatures which became his references in studying Islam. These literatures were not only received but also transmitted through *halaqah* as an informal educational institution. This *halaqah* binds its members including Soleh in a very strong social network and linkage as long as they are in it. The strength of *halaqah* as a space for knowledge transmission can defeat the individual preferences in it. Soleh mentioned that his Islamic education which he got from traditional Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) occasionally appeared in his mind to negotiate the current choices. However, these negotiations were always won by the violent narratives which supported in the individual relationships within the social network. The narrative was also strengthened by internal characterizations of the authorities referred to in the network. Finally, social networks are not only a medium of interaction or friendship but also mediating

and determining choices of knowledge that can be obtained to perform heroic acts of violence. Social networks have been keeping the “sacred pedigree” of religious knowledge which believe that their Islamic narratives are the only truth and the basis of their current conditions namely war.

The second story: migration and traces of heroism in humanitarian missions

In almost the same urban space, another case study can also be found, Hasan, who migrated to Jakarta at a young age and was involved in acts of terrorism. According to Hasan, the construction of his religious knowledge began when he first moved from Lampung to Jakarta. His primary objective was continuing his education to university after graduating from vocational high school of automotive in Lampung. He claimed that had been registered at UI but he did not explicitly mention where he completed his study. His primary education was pursued at Muhammadiyah elementary and junior high schools before continuing to vocational high schools. The basis for religious education is only obtained from there. He mentioned that his family, especially his parents having religious education. His mother comes from Central Java and had Islamic boarding school educational background, while his father is from Jember with a strong Nahdliyyin Islamic tradition. He did not feel there was anything special about his previous religious education with reference to his family or school. He studied in Muhammadiyah institutions because they were close and dominant in Lampung. He claimed that

basic religious education he received from family environment and education. When he being asked to recall his religious knowledge, with mentioning the word “past” Hasan referred directly to his experience in Jakarta not in Lampung. From the beginning, Hasan identified Islamic religious knowledge that influenced his social activism with the migration process, which ultimately did not only take place once, but repeated to other physical spaces.

Although he did not mention any particular location of university or college he studied, in the context of Islamic knowledge and experience Hasan pointed to regular Islamic study groups at Islamic Propagation Council or DDII. When he moved to Jakarta, he was active in DDII activities which he called Moderate Salafi. This study is not in the context of confirming the Moderate Salafi label. DDII is known in the context of the Islamic organization in Indonesia as mass organization founded by the leaders of Masjumi. Apart from the political dynamics of Masyumi history, DDII was never known as an anti-NKRI organization, even though its founding fathers were known as figures with relatively strong Islamic thoughts and social activism. At DDII, Hasan obtained the spirit of defending Islam and solidarity among Muslims both at the national and global levels. At the same time, in those years there was the Ambon war which exposed openly by various print and electronic media and even digital. When DDII formed the KOMPAK wing organization (Crisis Management Committee) to provide humanitarian assistance to Muslims in Ambon, Hasan involved and was sent to Ambon

as a volunteer to help Ambonese Muslims , according to media news he received, was oppressed and fought by infidel people. According to Hasan, the context of his involvement fully followed KOMPAK DDII's humanitarian agenda in Ambon at that time.

If DDII can be said to be Hasan's first informal education space that formed the spirit of his Islamic social activism, Ambon has just become the second informal education space , which dominantly transforms his Islamic spirit into the Jihadist Islamist movement. In Ambon Hasan started to know Jihadist terms and was involved in *tadrib askari* (military training). He met some jihadists alumni of the Afghanistan war as trainers who were later on recognized as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members. Not only military knowledge as a means of self-protection on the battlefield, Hasan also studied the ideology of Islamism. Returning from his "humanitarian" activities in Ambon, Hasan continued to communicate with the jihadists. Hasan was involved in the Poso war indirectly, even to the war in the Philippines, even though he was limited to being a weapons courier. Moving from one place to another and changing names and identities to disguise himself, apart from fighting, he continued to be active in Islamic study groups through *halaqah* which in turn strengthened his jihadist Islamism ideology. As similar as Soleh, Hasan also eloquently mentioned a number of authorities and Jihadist Islamism literatures as sources of knowledge. The authorities and literatures partly intersect with the authorities and literatures mentioned by Soleh earlier. These reinforce hi

himself about “sacred pedigree” of his religious knowledge as the only truth at that time.

As similar as Saleh, religious educational background of Hasan was being accelerated by identity crises. It was just that Soleh’s identity crisis was initially not triggered by personal experiences like Hasan, but through the spirit of Islamic solidarity with fellow Muslims. Because of this, its first mission was aimed at “humanitarian”, which later narrowed down to armed defense. This identity crisis is also constructed by its social network from DDII and KOMPAK. At the same time, the space and atmosphere of the Ambon war as spatial linkage both limited and directed the spirit of solidarity to become an armed movement. The same spirit may produce different movements when it exist in another space. Once again, the case of Hasan showed empty spaces of religious education which he got in his hometown Lampung with new religious he received from Islamic study groups in DDII. The void is even wider when he was in social activism such as war in Ambon, which does not have a single answer from his previous religious knowledge . The ideas of jihadist Islamist offered by the jihadists and their ideology at war has been provided practical answers.

