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Exploring the Reality and Aspirations of Muslims: The divisions of the Umat in Indonesia

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Abstract

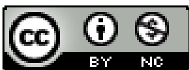
Islam in Indonesia has played an important role in socio-political development in its recorded history. However, it is also true that there have been various theological and political debates and disagreements in the umat. The implementation of syari'at Islam is one of the major subjects of such discussions. The emergence of liberal movement in the post-Suharto era also brought about the difference of opinion among Muslims. In other words, the umat has never been united as a single entity in Indonesia. This "divided" umat faces several challenges in the present day in Indonesia. That includes terrorism committed by militant Muslims. In addition to the effort to prevent terrorism, it is equally important to de-radicalise perpetrators of such violent and barbaric acts. Despite some discrepancy in the umat, we see several attempts and cooperation of Muslims to make former terrorists reintegrated in the society. This paper shows how the re-radicalisation programme for former terrorist executed. The author also intends to examine the socio-political development of the umat in modern Indonesia with regard to subjects of syari'at Islam and liberal movement. Based on these examinations, sociological analysis on religion is also presented in the paper.

Keywords:

Deradicalisation, JIL, Religious organism, Syari'at, Terrorism

Abstrak

Islam di Indonesia telah memainkan peran penting dalam sejarah pembangunan sosial dan politik. Namun, menjadi kenyataan pula bahwa telah terjadi berbagai perdebatan teologis dan politik serta ketidaksepakatan yang berlangsung dalam tubuh umat. Implementasi



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syari'ah adalah salah satu subjek utama dalam pembahasannya. Kemunculan gerakan liberal pasca 'Era Suharto' juga telah menyebabkan perbedaan pendapat di kalangan umat Islam. Dengan kata lain, umat tidak pernah bersatu sebagai sebuah entitas tunggal di Indonesia. Ini juga termasuk berbagai aksi terorisme yang dilakukan oleh kaum Muslim militan. Selain upaya untuk mencegah terorisme, hal yang sama pentingnya adalah upaya deradikalisasi pelaku teror atas kekerasan dan tindakan barbar yang telah dilakukan. Meskipun terjadi ketidakcocokan di kalangan internal umat Islam, kita melihat beberapa usaha dan kerjasama antar Muslim berlangsung dalam rangka membuat mantan teroris kembali ke masyarakat. Paper ini menunjukkan bagaimana program deradikalisasi bagi mantan teroris dilaksanakan. Penulis juga bermaksud menginvestigasi perkembangan sosial-politik umat di masa Indonesia modern dengan melihat syari'at Islam dan gerakan liberal. Berdasarkan investigasi ini, analisis sosiologis tentang agama juga dihadirkan dalam paper ini.

Kata Kunci:

Deradikalisasi, JIL, Organisasi keagamaan, Syari'at, Terorisme

Introduction

Indonesia has been on the radar of the international community due to its rapid economic growth since the end of 1990s. Before 2000, people used to visit public phone houses called *wartel* to communicate with their families and friends; they now possess their own portable devices, such as *smart phones*. In addition, the long-awaited intercity railway system in Jakarta, *Mass Rapid Transit*, began operations in March 2019. These remarkable social changes exemplify the characteristics of contemporary Indonesia, yet we also find a distinctive traditional quality in this largest of nations in Southeast Asia: a long-standing history of socio-cultural diversity and the dominance of Islam.

Before the advent of Islam, both Buddhism and Hinduism widely prevailed over the archipelago. Srivijaya, which thrived between the 7th and the 14th centuries in southern Sumatra, was a powerful Buddhist empire, exercising its influence over the region. Another Buddhist kingdom called *Shailendra* in Central Java built the *Borobudur* Temple in the 8th century. Hinduism, on the other hand, is still deeply rooted in the soil of Bali, existing alongside the influence of an exquisite native Indonesian culture. Hindu *Prambanan* temples in Central Java, which were erected in the era of Old *Mataram*, are another conspicuous legacy of pre-Islamic civilisation in

Indonesia. In addition to these established religions, indigenous animistic beliefs also continue to be held in the present (David, 1964).

Diversity in Indonesia applies not only to religions but also to the multitudinous ethnic groups. It is said that there are about three hundred tribes and between two hundred and four hundred local languages spoken in Indonesia (Mizumoto, 2006). Bountiful different traditional dances and dresses which still exist in the present are vivid examples of Indonesia's multicultural conventions. However, even with these diverse socio-cultural traditions intact, Islam has become the dominant religion in the region with almost 205 million worshippers, making Indonesia the most populous Muslim nation in the world (Pew Research Centre, 2010). Concurrently, despite the great presence of Islam, Indonesia has maintained a republicanism since its independence and has not implemented Islamic law (*syari'at*) as the legal foundation of the country. It is understandable, then, that Indonesia puts forth the notion of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, or Unity in Diversity, as a national motto.

We find different *aliran* (currents) in the *umat*, and the most commonly framed categorisations are modernist and traditionalist Islam, represented by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), respectively. Needless to say, these two mass Islamic organisations still exhibit their differences at the present times; however, it is more common that they cooperate in the face of various social issues. Both of them have already embraced republicanism and seem determined to contribute to the creation of a peaceful and tolerant religious community in Indonesia. In that sense, Natsir might be right that Indonesia is a country of mutual-help and is free from conflicts. Nevertheless, there seem to be numerous predicaments that the *umat* must deal with. These include acts of terrorism, the stance of Islam towards other religions, and even sectarian discord among Muslims.

