

Discourse War between the Indonesian Government and the Indonesian Radicals

Zifirdaus Adnan

ABSTRACT: There is no doubt that radicalism has become a major international issue for many contemporary governments, including the present Indonesian Government, since it can have a devastating effect on a country, especially on its economy. What the Indonesian Government considers to be radicals are Muslim *mujahidin* (fighters) or jihadists, who allow the use violence to achieve their goals. The government often call them 'terrorists', a term which has become highly discredited both in the Indonesian media and worldwide. These are also held to include those who aid them, or may choose to withhold information about them. A major method employed by the government to curb terrorism has been the establishment of the so-called 'deradicalization' program, the latter organized by its counter terrorism agency known as BNPT. However, unlike in some other countries where radicalization is harshly treated, the Indonesian Government is careful not to ban the expression of all radical views, perhaps fearing that suppressing these views could tarnish its democratic image. Drawing on an empirical analysis of the documents released by Indonesian radicals and also by the Indonesian Government, and, further, from the media statements made by individuals supporting the respective sides, this paper presents an analysis of what I elect to call a 'discourse war' between government officials in their de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation attempts and, further, in the counter attempts launched on the part of radical groups and their supporters. This topic is important to better understand the current state and the future prospects of outbreaks of both aggressive radicalism and of actual terrorism in Indonesia.

KEYWORDS: Critical discourse analysis (CDA), deradicalization, counter radicalisation, terrorism, radical groups

Introduction

There is little doubt that radicalism has become a major international issue for many governments, including the Indonesian Government, since it and its likely consequences could have a devastating effect on the country, especially on its economy, this much like what had happened to Bali after the first 'Bali Bombings' in October 2002 (This event had killed many Westerners especially Australians and it had sent a shock wave around the world). This present Indonesian government has a difficult

challenge—to keep a balance between the need to appease the biggest Muslim community in the world (the *Ummah*)—and the necessity to maintain the unity of the extremely and ethnically diverse country in the world, with the *Pancasila* (the five principles):

- Belief in the one and only God;
- Humanitarianism;
- The unity of Indonesia or Nationalism;
- Democracy guided by wisdom in deliberation and representation; and
- Social justice for all Indonesians), as its ideological foundation, which at least in its name is not Islamic, although it is often claimed to be Islamic in substance by its supporters.

With the biggest Muslim population in the world, the radicals believe that Indonesia must be based on Islam or at least the state should be very concerned to implement Islamic law (the Islamic *Shariah*). They have challenged the government through a range of activities in order to achieve this goal, including their use of the weapon of discourse. What is interesting is that this has been made possible with the return of democracy to Indonesia in 1998, after the collapse of the Suharto military dominated authoritarian regime, which had ruled Indonesia for the 32 years since 1967. Thus, while the West would have been thrilled with the return of democracy to the country, it was then/ is still also a real concern since the democratic system allows the freedom of expression and of organizations, of which many groups including the radicals have taken an obvious advantage.

Some militant members of these groups (often called ‘cells’ in some terrorism literature) perpetrate the pattern of acts of terrorism and thus of consequent its bombing actions. Such actions have been a serious problem in Indonesia, e.g. Bali 1 bombing in 2002, which crippled the economy of the island for several years. Especially was thus so for Bali bombing 1, since most of the victims of that atrocity were Australians. Other bombings and some subsequent related actions continue to happen in the Indonesian reformation era. Most other studies have focused on the networks, organization and actions of these radicals, and so not much on the discourse level.

This paper fills that gap in that it concentrates on what I will call the ‘discourse war’, one being waged between the government and these radicals. To allow this analysis, this paper adopts a critical discourse analysis (CDA), and one which is rare in the analysis of terrorism in Southeast Asia. CDA is adopted for two reasons. Firstly, it fundamentally assumes that discourse is an action and through discourse someone—or a group including the government—can control the public mind, and exploit

it to their political advantage. Secondly, it can reveal the ‘hidden’ principal/ most significant thoughts, those, in fact, which provide the basis for their political actions. Hence, such analysis can shed light on some political action they take.

Therefore, this analysis is important because it can provide an in-depth analysis of the fundamental beliefs adopted by both sides, which not only inspire, but may also direct their actions. As far as many of the radicals—(of course, not all the radicals are terrorists, but by adopting the radical perspective, one is closer to performing a terror action when provoked) are concerned, the subsequent analysis can shed some light on the terror attacks that have troubled Indonesia in the last 14 years, the latest being on 14 January 2016, and, then again, in early July 2016. As such events and their timing and details are scrutinised, the clearer understanding of their fundamental thinking can shed some light on the current state of radicalism in the country and, to some extent, predict its future prospects.