Although Hasan also experienced “internal negotiation “ in himself like Soleh. Soleh on several occasions recalled his experience of studying religion in Islamic boarding school which made him a little restrained, even though he was finally defeated by the pressure of the social networks where he was. Hasan also experienced the same thing. In an

interview for this research and in several other interviews were covered by the media, Hasan explicitly mentioned about the assassination order against a person convicted apostate and infidel by his group. Having carried out several times (he mentioned three times) of surveillance of the person in question, Hasan felt an internal conflict. The conflict is resolved by returning to one of the religious leaders where he was first exposed through DDII Islamic studies intensively what he called it as moderate salafi. From his discussion with the *ustaz* he decided to leave the order on the basis of argument that the action to be carried out was the right of the state or people who were authorized by state law, even if the allegations of heresy and apostasy were true. This pattern confirms that the empty spaces are not completely filled by new Islamist narratives. The narratives also still leave other empty spaces that are new. It was then that more moderate and open comparative narratives could enter. Hasan who had higher education, though hampered by the activity of “humanity” and terrorism, a little more build literacy and alternative construction in his mind.

Starting from the humanitarian mission, Hasan migrated from several cities in Indonesia and overseas where conflict in the name of religion take place had called his heroic spirit. Migration which happened many times was also becoming increasingly informal education which accelerated his religious aspirations and narratives of violence, leaving the basic knowledge of religion which he had received previously in Lampung. This even made him in jail three times with three

different cases which are all related to acts of terrorism, from engaging in any act of terrorism to the most mild form of possession of firearms.

The third story: the religious aspiration and expression of masculinity

We can find a stronger formal religious education background in the third case study, Malik. Born and raised from a family of educators, and pursued basic education in madrasa and religious schools until they entered university into a state Islamic university. After graduating from SDIT, MTs and private MA in Jakarta, Malik went to the Diploma Program in the Faculty of Islamic Education in Jakarta from 2002 until the end of 2005. Malik repeated his undergraduate program in the same department in UMJ (University of Muhammadiyah Jakarta). Feeling free when writing his thesis, Malik studied again at the same time at an Arabic language institute affiliated to the Kuwaiti government, in 2009, with the same major as well, but with the preface to the Arabic language. In the end, both the latest education nothing can be completed because of its involvement in military training in Aceh in 2010, which landed him in prison and a drop out of the two campuses.

Compared to other former convicted terrorist, Malik's formal religious education background is relatively well. It is influenced by his parent who worked in education sector. His father, who has been a junior high school teacher, was a lecturer at a private university in Jakarta. He graduated from State

Islamic University in Bandung and obtained a master degree in Jakarta. Meanwhile, although only a housewife took care of her children, before passed away, her mother completed an undergraduate degree in Sharia Economics at a campus in Jakarta. His brother was an alumnus of an Islamic boarding school Tahfiz Al-Quran in Central Java and had taught at Islamic boarding school in Kalimantan, recently teach Al-Qur'an with him at the school in their neighbourhood. Furthermore, because of his father was a prominent figure in the community, many residents come to his home to learn reciting Al-Qur'an. Since junior high school, Malik had taught reading Al-Qur'an to his friends. This kind of Islamic study group is what his family still maintains until recently.

With a formal and informal education background in the family, Malik concluded that never get any violent ideas from his educations. In contrast, he learnt from his parent and schools he had attended only basic Islamic teachings such as reciting Al-Qur'an, prayer, and worship practices. He claimed that he did not get much knowledge apart from these basic materials.

The situation above is different from the informal education he received at the same time as his formal education in tertiary institutions. The *liqā'* or *halaqah* model that he actively participated in an Islamic party during his college days was admittedly very influential on his way of thinking and religious aspirations. For him, attending *halaqah* is learning with the teacher, so that knowledge is not only a text, but also sees the teacher's ways, attitudes, and morals. Although,

it was influential for him Islamic education through the *halaqah* of this party was not enough, until he met Aman Abdurrahman and attended his sermons and lessons who for him answered concretely what Muslims should do under current conditions. In addition to basic Islamic materials such as Arabic, Fiqh and Tauhid, through Aman Abdurrahman he also felt that he had learned to practice directly in the field. The practice he meant was the defense of Muslims with the obligation to attend war training (*tadrīb* ‘ *askarī*). Although he did not mention in detail the defense in question, Malik seemed to build the same narrative as Soleh and Hasan before, namely the willingness to act for fellow Muslims who did not get their explanation from the formal education he had taken, even when he took three different educations in three schools. It is believed that the three educational institutions have provided him with powerful tools to further directly enter Islamist literature especially those in Arabic.

Ties with the figure like Aman Abdurrahman, as experienced by Soleh and Hasan has made them familiar with Jihadist-Islamist literatures as their favourite readings. While recognizing familiar with foundational references such as *Sahih Al- Bukhari*, the four schools of jurisprudence, Imam Ghazali’s *Ihya Ulum al-Dīn’* , these materials have not prevented them accept Salafi Jihadist literatures namely Abdullah Azzam’s book, *Tarbiyah Jihadiyah*. Malik claimed had read finished the 12 volumes of the book. Of all the cases above, Malik is the only one who mentioned Imam Samudera’s book *Aku Melawan Teroris*. Malik was even more

fond of other Islamist literatures such as the works of Hasan al-Banna. Malik asserted that the Islamist literatures have constructed his Islamic knowledge and religious aspirations to attend the military training in Aceh. Although he did not look at their figures recently, Malik admitted that when he decided to involve in military training, Jihadist Islamism figures were his reference, whether he met directly such as Aman Abdurrahman and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir or simply through literature like Abdullah Azzam and Hassan Al-Banna. The significant location of these authorities has in turn made Malik to meet Abdullah Azzam in a dream.

For Malik himself, the names become important because they meet the criteria that *dakwah bilhal* (Islamic propagation by practice) which he interpreted with actions, not just words. This narrative that made him comfortable with guns and war because it met the criteria for real action. Although he realized the war he meant was not possible at this time in Indonesia, the narrative heroisms and masculinity is still visible from his current social activism disaster volunteer movements -both that he was involved directly or by reading from media— and fitness with the many weights he lifts. This narrative is also evident from his assumptions about the education of boys and their duties in the family. If a girl, like the only child he currently has, is educated with what he calls as “lure” meanwhile a boy must be educated with lure and punishment, because he is the one who later responsible for earning a living and fulfilling the family needs, while women only serve at home.