This paper is an attempt to clarify the crux of the socio-religious issues that the *umat* encounters in modern Indonesia. In other words, it will attempt to uncover the reality behind the largest *umat* in the world. The author believes that it is worth exploring how Islam in Indonesia interacts with different groups within and outside of Islam, which will reveal a unique model of how Islam carries on in the contemporary world.

Methods

The research method employed in this study is a qualitative approach with a socio-religious research design. The study seeks to explore both the objective conditions and the aspirational dimensions of Indonesian Muslims, with particular attention to the dynamics of fragmentation, difference, and the construction of religious identity within the socio-political context of the contemporary era.

Data for this study were collected through a combination of library research and qualitative interviews. The literature-based component includes a review of academic books, scholarly journal articles, policy documents, and relevant research reports addressing issues of intra-Muslim divisions, religion–state relations, and the plurality of Islamic perspectives. Field data were obtained through a series of in-depth interviews and focused discussions with religious leaders, academics, community members, and activists from Islamic mass organizations representing diverse ideological and social backgrounds.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic and interpretive techniques, namely by identifying patterns of divergent views, the factors contributing to fragmentation, and points of convergence in the aspirations of Indonesian Muslims. The analysis also foregrounds the historical and structural contexts that shape Islamic discourses. Through this approach, the study aims to provide a nuanced portrayal of the complexity of differences among Indonesian Muslims, while also offering a reflective framework to strengthen socio-religious cohesion.

Result and Discussion

Syari'at Islam and Modern Indonesia

The end of the World War II simultaneously marked the end to the more than three-century-long colonisation of Indonesia by the Dutch and the Japanese. Although at that time Japanese government occupied Indonesia(and other Asian nations) under the pretext that a Great Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (*Daitoa Kyoeiken*) should be established, historical documents clearly reveal that the main purpose of Japan's invasion of Indonesia was to secure natural resources (Goto, 2012). This suggests that the interest of Japan was by no means to liberate the people living in the Indonesian archipelago from Dutch colonisation. Ricklefs believes that the defeat of Japan, in fact, had a positive impact on Indonesian independence (Ricklefs, 1993).

As the defeat of Japan in the war became more obvious, *Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (the Investing Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence) was formed in March 1945 (Ricklefs, 1993). This group was supposed to determine the course of Indonesia's future. The members of this committee were from various religious communities, and a prominent nationalist leader, Sukarno, was also an important member. It was a crucial moment for the *umat*, as the role of Islam in a new nation was intensively discussed. There were some Muslim leaders who insisted that Islam play a broader overall roll in the society via the implementation of *syari'at*. As of June 1945, the committee agreed that the president should be a Muslim and that *syari'at* should be observed by the followers of Islam (Cribb and Brown, 1995). This document, called "Jakarta

Charter" or *Piagam Jakarta*, clearly stated that "for the followers of Islam, they have an obligation to follow *syari'at*" and to believe in God (*dengan kewajiban menjalankan syari'at Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya*). Nonetheless, when the new constitution for the Republic was promulgated, the Jakarta Charter was excluded and the criteria that the president be a Muslim was also dropped (Ricklefs, 1993).

Not surprisingly, the omission of the Jakarta Charter from the constitution was demanded by non-Muslim groups, such as Christians (Ricklefs, 1993). Sukarno, the leader of the new country, understandably made the decision to prioritise an equilibrium among religious groups, as a potential threat for the Republic was disintegration based on religions and ethnic identities. Presumably, however, this political decision of Sukarno brought about a feeling of dissatisfaction and even a feeling of insult for those who had intended to implement *syari'at* in the new nation. In fact, there were attempts by Islamic political parties to reinstate the Jakarta Charter in 1959 and 1968 but in vain (Ricklefs, 2012).

Suharto and the Umat

Suharto, the successor of Sukarno, was in power for more than three decades between 1966 and 1998, and his regime was coined "the New Order government". Although Islam was one of the most influential social elements in the country during this time, the *umat* was heedful of Suharto's government, whose orientation was rather dictatorial. M. Natsir, whose statement was cited at the beginning of this paper, was charged because he stated the government treated Muslims as "cats with ringworm" (Aspinall, 2005). While the majority of Muslims were accommodating, some took more confrontational stances towards the New Order government. Some Muslims, in fact, voiced their resentment against Suharto in the early phases of the government. For example, they expressed their disapproval when the government attempted to implement a marriage law in 1973 (Bresnan, 1993; Kato, 1999). In addition, there was a clash between the supporters of the ruling *Golkar* and the Islamic party *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP) during the election campaign of 1982 (Bresnan, 1993).

The underground activities of rather hard-line Muslims, who probably held a grudge due to the decision of the Republic to discard the Jakarta Charter, began to include physical resistance. Presumably, these rigid Muslims were discontent with Suharto's stance towards working with non-Muslim Chinese Indonesian conglomerates, insisting that they monopolised businesses and exploited native Muslim Indonesians (*pribumi*). One of the most serious challenges against Suharto's regime was the hijacking of an aeroplane of the national flag carrier Garuda Indonesia in 1981. The culprits

of this crime expressed their motivation by saying that "they were "eager that the teachings of Islam should be fully put into practice".

