

Conference Paper

Countering Terrorist Narratives: Winning the Hearts and Minds of Indonesian Millennials

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Abstract

Youth radicalization is a global phenomenon and many countries have fallen victim to deadly terrorist attacks, including Indonesia. With the advancement of technology, society has changed. The millennial generation has become susceptible to terrorist propaganda. In this digital age, social media has become a powerful tool for spreading terrorist narratives. They target the millennial generation who depends on online social networks for self-expression and to develop a sense of belonging. It is assumed that online interactions have contributed to the radicalization process. Some of them eventually join terrorist networks or become suicide bombers. This paper critically assesses how terrorists use the media to develop narratives that win the hearts and minds of Indonesian millennials. It will do so by juxtaposing the terrorist narratives with the counter-narrative initiatives undertaken by the government, NGOs and universities.

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Received: 2 April 2018

Accepted: 17 April 2018

Published: 23 May 2018

Publishing services provided by
Knowledge E

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Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the 1st ICSEAS 2016 Conference Committee.

Keywords: Counter Narratives, Indonesian Millennials, Lone Wolf Terrorism, Terrorism and Social Media Youth and Terrorism

1. Introduction

An incident pertaining to youth and terrorism in Medan, Indonesia recently emerged when an 18 yr old boy attacked Santo Josep Church on August 2016. The perpetrator had failed in detonating a bomb. News of the attack soon spread like wild fire through online media, both local and international. For the local media, it was atrocious news, especially when it was known that his parents were very much involved in grassroots initiatives of inter-religious activities and they live peacefully side by side with their neighbors. His parents were not aware that their son had been influenced by radical views from the Internet. As reported in various news portals, the attacker had learned bomb making from the *jihadists* sites via the Internet

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Unlike a previous attack in Solo (July 2016), which identified the perpetrators' networks, the Medan attacker acted alone. General Tito Karnavian, the Indonesian National Police Chief, stated that the Medan attacker was a new case of a lone-wolf terrorist that has been described by Burton and Steward as "a person who acts on his or her own without orders from—or event connection to—an organization" [1]. This is further highlighted by Noor Huda Ismail that the lesson learned from this kind of attack is that to be an extremist, there is no need to join a *jihadist* network or to have a long process of ideological indoctrination or military training [2]. This new phenomenon alerted us that anyone could be recruited and influenced by radical views through social media; hence profiling a terrorist can be a difficult task.

Why are the youths becoming targets and remain susceptible to terrorist propaganda? Ramakrishna from RSIS (S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies) provided a preliminary answer using a psychosocial analysis of four factors: Neurological Factor (emotional transition to adulthood), Family Context (parental bond), Social Context (social economy marginalization, culture of hatred) and Technological Context (internet savvy). According to him, "the interplay of these factors create youth vulnerability to the terrorists group exploitation" [3].

This new age has brought different life experiences for the millennial generation (currently 15 yr to 34 yr old). As youths, they are in the transition to adulthood and searching for their identities. They want to fulfill their basic needs such as sense of belonging, affection and self-actualization. In addition, many young males search for a male role model, especially those who come from a weak family bond. On the other hand, the dynamic of our society has changed. Our direct interactions are now becoming fewer because everyone is busy with their gadgets. We spend more time with our online communities as compared to facing the reality of life in daily face to face dialogue. The millennials also prefer to express themselves online. Many of them are addicted to online games and can spend hours on those activities. They are also facing a culture of hatred in social media. It is believed that, "the growing use of social media has change the way we communicate and interact" [4].

Extremists have taken an opportunity to use the Internet, especially social media, to spread their propaganda narrative. Furthermore, they have the expertise to constantly produce media content both in print and online. Anyone can access a high quality of images and videos posted in websites on the Internet. Studies have found that many people were inspired or acted radically after watching *jihadist's* videos. Visualization of the *jihadist* movements in social media could attract millennials to be either sympathizers or potential recruits of *jihadist* networks. It is widely understood that

the Internet fosters youth radicalization and could function as a self-study. Thus, the millennial generation remains susceptible to terrorist propaganda. Samuel estimated that, "youths between 15 yr to 18 yr old make up about 20 % of all suicide bombers" [5]. Arianti and Singht explain "there are about 450 Indonesians and Malaysians, including children and women under fealty to ISIS in Iraq and Syria today" [6].

Many scholars have been researching how the terrorists' narratives are targeting and reaching the youth. Scot Atran, anthropologist, points out, "the terrorists offer disillusioned youth something just as exciting (but significantly less destructive and terrible) than becoming a terrorist" [7]. Samuel addresses a significant question on whether or not youth will use their analytical and critical ability when they confronted with the terrorists propaganda [8]. Youth, who are searching for their identities, often do not realize what is really happening in the world. Social media allows them to look for any information they want. As they mostly use Facebook, extremists know how to set up specific targets for Facebook (*i.e.* age, religion) and they are famous for their "Facebook Invasion".