Theoretically, this study also contributes to the expansion of the main coverage of discourse analysis, that is investigation into the discourses of, and about, the country’s religious minority groups. So far, the CDA study on minority religious groups in Indonesia is one still limited compared to studies on the current immigrants, minority ethnic groups, and the like. A new study has, however, been conducted on the discourses created by two Ahmadya groups in Indonesia (Irawan, 2016), but more needs to be done to expand the literature and substantiate or otherwise the findings up to the present. There have been studies on the ideology of the radicals, but no study has looked at the discourse’s closer interactions (in this case the modes and details to flow from this pattern of attack and counter attack) between the radicals and their government, especially in Indonesia—and with the closest attention based on all studies of these issues which use the CDA approach.

Initially at least, the violent actions including the bombings or other terrorist actions are based on the understanding of the radicals as involving their efforts to fight against all parties (people or countries), which, in their view, have attacked Islam. The same to-be-investigated parties are the United States (the U.S.A.) and its several allies around the world. The violent actions both contemplated—and actually carried out—are considered as the most effective way to defend Islam. According to them, the U.S.A and its allies are actually held responsible for the killing of Muslims and thus destroying all manifestation of Islam around the world. The destruction of Islam, they argue, is the work of an international conspiracy created by *Salibis* (Christians) and *Yahudi* (Jews). The political conspiracy as usually deemed to have been led by the U.S.A. international policy of the earlier President, George W. Bush, and one which is considered to have harmed Muslims countries—this including by attacking Afghanistan and Iraq—is one of the many factors. The Massacre

of Muslims by Allies bombings, for example in Afghanistan, has become the main trigger of Muslim *Mujahidin* (jihadists) in Indonesia to create a revenge against this ‘conspiracy’.

The retaliation bombing actions in Indonesia have included a variety of targets, namely people, buildings, and public international institutions, which are considered to be the symbols of the U.S.A. and of its allies. More recently, the terror actions in Indonesia have actually not only been an international issue, but they have also become the issue of internal Indonesian national security in that country as well.

To curb radicalism, and a range of associated acts of gratuitous terrorism, the Indonesian government has made strenuous efforts. These large scale and significant efforts are the so-called ‘de-radicalisation and counter-radicalisation’ programmes as organized by the anti-terrorism agency, the BNPT with the special police anti-terrorism squad, known as the *Densus 88*. Part of this programme is one truly operating by most carefully using discourses, thoughtful discussions, and these have—in their turn—been countered by the radicals through their own channels, including online and through a range of the print media.

This present article focuses on investigating the discourses created by Indonesian government officials and their supporters, and also those utilised by the radicals when they argue or present the important topical issues of (the time for acts of) terrorism and a range of related topics including *jihad and terrorism*, ‘thought’, a school of thought which questions the very legitimacy of the Indonesian government and of its officials, laws, as well as the work and the current honourable status of public servants.

In fact, this article will examine the nature of the discourses created by these two oppositional parties and by their supporters, and the ways through which they present them—as in various text genres, e.g. books and reported speeches. It will shed some light on the prospect of present and possible future radicalism (and terrorism) in Indonesia. To assist this investigation or analysis, the next section will outline the theoretical principles of the CDA which underpin and frame this study.

*

*

Theoretical Framework Discourse

‘Discourse’ is a particularly difficult word to define. Because its coverage is very wide, discourse can be used to analyze social issues from various disciplines using many different, and distinctive, forms of emphasis and definition. In literature, discourse and discourse studies are mainly used in the disciplines of linguistics and of the social studies. In its

history, each of these disciplines has its own definition, more or less standard view, analysis, and so, its accepted use. The new development of the discourse study has been trying to integrate these two disciplines into one, which produces a new discipline called critical discourse analysis (CDA). Such an analysis is used, as at present, to analyze social issues or problems, such as the notions of hegemony, of social inequality, of identifiable discrimination, and of the proper use of trust, as opposed to individual or societal power abuse. (Fairclough, 1992, 2003; van Dijk, 1993)

To put the issue more simply, discourse can be defined as a particular view of articulate or adult language in a societal context (Fairclough, 2003). Language here is not only seen as literate and grammatical and meaning conveying texts (words, phrases, and sentences), but it is beyond these things. In discourse study, language is observed as a part of a wider social context where its deeper more active meaning or message is to be determined by the temporal and social factors surrounding it, e.g. who creates the discourse, what topic being talked about, as well as when and where it is expressed.

Discourse, then, is also seen as a form of action (Blommaert, 2005; Johnstone, 2008). As an action, discourse is not only considered as a mere language expression, but by producing certain statements (e.g. the logic and the social and philosophical context of a sentence), the writer or speaker is 'making' and/ or to be deemed to be 'doing' something. In making or firming up an opinion about some issue, or situation, for example, many individuals or groups will try to justify their actions by presenting particular reasons, arrived at judgments, and comments in their spoken or crafted and then produced communicative texts. In most social and political issues, these reasons and judgments cannot be separated from a measure of ideology, i.e. it is the idea, opinion, or representation about reality that is consequently presented by (such) text producers in their texts. In justifying their actions on certain social issues, text producers use these ideas, opinions, or representations to advance the convincing of their hearers, and thus to create adherents to the speaker's/s' opinions.