Some have pointed out that more-politically oriented Muslim groups were a threat to the New Order government in the 1970s and 1980s (Aspinall, 2005). Even though the portion of these Muslims that engaged in physical resistance against Suharto in the *umat* remained rather small, the New Order government introduced a new regulation forcing all social organisations, including Islamic ones, to embrace *Pancasila* as a first principle(*asas tunggal*) in 1985 (Aspinall, 2005). Prior to the formal implementation of this policy, a large scale clash between government forces and Muslims groups took place in September 1984 in Tanjung Priok, an area in north Jakarta (Aspinall, 2005). In fact, during this period of the New Order, there were a series of violent incidents, such as the bombing of a Chinese Indonesian-owned Bank Central Asia building and the Borobudur Buddhist monument. Cribb and Brown discerned that "Islamic resentment" towards the secularisation of Muslim-dominated Indonesia influenced Muslim resistance (Cribb and Brown, 1995). As Suharto kept a tight grip, cracking down on violent Muslim extremists, some Muslims chose to leave Indonesia, including the charismatic Muslim preacher Abu Bakar Ba'asyir.

While some hard-line Muslims expressed their "resentment" and were even involved in terrorist acts, the large portion of the *umat* represented by mass Islamic organisations still maintained an accommodative attitude towards the New Order regime, although this may have been a tactical decision. While NU, led by their new leader Abdurrahman Wahid (popularly known as Gus Dur), endorsed *Pancasila* in 1984, which was prior to its legal enforcement, Muhammadiyah, although more reluctantly than NU, also accepted *Pancasila*, as if, in the words of Chairperson H.A.R. Fachruddin, they wore a "safety-helmet" while riding a motor cycle (Syamsuddin, 1991; Kato, 1999). Nonetheless, it is mistaken to believe that these mass Islamic organisations were subdued by Suharto completely. Aspinall points out that both NU and Muhammadiyah maintained their "semi-oppositional accommodation with the government" (Aspinall, 2005). Furthermore, the outspoken Gus Dur never abandoned his critical attitude towards Suharto and often had conflicts with the supreme leader. Indeed, there was a time when Gus Dur referred to Suharto as "stupid" while being interviewed by a foreign scholar, which invited the indignation of Suharto.

The relationship between supreme leader Suharto and the *umat* started to change when a new state-sponsored Islamic organisation, *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* (Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals or ICMI), was established in 1990. Some point out that the formation of ICMI was Suharto's attempt to create a support group at a time

when he had less support from the military (Aspinall, 2005). With an emergence of this new Islamic organisation, the division of the *umat* was widened. On the one hand, quite a few prominent Muslim leaders, scholars, and politicians who used to be "semi-oppositional" to the government joined the association. On the other, some Muslim leaders refused to be members of ICMI. Muhammadiyah's Amien Rais was a typical example of the former, and Gus Dur was a representation of the latter.

Post-New Order and the umat

The end of the New Order in 1998 brought about an overall reformation (*Reformasi*) of Indonesian society. The issue of human rights started to be paid more attention to, and the importance of freedom of expression acquired greater recognition after the authoritarian regime collapsed. This transformation also assured unrestricted activities for Muslims regardless of their religious standpoint. This resulted in the return of rigid hardliner Muslims who had fled Indonesia during the dictatorial rule of Suharto. As *Reformasi* progressed, the *umat* seemed to have entered a new phase in Indonesian history. While both NU and Muhammadiyah steadfastly represented the mainstream of the *umat*, there emerged two other opposing trends: an extremely rigid Salafist type group on one hand, and an extremely moderate group with a willingness to offer unconventional interpretations of Islamic teachings on the other. The rigid hardliner Muslims in exile during the time of the New Order belonged to the former group, and predominantly young Muslim intellectuals represented the latter.

In the post *Reformasi* period, Indonesia unfortunately witnessed some barbaric terrorist acts committed by splinter groups of rigid hardliner Muslims. These include the bombings in Bali in 2002 and 2005, the bombing of the Australian Embassy in 2004, and the bombings of the Marriot Hotel in Jakarta in 2003 and 2009. One might misconceive rigid Muslims eager to implement *syari'at* and the perpetrators of these terrorist acts as being identical in their ideas and attitudes. Although they might share mutual aims, their methodology for realising their religious purposes differs fundamentally. Terrorists opt to take weapons and kill fellow humans indiscriminately for their political ends, while rigid hardliners reject any acts that contradict *syari'at*, such as killing without a proper pretext. Rigid hardliners also choose to continue their proselytising activities through discussions and religious sermons.