This paper will begin with an overview of terrorist narratives and how the terrorists reach the millennials using a psychosocial analysis. It will adopt the four factors given by Ramakrishna: Neurological Factor, Family Context, Social Context and Technological Context. Social identity theory will also be used to analyze how the terrorists win the hearts and minds of the millennials. Moghaddam points out, "social identity theory has emerged as one useful social psychological paradigm for understanding religiously-motivated violence. Briefly and broadly, the theory starts of from the basic premise that all human beings need positive self-esteem for emotional and psychological health" [9]. The paper will further analyze the internet and particularly social media platform developed by the terrorists such as Facebook and online video in YouTube and to reach large audience. In addition, this paper will elaborate on the effectiveness of the counter narrative initiatives in Indonesia undertaken by Education Institutions, Community-Based organizations and the Government. This paper will then end with some analyses and conclusion.

2. Understanding Terrorist Narratives

A Narrative is defined as a story that produces meaning and is tied to identity. Halverson points out, "these stories are so deeply ingrained in cultures that they are an essential part of people's identities and who they are in any given cultural setting" [10]. Identity and cultural connections become key factors in a narrative. Halverson

further explains, "... culture is referring to an interrelated set of shared characteristic claimed by ethics, social, religious group, to which human beings collectively identify" [10] Following Halverson, a narrative will connect to the basic notion of where we are from, what shall we do, what activities need to be organized, what we believe as a good Muslim [10]. Schmid [11] quoted George Dimitriu' definition of the narratives as "a resource for political actors to construct a shared meaning to shape perceptions, beliefs and behavior of the public", they offer a structure through which "a shared sense is achieved, representing a past, present and future, an obstacle and a desired end-point".

Halverson, Goodall and Corman present a comprehensive thought on Islamist extremist narratives. Using the sacred text of Islam, they have delivered analyses of thirteen narratives used by the Islamic extremists. Their identification of the narratives is drawn from the extremists' statements, texts, and websites. One of the master narratives that is mostly used by the Islamic Extremists is about the seventy-two virgins. Halverson states, "Muslim men that die waging *jihad* against the enemies of Islam will be rewarded by Allah in heaven (*jannah*) as martyrs (*shuhada*) and receive 72 virgins to enjoy in blissful ecstasy. This notion seems to be particularly attractive to young males who live in otherwise sexually repressive societies (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan), perhaps due to stifling economic limitations and are yet to marry" [10]. Indeed, it is such a great offer to have 72 angels and all their sins will be washed away. They will be called a true believer. The message is clear; anyone has to be willing to die in the name of God.

Other narratives that inspire people to perform *jihad* are: (i) a basic grievance-the Muslim world is in chaos; (ii) for the Caliphate (good society); (iii) true Muslims have to engage in Jihad [11]. Schmid also found additional narratives used by extremists: "Suicide/martyrdom (*syahid*) operations as an asymmetric tactic of warfare against enemies are legitimate; No distinction is made between civilian and military targets in the fight against enemies; The killing of other Muslims is justified for their complicity with the West or with "apostate" Muslim governments which stand in the way of introducing strict Sharia law and an Islamic state; Takfir or the excommunication of Muslims for failure to apply Sharia law or failure to accept the beliefs and practices deemed right by *jihadists*; A clash of civilizations between the Muslim world and the non-Muslim world (*Dar-al-Harp*) exists until Sharia rule is established everywhere; and establishment of a government ruled by Sharia as a stepping stone to a Sharia-based world government" [11].

In Southeast Asia, Hedayah, the International Center of Excellence of CVE based in Abu Dhabi, concludes that there are four main themes of the narratives: Religious or ideological narrative (e.g. the concept of *Jihad* and the difference between Muslim and Non-Muslim), political narrative (e.g. government legitimacy, concept of State, Khilafa), social-heroic narrative (e.g. glorification of violent acts, grievances, social pressure) and economic narrative (e.g. economic marginalization) [12]. In Indonesia, the returning foreign fighters have also admitted that they joined the *jihadist* group because of the religious, political and economic narrative. One of the figures in the “*Jihad Selfie*” documentary film who has returned from Syria expressed that he went to perform *jihad* because he had been told that he would receive a high salary and his debt would be paid. From the neighboring country of Malaysia, Salman Rahim traveled to 11 countries and ended his trip in Syria where he died. He felt that there were a lot of injustices in Malaysia and there was a need to join and perform *jihad* to fight the injustice. Those are examples of how the terrorist groups used social and economic narratives to drive people to join them.

The extremists cleverly relate the narratives with the contemporary issues that Muslims face all over the globe. It is also believed that the extremists have conducted proper research, including amassing comprehensive data on injustice experienced by people in many countries. Al Qaeda is well known for its single narrative, “a unifying framework of explanations that provides its followers with an emotionally satisfying portrayal of the world in which they live and their role in it, offering them a sense of identity and giving meaning to their lives” [12]. Sense of identity is a basic need of people, but often in society, people ignore others because of social economy factors. One visible example of this is that some people overlook disabled persons because of their disabilities. The terrorist group uses the concept of “YODO” or You Only Die Once; why not make it martyrdom. Also, people tend not to give space to those who have dark history in the past and on the other hand, the terrorists quote Umar Ibn Khattab (RA), “Sometimes people with the worst past create the best future”. This is how extremists show that anyone could give the meaning of their life.

