

The Growth of anti-West, Jihad and Democracy: Indonesian Case

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This paper attempts to explain how some Islamic radical and moderate groups have a perception that the United States (U.S.) particularly and the West in general set a conspiracy to destroy Islam. From a survey conducted in 2000 and 2004, both the groups commonly called as Islamic radical and moderate subscribe to the above idea of Western conspiracy theory against Muslim. The main contention of this paper is that such a belief is caused by continuing attacks of the West particularly the U.S. against the Moslems countries. The Guantanamo, Palestinian, Afghanistan and Iraq cases are the most common examples about the injustice by the West mentioned by the above Islamic groups. Although there have been disagreements between the radical and moderate on how to face such a situation, the concept of jihad that has been introduced by both of them departs from the same concerns on western domination and world injustice and does not reflect the initial meaning of jihad purported during the Prophet Muhammad time.

To elaborate the above arguments, this paper will describe, first, the finding from the field related to the attitude toward the West. Secondly, it elaborates different conceptions of jihad among these groups, how they may relate to the debate of jihad in global Islamic discourse. Thirdly, this paper attempts to show how social and political context have instigated the growth of terrorism. However, fourthly, as long as there have been openness and dialogs – an opportunity to express grievances toward their government and the West particularly the U.S. in open forums, then the Islamic movements will not go into violence.

Attitude toward “the West”

There has been general belief that the U.S. conducted a double standard policy to Moslem world. At the beginning the response and complained was part of general response within Indonesia society not limited particularly to Moslem groups. The grievance to the West is started during the end of 1980s when the West increases the pressure on the implementation



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of human right and democracy after the end of its conflict with the communist. Human rights and democracy become the main agenda of the US. The West and U.S. gave strong pressure on Indonesia policy on East Timor, but they did not give the same pressure on the Israel occupation in the Palestinian lands.

The attitude of Muslim appears to get its religious dimension after the tragedy of September 11, 2001. There has been strong protest from some Islamic group to the US plan to send their troop to Afghanistan as an independent country. The 9/11 tragedy and what followed this event, was viewed by some Moslems with mixed feelings. The government under President Megawati Soekarnoputri issued a statement condemning the terrorist attacks. She said that the Indonesian Government would support the U.S. war against terrorism, including the plan to send troops to Afghanistan to track down Al-Qaeeda operatives. However this policy produced a diverse range of feelings within Indonesian society. Even Vice President Hamzah Haz (2001-2004) contradicted President Megawati and criticized America's anti-terrorist policies stating that America was the real terrorist because of the unjustness of its international policies. President Megawati was criticized for bowing to U.S pressure, because of her statement of support for the U.S. led war against terrorism in Afghanistan.

So-called radical groups such as Laskar Jihad, Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) and the Islamic Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam), Hizb al-Tahrir, and Jamaah Al Ikhwan al-Muslimin Indonesia all protested to the Indonesian Government, demanding the stop to its support of the U.S. The Prosperous Justice Party, whose support increased in the April 5, 2004 General Election, is also critical of the United States' treatment of Muslims and Muslim countries. Prior to the U.S. offensive in Afghanistan, there had been many anti-America protests and threats to assault U.S. citizens in Solo, Surabaya, Makassar and Jakarta. The demonstrators believed that the U.S.'s target was not Osama bin Laden, but the religion of Islam in general.

In our survey we find the anti-American views and the assumption of Western conspiracy against the Moslems in the world among all pesantren and Islamic leaders we interviewed. In Banten, the place where Imam Samudera, one of the actor behind the Bali Bomb, majority of pesantren ulama is in the opinion that the West was the mastermind behind the terror. At least the leaders of pesantren: Darul Istiqomah, Turus, Attohiriyah and three organizations:



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Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia, Hizbut Tahrir Banten Branch and Persatuan Islam (Persis) believe on the so-called Jews and Western conspiracy to destroy Islam.