After being released from prison, Malik also began to distance himself from the religious authorities he mentioned earlier. However, he still carried similar religious aspirations with them. Although he has a similar family background as Soleh and Hasan, namely from the Muslim traditional Islamic background or *Nahdliyyin*, Malik did not refer to religious authorities from the Nahdliyyin circles as Soleh and Hasan did. Soleh and Hasan returned to Gus Baha who did not circulate the narrative of Islamism. Malik still accepts the narrative of Islamism but referring to salafi *manhājī* (doctrinal orientation) authority, and has left *jihādī-ḥarākī* (jihadism). Malik particularly mentioned the authorities such as Ustadz Firanda and Ustadz Nurul Zikri. In contrast his previous references he recently refers to new figures above mentioned through digital media.

In general, there are two patterns of radical religious narratives that lead to violence and terrorism in the three cases above mentioned. The first pattern shows that there is an empty space for each religious aspirations caused by the accumulation of information from media, especially digital media and personal experiences, with knowledge of Islam obtained from previous formal educational institutions. The empty space is also shaped by religious aspiration which did not find its expression in any particular religious education. The empty space is then filled with narratives of violence and terrorism offered by informal education circulated by Jihadist Islamists. The offer came simultaneously through authorities and jihadi Islamism literatures. They fully

believe to both authority and literature as the only evidence of religious knowledge and accepted them as sacred pedigree.

The presence of the narrative of violence in empty space accelerated by many things, either in the subjectivity of former convicted terrorists or spaces around them. Digital media and personal experiences raise the issue of identity including spirit of religiosity in the form of performing piety and the spirit of Muslim solidarity through heroic action. The issue of identity is also strengthened by the impulse of masculinity such as feeling threatened masculinity or superiority of maleness. At the same time, the structure of society outside the subject in form of social networking and networking space have played a significant role in limiting the rise of the internal dynamics in the process of establishing the knowledge authority of the former convicted terrorists in their time respectively as depicted above.

Social linkage, authority relationship and literatures accompanied it, seems to differentiate the relationship between religious education background with religious aspiration nuanced by violent extremism of the former convicted terrorists if we compare to returnees and deportees as follow

Returnee and Deportee in One of Big Dipper

In the context of the cases in this study, the different categories of returnee and deportee are actually not very significant. They actually come from a large group connected by a family linkage. On their way to ISIS, because of their large number, they were divided into four groups which

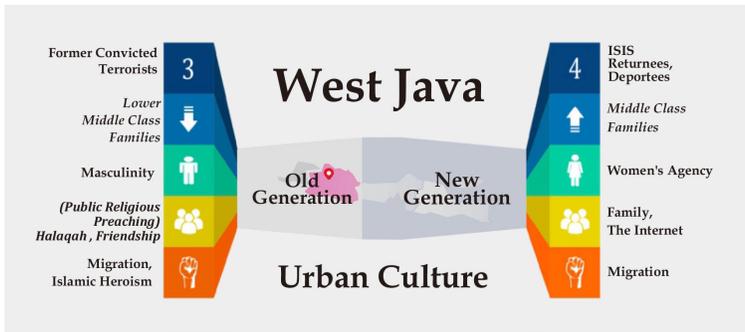
entered Syria separately. Unfortunately it could not be achieved, the first group consist of someone who appointed as a reference for Islamic questions in the family just failed to enter Syria and was arrested by Turkish government officials, until he was being deported to Indonesia. Although they are connected as one big family, this group consists of a number of families which have their own dynamics. This study will only take three family case studies to show the dynamics as well as the general pattern of religious aspirations and issues of religious education background in each case.

Three stories in one group: women's agency, family economy, and welfare narrative

Soleha, is the wife of an ustaz who teaches complete Islam and "straightforward". Soleha did not have any formal or non-formal religious education background. In addition to her informal religious education in family (read husband) and the virtual world in the future, sometime before *hijrah* (migration) her formal religious education was relatively simply received from school since elementary school, junior high, up to senior high school in the early 90s. He was familiar with -but not really familiar- religious traditions in the place of her origin in one of the cities in East Java with a strong tradition of *nahdliyyin*. However, she claimed that she is not part of that tradition. There is only little Islamic knowledge she could remember unless the religious practices of everyday life. Moreover her moving to Jakarta did not any relationship with religious reason, except for working in one company, to

meet with the husband who then becomes her religious. Her marriage with the religious mentor is not the first marriage.

From various sources can be obtained, Soleha repeatedly confirmed the two sources of religious knowledge that forms her religious narrative namely the family especially her husband and cyberspace. There is no particular religious authority or Muslim figure in local, national, and global, which impressed Soleha. There are no specific Muslim authority which whom she has referred to as well as any specific religious literatures that she could remember and refer in a number of conversations except in an interview for this study and also in some of the interviews with her in social media that she often refers to the story of the Prophet and Al-Qur'an and hadist directly. The absence of religious authority, literature, and other narratives has only made the two sources of informal religious knowledge are very significant in the instruction of religious narratives.



Meanwhile, she has to deal with economic and family issues at the same time with two children from her first marriage and one child with her current husband who is

polygamous. Both of these issues, the economy and the family have possibly significant to mediate religious narratives and to constructs her religious education in earlier informal channels. The notion that Islam we call 'straightforward' above mentioned is characterized by the need for religion to specifically and explicitly solve the actual problems faced by Muslims. The news about the declaration of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) which framed calling to emigrate (*hijrah*) and promised social welfare and piety in the state seemed to be the answer to the above economic and family issues. Of course, with a background of inadequate religious education, religious aspirations that prompted him to involve constructed by her husband through informal education in family and supported by knowledge she got from surfing in cyberspace.