To understand the behavioral activities of extremists, a psychologist from the University of South Florida, Dr. Borum proposes a four-stage development process of the ideology of the terrorists: “The four-stage process begins by framing some unsatisfying event, condition, or grievance (*It's not right*) as being unjust (*It's not fair*). The injustice is blamed on a target policy, person, or nation (*It's your fault*). The responsible party is then vilified-often demonized (*You are evil*)”.

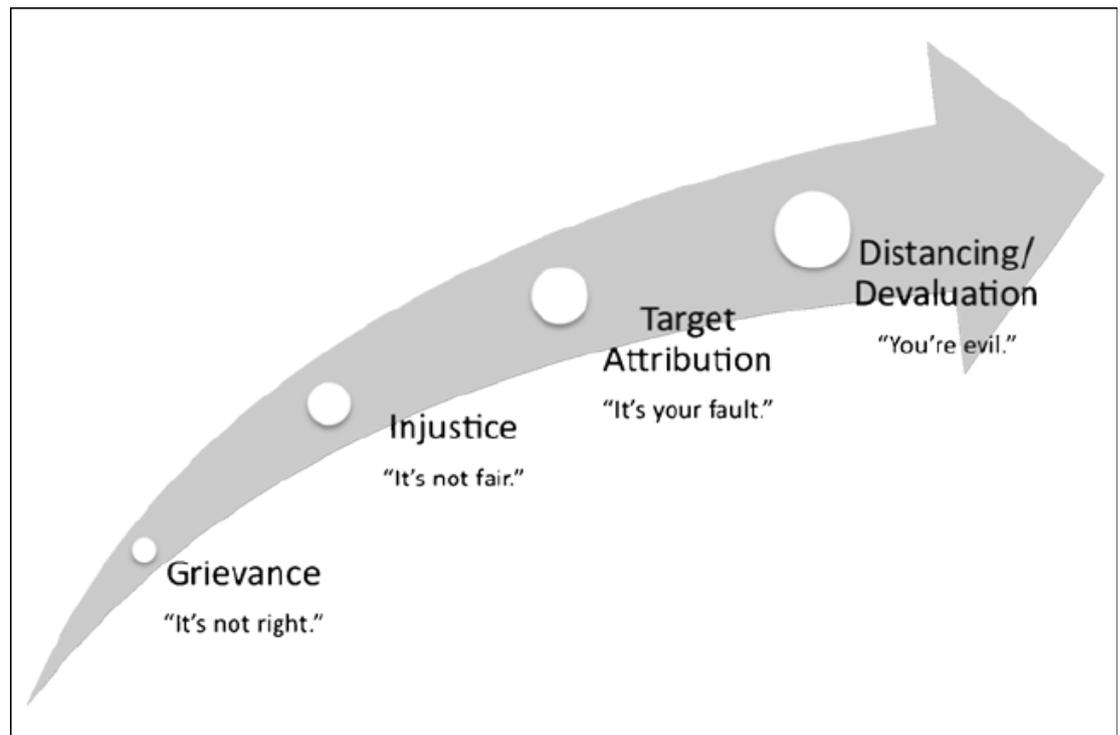


Figure 1: Borum four stage model of terrorists mind set [13].

3. New Terrorism, Internet and the Millennials Generation

As technology has advanced, terrorist groups make full use of the Internet. The Internet is easy to use, inexpensive, and has tremendous impacts in attracting audiences, especially youth. It also allows anyone to publish and share information quickly. The extremists use websites to recruit people, to search for funding, to maintain relationships, to promote their ideology, and to share weapon tutorials. Weimann quoted Evan Kohlmann, "Today, 90 % of terrorist activity on the Internet takes place using social networking tools. These forums act as a virtual firewall to help safeguard the identities of those who participate, and they offer subscribers a chance to make direct contact with terrorist representatives, to ask questions, even to contribute and help out the cyber *jihad*" [14]. In addition, Bergen highlights that, "the radicalization process resembles radicalization via social media far more than radicalization in person" [15]. The online environment, then, could also function as radical mosques.

A very well-known social media campaign of ISIS is a magazine called DABIQ, originally the name of a town in Syria. In the first edition, the Return of Khilafa, ISIS demonstrated its objective not only to recruit young fighters, but also to address specific people with technical as well as professional skills such as videographers, doctors and technicians. ISIS then asked for people who have specific expertise to train others.

Many of them have good educational backgrounds such as in engineering and science. This includes Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab who is popularly referred to as the underwear bomber on the Northwest airline that carried 289 people during the Christmas season in 2009. This could explain the dynamic of *jihadist* media productions that are appealing and stick with the youth.

