'Ideological Conflicts' Between the Indonesian Government and the Indonesian Muslim Radicals

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ABSTRACT: As in other many countries, Indonesia has recently suffered the dangerous scourge of terrorism. What the Indonesian government considers to be radicals are Muslim *mujahidin* (fighters) who could use violence to achieve their objectives (not all of them commit acts of violence). The government often calls them 'terrorists' (a term which has become highly discredited in the Indonesian media and worldwide). These also include those who aid them, or withhold information about them. A major method employed by the government to curb terrorism has been the establishment of the so-called 'deradicalisation' and 'counter-radicalisation' (preventing people from becoming radical) programmes organized by its anti-terrorism agency known as BNPT. However, unlike in some other countries where radicalization is harshly treated including verbally, the Indonesian Government is careful not to ban the expression of radical views, perhaps fearing that suppressing these views could taint its democratic image.

So, the radicals are quite free to publish books and articles especially on the Internet to promote their ideology and counter the opposite ideology (that of the government and its supporters). Drawing on an empirical analysis of the documents released by Indonesian radicals and the Indonesian Government, this paper presents an analysis of the 'Ideological conflicts' between the authorities and attempts to counter these attempts on the part of the radical groups and their supporters. This topic is important to understanding the state of the relationship between the Indonesian Government and the radical groups and shed some light on the prospect of radicalisation in Indonesia.

Introduction

The issue of the radicalization movement and of its many social effects on Indonesian society has been growing rapidly since the reformation era and the return of democracy to Indonesia, events marked in 1998 by the fall of President Suharto and his New Order Regime which had (officially) ruled Indonesia since 1967. One of the salient features of this era is the establishment of many religious organizations that could be categorized as 'radicals', in the sense that they wish to make radical changes to the state of Indonesia, especially to its ideology (the *Pancasila*) and laws with an Islamic ideology and Islamic law (the

Shariah law), respectively. Some of these groups with their militant members and ideology occasionally perpetrate terrorism including bombing and other terror actions. Such actions have become a serious problem in Indonesia in the last fourteen years or so, the latest being the bomb attacks on the heart of Jakarta on 14 January 2016. These have killed and wounded hundreds of people from various countries, especially in the Bali bombings in 2002; most victims were Australians as was discussed in this journal in 2013 (Adnan 2013). Other bombings and some other terror actions continue to happen in the Indonesian reformation era (since the fall of Suharto in 1998-present).

Most other studies have focused on their networks, organization and actions, but little ideological study has been conducted by using an ideological analysis. This article is an attempt to fill this gap. This article also expands on the ideological debates between Muslim leaders and secular leaders outlined in Irawan's article published in this journal (Irawan, 2013). Ideological analysis is important because ideological campaigns can shape and frame public mind, if repeatedly publicised, and as such, it can lead to public support or rejection of its ideas. Analysing the ideological conflicts between the Indonesian government and the radical groups can also shed some light on the current and future prospect of radicalism in the country, and even of the future of the republic if the radicals win in their campaigns.

The Arguments of the Radicals for the Terror Attacks, and the Government Response

The bombings and other terrorist actions are motivated by the understanding of the radicals of Islam, as an effort to fight against all parties (people or governments), which, in their perception, have attacked Islam or its followers. In the Indonesian context, the parties are the United States and its allies (in broadest sense) around the world including Indonesia. The violent actions are considered as the way to defend (and promote) Islam. According to them, the U.S. and its allies must be held responsible for killing Muslims and destroying Islam around the world. The destruction of Islam, they argue, is the international conspiracy created by *Salibis* (Christians) and *Yahudi* (Jews) who dominate the governments of those countries. The political conspiracy led by the U.S. International policy of George W. Bush, is an example, which they consider to have harmed Muslims in Muslim countries, e.g. by attacking Iraq and Afghanistan, is one the many factors.

What the USA calls 'collateral damage' due to its military attacks on these countries is seen by them as a 'massacre' of Muslims. This 'massacre' of Muslims, for example in Afghanistan, has become the main trigger of the Muslim *Mujahidin* (jihadists) in Indonesia to take

vengeance against this conspiracy. The bombing attacks in Indonesia have targeted people, buildings, and institutions, which are considered to be the symbols of the USA and of its allies, the latest being a Star Buck Café in Jakarta recently (14 January 2016). The terror actions in Indonesia are actually not only an international issue, but have also become an issue of national security in the country as some of the radicals have directed their attacks on their 'near enemy', the Indonesian Government, especially its police.

In order to curb terrorism and radicalisation, the Indonesian government has made most strenuous efforts. A major method is the *so-called* deradicalisation and counter-radicalization programmes. Part of these programmes is conducted through ideological promotion. But, the radical groups or individuals also promote their own ideology to counter that of the government. This article focuses on the ideological arguments promoted by the Indonesian government to shape the public mind and to gain its support, and the counter arguments publicized by the radicals regarding important issues including the issues of terrorism, state ideology and laws and related matters, and the status of the government. It will examine how these two competing parties and their supporters promote their respective ideologies in various text genres, e.g. in books, articles and public speeches. This examination is important since it can shed some light on the current battle and on future prospects for public order.