In the craft and academic discipline of analyzing discourse, there are many analytical tools that can be employed, both from linguistic and from the social studies points of view. Analytical tools from these two disciplines can also be integrated to persuade the hearer on one single (possibly controversial) social issue. In the sphere of linguistics, analysing discourse is conducted using colourful and distinctive linguistic features, such as metaphor, blaming, scapegoating, and problematising, or oversimplifying a complex situation, the better to achieve some assertive action. In social studies, however, discourse is best analysed by considering a text as merely a statement or a group of statements without making use of a strict analysis of linguistic features. In the discourse, the

statements are determined by the regime of the speaker or hearer's knowledge, in order to select which statements to be accepted and to be considered as truth (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 13).

In a social issue, there are always at least two opposite parties or groups. These opposite parties will always try to maintain their views to justify their action, while at the same time, to discredit others and so there are attacks and counter attacks between the opposing sides. These attacks and counter attacks can be identified in: the discourses they create, e.g. how they present (more flatteringly) the position held by themselves and that of others; what discourses they create; how they interpret the issue, what topic they highlight or leave as the background, and what text or genre they may elect to use to present their discourses, and what strategies they use. Such a mental and verbal 'fight' using discourses is to be called the 'discourse war' in this article.

Discourse War

Discourse war in this work is defined as a 'fight' or 'battle' using discourse (e.g. statements, opinion, idea, and their customary interpretation), that body of useful material or ammunition presented by individuals or groups when talking about certain issues or topics. In this current investigation, an empirical analysis using critical discourse analysis is to be carried out in order to examine how Indonesian governments and those who are considered as radical groups—as well as their supporters—present their views when talking about the issues and topics related to terrorism.

In this 'war', each party creates a discourse construction to justify his or her political actions, while attacking the position of the others who may in any way be in opposition to them. However these actions arising from the mind should be justified with valid reasons in order to provide legitimacy and to influence or control the public mind, the last in order to gain support from the public.

The discourse created by Indonesian governments and the radicals has been presented through some types of discourse genres, e.g. books, articles, blogs, and delivered—and accurately reported—speeches.

*

*

The Discourse as Created by the Indonesian Government on Acts of Terrorism and of 'Jihad'

Terrorism is the unjustified use of (public) violence to achieve a political goal or goals, such action / these actions including the use of arms, bombs, and other modes of protest and disagreement, in order to injure or

kill people either unarmed (civilians) or armed (military or police personnel). The key words here are ‘the use of violence’, ‘unjustified’, and the phrase, ‘to achieve political goals’. The contentious terms are the second and the third.

So, it needs explanation. ‘Unjustified’ refers to the international laws, as recognized by the United Nations, particularly since 1945. If the violence is conducted in a manner contrary to any international laws, either conducted by an individual, group or organization, or by a responsible state, it can be classified as terrorism, complemented by the perpetrator, e.g. if it is perpetrated by a state, it is called state terrorism. If a terrorism action is conducted by a state either against foreign or its own citizens, it is also called state terrorism. The third term is ‘to achieve a political goal’ such as to create a measure of fear, one such as can impact on a country, on its people and on its government.

In regard to terrorism, the Indonesian government, its officials and supporters denounce terrorism to the extent that it is stigmatizing for anyone being involved in and categorized as ‘terrorists’. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the Coordinating Minister for Politics, Legal Affairs and Security during the Megawati Presidency from 2000 to 2004, and the Indonesian President from 2004-2012, for example, has said,

Terrorism is a violation against humanity. It has destroyed humanity’s values, disturbed the safety and security of our nation, and it has become the common enemy of this world. (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, 2002, cited in ‘Imam Samudra Berjihad’, 2006).

Jimly Asshiddique, a pro-government professor who has occupied major government positions including as Chair of the Judicial Commission, which selects and watches judges, states that ‘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). So, for these two so highly placed officials and intellectuals, terrorism is a violation of human right, forbidden by religions, and so it is a crime against humanity.

Further, Jimly 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’ in daily activities such as in work, study, and to achieve a good goal (one most acceptable to God). This ‘truer’ meaning is mainly based on a *hadith* (a saying and conduct of Prophet Muhammad) reportedly pronounced by him (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 band of 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 perform good deeds.

The government sponsored Indonesian National Council of Clerics (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia* or MUI) supports the government’s discourse saying, essentially, that terrorism is forbidden (*‘haram’*) in Islam. In its ‘*Fatwa*’ (decree) Number 3, 2004 about terrorism, it says ‘*Hukum melakukan terror adalah haram, baik dilakukan oleh perorangan, kelompok, maupun Negara*’ (‘Committing terror according to Islamic law is forbidden, either it is committed by an individual, group, or a state.’) <http://hijrahdarisyirikdanbidah.blogspot.com.au/2011/10/keputusan-fatwa-majelis-ulama-indoneisa.html>; 26/7/16). It distinguishes it from ‘*jihad*’ in the following ways:

- Firstly, terrorism is damaging (*ifsad*) and anarchic or chaotic (*faudha*), while *jihad* aims at correcting an error even though it involves war.
- Secondly, the purpose of terrorism is to create fear and/or to destroy others, while *jihad* aims at upholding Allah’s religion and/or to defend the rights of the oppressed.
- Thirdly, terrorism follows no legitimate rules and the target is unlimited (indiscriminately), while *jihad* has to follow certain Islamic laws against a clear enemy. While terrorism is forbidden, to conduct *jihad* is obligatory.