We also conducted interview in East Java. We found that the leaders of pesantren and Islamic organization interviewed, except for An-Nuqayah Pesantren, Guluk-guluk, Sumenep Madura, which is an NU affiliated pesantren, have a similar view on the international conspiracy against Islam. Although they said that it was difficult to find any proves for such an allegation, the injustice of the West toward Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine, direct them to feel about the existence of Western conspiracy. Among the pesantrens where we have interview with their leaders, were Pesantren Al-Amien, Prenduan, Sumenep, Madura; Pesantren Karangasem Paciran, Lamongan; and a Muhammadiyah affiliated pesantren. While the leaders of organization we interviewed include: MMI Surabaya, HTI and Hidayatullah, Surabaya.

Similar views are also found among leaders of pesantren and Islamic organizations in Yogyakarta and Solo. The pesantrens and organizations are (1) Front Pembela Islam Surakarta; (2) Barisan Bismillah; (3) Lasykar Hizbullah Sunan Bonang; (5) Gerakan Pemuda Kabah; (6) Lasykar Jihad; (7) Jundullah; (8) KAMMI; (9) Lasykar Jihad; (10) Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia Solo; and (10) Ngruki Pesantren.

All interviews and fieldworks were conducted from May to August 2004, except for Lasykar Jihad which was interviewed in 2001, by a team from the International Center for Islam and Pluralism (ICIP), in which the author is one of the members.

Different Conceptions of Jihad

Relations between Islam and the West are often discussed in term of jihad. It is important to see here that in general the leaders of pesantren and Islamic organization believe on Western conspiracy although some of them cannot prove it. Almost all of the respondent make their grievance on injustice done by the US toward the Moslem world. Given such Muslim situation in the world, it is interesting to see how they look at the concept of jihad. As we know, at one extreme there have been the perpetrators of Bali Bomb and suicide bomb claiming that their activities are motivated by religious teaching called jihad against the West. But on another extreme, jihad means only to do something seriously. Therefore, we find that



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the concept of jihad have been given various meaning among the religious leaders interviewed in this project.

According to their means to conduct jihad we can divide jihad into radical and moderate ways. The radical can be divided again into two: the first group of radical jihad is jihad using sword or qital, which attacks the U.S. directly and the second group of the radical use jihad by making campaigns against the enemy. This form of jihad often divides the world into world of war and world of Islam. This second group includes among other the former Laskar Jihad which sent their troop to Maluku and Poso to support the Muslim community against the Christians. For them to overcome the injustice they have to go to war sometimes by using sword, killing their enemy. These radical groups may not attack the U.S. interests directly but they said that they support and understand the jihad conducted by people like Imam Samudera and Amrozi. They even believe that it is impossible for the two men to conduct suicide bombs. All these bombings according to them are part of Western conspiracy.

To define the enemy, these people use the following verse:

Never will the Jews or Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion. Say: "The Guidance of God that is the only Guidance". Wert thou to follow their desires after the knowledge which hath reached thee, then wouldst thou find neither Protector nor Helper against God (QS 2: 120).¹

People like Abu Jibril who was arrested because of the bomb blast nearby his house early last month, in an interview with a TV station clearly defined their enemy in this term. Another justification they use for their attitude against the enemy are the prophet experience of diving the world into the *dar al harb* and *dar al Islam*.

This kind of understanding is also subscribed by the groups such as Hizbut Tahrir in Jakarta, Solo and Surabaya; Majelis Mujahidin, and Islamic Defender Front. Jihad means *qital al-kuffar fi sibilillah li i'lai kalimatillah* or to make war against unbeliever (*kafir*), particularly

¹ See A' Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (Durban: Islamic Propagation Center International, 1934), fifth edition, pp. 50-51



against the unbelievers who are against Islam (*kafir harbi*).² Therefore, jihad for them means violence against the enemy.³