The battle has now moved to social media namely Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram, Telegram, We chat, Flickr and WhatsApp. The greatest number of social media users comes from the millennial generation; those who are commonly identified as born between 1992 and 2000, according to *livescience.com*. The millennials depend on their gadgets and online networking. They are pretty much "internet savvy". Andrea and Molly explain, "millennials have every reason to assume that all necessary information can be gathered with the touch of a button on a 24/7/365 basis" [16]. Social media has become an important medium for millennials to express themselves, to get updates on every single piece of news about their peer's activities, and to occupy themselves with online gaming.

Facebook has the highest number of user all over the world, which is estimated 1.31×10^9 and their average is 30 [14]. The technology of smartphones is getting cheaper and Indonesia has 43×10^6 Facebook users. Most of them are youth. Other social media platforms that are mainly used in Indonesia are: BBM, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Line and Twitter. The extremists quickly moved to social media in spreading their radical ideologies and targeting the millennials. The extremist groups are very professional in planning their media content and utilizing the features given by the social media providers including online interaction (chat or group), videos online, mentions in Twitter, and other online ways to engage youth.

Unlike in the past when a terrorist was defined as someone who completed a long process of training and indoctrination through a terrorist group, the lone wolf terrorists are not tied to any terrorist network and have gotten inspiration through the internet. Jeffrey highlights, "The interactions facilitated by the Internet have become one of the most powerful radicalization tools for domestic lone wolves. Interactive terrorist "chat rooms," in particular, have helped reinforce individuals' extremist views and "are among the most influential aspects of the Internet for inspiring terrorist attacks by those who might otherwise never consider going to such extremes." One of the examples of Al Qaeda is from the Arabian Peninsula Magazine called "Inspire" (2010) that published a main article entitled "Make a bomb in the kitchen of your Mom," by Al Qaeda Chef. This could be seen as their support for acts by lone wolf terrorists.



Figure 2: Al Qaeda inspire magazine [17].

The millennial generation, compared to other generations, has the most Facebook friends and they are labeled as narcissistic as they love to post their selfies in social media. The young *ihadists* of the Islamic States are also a part of this generation. The website conversation.com reported that “*ihadists* supporters often take selfies of fighters from their personal account and post them on their social media pages. Some websites also pick up these pictures and report on them in their websites in positive light” [18]. Many of the selfie photos of young *ihadists* express their happiness. They smile and carry weapons. The *ihadists* use this strategy to give a picture that they are powerful and own many weapons. In fact, the reality is probably far beyond the selfie. They may only have a few weapons and ask the *ihadists* to take turns taking selfie photos carrying the gun. The most striking one is that they tend to show off their willingness to perform *ihad* and for them, becoming suicide bombers is something that “entertains” others and is not frightening. In other words, violence is a performance and as a performer, they are very proud of their role as violent extremists.

4. Reaching Indonesian Millennials: Teuku Akbar Story

Teuku Akbar was only 15 yr old when he met Yazid in Turkey. They both were Indonesian students studying in a high school in Turkey. Akbar, like other teenagers, wanted



Figure 3: Indonesian young *jihadits* took a selfie photo. Picture courtesy of author from IS supporters' social media page [18].

something meaningful in his life. He got bored with his daily routines. For Akbar, the subjects he learned at school were not something that challenged his mind. Yazid left the school and went to Syria to perform *Jihad*. After that, Yazid performed as a spiritual, as well as a virtual, mentor for Akbar. He sent messages, photos, and videos to Akbar through Facebook messenger. Akbar was invited to join him to perform *Jihad* with the Islamic State. "The video was amazing. It was about the Land of Man. Man should be brave and perform *Jihad*, if you do not, then do not call yourself a man" [20]. The extremists use a perspective of masculinity to attract youth. The video "Land of Man" is a challenge to the young men to prove their braveness and masculinity. It is important to know that Yazid and many Indonesian youths who joined the Islamic State have different family backgrounds. Interestingly, many of them are those who did not have a male role model or a father who embedded a "masculinity" figure. They felt that they found the so-called "Islamic Masculinity figure" among the *Amir* (respective Islamic Leaders).

In addition to that, Akbar found that it was really cool selfie photo of Yazid, carrying AK 47 weapon and received many "likes" from *ukhti* (Muslim women). *Jihad* then understood as something "cool" in the eye of youth like Akbar and his millennials friends. That is exactly what the message that the Islamic state deliver to the youth.

It is also crucial to mention that the terrorist groups truly understand the gaming culture among youth. Akbar, Yazid, and many Indonesian millennials love to spend hours hanging out for online gaming. Yazid seems to be addicted to online gaming and spent



Figure 4: British fighters posted photo in social media [19].

almost 24 h playing those games. So, Yazid told Akbar that if Akbar joined him to support the Islamic State in Syria, Akbar could have a real weapon (AK-47) while riding a horse. Also, delicious foods would be served every day. Beautiful girls there would also accompany Akbar. What a seemingly great offer for Akbar! Yazid continued, if Akbar performed *Jihad* and died, the rewards would be heaven (*jannah*) with 72 virgin angels. Yazid also told Akbar that his parents would also go to heaven as a reward because of their son. Heaven is something that any Muslim wants, including Akbar. Referring to Havelson, the narrative will lead to notions of what we believe as a Muslim and what activities we should do [10]. Yazid explained to Akbar that Muslims must perform violence, otherwise the world will not change and the injustice will be all over the globe. This is the social context that Ramakrishna pointed out.