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

*

*

The Counter-Discourse Created by the Radicals

The radicals do not see *jihad* in that way. For them, their interpretation of *jihad* is the correct one, and the *hadith* quoted by Jimly above is seen as ‘weak’ and baseless, because one of its sources is an untrustworthy person (Interview with Abu Dujana, a military commander of Jamaah Islamyah,

in his cell at the Jakarta Police Headquarter in 2010). They even consider it as an effort for weakening Islam, weakening the urge to fight in war against enemy of Islam. So, it is a *hadist* manipulated by someone who is lazy, and unmotivated.

Other radicals see *jihād* conduct—such as the Bali bombings—as justified in response to what they call ‘terrorism actions’ by Western Powers against Muslims. Their motivation for conducting bombing actions is based on an understanding of their duty to defend Islam against the United States and its alliances. They justify their actions by considering the U.S.A. and its alliances as the enemy of Islam, which group or alliance, they believe, so far to have carried out many terrorism actions against the true followers of Islam. This can be seen from the Indonesian terrorist target of bombing or victims who are mostly from ‘Western Countries’, i.e. the Western people such as those who are from Australia, Britain and the United State of America.

This attitude against the U.S.A. and its allies can be seen in the statement of Imam Samudra, the field coordinator of the Bali Bombing 1, when interviewed by Adisaputra (2002). In the interview, Samudra (his actual name is Abdul Azis) explains that the name of Imam Samudra stands for *Islamic Movement against America and Allies, Save and Help our Masjidil Haram under Attack of America and its Allies*. He argues that he uses the name after he found a fact that there were 130,000 America Armies whose members ‘straddle’ (show no respect toward) *Masjidil Haram* (the Haram Mosque), the holiest mosque in Islam. (p. 42)

The idea and motivation to defend Islam is based on an effort to fight against the people, countries, or official institutions that have harmed many Muslims. They consider them *kafir* (infidel), and the *kafir* are those who have involved in killing Muslims around the world, e.g. in Afghanistan. According to Samudra, 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, and it is a must, to defend their Muslim brothers. Fighting against the U.S.A. and its allies as well as defending for other Muslims are considered as *jihād* (holy war) (Adisaputra, 2002, p. 56). The U.S.A. and its allies, such as the British, Australia, German, France, and Japan, are thus regarded as terrorists who try to destroy Islam. In order to carry out this defense and *jihād* as well, some Muslims, including Imam Samudra, have conducted bombing actions by targeting people or buildings that are considered as the representation of Western power.

Samudra also argued that the real terrorists in the world are the U.S.A. and its allies. He maintains that 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*), which is led by the

U.S.A. The killings of Muslims around the world, those in Asia and the Middle East (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. Fighting against those who destroy Islam and kill Muslims is a vital part of the necessary holy war (*jihad*).

Other radicals argue that the Indonesian government is to be seen as a collaborator for the Western Powers, joining their engineering of the justifiable countering terrorism issue. When asked regarding Indonesian Government anti-terrorism program—whether it has made the maximum efforts to counter terrorism in Indonesia, Alkhattath, the General Secretary of Forum Umat Islam (FUI), one of the radical organizations, has said,

Pemerintah Indonesia sadar atau tidak telah terlibat dalam rekayasa terorisme. Kita sudah sampaikan kepada DPR dan Komnas HAM tentang pelanggaran HAM yang dilakukan Densus 88 terhadap mereka yang dicap teroris. Suatu saat nanti ketika semua tabir kebohongan ini akan terbuka.

(The Indonesian Government, whether they are aware or not has been involved in terrorism engineering. We have reported to the (Indonesian) Parliament and the National Human Right Commission about the human right violation committed by the DENSUS88 to those (they) regarded as terrorists. One day all these lies will be revealed). (Lazuardi Birru)

By conducting the anti-terrorism campaign using the BNPT and the Special Anti-Terror Squad, DENSUS 88, the Indonesian Government is often branded as an executor or agent of the Western governments' agenda. This is echoed by Abdurrahim Baasyir (son of Abu Bakar Baasyir), in a street rally, as he had then urged the abolishment of the BNPT and the squad,

Kami mendesak pemerintah dan DPR, khususnya Komisi III, untuk segera membentuk panja untuk membubarkan Densus 88 dan BNPT. Karena dua lembaga ini hanya melaksanakan agenda asing khususnya Amerika dan Australia serta zionis internasional.

