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The Influence of the Middle East Conflict on Radicalism in Indonesia in the period 2022-2024: Daulah Islamiyah's actions in utilizing social media as a propaganda tool

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Abstract

The conflict in the Middle East, particularly the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, is a phenomenon that continues to this day. This conflict has direct implications for the Middle East but also has a significant impact on countries around the world, including Indonesia. This has a significant impact on the process of radicalism, particularly in Indonesia as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. In Indonesia itself, conflicts in the Middle East have caused major changes that can accelerate the process of radicalization through various means, from social media to interpersonal networks. This essay aims to analyze the influence of the Middle East conflict on radicalism in Indonesia during the period 2022-2024, using the case study of the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group. The method used is a descriptive qualitative approach through document analysis and secondary data. This essay applies Radicalism Theory to explain how groups and individuals adopt extreme views that lead to violence to achieve their ideology, as well as Relative Deprivation Theory to explain the dissatisfaction felt by Indonesian Muslims regarding the situation in Palestine. The results of this essay show that the author found significant impacts, including the increasing number of people joining jihadist groups in Indonesia, the proliferation of radical campaigns promoting terrorist actions on social media that are increasingly difficult to control, as the target audience is the younger generation with higher social media engagement, and influenced by anti-Israel sentiments among Indonesian society, revealing complex impacts that

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demand serious attention from the government in addressing the threats and radical actions arising from such sentiments.

Keywords: Terrorist acts, Israel, Palestine, Conflict, Radicalism, Propaganda, Media, Social

INTRODUCTION

Radicalism in Indonesia is a complex phenomenon that cannot be separated from global dynamics, particularly the conflicts occurring in the Middle East. Since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, this conflict has involved various forms of violence, negotiations, and international intervention, all of which have contributed to the tensions that continue to this day (Touval, 2022). Despite numerous efforts to achieve peace between the two sides, including the Oslo Accords and other initiatives, progress has often been hampered by mistrust, violence, and deep ideological differences between the two sides (Madani, 2024). In addition, political uncertainty and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the region further complicate the peace process (Akgül-Açıkmeşe & Özel, 2024). Hamas itself is one of the militant Islamic movements of the two major political parties in Palestine, this organization governs more than two million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, and dozens of countries have designated Hamas as a terrorist organization (Delta, 2024). The Palestinian-Israeli conflict peaked in October 2023 when Israeli bombing of Gaza killed nearly 15,000 people, including 10,000 women and children, in more than 50 days, making it the deadliest war for the besieged Palestinian territory to date (Chughtai, 2023). This phenomenon has a very strong influence on the radicalization process in Indonesia, a country with the largest Muslim population in the world in 2025 (World Population Review, 2025).

In this case, the phenomenon of transnational radicalism has become a serious concern in the study of contemporary terrorism. It is no longer limited to the physical dimension, but continues to change and transform into a phenomenon that utilizes information and communication technology as a medium or tool for ideological warfare (Weimann, 2015). The prolonged conflict between Hamas (Harakat al-Muqawamah al Islamiyyah) or the Islamic Resistance Movement and Israel is one of the most prominent movements internationally, especially involving Muslims, which can lead to radical sentiment (Zidni & Zuhdi, 2024). This conflict has direct implications for the Middle East, but it also has a very significant impact on countries around the world, including Indonesia. As the country with the largest Muslim population, Indonesia has strong emotional ties and solidarity with issues in Palestine.

This became a crucial moment in the process of radicalism in Indonesia. The attack

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launched by Hamas against Israel was followed by a response from the Israeli military in Gaza, creating a massive wave of solidarity among Indonesian Muslims (BNPT, 2024). This incident not only sparked peaceful demonstrations, but was also used by most radical groups in Indonesia to build a narrative of jihad, strengthen their ideological foundations, recruit new members, and gain support.

The purpose of this article is to analyze how conflicts in the Middle East in the 2022-2024 period affect the radicalization process in Indonesia with a focus on the mechanisms of spreading global jihad narratives and the recruitment of terrorist networks. Because the author found the initial fact that DI had carried out propaganda through social media by broadcasting information, video tutorials, obtaining explosives and songs containing propaganda to invite to join the group.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Dynamics of Radicalism in the Virtual World - Analysis of Trends and Prevention Strategies

This paper demonstrates a fundamental shift in the pattern of radicalism spread in Indonesia, from conventional media (books, magazines, cassettes) to cyberspace. It also identifies terrorist group activities in cyberspace, including propaganda, recruitment, training, logistics provision, paramilitary formation, planning, executing attacks, hiding, and financing. This 9P framework is highly relevant to the Indonesian radicalism conflict because it explains the complete ecosystem of digital terrorist operations that have been difficult for authorities to detect (Finta & Indah, 2024).

The millennial generation, who should be agents of positive change, has instead become an easy target for radicalization. They are in a phase of identity discovery, easily influenced, and very familiar with social media, which provides instant information without adequate verification. This phenomenon is highly relevant to the paper the author is reviewing, where the radicalism spread by JAD is carried out using propaganda as a tool for spreading jihad.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand the complex phenomenon of radicalization, which involves psychological, sociological, and ideological aspects that cannot be easily quantified. (Creswell & Creshwell, 2018).