Terrorist attacks in Jakarta on 14 January 2016. Source: New York Daily News *(https://twitter.com/nydailynews/status/687678012406558720)*

Specifically, an ideological analysis could shed some light on the question 'why radicalism is still gaining increasing support in Indonesia', and on/by which means the government deradicalisation and counter-radicalisation programmes do not work. 'Deradicalisation' is defined by the BNPT, and in this article, as an attempt to change someone's view regarding the society and government, so that they will conform to the government's view, e.g. changing the radicals' view that the government and its ideology should be changed as it is 'un-Islamic', to their accepting the Indonesian state, especially its ideology, laws, and system of government. 'Counter-radicalisation' means an attempt to prevent those who have not been affected by this view from being influenced by the radical ideology and becoming radical as well.

This attempt is crucial, as having so many radicals in the Indonesian community could imply the much greater possibility of having greater terrorism attacks. This is because, although radicalism cannot be equated with terrorism, as not all radicals are terrorists, but, having more people who support the ideology, is likely to increase the likelihood of more terrorism, because it would be easier for terrorist leaders to encourage people who subscribe to, or support, the ideology to conduct terror attacks than by those who do not share the same purpose. This is not to say that all radicals will become terrorists.

To understand the ideological conflicts better, one needs to understand the context of the issue, which the next section presents, namely a brief history of the debate on the ideological basis of the Indonesian State.

The Context: Islam and the State in Indonesia; and the Original Ideological Debate and Outcome

The aspiration of Muslims to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia dates back to the 1920s as was marked by the debate between two prospective future leaders on Indonesia, Muhammad Natsir (the first Prime Minister of Indonesia in early 'fifties after the Dutch Colonial Government eventually recognised the Indonesian National Government, after attempting to recolonise the country since November 1945, which it had to submit to the Japanese Force in 1942), and Sukarno (who later became the first President of Indonesia). Natsir wanted a state, which is based on Islam, and which implements Islamic norms and values including Islamic laws. This is based on the premise that the vast majority of Indonesian population (approximately 85%) is Muslim.

When Indonesia had the opportunity to gain its independence after the defeat of the occupying force, the Japanese, in the Second World War, on 29 April 1945 the leaders of Indonesian freedom fighters formed the Investigative Committee for the Preparation of the Indonesian

Independence (BPUPKI). In this committee, a similar debate raged again between the supporters of an Islamic state/Islamic based state and the proponents of a secular state. Amid the heated debate, Sukarno came up with a formula called the *Pancasila*—the Five Principles: (1) Belief in God, (2) The sacredness of Humanity, (3) Nationalism, (4) Consensus Based Democracy led by wisdoms, and (5) Social Justice for all Indonesians, which he claimed to be based on the way of life of Indonesians, but whose principles did not contradict Islamic principles. These principles were acceptable to the secular groups, but not to the Muslim group. Nevertheless, the successive deliberations had reached a compromise known as the Jakarta Charter, which added the phrase 'with an obligation for Muslims to carry out Islamic teachings' to the first principle. This implies that the state of Indonesia would be obliged to require its Muslim citizens to carry out the Islamic teachings, which include all Islamic laws.

Soekarno (sometimes spelled 'Sukarno'), with Moh. Hatta standing next to him, was proclaiming the Indonesian Independence on 17 August 1945. (Source: Sejarah Nasional Indonesia [Indonesian National History] cited on this site: https://jagoips.com/2013/01/08/peristiwa-sekitar-proklamasi-sampai-terbentuknya-nkri/)

However, this hard fought result of deliberation was cancelled for the sake of unity in a critical moment. Just after the Indonesian Independence was proclaimed on 17 August 1945 by Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta, both these leaders had lobbied Muslim leaders to remove the crucial compromised phrase due to a threat of disunity by Christian naval officers in Eastern Indonesia, and the fact that this ideological basis and the constitution that accompanies it was a temporary one until a general election was held. A concession from the Muslims was considered vital

at that critical moment, because it was vital to defend the newly declared independence against the Japanese forces who were still in Indonesia, and guard against the possible return of the Dutch to re-colonize the country, a threat which later turned into a real one. The small number of leaders they had lobbied accepted the request. So, the crucial phrase was removed.

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The Post Independence Struggle of Islamic Leaders

Consequently, many Islamic figures were unhappy but they continued the efforts to at least bring back the Jakarta Charter in Indonesian parliaments in 1955, in 1967, and in 2000, after the fall of Suharto, but all of them failed. A smaller group of Muslims were extremely unhappy, to the extent that they established a state of their own. One of these Muslims was Karto Suwirjo, an Islamic leader who had been leading the guerilla war against the Dutch in West Java area. He eventually proclaimed an Islamic State of Indonesia named *Negara Islam Indonesia* (NII) in 1949 since he considered that the Indonesian Government had capitulated to the Dutch by signing the Renville Agreement in 1948, which, in effect, giving West Java (along with many other areas of Indonesia) to the Dutch. Nonetheless, after the Dutch had eventually recognized the Indonesian independence in 1949, and returned the Indonesian territory, this state was involved in 'war' against the Indonesian Government until it was defeated in 1961.