Another conspicuous development in the *umat* in the 2000s was the active campaign of so-called "liberal Islam", known as *Jaringan Islam Liberal* (JIL) or the Liberal Islam Network (Wahib, 2012). Ulil Abshar Abdalla, for one, vigorously promoted an open-minded attitude for Muslims with the

unconditional acceptance of Republicanism. Abdalla invited controversy when he expressed his opinion on *jilbab* (a headscarf for Muslim women) in a newspaper article, saying that wearing *jilbab* was an Arabian tradition; thus, it was not compulsory for Muslim women in Indonesia (Abdalla, 2018). Young Muslim intellectuals from this liberal circle were greatly influenced by their predecessors, including Djohan Effendi, Dawam Raharjo, Nurcholish Madjid, Ahmad Wahib, and Gus Dur (Kersten, 2005). In that sense, the emergence of such "liberal Muslims" in the *umat* was by no means instantaneous. However, what distinguishes them from the former generation was their complete acceptance of secularism, other faiths, and even their method to convey their ideas to the public. Luthfi Assyaukanie, a colleague of Abdalla, explained that liberal democracy should be the base of a society where religious freedom and pluralism are assured (Assyaukanie, 2011). Therefore, for them, secularism was highly valued for helping to realise an ideal state rather than an Islamic one based on *syari'at*. Assyaukanie also rejected an Islamic attitude that subordinates other faiths (Kersten, 2005). Panikkar (1999) explains different attitudes regarding the relationship among religions, including, exclusivism, inclusivism, parallelism, pluralism.

Based on Panikkar's account, liberal Muslim intellectuals obviously adhere to the idea of pluralism, which embraces and acknowledges the values of all religions. The supremacy of Islam among other religions is one of the core teachings of Islam, as *al-Quran* confirms: "The only true faith in God's sight is Islam"…(*al-Imran*-19), and "He that chooses a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him and in the world to come he will surely be among the losers"…*(al-Imran*-85). Nonetheless, a new generation of Muslim intellectuals showed little hesitance in expressing an interpretation that acknowledges the equality of all religions, exercising their *ijtihad*. JIL also protected the rights of the Ahmadiyah Muslim Community and promoted interreligious marriage and gender equality (Kersten, 2005; Crouch, 2009).

Rigid Salafist type Muslims understandably detested these young Muslim intellectuals, mainly from JIL (Ali, 2005). Simultaneously, the Islamic liberal movement led by JIL also failed to attract public support, for they were regarded as another form of extremism (Dakwatuna, 2012). While JIL and other liberal Muslims struggled with the growing Salafist trend, the two major components of the *umat*, NU and Muhammadiyah, were rather slow responding "to the rise of reactionary Muslim activism and the subsequent conservative turn", as Kersten points out (Kersten, 2005). Although Ulil Abshar Abdalla was deeply connected with Gus Dur as a member of NU, young liberal Muslim intellectuals received little earnest support and acknowledgement from NU.

Despite the fact that there were quite a few young liberal intellectuals who were members of NU and Muhammadiyah, these two mass organisations with various components were never able to be as liberal as JIL. With regard to their stance on Ahmadiyah, both NU and Muhammadiyah have refused to accept this controversial group as Islam since pre-Independence times (Menchik, 2016). More recently, Ma'ruf Amin, a chairperson of *Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, and one of the executives of NU, reiterated that Ahmadiyah cannot be regarded as a form of Islam in 2018 (BBC News Indonesia, 2018). Conforming to this inclination, NU and Muhammadiyah have adopted the somewhat inclusive practice of accepting it as a non-Islamic religion.

Generally, the *umat* more or less showed its quadripartite tendency in the post-New Order times. First, rigid hardliner Muslims, whose ultimate purpose is to implement *syari'at*, have had a secure base for propagation activities since the time of *Reformasi*. This group can be categorised as exclusivist. However, they have no intention to eliminate non-Muslims from society by force, provided that non-believers never bother their religious activities. The second group employs barbaric acts of terrorism in order to realise their religious purposes. Although this group is proportionally small, the impact it has on society is rather immense. Liberal Muslims, especially young intellectuals, who can be considered pluralists by Panniker's account, constitute the third group. Due to their outspokenness and promotion of secularism, this group encounters ostracism from the masses, who dislike being perceived as "un-Islamic". NU and Muhammadiyah form the major component of the *umat*. These influential mass Islamic organisations have distanced themselves from the other three groups. The current socio-political order in the Republic is primarily the result of their activities, and both organisations aim to avoid Salafist extremism and liberal extremism. NU and Muhammadiyah, needless to say, cannot be understood as the two sides of the same coin, as they still have their own social, political, and religious agendas, respectively. However, as Latif points out, they share the same values of "democracy, social justice and welfare" and they have "inspired social, economic and educational programs throughout the country" (Latief, 2017).

Religion as Organism

The categorisation of the *umat* into four groups might be too simplistic since there are a numerous Islamic organisations and individual activities in Indonesia. Yet, each group explained above represents a general trend within the *umat*. One might wonder which trend epitomises "true Islam"? In other words, why do we find different attitudes and ideas among the followers of the same religion? V.S. Naipaul casts doubt on the uniformity of religion: "Religious or cultural purity is a fundamentalist fantasy" (Naipaul, 1998).

Various fields of study have dealt with religions in academic history. Theology, for example, focuses on the textual analysis of a religion's teachings and attempts to grasp the fundamental truth or essence of that religion. Theologians approach religions from a literal point of view; however, it is equally important to understand religions from a socio-cultural point of view, which attends to the relationships between the teachings and the followers within their socio-cultural environment. Soroush (1998) emphasises the necessity of employing not only theoretical reasoning but also scientific analysis to understand that "religion is divine, but its interpretation is thoroughly human and this-worldly" (Soroush, 1988).