(We urge the Government and the Parliament, especially the Commission 3, to hurriedly form a working committee to abolish the Densus 88 and the BNPT, because both of these institutions only carry out foreign agenda, especially the U.S.A. and Australia and international Zionist regime.)

*

*

Further Discourse War about Jihad

To undermine the radicals' definition of *jihad* which justifies the use of violence, government supporters cite Middle Eastern Islamic scholars. Ghazali, for example, argues that the word *jihad* has been interpreted differently; it may be associated with any and all the efforts made to defend Islam using non-violent or violent actions, except in a real war. 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 those enemies who use violence to destroy the religious truth of Islam.

Further, Ghazali also argues that terrorism and bombing actions are not exactly related to *jihad* (holy war). According to him, Islam does not allow one Muslim to kill other Muslims and non-Muslims as well, unless it fulfill particular rules. Similarly, Islamic teaching also does not permit particular Muslims to do unjustified destruction or vandalism. This interpretation is made by quoting Al-Qur'an, the Al-Maidah Chapter, verse 32 and Al-the Al Qashash Chapter, verse 77. Killing other Muslims and non-Muslims (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 the Islamic state (*khilafah*), according to Gazali (2011) should not be carried out through violent actions. Bombing, killing, and destroying buildings are contradicted by Islam. These violent actions will never change belief or others' understanding of Muslims. If they want to make a change (e.g. establishing Islamic state), they should pursue it through *da'wah* (proselytism), not through violence. Defending Islam by doing violent actions is also contradicted by, not to be found in the Islamic teaching 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, in his view, has spread Islam using non-violent actions, as the example to support his argument against terrorism.

*

*

Counter Discourse from the Radicals

For Abdurrahman and Baasyir, there is no other way that strictly sticks to the scripture, *hadiths*, and the interpretation of the scholars they believe to be consistent with the Quran and *hadiths*. This means that the government and its supporters have to be fought against. However, the fight could be through passive or active resistance. Passive resistance means by not recognizing nor obeying the laws and regulations made by human beings, e.g. the people's legislators. Active resistance means campaigning through writing and public speaking, and fight in a fight of self defence (when being attacked). Baasyir and Abdurrahman keep writing and publish it. Baasyir sent an advice book to the government to remind them of Allah's laws. They also promote 'iddad' (paramilitary training) to prepare for an attack on them, their community, or their country. They do not openly encourage violence, nor feel responsible if any Muslims use violence against anyone they consider as follower or backers of *thaghut*. So, they never condemn terror acts either. However, Abdurrahman does give two conditions before waging a physical war, namely (1) they have to have a secured territory (*qaidah amina*) and (2) they need to possess superiority in power compared to those they considered as *kafir* or *thaghut* (Abdurrahman).

*

*

Discourse War about Thaghut

The term *thaghut* is one of the prominent issues in the discourse war between the Indonesian government and the radicals. *Thaghut* is a concept in Islamic literature which has been debated by Muslim scholars for centuries. It could mean 'devil', 'worshipper of satan' or a person who rejects God's laws. This term is controversial but important since it can be used to question the legitimacy of the government and of its officials or even to delegitimize it. The case of a cleric convicted for protecting terrorists, named Khairul Ghazali, who had become supporter of the government, then repented and apologized to his *jihadist* friends and students for his earlier statements which contradicted their views; but, later on, had turned against them again and became a government supporter again, offers an interesting story. During his imprisonment period in 2011, he was sponsored by the BNPT to write a book, which contradicts the view of his fellow *jihadists*, named '*Mereka Bukan Thoghut*' (They are not *thoghut*), and when it had been published, he was brought out of his cell to a luxury hotel in Jakarta in order to launch the book.

In this book, Gazali (2011) argues that *thaghut* is defined by some Islamic scholars as devils (*satan, syaitan*), and all entities or things associated with evil characters. Some other scholars define it as an 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 carrying out injustice or unequal treatment to the some members of the public. The leaders demand excessive loyalty, honor, and exalting of others (Gazali, 2011, p. 124). Gazali maintains that the most accepted definition of *thaghut* is that it forms all objects or persons worshipped beside Allah (God); *thaghut* could be persons, things, objects, or images (Gazali, 2011, p. 125). In defending the government, he argues the Indonesian Government is not *thaghut* because it does not commit those evil actions. At the launch of the book, he criticized his former *jihadist* brethren and disciples for attacking anyone who contradict their definition. He says:

Sangat disayangkan, jika [sic] 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 very unfortunate that if [sic] the discussion of *thaghut* has been used by certain groups to attack anyone who contradict their belief. This is the ultimate 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*.