The Revival of the 'Indonesian Islamic State of Indonesia' Movement

Although this state was crushed, with the capture of Karto Suwirjo (who was later sentenced to death) and his top followers, his aspiration and ideology were never abandoned. Some of his followers revived his movement in early seventies. They recruited younger Muslim leaders including Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir. These two leaders, who found the Ngruki Pesantren (Islamic Boarding School) in Surakarta (Solo), Central Java, Salafi, followed an uncompromising interpretation of Islam, one which rejects un-Islamic beliefs and practices, including the *Pancasila* (the five principles discussed earlier) and saluting the Indonesian flag, as they believe that such belief and practices are not Islamic. Both leaders were arrested by the Suharto New Order Regime because of their stand. During a bail out period, they escaped to Malaysia and had established a similar *pesantren* in Johor Baru, near the boarder between Malaysia and Singapore. During the Soviet Union occupation of Afghanistan, both leaders contributed to supporting the American supported war to eject the Soviet Union (SU) military forces from the country by recruiting young Muslims from Indonesia and several other

Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia and the Philippines and sent them to Afghanistan to be militarily trained, and to join the fight against the SU forces (Imron, 2007). When the war was about to end, Sungkar and Baasyir broke away from the NII (The Indonesian Islamic State movement) due to theological differences, and established the Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), which most of the fighters joined. When they returned to their respective countries, they continued with the organisation. Some of them were later involved in terrorist attacks including the first Bali bombing (See Adnan & Mubarok, 2013).

Sungkar died in 1999, but Ba'asyir and his school have continued the preaching of his interpretation of Islam, even when he is in jail. Recently, he joined force with another prisoner a strong ideologue, Aman Abdurrahman, together with their respective supporters in declaring support for ISIS/IS. Schools with similar teaching have been established in several places in Java and other parts of Indonesia, e.g. as in the *Daarussyahadah* School in Solo and with Al-Islam School in Lamongan, East Java. So, he still has many followers in Indonesia. However, this is not to say that all radical groups follow his order, because there are many independent small groups (Mbai, 2014). This paper identifies a number of conflicting ideological arguments regarding the Indonesian state and government and other themes, which play a significant role in shaping the mind of Indonesians, and which undoubtedly affect the Indonesian state and its politics.

Abdullah Sungkar, the founder of Jamaah Islamyah. Source:
http://m.lasdipo.co/kajian/taushiyah/2013/07/29/allahu-yarham-ustadz-
abdullah-sungkar-menyingkap-tabir-fitnah-subhat-dan-syahwat.html

The Ideological Campaigns of the Radicals

Although many of the radicals, like Aman Abdurrahman and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir are in a maximum security jail, their thoughts cannot be fully contained by the government. They could still be smuggled out and published by at least several media outlets mainly on the Internet. The government cannot close the media outlets because closing them means a breach of freedom of speech. Recently, the Government tried it, but only to re-open most of them. Another issue is that their thoughts are also published in web blogs, which can reappear in different names or in different blogs, if one blog is closed.

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Ideology: The Definition

There are many definitions of ideology. For the purpose of this article I use the definition offered by *Oxford Online Dictionary*, which defines an ideology as 'A set of beliefs or principles, especially one on which a political system, party, or organization is based.' (http://dictionary. cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ideology). In this article 'ideology' refers to the set of beliefs or principles adopted by the Indonesian state and the radicals, in order to justify their views and conducts and to achieve their political goals. The Indonesian State, as represented by the Indonesian Governments, declares the *Pancasila* to be its ideological basis and political system.

As discussed earlier, these principles were proposed by Sukarno in 1945 as a middle way between those who advocated Islam and those who wanted secular principles. The radicals wanted Islam as a whole, as they understand it, to be the ideological basis and its laws (the Shariah law) to govern the political and legal life of the state of Indonesia as has been discussed by a number of researchers including Irawan (2014) in this journal previously. During the liberal democracy era 1950-1959, there was a lively debate, especially in the Indonesian Constituent Assembly between the two opposing groups, those who argued for Islam, a democratic form of it (Natsir, 2000), and those who championed secular ideologies including the *Pancasila*. This debate ended in a deadlock. The promotion of Islamic [political] ideology was restricted during the Guided Democracy (1959-1966), and it was banned during the New Order era (1967-1998). The return of democracy to Indonesia after the fall of Suharto, has given Indonesians freedom to promote their respective ideologies including Islam, (but communism has continued to be banned).

Ideological Conflicts

Ideological conflict in this article is defined as a 'battle' using ideological beliefs or principles presented by individuals or groups when talking about certain themes. In this current investigation, an empirical analysis using ideological analysis is carried out to examine how the Indonesian governments and those who are considered as radical jihadist groups, represented by their respective idols or leaders, as well as their supporters, present their views on crucial themes such as ideology and on the practices of the government.