Akbar started to contact his parents and sent Yazid's photos. His parents were afraid that Akbar would join Yazid. His mother always sent messages to Akbar and reminded Akbar that he went to Turkey to study and to be a great scholar. *Jihad* could be performed in many ways, such as studying and working hard, not raising a weapon or performing as a suicide bomber. His mother also reminded Akbar of a *hadiths*, "heaven is under the feet of a mother." Everything that Akbar wants has to receive permission from his parents. He also remembered his childhood and how his family spent time together. Akbar has a strong family bond.

Akbar started to think critically and questioned, "Why don't the *jihadist* leaders (*Amir*) perform *Jihad* to Syria? Why do the Amirs always ask young people to be suicide bombers?" [20]. When Akbar told Yazid that he did not receive permission from his parents to go to Syria, Yazid told Akbar that there is no need to get permission from parents for someone who wants to go for *jihad*. Yazid gave Akbar an article in the Indonesian language (also available in other languages) explaining that matter. The extremist groups are very professional. They have gone through proper research and have experience with how to handle Akbar's questions. Halverson explains that the extremists' narratives are persuasive by linking the ideology to tradition and to common sense [10].

Akbar made a crucial decision; he loves his parents and always remembers the hard work his mother endured when giving birth to him and his sisters. He chose to carry out *jihad* in a better way. He wants to be a young scholar who creates many innovations and, so far, Akbar has two innovative products and he wants to innovate more. Akbar's story is well-documented in the documentary film by Noor Huda Ismail entitled 'Jihad Selfie' that has been shown in many communities in different countries.

5. How an Indonesian Millennial Turn into a Lone Wolf Terrorist

Unlike in the West where the focus often stems from the perspective of an individual identity, Indonesia and other communities in Asia tend to reflect a perspective based more on a communal identity. This is believed to be one factor for the growing number of the lone wolves in the West, but we cannot neglect this issue, especially since recently, according to General Tito Karnavian, an 18 yr old student from Medan performed an act of lone wolf terrorism. He failed in successfully detonating the bomb. The perpetrator, identified as IAH, comes from a diverse background. His relatives and neighbors are both Muslim and Christian. As reported by the Indonesian Police

Chief, IAH does not have any connection with the Terrorist Network. The Police found a design of “al Baqdadi” on his t-Shirt which could indicate that he is a sympathizer of ISIS. He learned how to assemble a bomb from the internet. His brother has an Internet Café which allowed him to spend most of his time online.

Indeed, social media has fostered radicalization among youth. This is a very dangerous sign when a student below the age of 20 yr old used the internet to independently study radical ideologies. Without any military training, he committed to be a suicide bomber and a lone wolf terrorist. This is also a clear picture that the extremists have succeeded in targeting youth using their attractive propaganda. The danger of the lone wolf terrorist attack is also explained by Vasilenko, “lone wolf terrorists can be exceptionally dangerous and if such lone terrorists have access to high technologies, their acts may be very destructive” [21]. The lone wolf terrorists could undertake radical activities at any time they want, using advanced technological access. They can also be called as the new generation of young fighters.

Apart from that, Anindya reminds us that the Indonesian government should be careful in identifying the terror attack as the terrorist may use “the decentralisation strategy which makes it harder for security apparatus to trace them” [22]. Many scholars have provided wide-ranging definitions for the lone wolf phenomenon and there is a need for the Indonesian government to have an official definition. Anindya also suggested that the Indonesian government could use the cases of lone wolves from overseas as references” [22].

6. Counter-Narrative Initiatives in Indonesia

Counter narratives, in this case, refer to “the story or counter-argument utilized to reduce the appeal of violent extremism” [12]. There are many useful counter-narrative handbooks. Generally, these are some aspects that need to be considered in designing a counter narrative campaign: assess the push and pull factor of the terrorist recruitment, identify the target audience, identify the narrative being countered, set clear goals and determine an effective messenger, develop the content and logic of the message, identify the medium where the message will be disseminated, develop a dissemination strategy and evaluate the impact of the counter-narrative program [12].

There has been a growing interest in designing and providing a counter narratives program in Indonesia. It is widely understood that the government is the most responsible institution to overcome the problem of terrorism. Fortunately, there is also a great

concern from the universities, civil societies, and NGOs to take part in this issue. This paper will observe various counter-narrative initiatives in Indonesia.

7. Indonesian Government's Counter Narratives Program

A year after the JW Marriot Bombing (2009, Jakarta) and through Presidential Decree No 46 on July 10, 2010, the Indonesian Government established the National Anti-Terrorism Agency (*Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme, BNPT*). The three divisions of the BNPT are operations, prevention, and international cooperation. BNPT also works closely with other governmental bodies such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education, as well as Non-Governmental Organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, to identify radical mosques and their circumstances. In 2012, BNPT formed an organization called the Terrorism Prevention Coordination Forum (*Forum Koordinasi Pencegahan Terorisme, FKPT*) and was expanded to all provinces in Indonesia.

