Religious Intolerance and the Problematic of Religious Radicalism in Indonesia

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Abstract

Religious intolerance becomes an increasingly serious problem and has a significant effect on interreligious relations in Indonesia. A number of survey confirm that the level of vulnerability of intolerance in Indonesia for the last 3 years are at an alarming level. Those surveys reminded the public of the religious blasphemy case against Islam in late 2016, which has sparked a wave of mass protests by the Aksi Bela Islam (ABI) or "Islamic Defend Action". But by some experts and media analyst claim that blasphemy has been politicized by certain groups. This political assumption then turned to attack the ABI movement which claimed to carry sectarian political mission and promoted the religious radicalism. The debate surrounding cases of intolerance, and the simplistic accusation of religious radicalism to a particular group at the same time shows how complex religious relationships in Indonesia are. The complexity of the problem seems to be in line with the decline of tolerance index, and the high number of religious violence cases until the end of February 2018. The debate about the meaning of intolerance and the hasty claims of religious radicalism indicates a serious epistemological problem that needs to be well understood. Meanwhile, an understanding of the roots of religious radicalism often falls on simplification. This paper attempts to offer critical reading on two terminology; (1) religious intolerance, and (2) religious radicalism. By relying on an analysis of the phenomenon of the Islamic Defense Action that emerged as a response to the case of blasphemy, this study concludes, that; First, the loose correlation between mind and action makes tolerant and intolerant levels unfeasible, even problematic if it relies only on statistical numbers. Second, radical understanding does not specify the radical act itself. Referring to the case of the ABI movement which actually overturned the stigma and negative propaganda through sympathetic actions that illustrate the high tolerance of the Islamic masses against other religious. Third, cases of religious radicalism must be understood casuistically. That each event has a different context. And all generalization efforts will only bring a narrow simplification and conclusion. Therefore, a specific study of religious radicalism needed to be an alternative strategy for managing cases of religious violence, radicalism, and terrorism in order to be more proportional.

Keywords: *Religious Intolerance, Religious Radicalism*

Introduction

Indonesia is in an emergency of intolerance. That signal submitted a number of survey agencies. Like the Wahid Foundation in collaboration with the Lembaga Survey Indonesia (LSI), concluded that the level of vulnerability of intolerance in Indonesia in 2016 was at a very alarming level. Of the total 1,520 respondents, 59.9 percent claimed to have a hated group. And of that 59.9 percent, 92.2 percent disagree if the hated members of the group become public officials, and 82.4 percent do not want to be their neighbors (*Executive Summary of the Annual Report,* 2016. See also at wahidfoundation.org)

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Other survey results also indicate that the index of religious harmony in Indonesia has decreased. Data from the Center for Religious Religious Life of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia shows the figure of 75.47 percent in 2016. Then fell in the number 72.27 percent in 2017. These data by the activists are considered as a warning for the welfare of religious life in Indonesia. Although the government itself claims the results are still categorized as good (https://kumparan.com/indeks-kerukunan-umat-beragama-diindonesia).

Admittedly, that most of these surveys were conducted exactly in the year when religious blasphemy took place. The blasphemy by former Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahya Purnama (BTP) or commonly called Ahok has been highlighted by world media, and triggered a wave of protests of millions of Muslims from various regions in Indonesia. The action labeled ABI or "Islamic Defense Action" was led by an organization called the Gerakan Nasional Pengawal Fatwa-Majelis Ulama Indonesia (GNPF-MUI) or "National Movement of Fatwa Guards of the Indonesian Ulema Council".

However, some analysts and foreign media argue that the blasphemy is only the politicization of certain parties (theguardian.com (16/11). This political assumption then turned to attack the ABI movement which is claimed to bring sectarian political mission from hard-line Islamic groups (radical). The debate surrounding this case show the complexity of religious issues in Indonesia. And The division of two groups of the pros and cons against the blasphemy also indicate the existence of epistemological problems that need to be understood well, so that cases of blasphemy and religious radicalism can be immediately identified.

This paper attempts to read critically 2 conceptions in the sociology of religion; *religious intolerance*, and *religious radicalism*. Two conceptions are chosen for the purpose of understanding the root of religious blasphemy, and the roots of religious radicalism, to serve as a strategic reference for managing cases of religious violence more properly.

Religious Tolerance and Intolerance

Cohen (2004) defines "tolerance" as "*an agent's intentional and principled refraining from interfering with an opposed other (or their behaviour, etc.) in situations of diversity, where the agent believes she/he has the power to interfere*" (Cohen 2004, p. 69). Tolerance contains the principles of "deliberate," and "non-interference" as two equally important elements.