The virtual world actually offers many choices, even relatively very and too many choices to answer those economic and family issues. However, Soleha's construction of religious aspirations relatively became the compass of choice for information chosen. Her Islamic aspiration is relatively puritanical in term of concerned with the purity of Islam in accordance with the basic teachings and the first source. In the interview, along with absence of religious figures and Islamic literatures being referred, Soleha put pressure on two things: first, monotheism or *tauhid* as the most important in religion than others; and second, Al-Qur'an as the main reference. In the first, instead of remembering many things that might be difficult for him, what is important is

the lesson of *tauhid*. In her understanding about tauhid she locates subjects are insignificant. In fact, he also used this to determine the choices of social groups that could be a space for her informal education, such as Islamic study group which he wanted to participate in. "I used to participate in one Islamic study group, but it teaches this should be read etc, afterward I never come again to the Islamic lesson group" she said. In line with this attitude, she will find the answers for all problems to verses of the Al-Qur'an. Against formal and informal Islamic education as mentioned previously, the ability to refer and call the meaning of foundational texts is relatively good and interesting to mark this puritanical nature.

Soleha's position as a woman even though her religious narrative was significantly constructed by her husband, made family relationships not only a medium for transmitting knowledge, but also a point of making decisions and involving more subjects. His two young children were relatively not in a position to choose whether to be involved or not, except with their mother, not their father. The same situation also applies to older children, who at the time of the decision to leave were in their teens. In an interview on a private TV station, her eldest son clearly stated that he decided to go to Syria because he did not want to be left alone, without having certain ideological knowledge or beliefs about the purpose of the trip. This reinforces the previous thesis saying that women's involvement in social activism including joining with ISIS is relatively will involve more subjects, especially in the circle of nuclear family like the wife to the husband,

mother to children, or children to parents. We can see this pattern later in other cases as well.

The position of women agency who never became a single subject confirmed by a second family story of this large family. In contrast to Soleha, Denok, the second of third children from middle to upper class families who are relatively well-off economically and socially. Both of her parents completed higher education, even her father holds a master's degree and occupies an important position in a state-owned company outside Java. They are connected with their extended family in Depok and usually gather in moments of large family gatherings at Denok's grandmother's place in Depok. Her mother was the brother-in-law of her husband and was also Soleha's religious adviser, Pak Huda. The extended family meeting that took place was not just an ordinary meeting, but in a certain period also family Islamic lesson which led by Pak Huda. From this Islamic lesson, Denok got information about the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Due to the long distance, the frequency of Denok and his family's attendance at this extended family Islamic study group is relatively limited. He filled this limitation by surfing in cyberspace. Denok's agency is generally the same as Soleha. He managed to convince his mother, who had stopped working at a state-owned bank, with an attempt to build his own, less successful business, to join him. The participation of her mother finally brought her two siblings who were also women, even her father who explicitly stated that he was only involved to accompany the family, which was all women, without

understanding deeply the religious issues that accompany it, except for the jargon of a prosperous Islamic state. Even her father himself, acknowledged that he has not a good Islamic understanding. His involvement in family Islamic lesson was more as a family member, not because of the acceptance of religious understanding that is conveyed. Hence, his decision to get involved, even provided financial support, was more due to Denok's encouragement and his mother which he said were more dominant in teaching him religion.

Denok, who is a digital native has received his Islamic basic education from SDIT and SMPIT in Batam city. He continued his schooling to favourite high school in Batam which had to be completed with the package C exam due to her migration to ISIS. In an integrated Islamic school, Denok did get religious materials, such as worship, memorization of Al-Qur'an, and Arabic language, but she did not feel it was something important at that time. Even today, not many impressions have lingered in his memory from those lessons. Although there are lessons in Islamic history such as the stories of the prophets that she remembered, for her those lessons did not have much influence on his current religious aspirations. In fact, it was informal education in the family Islamic lessons that stimulated her thoughts further about the Islamic state, which for her was not found in the previous formal education. The low intensity of attendance at family Islamic lesson due to distance makes her digital native character s work well by seeking and confirming information from cyberspace. ' Algorithm' psychic worked to select sites

and information that confirms positively about ISIS which provides prosperity compared with the information about the backward of Muslim countries including in Indonesia, which stimulated them to emigrate. There is no other authority that confirmed aspirations and narrative except her family Islamic lesson. Consequently, she back again to the virtual world. In a number of interviews, Denok was able to specifically mentions the sites and social media he referred to. The site which also presents a number of “ muhajirah « figures , Asian and European women of the same age who have emigrated to NIIS which further convinced him with the promise of prosperity and piety of the Islamic state made by Abu Bakr al-Baghadi .

Just like Soleha who has a puritanical view of Islam when he decided to migrate could be also found from Denok. Its emphasis on pure tauhid as well as direct reference to the verses of the Al-Qur’an marked its position. Even though Denok had a formal education with Islamic nuances at the primary and secondary education levels, according to her, that position was not obtained from there. However, he got it from family Islamic lessons and from surfing in cyberspace. Denok also often refers to the verses of the Al-Qur’an to mention the understanding about the actual conditions of Muslims. In fact, when she was asked about Islamic reference she mentioned Al-Qur’an, the story of the Prophet also refers to the Koran which has explained everything completely and covers all aspects of life, including government.

In contrast to Soleha, when Denok being invited to reflect on her situation after returning back from ISIS to

Indonesia, Denok seems to recognize Islamist figures and Islamic literatures, which previously never come to her mind. He mentioned such figures including Buya Syafi'i Ma'arif and his writings, as well as Irfan Amalee and his peace movements. As a digital native, a bad experience during stay at ISIS which forced her and her family to find a way home has reorganized and expanded her algorithms to understand the existing situation, including her Islamic aspirations.