The Indonesian government has been working for many years to initiate and implement counter-narrative programs. The **first step** that the Indonesian government undertook was the takedown of more than 30 radicalized or "pro-Islamic States" websites in order to remove the extremist's content from the Internet. The website include: bahrumnaim.space, www.ghur4ba.blogspot.com, www.thoriquana.com, www.dakwatuna.com, www.kafilahmujahid.com, www.an-najah.net, www.muslimdaily.net, www.voa.islam.com, eramuslim.com, majanik.com, langitmuslim.blogspot.co.id, kajiantauhid.blogspot.co.id, muslimmori1.blogspot.co and pendukung-daulahislam.blogspot.co.id [23]. The Jakarta Post quoted Cawidu from the Ministry of Information Technology, "one of the radical websites belonged to Bahrn Naim, an IS member. His website, bahrumnaim.space contains the teachings of IS, instructions on how to start a terrorist attack, including a how-to guide on assembling handmade guns and conducting urban warfare, as well as on avoiding intelligence surveillance. The websites were found in violation of Article 28 (2) of the 2008 Electronic Information and Transaction (ITE) Law on prohibiting hate speech" [24]. In addition, the Indonesian government has also blocked radicalized social media accounts that supported the viewpoints of the Islamic State.

Secondly, the Indonesian government recognized the voice of the victims as a powerful tool in countering terrorist narratives. They have been invited to share their experiences, including that their decision to perform *Jihad* was because of the propaganda of the terrorists groups that are so appealing and enticing. The Indonesian government

can also use storytellers as a strategy for counter-narrative programs. One instance is sharing a story from a mother of a young man who was recruited by the terrorists. It could be taken in the form of a video or in WhatsApp messages. Another useful theme that could be employed is a message on the indicators of online radicalization.

Thirdly, the Indonesian government also made efforts to counter the extremist narratives by facilitating personal meetings and dialogues with Islamic Clerics from the Middle East namely Ali Hasan Al Halabi (Jordan), as well as Dr. Najih Ibrahim and and Hisyam an Najr (Egypt) [25]. This program claimed to be successful, but as I talked to Akbar, he asserts that the terrorist groups have their own *Amir* (Islamic Leader) and other people cannot replace their *Amir*. This could be an evaluation for the Indonesian government.

Fourthly, “*Duta Damai Dunia Maya*”, Online Peace Ambassador, is the most recent initiative of BNPT of the Indonesian government to engage youth into a delegation of peacemakers in the online community. The candidates needed to register for the Peace Community and were trained in June 2016 in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Medan, and Makassar. There were 23 websites launched as outputs of the training. It is hoped that the websites can be a medium for alternative counter-terrorism among students and youth” [26]. The challenge will be maintaining the spirit of the youth to consistently produce the content of the website. There should be an inner spirit and awareness that what they are doing is important for the society and the future of the Indonesian youth.

8. Universities Initiatives

One of the contributions of the universities is the direct involvement through community development initiatives. The Inter Religious Studies (IRS) Study Program, which is located at the Graduate School of Universitas Gadjah Mada and founded by UGM, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, and Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana (UKDW) has recently facilitated two programs entitled Interfaith Youth Pilgrimage (IYP) and Interfaith Workshop for New Generation (INGAGE). Both programs aim to educate and facilitate interfaith communication to transform prejudice into empathy. The programs include digital literacy training for youth, especially on how they use social media. The participants come from various backgrounds. Some of them came from Medan, Poso, Palu, Ambon and other conflicted cities. They have experienced threats, bombs, and religious conflicts. These programs resulted in life-changing experiences among the participants.

The Center for the Study of Islam and Social Transformation (CISForm) of the State Islamic University, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta just launched a Comic “*Si Gun Pingin Jihad*” (Si Gun wants to *Jihad*) in Yogyakarta, Solo and Mataram in 2016. This is basically the story of how a young man named “Gun” with a terrible past is influenced by a radical view through religious sermons in a mosque. Gun wants to perform *Jihad* and is willing to be a suicide bomber, but then he realized that *Jihad* can take other forms such as studying hard, assisting poor people, helping people who have different ability, and reminding others not to drink alcohol. The second comic, “*Rindu Khilafah*” will be launched in 2017.