In these 'conflicts', each party creates ideological constructions to justify their political positions and actions. The positions and actions are justified in order to provide legitimacy and to influence or control the public mind to attract support and followers, which, for the radicals, means to increase the number of radicals in the community, and, at the same time, delegitimise the positions and actions of their opponent. For the government, the increase of radicals means a failure in its counter radicalization programme, that is, to prevent the number of ordinary people (mainly Muslims) from becoming radical. Therefore, it has to counter the ideology of the radicals, e.g. by delegitimising and even stigmatising radicalism and terrorism, while at the same time justifying its ideological position.

Susilo Bambang Yudoyono (https://kabarnet.in/2009/11/page/2/)

The Arguments Created by Indonesian Government Officials on Terrorism and Jihad

For the Indonesian Government, terrorism is a violation of human rights, endangering the security of Indonesia and constitute an enemy of the world. When he was the Coordinating Minister for Law and Security

during the Megawati's Presidency (2002-2004), Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono considered:

> Terrorism is a violation against humanity. It has destroyed humanity values, disturbed the safety and security of our nation, and it has become the common enemy of this world. (The former Menkpolkam, Susilo Bambang Yudoyono, 2002, cited in *Imam Samudra Berjihad* 2006).

Another government official said that terrorism is an act prohibited by all religions and civilisations, and it it is an extraordinary crime against humanity. He went on: 'Terrorism is an action prohibited by all religions and civilizations. It is an extraordinary crime against humanity' (Prof. Jimly Asshiddique, 2002, cited in *Imam Samudra Berjihad*, 2006). He argues that the radicals have wrongly misunderstood *jihad* to mean mainly violent action, i.e. war (*qital*), while it has a truer meaning that is to 'endeavour seriously' such as in work, study, and to achieve a good goal (acceptable to God). This 'truer' meaning is mainly based on a hadith (a saying and conduct of Prophet Muhammad) reportedly pronounced by Prophet Muhammad before his followers after winning the Badr war, a war of survival against a much bigger force from his hometown Mecca (the most sacred Islamic city, in the country now called Saudi Arabia), which had intended to kill him and wipe out his, then, small followers who had escaped to the city of Medinah approximately 490 km from Mecca. As the hadist says, 'We have returned from a little *jihad*, and are heading to the big *jihad*, that is the *jihad* against our (evil) temptation'. It is believed, therefore, that for Muslims, the big *jihad* is one's ability to fight the temptation to commit bad deeds such as stealing, drinking alcohol, to commit adultery and other deeds unacceptable to Islam, and follow the commands of God to conduct good deeds.

The anti-terrorism agency, the BNPT, promoted the meaning of terrorism as any attempt to establish a state based on an alternative ideology (in this case Islam) to replace the existing *Pancasila* ideology, something which has to be fought against.

The Counter Ideology Created by the Radicals

For the radicals, their interpretation of *jihad* is the correct one, and the *hadith* quoted above is seen as 'weak' and baseless, because it was reported by an untrustworthy person. They even consider it as an effort for weakening Islam, reducing the urge to fight in war against enemy of Islam. It is a hadist manipulated by someone who is lazy, and unmotivated.

Their motivation in conducting bombing actions is considered as a holy *jihad* to fight for Islam against what they consider as enemies of Islam, including the United States (USA) and its allies. They justify their actions by considering the U.S. and its allies as the enemy of Islam, because they have carried out many actions around the world to destroy Islam. This can be seen from the target of bombing (or victims) who are mostly from 'Western Countries', i.e. the Western people such as those who are from Australia. The Indonesian government is seen as a follower of the USA policy, and so they could also be part of the target.

The hatred against the USA and its allies can be seen in the statement of Imam Samudra (the field commander of the first huge Bali Bombing operation), when interviewed by Adisaputra (2002). In the interview, Samudra (his actual name is Abdul Azis) explains that his name 'Imam Samudra' stands for *Islamic Movement against America and Allies, Safe and Help our Masjidil Haram under Attack from America and its Allies.* He argues that he uses the name after he found a fact that there were 130,000 America soldiers needed to 'straddle' the Masjidil Haram (Islam holiest mosque, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia) (*op. cit.*, p. 42).

The idea and motivation to defend Islam is based on an effort to fight against people, countries, or official institutions that are considered as *kafir* (infidel). The *kafir* are those who have involved in killing Muslims around the world, e.g. in Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2001, 200,000 Muslims in Afghanistan were bombed and killed. In the bombing, the victims were mostly weak people and children. According to Samudra, based on his Islamic understanding, other Muslims have an obligation to take revenge against the attackers, and it is a must, to defend their Muslim brothers. Fighting against the USA and its allies as well as defending for other Muslims is considered to be *jihad* (holy war) (Adisaputra, 2002, p. 56). In his view, the USA and its allies, including the British, Australia, German, France, and Japan are as the real terrorists who try to destroy Islam. In order to carry out this defense and *jihad*, some jihadist Muslims, including Imam Samudra himself, have committed violent actions by targeting the people that are considered as the representatives of the Western power.