The third story comes from a male returnee which demonstrates female agency as illustrated in the previous two stories. Fadli who had written the story of Syria in the book that already disseminated to many cities in Indonesia, indirectly involved in the exodus to ISIS because of his mother. Fadli lived with his mother, who still has a family relationship with Pak Huda as uncle and also brother in-law, after his parent divorced. As similar as Denok, Fadli's parents who live separately are relatively well-off economically. Fadli was not regularly attending his family Islamic study group and he did not know about his mother and big sister as well his extended family planning to go to ISIS. Far away from his mother and staying alone made him longing family especially his mother. As a result he decided to go to ISIS in order to meet his family.

From an urban middle class famil, Fadli only received religious education from primary and secondary schools in public schools. In high school level, accompanied by dynamic discussions with his family as he tells of in his book, Fadli finally decided to pursue a homeschooling education model. A claim that there was no Islamic religious lessons from schools

did not necessarily lead to Fadli's acceptance of the ISIS religious narrative. There is no religious authority he refers to as well. Within the family, he also relatively has no preference for certain religious groups and practices, because his mother has Muhammadiyah religious preference while his father has a NU background. However, this "empty" condition as a significant problem later on. When he found out that his family had left him to join ISIS for formal reasons of religious aspirations, he had absolutely no reference to respond. With a similar pattern to Denok, his 'algorithm' works to find justification and a way to join ISIS for the sake of being with his family, mother and brother.

Marking a new generation, Fadli also experienced the same experience as Denok namely expanding his algorithm after returning back to Indonesia. Although he asserted the influence of her mother in shaping his informal religious education in family, the character of the digital native remains significant. Fadli even recently refers to some authorities such as ustaz Nur Huda who recruited him at ruangbaca.com, Irfan Amalee with the Peace Generation movement, and Habib Husein Ja'far, the pioneer of the *Islam Cinta* movement. The three names are figures who are active in cyberspace to counter the religious violent extremism aspirations.

Returnees : agency, mediation, and aspiration

The case studies in West Java as explored above indicate the dominance story of female agency among the returnees. The significant location of women agency is related to the issues

which mediate the construction of religious knowledge obtained through informal education. The mediation resulted in the agent involvement in religious extremism in the form of moving to ISIS. The issues include family economy namely economic problems faced by a family, but can also be the welfare issues in a broader sense namely economic welfare. These two issues meet in the narrative and imagination of Islamic way of life. The issue of welfare coupled with piety can emerge as one of the markers of the urban middle classes as illustrated in the second and third cases.

The significant location of female agency also has an impact on the involvement of more subjects of the perpetrator. Women's agency does not emphasize the heroic side of social activism but the family linkage. As a result, female agencies will often involve other family members. A wife or mother will have the potential to invite her husband, children, and even parents. A girl has the potential to invite both parents, especially male parents, for protection or other reasons.

The emergence of a new group of religious extremism from digital native generation such as their involvement in ISIS also characterized by a weakening of social linkage in the form of cells of Islamist group. Instead of social network as happened among former convicted terrorists, this new phenomenon emphasizes on family linkage and individual search-based virtual world.

The three points above mentioned are also connected by the normative content of formal religious education which

is considered by those involved in acts of religious violent extremism as failing to respond to religious aspirations or to narratives of violence they receive from domestic issues in the family or those who exposed by news in cyberspace. The three cases indicate a uniqueness of each person at various age levels. This requires Islamic education formulae that are dynamic and responsive to religious aspirations.

Deportee: Romance and Masculinity

In the midst of a pandemic atmosphere when this study being carried out, this research will only present one deportee case study. As similar as the three case studies about returnees above, the following deportee of ISIS occupies a key position in shaping Islamic religious knowledge of the returnees. He was identified as deportee due to his failure to enter ISIS territory. He was arrested, returned to Indonesia. Meanwhile, most of his family, including two of his immediate family members can manage to go to ISIS.

His religious knowledge was originally constructed by social networks such as old generation of former convicted terrorists as above described through NII. After being disconnected with the NII, he still maintained the romance about Islamic state through social media to find information about NII propaganda. This propaganda brought his old knowledge about the imagination of the Islamic state. In contrast to the initial pattern when the NII are tried to set up Islamic state in Indonesia, the new model encourages to move to ISIS. Pak Huda in terms of age and character, his religious

construction becomes a model of intermediary between old model of religious violent extremism dominated by former convicted terrorist and a new model which is dominated by returnees who are characterised as digital natives. In the late 80s and early 90s, Pak Huda was indeed involved in NII.

Pak Huda's knowledge construction is relatively similar as the returnees above mentioned except for the content of knowledge which is relatively more, because of its position as a resource person. He did not mention the educational institutions he had attended. However, in an interview we carried out, he explicitly mentioned that he has been active in the NII in the late 90s and also attended non-formal education in Islamic boarding school. Therefore, although he refers to the verses of the Al-Qur'an and hadith directly as appeared among the returnees he was able to provide a relatively more complex explanation of the verse or hadith that he quoted. The similarity of this pattern illustrates the strong influence of Pak Huda on the knowledge construction of the two women returnees. However, having as a position as religious reference for them Pak Huda has a broader knowledge. Pak Huda described that one day when he was in prison he managed argumentation with a number former convicted terrorists who lost to argue religion with him. Consequently, this made him hostile because he was considered to keep terrorism prisoners away from the jihadist ideology that became the ideology of the movement.