Russell Powell and Steve Clarke in *Religion, Tolerance and Intolerance: Views from Across the Disciplines*, even positioning the "non-interference" element as the core of tolerance. In practice, non-interference attitudes are direct, or "non-interfering-directly". Powel gives an example: *A devout Catholic may decide to tolerate the Protestant religious practices in her community. However, she may feel that the attitude of tolerance that she displays does not extend to refraining from proselytizing on behalf of the Catholic Church to Protestants. She hopes to achieve the end of converting Protestants to Catholicism, causing inter alia, the cessation of Protestant religious practices, but takes the view that it would be wrong to do so by means other than by rational persuasion* (see Powell & Clarke, Religion, Tolerance and Intolerance, Oxford Univ, p. 4-5). That is, just by "intent-not-interfere" (intent to non-disturb) others then one can be called tolerant. Conversely, if a non-disturbing person simply because of ignorance and neglect, then he/she cannot be called tolerant.

In everyday life we may find; A Muslim (M) is convinced that his Christian (N) friend's Christmas celebration is contrary to his belief. Because in Muslim belief, God begets not, nor was He begotten. However, M deliberately held himself to say disagree and allow the Christmas ritual for N. So M, in the perspective of Powell and Clark are called a tolerant.

While the meaning of "intolerance" is the opposite of all the principles contained in tolerance. In my opinion, there are at least 3 components of intolerance; (1) an inability to refrain from disliking others, (2) interference/against others and (3) intentionaly-disturbing others. These three components are the characteristics of a person called intolerance. So if we continue the example of Christmas ritual above; then if M acts vulgarly expresses his disapproval to the public, in words such as, "*Christmas is the deceit of the church*" Or "*Do not want to be lied to a Christmas event*", then it can be ascertained that M is an intolerant person.

MUHAMMAD FARID

The case of blasphemy by Ahok at the end of 2016 can be easily understood through this perspective. When Ahok said, "*do not be lied to using almaidah 51*", then he has been classified as intolerant, because it clearly and unequivocally shows his dislike to (meaning) the verse. Ahok's attitude proves that he failed to prevent his dislike of different religious beliefs in the public area.

Many cases of intolerance in the form of religious hate speech before Ahok can also be easily identified. Like the case of Hindu insults in Bali by a Christian woman who says; "*God can not enter the house because there Canang here. And this Canang is disgusting and dirty. God is rich, He does not need offerings*" (http://bekasimedia.com/2016/10/11). This sentence clearly indicates the woman's displeasure with Canang (place of offerings) of Hindus. Another case of blasphemy by a priest at Bethel Tabernacle Church, Heidi Eugenie, who in his sermon called "*a serpent tempting Adam and Eve are half female*" (http://www.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/hukum/16/10/18/). This pastor has been tried in court even though he is finally free. And rightly so, because this case is more on the issue of different version of the internal interpretation of Christians, and has not entered the domain of blasphemy.

Some cases of blasphemy that followed after Ahok also performed by Islamic leaders such as Habib Rizq Shihab (HRS). In his lecture HRS questioned, "If God begat, who is the midwife?". This expression in a sociological perspective also falls into the category of "disturbing" other people's beliefs about Jesus. Even in HRS belief that God is begets not, nor begotten. But in Powell's perspective HRS has proven unable to prevent itself from direct interference with other people's beliefs.

Then why people do intolerance? According to Hunsberger (1995), intolerance is a negative attitude based on false simplification, or "over-generalized beliefs." This kind of prejudice has three components; *first*, a cognitive component involving a set of beliefs or stereotypes about a derogated out-group; *second*, an affective component entailing disgust or visceral dislike for the out-group, and *third,* a disposition to behave in a socially aversive way toward members of the out-group, both interpersonally and politically in terms of social policies (Hunsberger's, 1995:113-29).

Stereotypes are the first layer of intolerance. Such views degrade others. The second layer is dislike or hate for something different from it. And the third layer is an unpleasant act, such as insulting, slandering, berating someone different from him. According to Haidt (2001), These three components of prejudice are likely to reinforce one another, given the nature of motivated reasoning and the demonstrated effects of negative affect in general, and disgust reactions in particular, on moral judgment processes (Haidt, 2001; see also Powel & Clarke:18). And logically it is not difficult to imagine how negative affective can mediate anti-social behavior toward outsider members.