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Ideological Conflicts About Terrorism

The Radicals consider that the real terrorists in the world are the USA and its allies. They have killed thousands of Muslims around the world. The radicals regard the killing of Muslims as the launching of a new 'Crusade War' (*Perang Salib*), one which is led by the USA. The killings of Muslims around the world, all those in Asia (such as in Palestine, Afghanistan, and Iraq), in Europe (such as in Bosnia and Kosovo), in

Africa (such as in Sudan), and those in Indonesia (such as in Poso and Ambon) are considered as the conspiracy of International *Salibis*, in order to begin the crusade war to destroy Islam. For them, all fighting against those who attack Islam and kill Muslims belongs to the holy war (*jihad*).

Recent development in the ideological conflicts is that the enemy is not only the Western powers, but also the Indonesian Government. The Indonesian Government is seen as the carrying the mission of the Western Powers, because it received money from them, and the money has been used to buy weaponry for the Indonesian anti-terror squad called 'Desus 88', to kill Muslims. Therefore, the radicals have adopted an offensive strategy of delegitimation, projecting the government as *thaghut* (infidel, the party which rejects the teaching of Islam) as will be discussed in the next section.

Ideological Conflicts About Thaghut

Thaghut is a term often used in Islamic history to discredit or deligitimise the people who ignore Islamic teachings/laws. The Indonesian radicals use the same term to delegitimize the Indonesian Government. In their view, the government is *thaghut* because it uses men-made law, while the Qur'an says that whoever seek a law other than the law of Allah, 'they are *thaghut*'. Therefore, it should be rejected, and Muslims should not work for it. Those who work for it, e.g. the public servants, are considered *thaghut* as well.

To counter this discourse, the government sponsored a cleric, one sentenced to jail for terrorism related charges including 'harbouring' terrorists, named Khairul Ghazali (sentenced to jail for harbouring terrorists), for writing, publishing, and launching a book, named *Mereka Bukan Thaghut* (They are not *Thaghut*) (Ghazali, 2011). Interestingly, he was brought by the BNPT (the government anti-terrorism agency) from his prison in South Jakarta to a luxury hotel, named Shahid Jaya, also in Jakarta, to launch the book and join in the ensuing discussion. In this book he legitimized the government by excluding it from the radicals' definition of *thaghut*. He argued that *thaghut* is defined by some Islamic scholars as devils (*satan, syaitan*) and that all such entities or things associated with evil characters. Some other scholars define it as image (*berhala*), shaman (*dukun*), and fortune-teller (*tukang ramal*). The actors of *thaghut* are those who have leadership authority, either in religion, social, or politics. In administering their leadership, these leaders abuse their power by committing injustice or discrimination against some people of the public. Such leaders demand excessive loyalty, honour, and exalting of others (Gazali, 2011, p. 124). Gazali then continued that the most accepted definition of *thaghut* is all objects or persons worshipped

beside Allah (God); *thaghut* could be persons, things, objects, or images (Gazali, 2011, p. 125). So, in this case, the Indonesian Government is not *thaghut* because it does not commit those actions. At the launch of the book, he criticized his former colleagues (jihadists) for attacking anyone who contradict their definition. He says:

> *Sangat disayangkan, jika kajian ihwal thagut telah digunakan oleh kelompok-kelompok tertentu untuk menyerang siapa saja yang berseberangan dengan keyakinan mereka. Inilah puncak lahirnya radikal ekstrimis ideologi yang bermuara pada tindakan anarkis atau teroris.* (It is regrettable that if the discussion of *thaghut* has been used by certain groups to attack anyone who contradict their belief. This is the top cause of the emergence of the extremist radicals ideology which ends in anarchic/terrorist actions. (See more at: http://www.voa-islam.com/read/indonesiana/2011/12/21/17109/peluncuran-buku-mereka-bukan-thagut-pns-aparatur-negara/#sthash.z1OIV9Dw.dpuf)

He had added that the book is intended to correct the meaning of *thaghut* so that the Muslim community, especially preachers, spread the meaning of *thaghut* correctly and wisely because the preachers, who wrongly explain the term *thaghut*, can turn them into *thaghut*.