Although Pak Huda was the source of informal knowledge for the two women returnees he brought up his own issue

which mediated his religious background with his decision to join ISIS. The issue of masculinity as the person in charge of family welfare, which is not only in the form of economic but also health problems, met with ISIS propaganda on welfare and piety in digital media. During that time his religious aspiration met with his desperate condition about the failure of democracy in Indonesia. This aspiration is linked to the NII romance that he has been followed. NII's romanticism does not occur in cases of the women returnees. In contrast to the returnees case that relies heavily on digital media to cover the empty space between the religious knowledge of formal education and their religious aspirations, Pak Huda added "religious romance" as the former of NII to cover the empty space. So, even though he also surfed in cyberspace his 'algorhythm' was relatively more established which guides him to determine the intended construction of knowledge.

In the cases above, the returnees and deportee have a similar pattern of religious narrative which did not have any religious authorities and literatures but they made Al-quran and hadith as a direct reference. In Islamic history such patterns can be found in the social activism of modern Muslims especially modernists and reformers (Afsaruddin 2007; Brown 1999). In several interviews with informants they were consistently referring to Al-Qur'an to strengthen their narrative constructions. They did not find the narratives in formal education, but on their own way. Deportee who is the ideologue of the group has refreshed his memory about NII with basic commands from the Al-Qur'an and the hadith that

he remembered. Meanwhile, the returnees referred all their arguments by showing the number of verses of the Al-Qur'an. There was no authorities or literatures that they referred to.

Closing Remarks

Being in one big dipper, the cases of returnees and deportee in this study simultaneously reaffirmed the same general pattern with the former convicted terrorists. The pattern realised in the form of an open gap between religious educational background, especially in formal and informal education, and their religious aspirations. Even though they are both influenced by the development of information technology as one of the markers of urban society, the case of former convicted terrorists shows a slight difference between returnees and deportee. The development of information technology among former convicted terrorists did not close the empty space, but plays a significant role in accelerating the problem of identity, solidarity movement, and gender crisis which makes religious aspirations distant from religious knowledge previously acquired in formal and non-formal education. Finally, the empty space is closed through informal education which is built through social networks and space networks. In this network, former convicted terrorists used to tie themselves to authorities and literature as personal agency. Meanwhile, in the case of returnees and deportee, information technology does not only accelerate the opening of the empty space between their religious knowledge and their religious aspirations. Moreover, information technology also

fills that space as an impersonal authority, namely an authority that does not rest on the character of a particular authority or literature. This phenomenon is a typical phenomenon of digital society in the contemporary era where returnees and deportee live (Bunt 2003; Bunt 2013; Campbell 2021; Larsson 2011). Social and spatial networks among former convicted terrorists have been replaced by family networks and digital media among returnees and deportee.

In other words, the primary issue about the relationship between education background and religious aspiration which led to religious violent extremism is an empty space in between. The main issue is not the positive relationship where the former affects the latest. Even so, we also did not care about the fact that a number of formal education space that facilitate direct or indirect present and growing religious violent extremism which provide a justification in the future. We can refer to specific case such as Islamic literatures read by Rohis students in school, or the presence of a mentors from outside school to manage Islamic activities with the agenda of Islamism he brought, or even the presence of a teacher in non-Islamic education field of study which actually becomes a place to complain about religious issues and bring students into direct or indirect narratives of violence (Noorhaidi 2018).

From the above cases it can also be concluded that the presence of informal education does not necessarily mediate extreme religious aspirations into violent behavior in religion, including terrorism. Informal education fills the gap between

formal and non-formal education with religious aspirations which are constructed relatively and vary by each person: economy, politics, identity crisis, structural problems, media information, and even gender crises. The religious aspirations at this context produce an extreme religious narrative. Aspiration and religious narrative is then accelerated by social structures and social networks, family network and even spatial network to be a practice of violence and terrorism. Changing structures and networks can also affect to the change of violence, become more violent, or even weaken. In a broader scale, Schulze (2002) demonstrates that the spread of *al-Ikhwān al-Muslim* Brotherhood in the Middle East and Asia produces different religious violent practices or in contrary, it becomes an open ideology.

In line with the general symptoms above, the research findings above also confirm the differences in the practice of violence which involve female agencies. The difference can be started from the religious aspirations of women in the above case which emphasizes the issues of welfare and piety related to domestic issues, family welfare. Family welfare can be in the form of family economic or health issues. In contrast to male agencies that emphasize masculinity and heroism. Even so, in some cases, the prominence of masculinity is sometimes indicate an expression of masculinity problems in the domestic space, such as the issue of fulfilling the family economy, childcare arrangements, or the division of public and domestic responsibilities that challenge male masculinity. Due to heroic reason the men agency are more

often single, compared to women agency. Women agency will attract more subjects to engage with, as shown in the differences in the number among the former convicted terrorist, returnees and deportee. In general, women agency ultimately determine religious aspirations and narratives as well as possible violent practices (Taskarina 2018; Loveihm 2013)

Finally, the empty spaces that were present to be filled provide opportunities for the presence and growth of religious aspirations and narratives that had violent extremism in all its forms. Even though this empty space does not suddenly exist, the accumulation of various mediating factors which fail to respond appropriately causes it to turn into aspirations, narratives, and even violent practices. A turning point that can also be found in some of the cases above occurs when aspirations and narratives of violence are responded to appropriately in existing educational processes, both in formal, non-formal, and informal institutions. The alternative narratives which existed among the students did not marginalize them in the process in the educational space, whether formal, non-formal, or informal. *Allah knows best* .

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EPILOGUE:



EPILOGUE:

Lessons Learned from the Stories of Twenty Former Convicted Terrorists, ISIS Returnees, and Deportees

Noorhaidi Hasan



What lessons can we take from the 20 cases of former convicted terrorists, ISIS returnees and deportees whose life histories are examined in this study? Is there anything new, which gives us a perspective to understand more deeply the background and reasons for joining a radical movement? More specifically, perhaps, does their educational background become the determining factor behind their involvement in these acts of radicalism and terrorism?