*

*

Counter Discourse from the Radicals on Thaghut

This discourse received an immediate response from the radicals, both at the launch and afterwards. A former convicted leader of Jamaah Islamyah (JI), Abu Rusydan, had criticised Ghazali for using a narrow etymological definition in his book, and ignoring the broader conceptual meaning given by Islamic scholars in Islamic history. This was followed, just one day after the launch, by a direct and more comprehensive response by Oman Abdurrahman aka Abu Sulaiman, perhaps the most revered radical ideologist today, and he is incarcerated in the highest security prison on the Nusakambangan island, south of Java, where drug dealers and terrorists are imprisoned and executed. He published a Pdf booklet

named online and distributed a printed form circulated amongst his followers. It is called “*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 defamation of Khairul Ghazali in his book ‘They are not *Thaghut*’).

The author argues using verses from the Quran, quoting the Chapter ‘*Al Anam*’ (Animal), verse 112, essentially saying that God had created for every prophet enemy, devils (evil human) and fairies, some of whom preach beautiful words to deceive human beings, so 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 ignoring the conceptual meaning, for which Islam was revealed. He also refutes Ghazali’s accusation saying that

Khairul Ghazali membela pemerintah thaghut dengan cara mencampurkan 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 menyalahgunakan kekuasaan, polisi/TNI yang menganiaya dan menindas rakyat, perampas hutan dan alam rakyat, dan yang lainnya— tidak boleh dilakukan dengan kekerasan...” (hal. 70-71).

(Khairul Ghazali defends 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 thieves of public forest land and natural resources and not as infidel [(http://www.voa-islam.com/read/citizens-journalism/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 discourse war, the radicals employ this concept of *thaghut* to justify their actions in committing violence (especially bombing actions) against those who they consider as *thaghut*. The radicals interpret the term and create a discourse, which claims that all the governments or institutions that do not implement Islamic law (*sharia*) completely, and tend to apply secular ideas in politics, belong to the *thaghut* category. Even though the governments believe in God (Allah), pray and fast during Ramadhan, they are not infidel because, according to Abdurrahman (n.d.), worshipping God by Muslims does not mean only doing prayer and fasting, but they

must also carry out all other instructions commanded by God in their daily life, including implementing His Laws. So, Muslims have to base their laws, which also regulate their daily life, on God's laws outlined in the Al-Qur'an and the Sunnah (Prophet Muhammad's saying, and traditions).

All rules that are not based on God's laws are considered *thaghut* laws and the people who follow these laws and reject God's laws are *kafir*. Because Indonesia implements democracy and secularism, which they consider contradictory to Islamic laws, its government is considered *thaghut*. Individuals or institutions that make and follow this system are categorized as non-believers (*kafir*).

Therefore, they have to be fought since they do not implement the *sharia*. Although Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world and most of government officials are Muslims, yet, according to the radicals, the Indonesian government does not implement Islamic laws. Instead, it implements secularism and democracy that resemble the Western political system (especially democracy as disseminated by the U.S.A). That is why, in their view, the government belong to the *kafir* (infidel) or *thaghut* category (sometimes these terms are used interchangeably by them). This point is supported by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir (a former spiritual leader of Jamaah Islamyah) who wrote in his introduction to Abdurrahman's book:

Mereka mengatur Indonesia dengan hukum jahiliah dan membuang hukum Allah, maka mereka adalah thagut kafir yang menjerumuskan ummat Islam kepada kegelapan hidup (syirik, mungkar, kekafiran....

([Because] they [the government officials of Indonesia] managed Indonesia by using ignorant laws and discarding Allah's laws, they are infidel *thaghut* who plunge the Muslim community into the darkness of life [polytheistic, infidel, infidelity]... .)

He continues to say,

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).

Clearly, Ba'asyir de-legitimises the Indonesian governments and its officials despite being (in the majority) Muslims. To support his view, he also quoted a verse from the Al Quran, Chapter 2, verse 257: "*Dan orang-*

orang kafir, pemimpin mereka adalah thaghut...” (And [as for] the infidels, their leaders are *thagut*).¹

For this reason, Baasyir warned Ghazali that he had become a supporter of *thagut*, and asked him to repent and become helper of Allah (*ahsarullah*).

Abdurrahman also justifies his interpretation to claim government officials as *thagut* and *kafir* by quoting the Al-Quran, As-Syura Chapter, verse 21, Al-Maidah Chapter, verse 44, An-Nisaa Chapter verse 60, and At-Taubah Chapter, 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 *thagut* says: “There is no doubt that all things belonging to *thagut* are the making of rules or regulations using laws outside Islam and its teachings, and other rules made by human beings”

For Abdurrahman, it is not only those who make the rules are considered ‘*thagut*’, but also those who disseminate them,

People who make and disseminate them are also *thagut*... This also includes the holy books [written] based on human minds in order to turn other people [away] from the truth brought by Prophet Muhammad.

*

*

Discourse Response from Government Supporters

To further justify the Indonesian government position, Ghazali cited an influential Middle Eastern Islamic scholar regarding his definition of *kafir* or *thagut*. He wrote that according to Al-‘Allamah Muhammad Nashiruddin Al-Albani (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 are not based on Islamic laws as well. Those who belong to *kafir i’tiqadi* have carried out big sins and they are not forgiven. Their place would be in the hell in the afterlife. The latter relates to the presence of religious believe (worship to God) in one’s heart, but his daily conducts (including higher systems of life such as political system) are not strictly based on Islamic laws. Those who belong to *kafir amali* could be forgiven depending on God’s will and decision. In the wider context, people (e.g. politicians, officials, decision makers) should not be despised, opposed, and be categorized as *thagut*.