The Counter Attack

However, the radicals fought back. One of its 'representatives' in the discussion, a former convict for being a leader of *Jamaah Islamyah*, criticised the author for using only a narrow etymological definition, and ignoring the religious definitions given by Islamic scholars over the centuries. A more direct and comprehensive response came from Abdurrahman in an article named *Ya… Mereka Memang Thaghut ! Bantahan atas manipulasi dan fitnah Khairul Ghazali dalam bukunya Mereka Bukan 'Thaghut'* (Yes, They are indeed thaghut! A Response to the manipulation and *fitnah* of Khairul Ghazali in his book *They are not 'Thaghut'*). The author argues using verses from the Quran, quoting the Chapter 'Al An'am' (Animal), verse 112, was essentially saying that God created for every prophet enemy, devils (evil human) and fairies, some of whom preach beautiful words to deceive human beings, so that Muslims should stay away from them. He argued that Ghazali has obscured the meaning of *thaghut* by only using the etymology of the term and ignore the religious meaning, for which Islam was revealed. He also refute Ghazali's accusation that

> Khairul Ghazali membela pemerintah *thaghut* dengan cara mencampur-adukan makna *thaghut* secara *lughawiy* (bahasa) dengan makna *syar'iy* (istilah), dan saat menyimpulkan tulisannya ini dia berpegang terhadap makna lughawiy dan mencampakkan makna syar'iy. Sehingga dia

memasukan dalam rengrengan *thaghut* itu para ahli maksiat yang tidak sampai pada tahap kekafiran seperti koruptor, ahli maksiat, perampas hutan dan alam rakyat dan yang lainnya, dimana dia berkata dalam bukunya itu, *'Pada saat sekarang, aktifitas perang dengan thaghut – setan, pengumbar nafsu, pengobral narkoba, koruptor, tukang sihir, ahli maksiat, dukun/tukang santet, mafia peradilan, penguasa yang menyalah gunakan kekuasaan, polisi/TNI yang menganiaya dan menindas rakyat, parampas hutan dan alam rakyat, dan yang lainnya– tidak boleh dilakukan dengan kekerasan…'* (pp. 70-71).

(Khairul Ghazali defended the infidel government by confusing the literal meaning of *thagut* and the religiously conceptual meaning, and when he made his conclusion, he only relied on the literal meaning, and discarded the conceptual meaning. He categorized the criminals such as corruptors, criminals, and other thiefs of public forest land and natural resources not as infidel. He says in his book (*Mereka bukan 'Thagut'*), 'These days, fighting against *thagut*—devils, followers of temptations, drug sellers, corruptors, shamans, criminals, black magicians, court mafia, officials who abuse power, (members of) the Police and the Indonesian Armed Forces who brutally treat and oppress people, may not be conducted using violence…' (pp. 70-71), not as infidel (http://www.voa-islam.com/read/citizens-jurnalism/2012/01/10/17348/ya-mereka-memang-thaghut-bantahan-atas-buku-khairul-ghazali/#sthash.iVpwjZXr.dpbs)

By criticizing Khairul Ghazali's position, this quotation implies that in the ideological conflicts, the radicals employ this concept of *thaghut* to justify their actions to perpetrate violence (especially bombing actions) against those who they consider as *thaghut*. The radicals interpret and create a discourse that all the governments or institutions that do not implement Islamic law (*sharia*) completely, they tend to apply secular view, belong to the *thaghut* category. Even though the governments believe in God (*Allah*), they have to be destroyed if they do not implement the *sharia*. Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world and most of government officials are Muslims. However, according to the radicals, the Indonesian government does not implement Islamic laws. Instead, it tends to implement secularism and democracy that resemble the Western political system (especially democracy as disseminated by the USA) That is why, in their view, the government belongs to the *kafir* (the infidel) or *thaghut* (the unbelievers) category (for sometimes these terms are used interchangeably by them). For this reason, they have to be opposed and replaced with a government which implements Islamic *shariah* (laws).

Abu Sulaiman alias Aman Abdurrahman (n.d.), the writer of book *'Ya, Mereka memang Thaghut'* (Yes, They are *Thaghut*) argues strongly that worshipping God by Muslims does not only mean doing prayer and fasting, but they must also carry out all the other things commanded by God in their daily life, including implementing His Laws. Muslims have to base their rule, which also regulates their daily life, on God's laws

outlined in the Al-Qur'an and the *Sunnah* (Prophet Muhammad's saying, actions and approval of his companions' attitudes and behaviours). All rules that are not based on God's law belong to *thaghut* laws and people who follow these and reject God's laws are *kafir*. Because Indonesia implements democracy and secularism, which are considered to contradict Islamic laws, its government is considered *thaghut*. Individuals or institutions that make and follow this system are categorized as non-believers.

> All individuals who make rules or legal systems (where the systems are not based on God's laws), and the rules are followed by other people, position themselves as God. When they do this (position themselves as God beside Allah), they are classified as *kafir* (infidel).

Abdurrahman justifies his interpretation to claim others as *thaghut* and *kafir* by quoting Q.S. As-Syura verse 21, Q.S. Al-Maidah verse 44, Q.S. An-Nisaa verse 60, and Q.S. At-Taubah verse 31. He also quotes some opinions from major Islamic scholars such as Imam Ibnu Qayyim, Imam At Tirmidzi, and Syaikh Muhammad Hamid Al-Faqiy. Another quote which enforces his belief about *thaghut* says:

> There is no doubt that all things belonging to *thaghut* constitute the making of rules or regulations using laws outside Islam and its teachings and other rules made by human beings ….