But the three components of intolerance it is also possible, theoretically, someone prejudiced but still able to be behave positively toward the outer group. Powell and Clarke affirm, that "*is possible a person be highly prejudiced in terms of the relevant cognitive and affective components, but nonetheless maintain a positive behavioural disposition toward the negatively stereotyped out-group. In practice, however, this combination is probably the exception rather than the rule*" (Powell & Clarke: 18). Meaning, a person who only has stereotypical views may not be an anti-social. But a person who acts intolerantly will definitely have a stereotypical view to a different one.

The loose correlation between mind and action makes difficult to identify a person or group as tolerant, intolerant, and anti-social. Tolerance is even problematic when measured by statistical numbers, though not impossible to do. For example last year's report, Setara Institute released Indeks Kota Toleran (IKT) or "Tolerant City Index" in 2017, through 4 parameters used, namely (1) government regulation, (2) government action, (3) social regulation, and (4) religious demography . In conclusion, the cities of Manado, Pematangsiantar, Salatiga, Singkawan and Tual are the top 5 cities with the highest tolerance score (http://setara-institute.org/indeks-kota-toleran-tahun-2017).

Where is the problem? If we take just one parameter of "religious demography" for example, that the composition of a heterogeneous population based on religion (statistically) is a

tolerant reference of the city. So the final conclusion is predictable, that homogeneous cities based on religion will never enter the competition into a tolerant city. It must be understood, then, that religious heterogeneity is not the only measure in assessing the ability of people or groups to appreciate differences. It may be that certain cities are homogeneous based on religion but heterogeneous based on ethnicity and belief. So as Gibson suggests (2005), Tolerance is a notoriously difficult thing to measure through survey analysis, because in order to measure the extent to which people will countenance dissent or diversity, they need to be asked about their specific attitudes and reactions, and it is always possible that an alternative subject matter would have elicited a different response (Gibson 2005, 317).

Cases of blasphemy in the form of hate speech can be identified more clearly as they fulfill their sociological principles and criteria. But in court is another story. The case of blasphemy since 2016 and following up to early 2018 was handled by the court with different results. It is realized that the law has its own perspective and criteria. The sociological aspect is sometimes a reference, but it is not the only basis that can punish intolerants, whether to be free or to end up in iron bars.

Understanding the Religious Radicalism

In addition to religious intolerance, *Religious Radicalism* is also a major issue of the world's nations. Radicalism even poses a wider threat, not only an inter-religious range, but also to the national security and territory. However, the radical conception is still very poor but open to enrichment. The deficit of this term is not solely due to epitemological problems, where there is an expert debate within, but also caused of the difficulty of identifying the various practices of violence and the form of radicalism that appears on the surface. Ironically, the terms "radical", "fundamental", "extremist" have been used haphazardly with overlapping meanings in the public domain. That's why Sedgwick (2010) quipped that the term 'Radical' has become "*standard term used to describe what goes on before the bomb goes*" (Sedgwick, 2010: 479-494).

A recent cases in Indonesia; the destruction of the Church in Sleman Jogjakarta, which resulted in three congregations, one priest, and one policeman injured by a sword blow by a man named Suliono. National Police Chief General Tito Karnavian quickly announced that "there is a strong indication of the perpetrators being radically pro-violent" (Kompas, 12/2/2018). In fact, to say a connection between radicalism and violence requires a thorough investigation. Though, theoretically it is possible, but in practice no studies have succeeded in ensuring an absolute correlation between radicalism and violence.

Terminologically, the word "radical" defined narrow and broad. In the Oxford dictionary the word "extremist" is synonymous with the word "radical". "Extremist" is defined as "*a person who holds extreme political or religious views, especially one who advocates illegal, violent, or other extreme action*". While the word "radical" is defined as "*representing or supporting an extreme section of a party*" (The Oxford English Dictionary, 2009). Correspondingly, McCauley and Moskalenko (2008) define radicalization as "*increasing extremity of beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defense of the ingroup*" (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008: 415-433). Crosset and Spitaletta (2010), defines radicalization as "*the process by which an individual, group, or mass of people undergo a transformation from participating in the political process via legal means to the use or support of violence for political purposes*" (Crossett & Spitaletta, 2010). Wilner and Dubouloz, defines Radicalization "*as a process of 'transformative learning' suggest that radicalization is a personal process in which individuals adopt extreme political, social, and/or religious ideals and aspirations, and where the attainment of particular goals justifies the use of indiscriminate violence*" (Wilner & Dubouloz, 2010: 33-51).