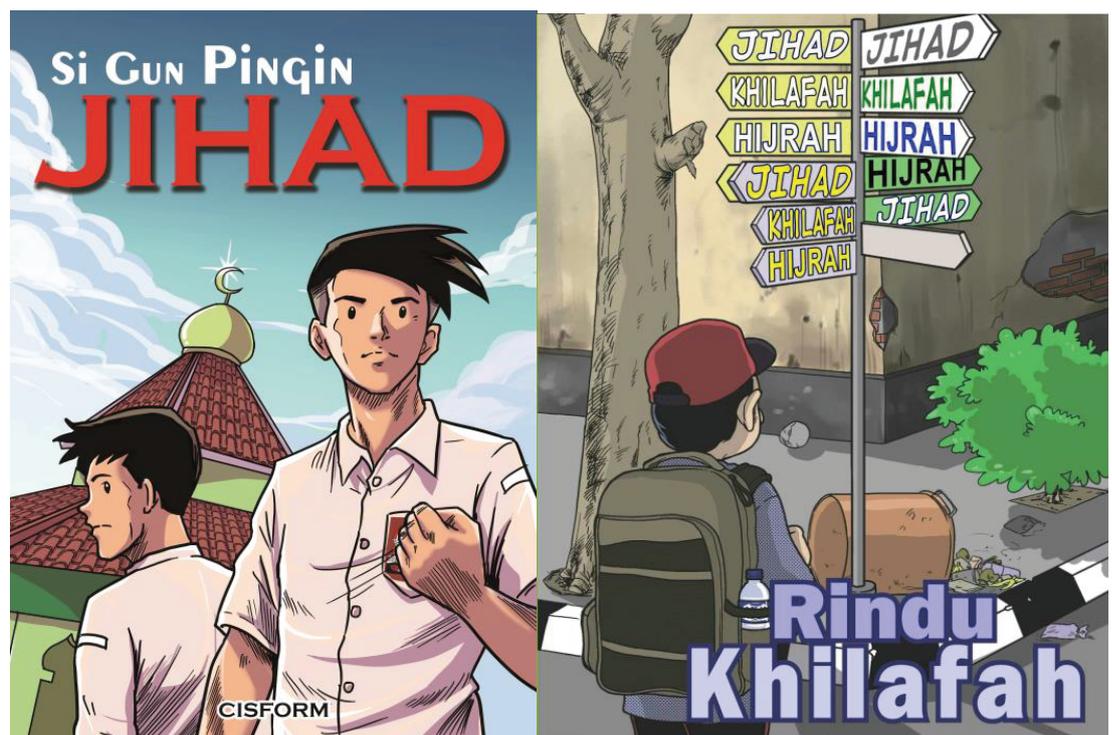


Figure 5: Cover book comic *Si Gun Pingin jihad* and *Rindu Khilafah* [27].

9. NGO Initiatives

Growing awareness to participate in the counter narrative programs also came from NGOs. The Wahid Institute, Muhammadiyah, NU, Peace Generation, Indonesia Muslim Crisis Center, Maarif Institute, and many other organizations have paid attention to this issue. They also received some support to conduct intensive research on the effectiveness and evaluation of the counter narrative initiatives.

Peace Generation (PG), a Youth organization based in Bandung, conducted alternative or positive counter-narrative programs especially for youth. For many years, they

have successfully designed and implemented a peace curriculum at school. They also trained teachers in many provinces in Indonesia. PG has engaged with youth in many forms and activities such as Peace Walk, Peacetival, Rock the Peace, etc. Every year PG invites Indonesian youth to be young peacemakers and connects them to the world of peacemakers. Recently Irfan Amalee, co-founder of Peace Generation and social media expert, published comics and cartoons on his Facebook page to spread peaceful messages and to contrast the thriving culture of hatred in social media.

The Wahid Institute is also very active in contributing counter-narrative efforts. One of their programs is "Dare to be Peace". As Hedayah reported, "This particular campaign was targeted at youth in urban areas that are active on social media. In particular, the campaigns focused on the urban secular communities who are vulnerable because they have little understanding of religion (especially in Jakarta)" [12].

Indonesian Muslim Crisis Center (IMC2) has been working on the comic strips and Malay poems as counter-narrative messaging. IMC2 was established in 2005 in response to the growing number of acts by violent extremism groups in Indonesia. The choice of comic strips and Pantun is because they are easy to understand, require low budgets, and only need a small number of team members. In terms of messaging, they counter the DAESH messages As Robi Sugara stated during his presentation in the SEARCCT/South East Asia Regional Centre For Counter Terrorism Workshop on Countering DAESH Narrative in Kuala Lumpur November 2016, the comic strips have a context. For example, CNN Indonesia reported on an article entitled "*Baasir Marah Saat diminta Bawa Bom Bunuh Diri*" (*Baasir is Mad When Someone Asks Him to Carry a Suicide Bomb*). IMC2 then worked on the comic strips and published them:

Here are the two comic strips that are the collaborative work of Wildan (CISForm Director), Robi Sugara (IMC2), and Annuar Hasan "Sireh" (Malaysia) during the three-day workshop on counter-narratives hosted by SEARCCT Malaysia:

10. Conclusions

The terrorist groups have targeted the millennials, or youth and worldwide there is a growing number of youth and underage boys who have joined the Islamic State. There is not any single characteristic of those who committed to be suicide bombers or who have joined the new phenomenon of lone wolf terrorism; it is getting difficult to profile who the terrorists are. The four factors of psychosocial analysis which assist people to understand why youth become targets and remain susceptible to terrorist propaganda are the: Neurological Factor (emotional transition to adulthood), Family



Figure 6: Comic strips by IMC2 [28].