Abu Sulayman or Aman Abdurrahman, a (so far) consistent ideologist. (Source: http://www.voa-islam.com/read/under cover/2012/03/18219/wasiat-ustadz-aman-abdurrahman"hadiah-untuk-ikhwan-masjunin/#sthash.HwLCCsNw.dpbs)

It is not only those who make the rules are considered *thaghut*, but also those who disseminate them,

> People who make and disseminate them are also *thaghut* …. . This also includes holy books based on human minds in order to turn other people from the truth brought by Prophet Muhammad (no page number).

On the contrary, the Indonesian government and its supporters provide a different interpretation, one to counter the interpretation of the radicals, arguing that it is not a *thaghut* government if its officials still believe in God, although they do not implement Islamic law strictly in their political system. The people are still Muslims although they implement other systems such as democracy.

The Radical's Response

The radicals responded with a counter argument, saying that those who do not implement God's laws, although they still believe in God, are still considered *kafir* and *thaghut*, so, they have to be opposed. This is based on their interpretation of worship, that is worship of God (*Allah*) is constituted not only in the form of believing in Him, but also in carrying out all His commands, including their place in a political system. The government counters this by saying that those who believe in God, e.g. doing prayer, fasting, and doing hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) still belong to Muslims, not *kafir*, even though in their daily life they (including in politics and governance) do not implement God's laws completely. They should not be categorised as *thaghut, and the government they support is not a thaghut government*. Violations against the *Sharia* laws are sinful actions, but the people who commit the violations are not necessarily *kafir*.

One of the justifications supporting the Indonesian government statement is the division of the type of *kafir* or *thaghut*.According to Al-'Allamah Muhammad Nashiruddin Al-Albani cited in Gazali (2011, pp. 129-131), *kafir* is divided into two types, i.e. *kafir i'tiqadi* and *amali*. The former relates to the absence of believe in God in a person's heart and his daily conducts is not based on Islamic laws as well. Those who belong to *kafir i'tiqadi* have carried out serious sins and they are not forgiven. Their place after death would be in hell. The latter term (*kafir amali*) relates to the presence of [the Islamic] religious faith in one's heart, but his daily conduct (including in the higher system of life such as the political system) are not strictly based on Islamic laws. Those who belong to *kafir amali* could be forgiven for depending on God's will. In the wider context, people (e.g. politicians, officials, decision makers) should not be despised, opposed, and be categorized as *thaghut*. The people who do not implement God's law may be categorized as *kafir*, but, *kafir* here means only committing major sins (*dosa besar*), so the status does not exclude them from Islam (Gazali, 2011, pp. 139-141). On

page 61 of this book, Ghazali accused the radicals who categorise the Indonesian government as *thaghut* for being *thaghut* themselves.

In response to this argument, Aman accused the principle, on which Ghazali based his view on, for being a misguided belief, as it contradicts the basic theological position of Sunny Islam:

> Tapi lucunya, dia menganggap pemerintah yang berhukum dengan hukum *thaghut* lagi memerangi pemberlakuan syari'at Islam adalah bahwa mereka itu bukan *thaghut* dan tidak kafir dengan merujuk kepada Syaikh Al Albani yang dalam permasalahan ini terjatuh dalam kesesatan paham Ghulatul Murjiah dimana menganggap tindakan pemerintah *thaghut* ini hanya kufrun duna kufrin (kekafiran kecil yang tidak mengeluarkan dari islam). Padahal itu adalah paham yang sesat yang menyelisihi aqidah Ahlu Sunnah yang meyakini bahwa berhukum dengan undang-undang buatan itu adalah kekafiran yang mengeluarkan dari Islam tanpa melihat keyakinan hatinya.

> Wal Jama'ah yang meyakini bahwa berhukum dengan undang-undang buatan itu adalah kekafiran yang mengeluarkan dari Islam tanpa melihat keyakinan hatinya. (But ridiculously, he regards the government which implements *thaghut* laws and fight (attempts to implement) Islamic laws as non-*thaghut* and non-*kafir* by referring to Syaikh Al Albani, whose view regarding this issue follow the misguided Murji'ah (a school of thought in early Islam) which considers the actions of the *thaghut* government as *kufrun duna kufrin* (minor sin which does not exclude one from being a Muslim), while, in fact, it is a misguided belief which contradicts the Sunny faith, which believes that following men made laws is a sin which disqualifies someone from being a Muslim, regardless of (the faith they have in) their hearts.

In support of his position, Aman provides more credible reference by referring to some selected verses in the Holy Quran.

Ideological Conflicts as to Jihad

Jihad is an important word in Islam that has become a buzzword worldwide and been given a variety of meanings, the main one being 'holy war' and 'terrorism', especially since the 9/11 tragedy in the USA.*Jihad* is a common term in the Islamic world, one which can be defined as 'struggle' in defending Islam seriously or wholeheartedly. The term may be associated with all efforts to defend Islam using non-violent or violent actions. According to Yasir (1982, 2006), *jihad* is not associated with war. Instead, it is a serious attempt to struggle against lust (*hawa nafsu*), Satan (*setan/syaitan*), and all enemies who use violence to destroy the teachings of Islam. However, some others argue that violent actions can be used to fight against all people or institutions that try to destroy Islam. Such an interpretation equates *jihad* with *qital* (war), which is then widely known as 'holy war'. Being killed in such a

war is called 'martyrdom' (*istishhad*). A Muslim who is killed in a holy war is considered to be a martyr (*shahid*).