¹ <https://www.arammah.com/read/2012/01/11/17338-ustadz-abu-bakar-baasyir-penguasa-nkri-sejak-merdeka-hingga-saat-ini-adalah-thaghut.html>

The people who do not implement God's law may be categorized as *kafir*. However, *kafir* here just belongs to big sin (*dosa besar*) and it does not exclude them from Islam (Gazali, 2011, pp. 139-141).

In the discourse war, the oversight in understanding this issue (i.e. claiming other people as *kafir*) has been the theological and ideological foundation of the establishment of radical groups, especially in the Middle East (Gazali, 2011, p. 141) and in Indonesia as well. They use this fallacy to overthrow the legitimate governments and claim them as *kafir* because the governments do not implement Islamic laws.

*

*

Conclusion

The discourse war between the government and its supporters have intensified especially since the fall of Suharto in 1998. Previously, during the New Order era, from 1967-1998 as well as the Guided Democracy era from 1959-1965, such open expression of the radical discourse was banned, but it was free from 1950-1958, when Indonesia was adopting a parliamentary democracy. Similar discourse war was taking place then, but inside the Indonesian Constituent Assembly. The type of interpretation of Islam proposed then was also different, for example, the main argument then was mainly for an Islamic-based state which adopted a (Islamic) theistic democracy as proposed by Muhammad Natsir, leader of the biggest Islamic party called the Masyumi, while these days the radicals reject democracy outright as they consider it a *thaghut* system since it assumes sovereignty is in the hands of the people, while the current radicals believe that sovereignty must strictly be in Allah (God).

This is because Muhammad Natsir was educated through a modern schooling system, while the current radicals are influenced by the totalistic Islam introduced by Karto Suwiryo, the Head of the Indonesian Islamic State (*Negara Islam Indonesia*), as declared in West Java in 1948, but he was defeated by the Indonesian National Government under President Sukarno in 1962. It is also influenced by the puritan and uncompromising Wahabi version of Islam.

As shown in the discourse war, each side vehemently defends their respective positions. The Government, which is nationalistic in nature—although based on the Pancasila, and the large majority of its people are Muslims—will not be ready to budge any time soon, as it has to consider the minority but economically influential non-Muslims (the economy is dominated by non-Muslim Chinese entrepreneurs). It is also dependent on foreign investments and in close collaboration with anti-radical and anti-terrorism countries, which could any time pressure Indonesia to control the radicals and crash terrorism as they pressure other countries as had

happened in 2002 when the U.S.A. pressured the Megawati Government to change its policy on terrorism from passive to active in dealing with terrorism.

Likewise, the radicals will continue to campaign and promote their discourse as they believe that they are in the right path unless the law is changed to become too restrictive as it was during the New Order era. Even so, they can still do it on the Internet in one way or another. If we look at their arguments, they are really adamant that they are correct as they support their positions with Islamically more credible sources, that is, with verses from the Al Quran, although they tend to ignore the verses which stresses the ‘merciful’ characteristics of Islam and Prophet Muhammad, e.g. that ‘Muhammad was sent as a mercy to the whole universe’, and killing innocent people without a justification is like killing the whole humanity; Muhammad was very merciful to those who had bad attitudes and behaviour towards him.

With the increase in the number of radicals in Indonesia—as has been acknowledged by government officials including the current and former head of the BNPT and parliamentary members—it seems that the radicals are winning the battle. This might be due to a variety of factors, especially the use and literal interpretation of selected Quranic verses and hadiths by the radicals, which sound more credible for grassroot and poorly educated Muslims, whilst the government and its officials’ discourse uses more complicated and often abstract arguments which are more difficult for the poorly educated Muslims to understand.

Theoretically, the discourse war suggests that, unlike other minority groups, the Indonesian radicals are much more aggressive in their discourse attacks against the creators of the dominant discourse despite their minority status. They go as far as de-legitimising the government as *thaghut* and *kafir*, a very seriously negative label in Islam.

*

*

References

- Abdurrahman, A.S.A. nd. *Ya, Mereka memang Thoghut*. Retrieved from www.azzamalqital.blog.com on 7 June 2015.
- Adisaputra, A. (2006). *Imam Samudra Berjihad*. (Jakarta: Perguruan Tinggi Ilmu Kepolisian).
- Blommaert, J. (2005). *Discourse: A Critical Introduction*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. (London: Routledge).
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. (Cambridge: Polity Press).