Veldhuis & Staun (2009) then formulate, the term "radicalization" in the narrow meaning of the word, *emphasis is put on the active pursuit or acceptance of the use of violence to attain the stated goal*. In a broader sense of radicalization, *emphasis is placed on the active pursuit or acceptance of far-reaching changes in society, which may or may not constitute a danger to*

democracy and may or may not involve the threat of or use of violence to attain the stated goals (Veldhuis & J. Staun, on Islamist Radicalization, 2009).

Especially in the case of terrorism, the word 'radicalization' is most misunderstood. In fact, according to Borum (2011), "*most people who hold radical ideas do not engage in terrorism and many terrorists are not deeply ideological and may not 'radicalize' in any traditional sense*" (Borum, Randy, 2011: 37-62). Then the simplification of the ideology of radicalization affecting the acts of violence has the potential to fall on the error of conclusion. That is, Borum wants to emphasize that the extreme ideology that justifies violence may be one of the paths to terrorism, but not the only one. And the vast majority of Europeans, irrespective of belief, do not accept extremist ideologies. Even amongst the small number that do, only a few turn to terrorism (see *The European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalization and Recruitment to Terrorism*, 2005: 2)

The Wahid Foundation Survey in collaboration with the Lembaga Survey Indonesia (LSI) in 2016 has confirmed the thesis that radicalism does not correlate itself with radical action. Of the total 1,520 respondents, 59.9 percent of individuals claimed to have a hated group. And 92.2 percent disagreed when the hated members of the group became public officials. While there are 82.4 percent who do not want to be their neighbors. But interestingly, as many as 72 percent of Indonesian Muslims refuse to do radical attacks such as religious houses of worship of another religion or sweeping places that are considered contrary to Islamic Shari'ah (wahidfoundation.org 2016, kompas.com, 2016).

Similar to the Wahid Foundation, a survey by Gallup in 10 countries also concluded that about 7% of the world's population sympathizes with extremist or "radical" views, although in general they refuse to commit acts of violence (see A Gallup World Poll Special Report: The Battle for Hearts and Minds: Moderate vs. Extremist Views in the Muslim World). That is, the involvement of a group or terrorist activity can be attributed to many reasons, and ideological reasons are often linked, but not always.

The biggest mistake ever happened is in the very famous case of the Islamic Defense Action in late 2016. The responsive action against religious blasphemy has been accused by many experts to be the action of radical groups promoting anarchism. With a simplistic assumption, many people suspect the action will end chaos as it did in the ethnic riots of 1998 before the fall of President Suharto.

A number of media, such as TIME.Com wrote, " *Basuki T. Purnama, seen as a symbol of tolerance, has been the target of hard-line Muslim protesters* ". Also on the news page daily-sun.com.write "*at least 100,000 people took part in a protest led by a hardline Muslim group in Jakarta calling for his resignation and prosecution. The movement against Mr Purnama has taken on anti-Chinese overtones*". And Washingtonpost, reported, "*Jakarta was rocked by a massive protest by conservative Muslims against the governor. One person died and dozens were injured in rioting. Hard-liners have threatened more protests if Ahok isn't arrested*".

In fact, the Islamic Defense Action runs orderly, and does not cause anarchists and chaos as alleged. Not even a single plants along the way and in the circle of the National Monument (Monas) was damaged trampled by the masses. The accusations of extremist and fundamentalist groups that do not tolerate non-Islamic groups are also denied by the sympathetic action of the ABI masses that rescued two bridal Christians who were trapped in the crowd toward the Cathedral Church near the Istiqlal mosque. This harmonious moment dismisses all the negative stigma, and dramatically overturns the propaganda that discredits Muslims.

Then how to understand the various cases of violence that occurred during the year 2016 to 2018; as reported in the Coordinator of the Committee on Religious and Beliefs of Freedom of Komnas HAM, shows the number of cases of religious intolerance in 2016 close to 100. Significantly increased compared to the previous two years. Violations such as; the prohibition of religious activity, the destruction of houses of worship, discrimination on the basis of belief or religion, intimidation and imposition of beliefs (KOMNAS HAM KBB Report 2016, Kompas, 5/1/2017).

In 2017, Setara Institute even recorded 151 incidents of violations of freedom of religion / belief (KBB) with 201 forms of action spread across 26 provinces throughout Indonesia. Most

violations occurred in West Java, and DKI Jakarta, with details; West Java 29 events, DKI Jakarta 26 events, Central Java 14, East Java 12 and Banten 10 events (setarainstitut.org, 16/11/2017).