In contrast to the radical view on jihad, there has been a moderate interpretation of the concept. For them, in general jihad has various meaning and should not necessarily *qital* or war. According to them, jihad is to do something seriously, to search for knowledge and to help the poor. One respondent even stated that jihad can be done by *do'a* (praying). When asked about what to do against the Western conspiracy, we just need *do'a* (praying) to help the Muslims in the world. A leader of Nahdlatul Ulama interviewed for example follows this moderate understanding of jihad. He said that jihad can be done against the bad desires, to search for knowledge, or to give donation.⁴ A leader of pesantren such as Ustadz Muhammad Syakir, Hidayatullah, also understand jihad as attempting seriously to promote and implement Islamic values. Another pesantren adopted similar perspective on jihad is pesantren an-Nuqoyyah, Guluk-Guluk Madura. One of its leaders argues that jihad is divided into big and small jihad. Big jihad means war against enemy but small jihad is war against any temptation to do bad things.⁵ Another respondent from an Islamic organization also argues that jihad should not mean war but to develop faith of Muslim internally. He gave examples of the practices of jihad such as building mosque, eradicating poverty, and overcoming stupidity.⁶

Despite their differences, the bottom line of their view has similar spirit that is as a response toward Western domination. This is an expression against the long time domination and injustice of the West in the Muslim world. According to Sohail Hashmi, this view is in sharp contrast to the view of initial Islam on the meaning of jihad to spread Islam.⁷ The concept has been adjusted to the specific historical and social context. According to Hashmi, the initial meaning of jihad to spread Islam as practiced by the Prophet has been given new meaning.

² For Ismail Yusanto, the speaker of Hizbut Tahrir, there are two unbeliever, the first one is *kafir dzimmi* who is submissive to Islam and *kafir musta'min* or *mu'ahhid* (who is against Islam). Interview with Yusanto, August 2004.

³ Interview with Tindyo Prasetyo, Head of Hizbut Tahrir Solo on 3-4 August 2004 in Solo; interview with Fikri Arsyad, Head Hizbut Tahrir Surabaya on 5 August 2004 in Surabaya; interview with Irfan S. Awwas from Majelis Mujahidin Yogyakarta on 29 July 2004; Interview with Habib Rizieq Shihab on 5 Agustus 2004 in Jakarta.

⁴ Interview with KH. Syafii Hadzami on 3 August 2004 in Jakarta.

⁵ Interview with KH. Abdul Basith on 28 July 2004 in Madura.

⁶ Interview with Budi Hartono, Head of Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia (LDII) tanggal 1 August 2004 in Banten.

⁷ Sohail H. Hashmi (ed.), *Islamic Political Ethics, Civil Society, Pluralism and Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).



The prophet sent letter to the non Muslim rulers and if they do not allow the Muslim to do dakwah in the country then they may go to war. The foreign rulers are offered a choice whether to integrate their citizen into Islamic ruler but they have to pay tax and jizya as compensation for not following military tasks.⁸

The current interpretation of jihad, therefore, is a new interpretation adjusted to the challenges faced by the current Islamic world. But this conception of jihad is actually inward looking, only aimed at internal situation. It is sometimes directed to groups inside their own country considered as symbol of the West.

Although they have different claims, their conception of jihad is based on the reactions against the West. Both the moderate and radical use the jihad not in its initial context but as a reaction against the backwardness and injustice happening to their Moslem brothers and sisters in the world. In this context, the social and condition of a society within which the radicalism emerge need to be discussed. We will discuss this point in the next session.

The Social Context of Radicalism

Given the above connection between the Western threat and radicalism viewed by Moslem on jihad, we can make an assumption that the social and political context plays an important role in the process of how jihad and attitude toward the West are constructed. In this case, Western domination and long term injustice toward Muslim countries since the colonialism have given jihad a new meaning that is to counter the West. In some countries the Muslim frustration against the West is reflected in their protest against their own government which they argue only serve Western interests. Sometimes these regimes, according to Hashmi, are authoritarian which use whatever means to stay in power. The Soeharto regime in Indonesia for example use a term “extreme right” to call Muslim activists struggling to form Islamic state in Indonesia. Soeharto used the justification of the threat from Islamic “Extreme Right” to arrest and jail these activists.