Context (parental bond), Social Context (social economy marginalization, culture of hatred) and Technological Context (internet savvy) (Ramakrishna). From the story of Akbar, IAH and other Indonesian youth who have joined *jihadist* groups, we can find

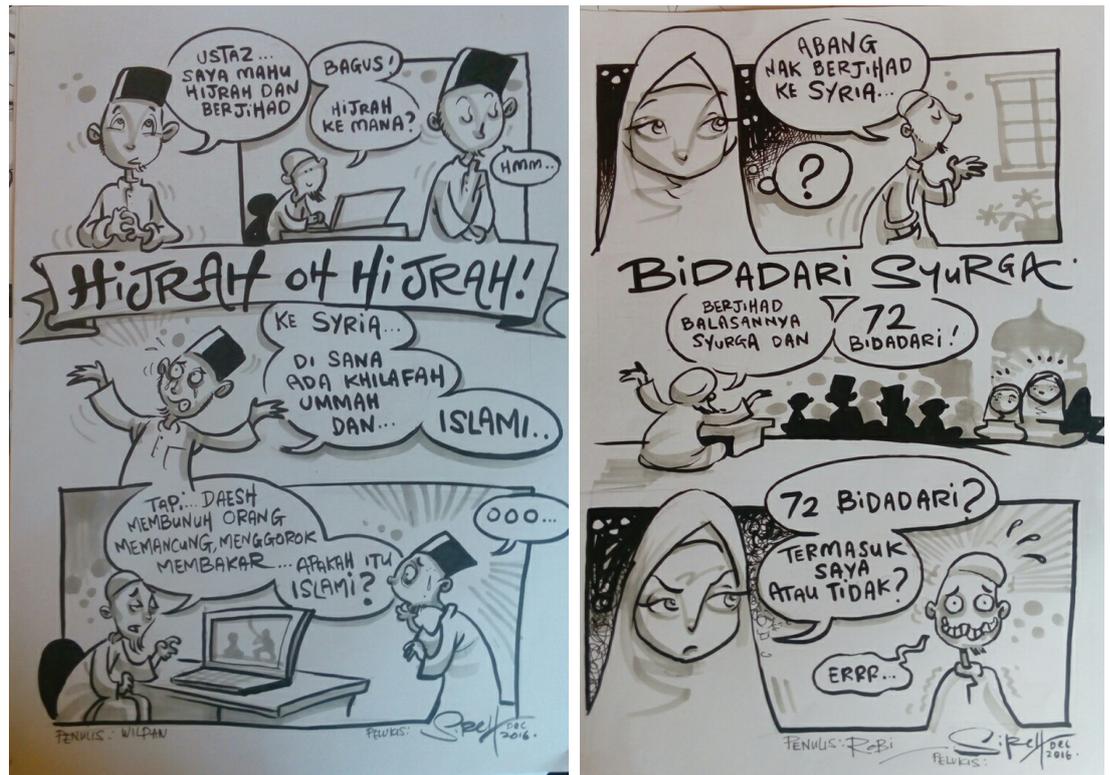


Figure 7: Comic strip as a counter-narrative [29].

the interplay among those factors. For instance, Yazid searched for a role model of Islamic masculinity and combined it with the technological context (the video of Land of Men) which made him join the Islamic State and recruit others to join. On the other hand, Akbar (18 yr old who experienced a transition period to adulthood and was active in social media, cancelled his trip to Syria because of his critical thinking skills and a strong family bond.

It is necessary to understand that the extremist groups have conducted proper research. They are not only mastering the neurological, familial, and social contexts, but also understand the gaming culture among the millenials and take many advantages of their characteristic that depends on online social networks.

To counter the terrorist narratives, first we should understand which narratives we want to counter (*i.e.* narrative of grievance, injustice, *takfir*). Then we need to identify the target audience, define the objective, and develop the content, as well as evaluate the impact of the counter-narrative programs. Targeting youth, or the millennials, requires an understanding of the four factors mentioned above. Their ability in maximizing the advanced technology needs to be cultivated. Programs should be designed with more youthful creative approaches that excite them.

The counter-narrative programs for the Indonesian millennials should also include prevention efforts for lone wolf terrorism. There should be more research on the early warning signs of online radicalization in Indonesia. Simultaneously, the Indonesian government encourages working with IT programmers to create applications for early warnings of online radicalization and other applications to check radical content. It is also suggested to work with social media owners in preventing radical content in social media.

Education is important and it is essential for youth to develop critical thinking abilities. Abdullah X, former foreign fighter, produces many videos posted in Youtube. Abdullah X educates viewers to use critical thinking and counters the messages in the narratives. Such programs can also inspire Indonesian youth to do similar projects. Social media literacy is also important and thus the idea of always thinking twice can be a positive way for youth to develop their critical thinking abilities in this era full of hatred towards other cultures.

Acknowledgements

Author would like to thank Dicky Sofjan, Core Doctoral Faculty Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies, for his invaluable insight and feedback on the initial draft of this paper. I am indebted to Thomas Koruth Samuel and Ahmad Tajuddin (SEARCCT) who have emboldened my efforts to undertake this research.

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