Religions in this sense can be seen as a response to social phenomenon. The truth might be hidden in the text; however, humans are still required to search for it by themselves, and the results of individual searches or interpretations could differ from one another. Therefore, the fact that the *umat* in Indonesia shows several contrasting features is a natural development in the religious community. NU, for example, adopted Islam Nusantara as the theme of its conference (*Muktamar*) held in 2015 (Kato, 2018). This move was severely criticised and denounced by rigid hardliner Muslims. A. Rohim believes that it was a deviation from the truth of Islam (Interview, 2018). Knowing these conflicting views in the *umat* in Indonesia, we again have to wonder whether there is a more comprehensive view for understanding Islam.

Salafist type rigid Muslims prioritise literal understandings of the teachings based on the holy scriptures and have ardently attempted to revive the norms and traditions from the time of the Prophet Muhammad. They even grow their beards following the *Hadith*. Furthermore, it is common in Indonesia that once friendship is established, a non-kindred "mate" is considered a related family member. Pluralists usually have no reservations about nurturing this relationship with non-Muslim friends. On the contrary, religiously rigid Salafist Muslims refuse to admit non-Muslims as family members. The author, as a non-Muslim, has had such a personal experience with a hardliner Muslim friend, who politely refused to recognise the author as his "brother".

On another occasion, some hardliner Muslim friends invited the author to convert to Islam–which rarely takes place with pluralist liberal Muslims–under the pretext that the author would otherwise never be accepted in Heaven in the afterlife. Their invitation was by no means forcible, as Islam forbids compulsive conversion (*al-Quran*: al-Baqarah 256). Their invitation was based on their compassion for a non-Muslim, and their deed surely originated from their exclusivist idea that their own faith, Islam, is the highest and only true religion. We can hardly criticise their literalist interpretation of Islam and their attitude as discriminative or evil; rather, they merely follow

what they believe has been bestowed by *Allah* and recorded in *al-Quran*. These rigid Salafist type exclusivists seem to struggle in creating a purely "Islamic society" defined and arranged by *al-Quran* and the *Hadith*, which has not yet materialised in modern society. In this kind of "Islamic society", there is little room for a "science of religion" as proposed by Soroush (1998).

Compared with exclusivists rigid Muslims, pluralist liberal Muslims in Indonesia attach great importance to socio-cultural conditions in deciding their religious attitude. They believe that Islam must face modernity and be reconciled with it (Ali, 2005). This view resonates with the ideas of An-Na'im, who states that "…the *Qur'an* and *Sunna* have been the source of Shari'a as the Islamic response to the concreate realities of the past and must be the source of modern Shari'a as the Islamic response to the concrete realities of today" (An-Na'im, 1996). Their active practice of *ijtihad* was an ideal framework for a multi-religious society without a *syari'at*-based legal system (Ali, 2005).

Indonesian pluralist ideas are tantamount to Islamic reformist reasoning (including that of Soroush) which values various fields of studies, including philosophy, politics, sociology, and history, and encourages a "re-shuffling the traditional suppositions" (Soroush, 1998). According to the pluralists, gender equality, inter-religious marriage, and the issue of human rights matter for creating and maintaining an amicable relationship among humans whose cultural as well as religious backgrounds vary. The author knows through informal discussions with pluralist Muslims that some are brave enough to recognise Ahmadiyah's contention about the prophecy and that some accept Ahmadiyah members as fellow Muslims. Whereas exclusivist Muslims are in the process of creating an *Islamic society*, pluralist Muslims reside in a *Muslim society*, where human reasoning operates and where societal conditions change or–as is more accurate to say–progress (Kato, 2018).

Thus, there seems to arise doubt as to which group possesses the truth about Islam. From a literal perspective, exclusivist groups maintain tradition and authenticity in behaviour. On the other hand, pluralists also draw upon traditions of Islam, including the *al-Quran* and *Hadith*, with social conditions and changes in mind. Therefore, it is fallacious to conclude that they are un-Islamic. The Muslims who are more open-minded towards reformations of Islam are also genuine Muslims. A useful way of referring to Islam in a comprehensive manner is to use "ISLAM" (in all caps) to mean both *Islamic society*, upheld by exclusivist Muslims, and *Muslim society*, where liberal Muslims and probably the majority of Muslims in Indonesia reside. The former society is in the process of materialisation and is religiously rigid and uncompromising, while the latter is rather flexible and unconventional. The vast number of Indonesian Muslims are not affiliated with mass organisations, and their worldly interests are likely greater than their willingness learn Arabic

to understand *al-Quran* in the original. They also do not hesitate to express their wishes to their ancestors and the spirits living in nature, which is conventionally forbidden in Islam. The degree of behavioural authenticity for these Muslims is surely lower, yet we cannot exclude them from ISLAM.