In this study we have attempted to interview in depth all of our 20 respondents and delved into relevant data to strengthen our interview findings. The interviews went relatively smooth, and we have got a lot of information, worldview, and insights from those interviews. Our focus is to explore their life history, especially related to their educational background. We *let* them tell at length about their life history,

including their experiences, perceptions, aspirations, and responses to the various situations that surround them. In this context, we choose to use a narrative approach as a strategy to explore and “understand” the respondents’ stories.

The use of a narrative approach to understand the radical movement mobilization model is adopted, for example, by Jeffry R. Halverson, H. L. Goodall and Steven R. Corman (2011). In *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*, they define narrative as a combination of different stories that are coherently combined to support a particular goal or ideology by taking into account the emotions and conditions of the audience. The narrative contains an explanation of the unwanted situation and directions on how to deal with the situation. Although closely related, narrative is different from ideology. Ideology is a set of values, concepts or a vision of what you want to achieve complete by making it happen, while narrative is a form of conveying ideology so that it can be accepted by the audience.

From these interviews it is clear that socio-economic factors associated with structural problems are still the main variables that encourage a person to join a radical movement. Our respondents consist of two generations, namely the first generation in their 30s and the second generation who are younger in their 20s. The first generation generally comes from families with lower middle socio-economic backgrounds (lower middle class) who have to work harder in order to meet their needs in small cities or villages. Some had to live with their grandparents or uncles because their parents left

them when they were children. The second generation is somewhat different because most of them come from urban families with slightly better socio-economic backgrounds. However, they also have to struggle to live because of the various micro-social problems that surround their lives, including their parents' divorce. They are all classified as "young people" who have been and are struggling to achieve social mobility.

The relationship between economic pressure and individual recklessness in joining a radical movement is not a new story. In various radical movements this factor has always been prominent. There is a pattern that people with limited economic opportunities, such as those with relatively low incomes, and limited education or little work experience, are more likely to join radical movements than those with more stable economic positions. In other words, individuals whose sacrifices are lesser are those more attracted to joining the radical movement. This pattern is related to the cost and benefit variables: the greater the sacrifice, the more reluctant an individual is to join a radical movement. The size of the sacrifice usually correlates with the commitment and militancy of an individual within the movement.

In sociology, we have long been familiar with the concept of *relative deprivation*, which is the feeling that arises when an individual realizes that his living conditions are dominated by disadvantages or misfortunes compared to the others. He feels that the things that the others achieve or have are not with him. This is mainly related to the problem of the

inequality that an individual feels when comparing or placing himself in a space of social interaction. The existence of a feeling of inequality usually leads an individual to a perception of injustice concerning himself in relation to, initially, his surroundings and then to more macro structural conditions. Relative disappointment can easily turn into an identity crisis when covered with a variety of other factors. The identity crisis occurs precisely when a person feels that he does not have a place or a home in an existing social space (homelessness of personal identity). From this perspective, joining a radical movement is a rational attempt by that person to regain a home for himself or to consolidate his identity.

Of course, not all poor young individuals or those who experience socio-economic problems have the tendency to become radical. Most of the poor young individuals are not driven at all toward radicalism, instead. It is clear that there are other variables that also play a role in encouraging those with socio-economic problems to join the radical movement. Is it related to problems in micro scopes that individuals experience; a messy household of their parents, for example, or the abuse and torture that individuals experience during their childhood? Or is it related to other factors? To what extent did the educational background of individuals contribute to their reckless decision to join the radical movement?

In general it can be assumed that people who have a higher level of education but end up feeling disappointed and frustrated because they do not get a job, for example, are more likely to be radical than those with a lower level of education

who also experience similar failures. The formula is that the higher the expectations are raised, the more painful it will be if those expectations are not achieved. A person who has received higher education, when he meets a failure in his life, disappointment and frustration will quickly befall him. The next story is how he looks for a way out of that frustration.

In this study we did not find a steady pattern that could explain the relationship between educational background and radicalism. The 20 respondents have varied backgrounds. Some have basic education (SD) in public schools, then continued their junior high school (SMP) and senior high school (SMA) in private Islamic schools, and then studied at public private universities. There are those who studied from elementary to high school in public schools, and then went to private Islamic universities. There are also those who attended *pesantren* education after completing elementary and junior high school education at public or private schools. So there is really no certain pattern that we can identify as a pathway that tends to lead someone toward radicalism.

They seem to have access to radical ideas “accidentally”. Their failure to find answers to various disappointments experienced in life through lessons in school or formal education encouraged them to look for something outside, which, they felt, was able to answer their anxiety. Amid growing Islamic activism in schools in the last three decades marked by the widespread popularity of Rohis (Islamic Spirituality), attempts to fill this void did not seem too difficult. They could get clues or preliminary information that

directed them to get acquainted with people who were active in secret cells, *halaqas* and closed religious trainings (*dauras*) or exclusive religious learnings that actively spread hateful narratives against the establishment while promoting the radical ideas of Islamist and jihadist ideologues. The pattern is “friends invite friends, family members recruit each other, and neighbors recruit neighbors.” Therefore, the closeness of social relations in the form of kinship ties or spatial closeness due to the chance of having neighbors who were already active in a radical group often becomes a determining factor in the process of individuals’ joining into the movement.