- Johnstone, B. (2008). *Discourse Analysis*. Second Edition. (USA, UK, Australia: Blackwell Publishing).
- Jorgensen, M., & Phillips, L. (2002). *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. (London, California, New Delhi: SAGE Publications).
- Gazali, K. (2011). *Mereka Bukan Thaghut; Meluruskan Salah Paham tentang Thaghut*. (Jakarta: Penerbit Grafindo Khasanah Ilmu).
- Parsons, N. & Mietzners, M. (2009). 'Sharia by-laws in Indonesia: A legal and political analysis', *Australian Journal of Asian Laws*, 11(2), 190-217.
- Pasha, T. (2011). *Islamists in the headlines: critical discourse analysis of the representation of the Muslim brotherhood in Egyptian newspapers* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Utah: The United States.
- Rabasa, A. M. (2003). *Political Islam in Southeast Asia: Moderates, radicals, and terrorists*. (The United States of America: Oxford University Press).
- Ricklefs, M. C. (2008). *A history of modern Indonesia since C. 1200*. Fourth Edition. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). "Analysing Racism through Discourse Analysis: Some Methodological Reflections." In *Race and Ethnicity in Research Methods*, edited by J. Stanfield. (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publication).
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1993 a). 'The Principles of critical discourse analysis', *Discourse and Society*, 4(2), 249-283.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1995 a). 'Elite discourse and the reproduction of racism'. In R.K. Slayden, & D. Slayden (Eds.), *Hate Speech*. (Newbury Park: Sage Publications), pp. 1-27.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1995b). 'Aims of critical discourse analysis', *Japanese Discourse*, 1, 17-27.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1996). 'Discourse, power, and access'. In C.R.C. Coulthard, and M. Coulthard (Eds.), *Texts and practices, reading in critical discourse analysis*. (London: Routledge), pp. 84-104.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1997a). 'Political discourse and racism: Describing others in western parliaments'. In S. H. Riggins (Ed.), *The language and politics of exclusion of others in discourse*. (Thousand Oaks: Sage).
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1997b). 'Discourse as Interaction in Society'. In T. A. Van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as social interaction*. (London & New Delhi: Sage Publications).
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1998). 'Opinions and ideologies in the press'. In A. Bell & P. Garrett (Eds.), *Approaches to media discourse*. (Oxford: Blackwell), pp. 21-63.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1999). 'Media, racism, and monitoring'. In K. Nordenstreng, & M. Griffin (Eds.), *International Media and Monitoring*. (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press), pp. 307-316.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2000a). 'The Reality of racism'. In G. Zurstiege (Ed.), *Fur die wirklichkeit* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag), pp. 211-226.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2000b). 'Ideology, racism, discourse: Debates on immigration and ethnic issues'. In J. ter Wal, & M. Verkuyten (Eds.), *Comparative Perspectives on Racism*. (Aldershot: Ashgate), pp. 85-103.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2000c). New(s) racism: A discourse analytical approach. In S. Cottle (Ed.), *Ethnic minorities and the media*. (Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press), pp. 33-49.

- Van Dijk, T. A. (2001). 'Discourse, ideology and context'. *Folia Linguistica*, 30(1-2), 11-40.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2002). 'Discourse and racism'. In D. Goldberg, & J. Solomos (Eds.), *The blackwell companion to racial and ethnic studies*. (Oxford: Blackwell), pp. 145-159.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2004). 'Racist discourse'. In E. Cashmore (Ed.), *Routledge encyclopedia of race and ethnic studies*. (London: Routledge), pp. 351-355.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2006a). 'Discourse and manipulation'. *Discourse & Society*, 17(2), 359-383.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2006b). 'Ideology and discourse analysis'. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 11(2), 115-140.
- Van Laer, K., & Janssens, M. (2010). 'Diverse resistance to diversity discourses: Minority professionals' engagement with diversity discourses in the Flemish workplace'. *Stream 4 (Diversity is not enough: Interrogating difference and inequality in organisations) of the 2nd 'Equal is not enough'*. Antwerp Belgium. Retrieved from <https://lirias.kuleuven.be/handle/123456789/302777>.
- Vatikiotis, M. R. J. (1998). *Indonesian politics under Soeharto: The rise and fall of the new order*. Third Edition. (London and New York: Routledge).
- Wodak, R. (2010). *Critical discourse analysis: Some important concepts and considerations*. (Lancaster: Lancaster University).
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2009). 'Critical discourse analysis: Agenda, theory, and methodology'. In R. Wodak, & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. (London: Sage Publication), pp. 1-33.
- Wodak, R. & Reisigl, M. (1999). 'Discourse and racism: European perspective'. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 28, 175-199.
- Wodak, R. & Reisigl, M. (2001). *Discourse and discrimination: Rhetorics of racism and antisemitism*. (London and New York: Routledge).
- Yasir, S.A. (1982). *Jihad Dan Penerapannya Pada Masa Kini*. *Yogyakarta Gerakan Ahmadiyah*. (Lahore Indonesia).
- Yasir, S.A. (2006). *Jihad Masa Kini*. Edited by N.R.I. Iskandar. (Jakarta: Darul Kutubil Islamiyah).

*

*

*