We next need to consider where terrorist Muslims and the mainstream of the *umat*, such as NU and Muhammadiyah, are to be placed in this account. Terrorist acts are derived from an ideology of utter acceptance of indiscriminate killings of fellow humans regardless of their religion. This notion is by no means in accordance with the idea of *jihad* and the teachings of Islam. Therefore, terrorists should be distinguished from so-called "exclusivist rigid Muslims". Nevertheless, it is erroneous to conclude that these violent-driven Muslims are not Muslims. Because they exercise their *ijtihad*, interpreting *jihad* "unconventionally" in their own way, they can be regarded as the residents of *Muslim society*. It is obvious that harmless liberal Muslims, less pious Muslims, and violent harmful Muslims all coexist in so-called *Muslim society*.

The position of large-scale organisations such as NU and Muhammadiyah seems to oscillate in the world of ISLAM, as both avoid placing themselves among the extreme positions of rigid exclusivists and liberal pluralists. Even though Muhammadiyah focuses on their own academic and social activities and approve of the *status-quo*, we still know that some elements of this modernist organisation are willing to "purify" Islam. They also intend to adjust themselves to modernity, as is signified by Muhammadiyah's launch of *Islam Berkemajuan* (Kato, 2018). NU also shows a similar stance in their tolerance of Indonesian cultural traditions within Islam, while the purity of Islam within *Islam Nusantara* is emphasised (Kato, 2018). In this sense, these mass organisations travel back and forth between *Islamic society* and *Muslim society*, and on most occasions, they stay somewhere in-between in the world of ISLAM.

The dispositions of these Muslim groups suggest that Islam *qua* religion should be understood as an organic entity, which is "reflective of social circumstances and changes" (Kato, 2011). *Islamic society* is probably less responsive towards social changes, yet it is still a part of ISLAM, where various unconventional interpretations and worldly approaches to Islam are instigated. Thus, ISLAM as a whole cannot persistently keep an immutable form. In other words, debates and disagreements taking place among groups in the *umat* are congenital aspects of the organic social entity ISLAM.

Some scholars tend to only designate pluralist Muslims and moderate NU and Muhammadiyah as "good and genuine Muslims", and they believe that non-Muslims should strengthen their relationships with these comfortable allies. This favouritism is misleading, as the concept of ISLAM as a whole is

disregarded. Many would agree that acts of terrorism should never be tolerated; however, this is only possible if all types of Muslims work together in political and cultural matters. Such efforts should be continuously made by non-Muslims, especially in matters related to the Islamophobia explicitly exhibited in the West. Yet as these external endeavours would be insufficient in bringing an end to all such problems, inter-Muslim dialogue, debates, and activities within ISLAM and the *umat* must also occur.

There seem to be numerous debatable and controversial issues within the *umat*, such as the preferred political and legal system and national policies on multi-culturalism. However, we find a looming issue crucial for the creation of stability and tolerance in society: de-radicalisation of former terrorists. In what follows, the paper will attempt to present the current conditions and the crux of the contention related to this issue.

The De-radicalisation of Former Terrorists

Prior to discussing de-radicalisation, we need to clarify the semantic meaning of certain terms related to terrorists and other hardliner Islamic movements. The English word "radical" originates from the Latin word "radix", which means "root" or "first" (Kato, 2011). Following the original meaning of "radical", de-radicalisation means the elimination of authenticity or originality.

Only Islamophobics, who believe that the original teaching of Islam is violent, can use the word "de-radicalisation" to refer to making terrorist Muslims peaceful. The author, therefore, is reluctant to employ the word "radical" to describe terrorists. In reality, the word is commonly used to describe both terrorists and rigid Muslims, and it carries an extremely negative connotation in the non-Islamic world. By the same token, the term "fundamentalist", which originally meant "beginning" or "foundation", is not used in this paper. The author has opted to use the term "de-radicalisation" in what follows, as the word seems to have become a common noun for describing the process of rehabilitating former Muslim terrorists.

As previously mentioned, Indonesia has encountered several acts of terrorism conducted by Muslims in its modern history. Some of the perpetrators of these acts were executed, and some were imprisoned according to their misdeeds. From 2010 onwards, former terrorists began to be released, having completed their terms of imprisonment. One of the central concerns in Indonesia has been whether the former terrorists have had a change of heart. If they have not abandoned their violent ideology, their de-radicalisation is an urgent requirement for the prevention of further terrorist attacks.

Zuhri explains that three different achievements are sought through a de-radicalisation programme: ideological de-radicalisation, behavioural de-

radicalisation, and organisational de-radicalisation (Zuhri, 2017). As a governmental institution, *Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme* (National Counter Terrorism Agency or BNPT), which was authorised to handle anti-terrorism activities in 2010 by a Presidential decree known as *Desk Koordinasi Pemberantasan Terorisme* (Eradication Terrorism Coordinating Desk or DKPT), has played a key role in the de-radicalisation of former Muslim terrorists in Indonesia. BNPT works with 36 ministries and governmental agencies to combat terrorism (Harianto, 2019). They organise various programmes; however, they seem to focus on behavioural and organisational de-radicalisation rather than ideological.