For young people who are experiencing identity shock, joining secret cells and *halaqas* or closed *dauras* seems to be a kind of religious adventure. This generally begins with the introduction of a rigid version of Islam. Those who know Islam in this way usually try hard to separate themselves as quickly as possible from their past ignorance (*jāhiliyya*). This change is usually accompanied by a commitment to maintain a distance from the surrounding environments and live an exclusive life, complete with symbols that mark their ‘*hijrah*’ to a new life, which is perceived as a truly Islamic life. In this new life, Islam is believed to be practiced as a whole (*Islam kaffah*), following the example of the early generations of Muslims (*as-Salaf as-Ṣāliḥ*).

From these 20 cases, it is clear that education, or particularly religious education, which they received in formal educational institutions is not the main factor that drives them to join the radical movement. Education only

really comes into play when it is mediated by other factors. Even if there is something to be underlined, the religious education they received in formal educational institutions has apparently not succeeded in preventing them from seeking answers to anxieties related to various life problems in alternative channels outside of formal educational institutions. Religious education that is presented by formal educational institutions generally still emphasizes the cognitive dimension, especially in the form of an introduction to religious concepts and knowledge. The method is mostly in the form of memorization, not interactive discussion which can foster understanding and internalization of religious knowledge so that it can shape the attitude and behavior of a student. The affective dimensions related to emotions, values, feelings, enthusiasm, interests and attitudes have not been adequately addressed. Most religious teachers may not even really 'understand' the individual problems of a student, who needs to be approached, touched and perhaps shown a way out —of course by utilizing the existing insights in the science of religious education. In formal education institutions, engaging education does not seem to be really present to guide students to prepare themselves for living in life that is not always ideal.

Their failure to get answers in formal educational institutions for the various anxieties they experienced has prompted them to look for alternative channels, in the form of secret religious learning and *halaqahs* as well as and closed *daurah*. It was there that they came to know the doctrines

of *al-walā' wal-barā'* (loyalty and disloyalty), *jahiliyyah* (ignorance), *hijrah* (migration), *ḥākimiyyah* (sovereignty), *takfir* (charging others with infidelity) and even *jihad* which played an important role in justifying their decision to join the radical movement. They also seek to obtain other sources of knowledge independently through reading or information scattered on social media, to broaden their knowledge and understanding of these doctrines.

The doctrine of *al-walā' wal-barā'* which means loyalty and hatred they understand as a requirement to love and be loyal to people who come from the same understanding and group, and at the same time to hate and to be hostile to people who do not come from the same understanding and group. They see others' living covered with the sins of ignorance, and therefore in order to be safe there is no other choice but to migrate or join a radical group. They then learned the *ḥākimiyya* doctrine to understand that power absolutely belongs to Allah, and therefore all statutory regulations must be based on Allah's law. They consider a nation-state system like Indonesia to be a *taghut* system that has been embroiled in infidelity so that fighting or rebelling against its rulers is seen as a necessity. In this context *jihad*, which they interpret narrowly as holy war, is emphasized as part of a believer's obligation to obey God's commands and to get rid of all evils that exist on earth.

It would not be surprising if hundreds of people had the courage to decide to go to Syria in order to join ISIS, even though they knew the dangers they might encounter. ISIS

originated from *Tanzīm Qā'idat al-Jihād fī Bilād al-Rāfidain* (Al Qaeda in Iraq), which was founded by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2004. It joined forces with other Sunni opposition groups to form the Mujahidin Shura Council and later built an Islamic State in Iraq (ISI). ISIS eventually transformed into ISIS and had more than 4,000 fighters in its ranks. The founder of ISIS is Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi who was of sunni salafi-jihadi school and was also known as "Amir al-Mu'minin Khalifah Ibrahim". ISIS proclaimed its status as a caliphate that sought to establish political control and dominate the entire Muslim world, starting with Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Cyprus, and southern Turkey. ISIS's recruited volunteers from various parts of the world, including from Indonesia. They were active in carrying out attacks and bombings on various targets, civilian and military, including through suicide bombings, so that many countries declare it a very dangerous terrorist organization.

By joining ISIS, they were actually embracing multiple goals at once. They were trying to practice all the doctrines mentioned above. They were also undergoing adventures with full of sensations that spurred adrenaline, tension, disappointment, sadness, happiness, and of course heroism and patriotism as self-sacrificing fighters plunging into the battlefield to save the fate of Muslims who were perceived to be constantly dumped and persecuted by the global hegemonic forces. They seemed to wish to say, let us be those who are plunged into the battlefield, sacrifice our lives to save our children, grandchildren and millions of other Muslims

from endless oppression. For them, ISIS was not a haphazard battlefield. But, it was a sacred field, which holds the traces of the majesty of Islam that must be freed from the shackles of the *taghut* power. They believe that to sacrifice their properties and even their lives when joining ISIS was not a big deal in order to turn their frustration into herorism and turn their helplessness into strength —despite its illusive nature.

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THE NARRATIVES OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN INDONESIA

Educational Background and Individual Agency

This book examines religious educational background of the former convicted terrorists, returnees and deportees through their biographical narratives and individual agency. In order to extend and enrich the exiting studies on religious extremism which pay much attention to figures and networks of violent extremist groups and emphasize structural and identity analysis, this book argues that religious education background also exposes a person to radical and extremist ideology when it is mediated by structural problems, identity crises, social networks, and ideologies. These factors shape or direct certain religious understandings significantly towards religion-based extremism.

This book demonstrates that there are two categories of generations within the discourse of religious violent extremism when viewed from the their perspectives and sources of religious knowledges. The former is characterized by social networks, while the latter is open to information related to religious aspirations. The first generation is dominated by former convicted terrorists informants. They generally come from lower middle class family backgrounds and are exposed to the ideology of radicalism and extremism through social networks: Islamic study groups and social linkages. Meanwhile, the second generation is dominated by ISIS returnees and deportees. They typically come from an affluent family and have an urban culture background. Family networks and the internet are important contexts that expose them to radicalism and extremism.



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