Most recently, up to February 2018, there were nearly 10 cases of religious intolerance and violence, ranging from bomb threats at Tee Koen Karawang temple, the destruction of mosques in Tuban, the clerical attack on Lamongan, the destruction of Pura Lumajang, the attack on Pastors and Churches in Sleman, the persecution of Monk in Tangerang, and brutal murder of ustad in Solo and Bandung.

If we read in a theoretical frame, it is not excessive if Indonesia called in the emergency of radicalism. Because these cases clearly indicate the threat of physical violence, even to the killing. And if not properly understood, these cases of religious violence will be wild and counterproductive.

In my opinion, cases of religious radicalism need to be understood casuistically. Meaning, that each event has a different context. Therefore any generalization effort which will only result in a narrow conclusion should be avoided. Example, generalization of terrorism cases in Indonesia. If terror is perpetrated by a Muslim, it is often labeled "suspected terrorist", or at least he will be called "an individual exposed to radicalism". In fact, the cases are sometimes not complete yet, or still in the process of investigation. Some terrorists in Indonesia even have to end up with a mysterious death, without knowing the cause.

In fact, if more careful reading of theoretical developments and scientific findings on religious violence, it may be a positive input for the counter-radicalism and counter-terrorism counterparts who are still dominantly put forward on the militaristic ways. One of an interesting survey from professor John L. Esposito, who aims to answer big questions; "What makes a radical Muslim?", Esposito concludes that radical Muslims in fact have more in common with their moderate brothers than is often assumed. All indicators, such as; (1) the importance of religion in life, (2) daily worship, (3) interest in education, (3) work interests, (4) magnitude of income, (5) interest in Western technonogy, (6) recognition of democracy and freedom, (7) hopes of being rewarded for his beliefs, shows that the difference between moderate Muslims and radical Muslims is only 5 percent (Esposito, 2006: 1-3).

E   sposito's findings will actually make anyone to rethingking about who are moderate Muslims and radical Muslims?! It is realized, that we have been exposed to simplistic assumptions that radical groups tend to reject Western civilization as a threat to their faith; or radicals are identical to Arabs such as wearing headscarves, veils, robes, and beards. Meanwhile, moderate Muslims are considered a more open and always eager to build relationships with the West. Esposito's findings undermine such simplifications, and at the same time deliver a serious warnings to policymakers to develop alternative strategies for managing radicals more humane, while preventing the flow of moderate movements out of their bounds, and becoming a disadvantageous force.

Conclusion

Religious intolerance becomes a problem affecting the harmony of religious life in Indonesia. The fact of religious blasphemy, and the wave of mass protests that followed thereafter, divided the society into pros and cons, creating endless social friction, are clear evidence that proves the bad influence of intolerance.

Religious Intolerance is more clearly identified in the frame of social theory than the law. From Powell and Clarke theoretical frames, there are two main elements of tolerance. *First*, the element of "intentionally", and *second*, the element of "non-interference". Meaning, a person will be called tolerant only if he/she "intentionally-not-disturbing" others even if he/she is able to do that. But if he/she "not interfere" simply because does not care (not "intent"), then he/she can not be called tolerant.

Two elements (intentionally and non-interference) are the core of tolerance. The opposite of both elements will be called intolerance. That is, one who "disturb" others, intentionally or not, is definitely called intolerance. As for the causes of intolerance are false simplification, or over generalized beliefs. However, intolerant acts are not easy to understand, let alone by relying only

on statistical figures. Survey analysis will be difficult to measure the extent to which people can be tolerant of differences because each has a distinct attitude and different reactions. Theoretically, it is possible that people are prejudiced in the mind but still behave positively toward outsiders.

Similarly, the term "radicalism" is also often misunderstood. Though has a lot of research done on people who have radical ideas but the reality is not involved terrorism. While radical ideology is never absolute in the act of terror. Thus, the overly narrow point of "ideological radicalization" has the potential to fall into the error of conclusion.

Simplification is most visible in the very famous case of the Islamic Defense Action at the end of 2016. The action which is the response of Muslims to the religious blasphemy claimed as a radical group movement that promotes anarchism. The action was even predicted to give birth to a big mess. But the phenomenon of the Islamic Defense Action finally has succeeded in dismissing all the negative stigma, and dramatically overturning the propaganda of discrediting Muslims.Cases of religious radicalism must be understood casuistically. That each event has a different context. And all generalization efforts will only fall to a narrow conclusion. Therefore, a specific study on religious radicalism is needed to be an alternative strategy for managing cases of religious violence, radicalism and terrorism in a more proportional manner.

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