The core principles behind behavioural de-radicalisation programmes are twofold: prevent and inform. There are various programmes designed for the younger generation, who are the target of terrorist recruitment. For example, BNPT created a programme called "the Ambassadors of Peace", which involves the youth disseminating messages about the importance of peace and cooperation among religions through social networks. Eight hundred-sixteen youths participated in this programme across thirteen cities in Indonesia nation-wide by March, 2019 (Harianto, 2019). BNPT has also provided the public with information about the mindset and experiences of former terrorists through seminars and lectures usually held at public venues, such as hotels. However, BNPT employs no "formal theological dialogue", which can be linked with ideological de-radicalisation (Rabasa, et al., 2010). Rather than direct persuasion, Indonesian authorities more frequently take an indirect method to soften the attitudes of former terrorists; they speak to the terrorists in their local languages and treat them in a humane manner (Rabasa, et al., 2010). Even when BNPT attempts to instil a non-violent ideology in former terrorists, they still take a cultural approach and present the idea of peace via an Indonesian puppet show, or *wayang kulit* (Zuhri, 2017).

BNPT also works with mass organisations, including NU. The chairperson of NU, K. H. Said Aqil Siraj, also believes that his organisation should be a part of the de-radicalisation programme, although he admits that the eradication of terrorism itself might best be conducted by BNPT and other institutions (Zuhri, 2017). The collaborative de-radicalisation programmes include seminars for the leaders of mosques, Islamic boarding schools(*pesantren*), universities, and other educational institutions (Zuhri, 2017). NU alone offers informal religious education and training to the public. For example, NU organises a six-month-long course at its headquarters in Jakarta, and *pesantren* leaders, schoolteachers, private employees, and youth as young as high school students attend this course.

Although two major Islamic organisations seem to have little objection to the idea of de-radicalising former terrorists, NU and

Muhammadiyah have different opinions on the cause of terrorism. While NU believes that radicalism is derived from Wahabism, Muhammadiyah considers it to be the result of a grudge held by some Muslims towards governmental policies, such as unjust aspects of the legal system, economic inequality, and the feeling of being marginalised (Zuhri, 2017). BNPT worked with NU between 2011 and 2013, but not with Muhammadiyah (Zuhri, 2017). Zuhri suggests that these two organisations are able to contribute to the prevention of the further growth of terrorism in Indonesia by assisting the offspring of terrorists and inducing a peaceful ideology through promotional activities (Zuhri, 2017). In this regard, these major components of the *umat* have great potential for assisting de-radicalisation programmes through various means.

Apart from BNPT, there are non-governmental organisations that are actively involved in de-radicalisation programmes. Among others, these include the *Indonesian Muslim Crisis Centre* (IMCC), *Yayasan Prasasti Perdamaian* (YPP), *Peace Generation*, and *Aliansi Indonesia Damai* (AIDA). The founders of these NGOs are mainly academics and civilian activists, and their focus is to provide practical assistance to former terrorists, including job training, job recruitment, and financial loans. The degree of their success should not be hastily assessed; however, the obstacle they currently face is an insufficiency of funds to run their programmes. Therefore, some of them have attempted to stabilise their finances by creating their own enterprises. IMCC and YPP, for instance, opened restaurants in Jakarta and Solo, respectively.

The most crucial and probably most challenging part of the de-radicalisation process is how former terrorists can alter their violent mindset, which is intricately connected with the ideological aspect of Islam. However, the three major players in de-radicalisation programmes–the government institution BNPT, the major components of the *umat* (NU and Muhammadiyah), and civilian-run NGOs–have encountered obstacles in establishing a forthright theological medium for bringing about such a metamorphosis in the minds of former terrorists.

From a terrorist perspective, BNPT could be seen as the greatest agent for the suppression and marginalisation of fellow Muslims hitherto. As former terrorists might still distrust the government, they are reluctant to engage in in-depth discussions about their Islamic ideology, not only with BNPT but with any government-affiliated institutions. NU and Muhammadiyah in some respects have been collaborators with the government, at least in the post-Suharto era with their endorsement of the *Pancasila* ideology, which conflicts with that of the terrorist. Thus, these two large organisations are still held at a distance by former terrorists, who are sceptical towards them. Civilian-run NGOs, on the other hand, focus on practical support for former terrorists after their release, and they organise

activities to prevent the spread of violent ideology rather than attempt to change their minds.

With regard to religious ideology, hardliner rigid Muslims take the closest stance to former terrorists. For example, both never abandon physical struggle in the face of an enemy. What distinguishes these two groups, however, is the prospect of *jihad*. While rigid hardliner Muslims strictly follow the teachings on *jihad* stated in holy scriptures—and thus their struggle is far from indiscriminate killings—terrorists lack such prudence, which has resulted in the random slaughter of both fellow Muslims and non-Muslims. Yet the groups still seem to have a mutual understanding, as rigid hardliner Muslims will sometimes say "terrorist acts are wrong, but the intention is understandable".

Accordingly, interaction between rigid hardliners and former terrorists can be effective in ideological de-radicalisation. A potentially even more effective means of altering the mind of terrorists is interaction among former terrorists themselves. Presumably, the degree of remorse will differ from one former terrorist to another. Those already substantially cognizant of their misdeeds are more persuasive than any other Muslim in the *umat* in de-radicalising former terrorists who still persistently attach themselves to a violent ideology.

In fact, there are several former terrorist figures who are actively involved in the process of de-radicalising fellow former terrorists. Some of them have established their own organisations, although small in scale, with the purpose of correcting misguided Muslim ideologies and helping the peaceful aspects of Islam to prevail. A former terrorist Joko Tri Hermanto—known as Jack Harun, who was involved in the Bali Bombing of 2002—established an organisation with the purpose of "supporting ex-terrorists to re-integrate in society and making them have a human life again" (Interview, 2019).