The Indonesian government and its supporters argue that terrorism and bombing actions are not exactly related to *jihad* (holy war). According to them, Islam does not allow one Muslim to kill other Muslims and even non-Muslims, except when it fulfills particular rules (justified). Further, Islamic teaching does not also permit particular Muslims to do acts of destruction or vandalism. This interpretation is made by quoting Al-Qur'an, Chapter *Al-Maidah*, verse 32 and Chapter *Al-Qashash*, verse 77. 'Killing other Muslims and non-Muslims unjustifiably (e.g. who do not attack Muslims and destroy Islam) is forbidden (*haram*).'

> If there is a claim or assumption that killing and bombing are the commands of sharia, the claim belongs to mad actions (*aksi sinting*). Terrorism is not the part of Islam and it has no relation with this holy religion (Islam). (Gazali, 2011, p. 143)

Efforts to establish Islamic state (*khilafah*), according to Gazali (2011), should not be carried out by means of violent actions. Bombing, killing, and destroying buildings are acts contradictory to Islam. These violent actions will never change the belief and understanding of Muslims. If they (the perpetrators) want to make a change (e.g. by establishing an Islamic state), they should pursue it through *da'wah* (proselytism), not through violence. Defending Islam by doing violent actions is also contradictory to the Islamic teaching as disseminated by Prophet Muhammad. Gazali (2011) strongly emphasizes that Islam has never taught Muslims to perpetrate terrorism actions. He presents the life story of Prophet Muhammad, who has spread Islam using non-violent actions, as the example to support his argument against terrorism.

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Conclusion

The discussion in the previous sections show a heated ideological debate between the Indonesian Government and the radicals, thanks to the return of democracy to the country and the availability of the Internet. This debate is a continuation of the debate older than the republic itself. The government has abundant resources at its disposal to beat the radicals, but it finds it difficult to defeat the radicals ideologically, as is proven by the increasing number of radicals in Indonesia.

Why is it difficult for the government to defeat the arguments of the radicals? There are two reasons. First, there are many amongst the majority Muslims who feel comfortable with being fully Islamic as expected by the religion, while the Indonesian state is not based on Islam, but the *Pancasila* (the five principles), while the radical ideologists offer a clear and straight forward call for an Islamic State or a state which implement Islamic law (the Shariah), believed to be the only true path to go to heaven. This was reported by a radical activist, who had left the movement, at his presentation to the University of Indonesia in 2012 (attended by the author of this article). He could easily recruit a young Islamic student within 10 minutes. He said that he simply asked his potential follower whether she was a true Muslim and wish to live in a truly Islamic state. She said 'yes', but when he asked about the ideology of the Indonesian state, she said 'no'. He then said that she is not living in a truly Islamic state. She 'lost' the debate, so he the persuaded her if she would be interested to live in a truly Islamic state. She then became interested. He won and would continue his persuasion and eventually she became a loyal member of his 'Islamic State of Indonesia' (an underground state complete with its government structure).

The effective method of the radicals is as follows. As shown in the debate earlier, they usually select and interpret verses from the *Al Quran* and the *Sunnah* of the prophet literally irrespective of their contexts. In other words, they present selected verses from the most trusted sources in Islam, which good Muslims are supposed to follow. With such holy verses presented to support their arguments, it is relatively easy for them to convince the less educated or less literate but devote Muslims, who form a large number of Indonesian Muslims. On the other hand, it is difficult for the government to refute their arguments/claims and win, because the government needs to make longer and more complex arguments, which are generally difficult for the less educated masses to understand.

The second reason for making it difficult for the government is that it is undeniable that the Indonesian Government receives financial support from the USA and its Allies in its fight against terrorism in Indonesia. The radical can tweak this fact by developing an argument that the Indonesian Government is fighting Indonesian Muslims for Western powers who fight Islam. In this case, it has acted unjustly against Muslim citizens of Indonesia.

With such difficulties, the Indonesian Government needs to work harder and to avoid any activities that can galvanise the arguments of the radicals. Indeed, the Government has already been successful in making the general population hate terrorism, but its heavy handed and unfair approach to fighting terrorism has created a lot of criticism not only from the radicals, but also from moderate Muslim organisation such as the

Muhammadyah. Further, such criticism has also come from non-Islamic organisations such as the National Human Right Commission, from members of the Parliament, and from the non-Islamic media. Conduct such as torture of suspects, wrongful arrest followed by torture but without apology from the government, the killing of terrorist suspects, and unfair application of the anti-terror law to them. All of these unfortunate actions can continue to galvanise the ideological campaigns of the radicals.

<div align="center">*   *</div>

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