Soeharto may be able to maintain his power but his pressures on some Islamist groups have instigated the emergence of underground movement against his government. As for the

⁸ *Ibid.*



underground movements against the government during the Darul Islam (DI) rebellion against the authoritarian Soekarno government, in different level, there had been also underground anti-Suharto group.

As mentioned by the ICG, the radical groups' perpetrating the bombs in Indonesia has a link with DI/TII. We may say that the radical and terrorist have been frustrated during the Soekarno time and continued their hatred against the government during Soeharto times. Violence was the means used after the Soekarno government disbanding the elected parliament to end the liberal democracy in Indonesia. The next generations and supporters of this group seem to continue their violence protest against the government. Sydney Jones said that the Indonesian radical groups have a link with Darul Islam. The perpetrators of suicide bomber recruited by Dr. Azahari and Nurdin Muhammad Top, the main planners behind some bombs in Indonesia, had fathers in Darul Islam.⁹ DI/TII became radical and violence in the past because their aspiration to build an Islamic state was completely damaged without any hope when the government turns into an authoritarian government.

Terrorism and democracy

If the above argument has some validity, then the origin of violence and terrorism in Indonesia relate closely to unavailability of channels for some groups to express their aspiration peacefully. Part of them, although not all radical groups, continuing their violence against their enemy, needs to be seen as protests against the government that did not give channels for their aspiration. During Soeharto's time, the groups using strategy of violence against Soeharto included among other *Komando Jihad*, *Ali Imron* and *Terror Warman*. Abu Bakar Baasyir, the Head of Majelis Mujahidin and now under arrest, had a strong connection with *Komando Jihad*¹⁰. Because of his strong protests against Soeharto, he was interrogated and left the country for Malaysia for some years. The Soeharto regime had closed down dialogical channels where people can negotiate their aspiration and views with other groups. This policy, in turn, has produced groups using violence to achieve their goals and to let people know about their existence.

⁹ Indonesian Crisis Group, "Recycling Militants in Indonesia: Darul Islam and the Australian Embassy Bombing", http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/indonesia/092_recycl_militants_indon_darul_islam_austr_embassy_bombing.pdf

¹⁰ Jamhari, "Mapping Radical Islam in Indonesia", *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2003, p. 14.



Democracy, which respects pluralism and different view, in this case, although it came a little bit late in Indonesia, becomes one way to reduce radicalism. Through democracy people can negotiate and make dialogue than war. As David Held argues – the benefit of democracy is it is offer a way to resolve conflict. ‘It offers - in theory at least - a form of politics and life in which there are fair and just ways of negotiating values and value disputes’.¹¹ Such a form offers ways to resolve and relate different values through a political dialogue.¹² In this sense, it is preferable as a form of government because of its ‘intrinsic fairness’ and its ‘overall good consequences’ for a society.¹³ Democracy, according to Held, is a key word that can ‘legitimately frame and delimit’ the competing ideologies and interests in a state.¹⁴

The network of violence only developed when many aspirations including the radical one cannot find its channel of expression. Democratic climate in Indonesia sometimes go to a direction which make some people worry. The radical groups and individuals may grow their significance and the implementation of syariah law has been demanded in many regions. Democracy and decentralization make it possible for these people to push regional authorities to implement syariah law.

However, we need democracy since it gives channel for grievances to be debated openly. As for the growth of syariah in Indonesia, it is the task of all components within civil society to contest the syariah implementation in public discourse. The dissemination of idea of the pluralism and multiculturalism has to be continued to encourage people to respect different views.

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¹¹ David Held, ‘Liberalism, Marxism, and Democracy’, in Stuart Hall, David Held and Tony McGrew (eds.), *Modernity and Its Futures* (Cambridge: The Open University Press, 1994), p. 41.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ McGrew (eds.), *Modernity and Its Futures* (Cambridge: The Open University Press, 1994), p. 41.

¹⁴ Held, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.



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