His organisation, called *Gema Salam*, accepts former terrorists as members and provides them with opportunities to feel that they are a part of society and useful for fellow humans. Jack Harun and his "mates" regularly visit schools to share their experiences with young pupils (Jack interview, 2020). He also organises meetings with the police and released former terrorists in order to eradicate mistrust among them. These activities are independently planned and executed without specific support from the government (Interview, 2020). He opened a small canteen for traditional chicken soup in the suburb of Solo in order to secure his finances and continue his activities.

When he invites former terrorists to join him, he shares his experiences and conveys two messages: That it is wrong to employ any act of violence to realise a religious purpose, and that it is good to make family happy (Interview, 2020). As a former advocate of terrorism, Jack Harun is able to analyse his own path to becoming a terrorist, which serves a useful function when he attempts to de-radicalise strong-willed terrorists. On occasion, however, Jack Harun fails to persuade former mates to abandon their terrorist ideologies. For example, one of his former terrorist friends, who was on the run with him before their arrest, rejected Jack Harun's suggestions and opinions. This took place when Jack Harun himself visited his friend in prison in 2008, and they have never met since. Jack Harun said that "I did everything I could do for him, but there was nothing I could do after he rejected me" (Interview, 2020).

Harris Amir Falah is another "remorseful Muslim", who was arrested in 2010 and charged with funding a military camp in Ace. Falah shares his experiences not only with former terrorists but also with potential terrorists who are exposed to violent ideologies. Falah even visited a prison to have a dialogue with ISIS supporter Abu Mubarok, and he has held preaching sessions for young lecturers at the *pesantren* run by Mubarok (Falah, 2019). Despite suspicion and tacit dissent from the participants, Falah feels that his message about the denial of extremism has started to instil itself in the hearts of young Muslims who could turn to *takfiri* (Interview, 2019).

There are other former terrorists who also actively campaign against violent attitudes and ideologies in Islam. They seem to have changed their mindset and have willed to make themselves useful for society. These include Yudi Zulfahri, who established *Jaring Perdamaian*; Kurnia Widodo, who established *Genggam Perdamaian*; and Ali Fauzi, who established *Yayasan Lingkar Perdamaian*. Although the establishment of these organisations is meant to support former terrorists who wish to change their religious ideology and be reintegrated into society, their activities are still premature: the founders themselves have not yet been reintegrated into society. These former terrorists find it difficult to obtain a proper occupation. Kurniawan Widodo admits that his organisation is not fully operational yet (Interview, 2020).

Conclusion

Islam has been an important social element in Indonesia. Its socio-political stance has exerted its influence across the country. At the same time, the *umat* in Indonesia has never been united as a single force. The *umat* has been divided due to cultural, social, and political issues, and even interpretations of religious teachings. The implementation of *syari'at* is one of the causes behind this discord in the *umat*. Differing political strategies between important members

of the *umat* have also caused disagreement, which was, for instance, observed in the time of the establishment of ICMI

During the post-Suharto era, Indonesia has witnessed several cases of terrorism. Following the release of some of the perpetrators of terrorism, the issue of de-radicalising former terrorists became crucial. Since access to terrorists who steadfastly cling to violent ideologies is limited, de-radicalisation is one of the most serious predicaments that the *umat* has to deal with in contemporary Indonesia.

Each group of the *umat*, however, seems to have its own role to play in de-radicalisation. Pluralists have no direct access to former terrorists, yet they are still able to collaborate with civilian-run NGOs to develop terrorism-preventive programmes for the public. Major Islamic organisations, such as NU and Muhammadiyah, are also able to spread a moderate Islamic ideology to their members and the schools they run through educational programmes. These large-scale organisations can be competent partners for the government when religious assurance is required in BNPT programmes.

The most prospective educators of de-radicalisation programmes are rigid hardliner exclusivist Muslims and former terrorists who have shown regret for their actions. Nonetheless, these two Muslim groups can hardly accomplish their goals without assistance and collaboration provided by other groups in the *umat*. Such "assistance and collaboration" are still possible even without complete agreement and total reconciliation within the *umat*; however, what is required is the commitment of each group based on their own capacity. For example, some affluent groups might offer funding for the programmes if they are not a main organiser. Some are also able to offer opportunities to discuss core ideas of Islam from various perspectives, such as exclusivist, pluralist, and terrorist points of view in order to clarify the inadequacy of the idea of indiscriminate killings. Insofar as discussions continue, there will be no final physical confrontation.

In conclusion, Islam–and religion in general–naturally develops as an organism with different religious attitudes and interpretations. Thus, the divisions that we see in the *umat* in Indonesia are not peculiar. As long as non-Muslim favouritism to only "good Muslims" persists, there will be no genuine mutual understanding between the Islamic and non-Islamic worlds. Simultaneously, the reality of the *umat* in Indonesia seems to suggest that if Muslims in Indonesia wish to overcome their predicaments, including the de-radicalisation of former terrorists, Muslims themselves must understand the divisions in the *umat* and endeavour to maintain continuous internal discussions.

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