Data collection techniques were carried out through literature studies, which involved gathering information from reliable sources such as scientific journals, books, official reports, and

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other relevant documents. According to Sujono and Budianto, literature studies are an effective qualitative data collection method for understanding complex phenomena, as they allow researchers to integrate various perspectives from diverse sources (Sujono & Budianto, 2019).

THEORY

The Theory of Radicalism

Radicalization can be understood as a psychological and sociological process in which individuals or groups adopt extreme views that can lead to the use of violence to achieve ideological goals (Schmid, 2013). According to Moghaddam (2005), Radicalization occurs through a "terrorism ladder" consisting of six levels, ranging from dissatisfaction with social conditions to full commitment to terrorist acts. (Moghaddam, 2005). In the Indonesian context, the radicalization process often begins with a sense of solidarity toward Muslims in conflict zones, which then develops into identification with the global jihad narrative.

Relative Deprivation Theory

According to Tedd Gurr (2011) Relative deprivation is the most fundamental factor causing aggressive behavior or violence. Revolution arises from dissatisfaction resulting from the realization or persuasion that something has been lost. Gurr explains that relative deprivation is a perceived gap between expected value and actual value, and is synonymous with frustration, which causes aggression and links subjective desires and imagined rights on the one hand with insufficient capabilities and the emergence of frustration on the other. And this frustration occurs due to the inability to fulfill desires, so that frustration will create violence. (Dayaksini, 2009).

This theory correlates with radicalism in Indonesia, where group members feel a sense of injustice when they realize the gap between their expectations and their actual circumstances, and this dissatisfaction can lead to collective action or radicalism using this relative theory aims to reveal how the conflict influences the actions of radical groups in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Mechanism of Radicalism: From Solidarity to Extremism

According to Dr. F.G Cempaka Timur (2025) Radicalism is defined as a process whereby an individual or group adopts extreme or radical beliefs, particularly in a political or religious context, but they always use the wrong methods. For example, they believe in excessive ideas, such as those in the name of the state, or, more sensitively, in the name of religion. This is what triggers

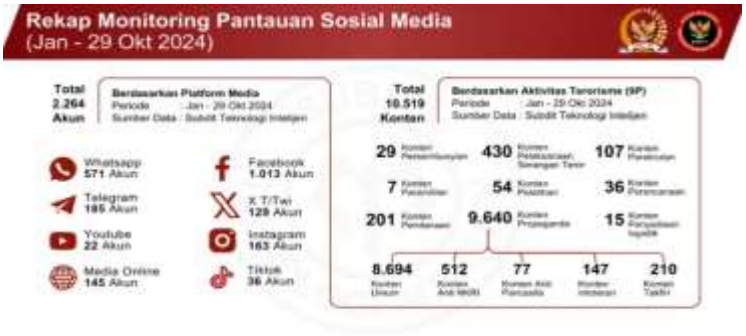
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a war. The factors causing radicalism itself are alliances, social marginalization, and racial discrimination, which are aimed at opposing policies that serve the interests of the central government. According to Moghaddam F (2006), radicalism can occur in several stages as a result of the influence of individual psychology and broader socio-political contexts, with intervention occurring at the escalation stage.

The first is a sense of injustice, which can lead to resentment. The second is cognitive openness, which leads to receptivity to extreme ideas. The third is a call to action, where one feels the need to take radical measures. The fourth is moral involvement, influenced by internalization to commit acts of violence. Finally, terrorist acts are the tangible manifestation of this stage (Moghaddam, 2005).

Social media has become the main platform for spreading radical narratives linking the Middle East conflict to the situation in Indonesia. Platforms such as Telegram, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and even TikTok are used to disseminate content that frames regional conflicts as part of a global jihad narrative (Nashir, 2023)According to data from the Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme (BNPT), there was a significant increase in online propaganda and recruitment activities during the period of January-October 2024 (BNPT, 2024). Various radical and terrorist movements in Indonesia, such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) and groups affiliated with ISIS in Indonesia, are exploiting the emotional momentum of anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian sentiment to spread the narrative that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is part of a larger "crusade" between Islam and the West aimed at recruiting new members and strengthening the legitimacy of their actions. -The Israel conflict is part of a larger "crusade" between Islam and the West, to recruit new members and strengthen the legitimacy of their actions.

Figure 1. Social media usage data



Source: Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme(BNPT)

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Content analysis conducted by terrorism researchers shows that radical groups in Indonesia use an "emotional hijacking" strategy, whereby they exploit religious emotions arising from the Middle East conflict to recruit new members (Nashir, 2023). The content disseminated usually consists of images and videos that provoke emotions, accompanied by narratives describing the suffering of Muslims in the Middle East as the collective responsibility of the global Muslim community. This issue has gone beyond bilateral concerns and touches on issues of identity, human rights, and nationalism in various countries, including Indonesia.

Interpersonal Networks and Recruitment

In addition to social media, interpersonal networks also play an important role in the radicalization process. Mosques, religious study groups, and Muslim communities that initially focused on routine religious activities can become places for the spread of radical ideology when conflicts in the Middle East heat up (Bruinessen, 2013)

The recruitment process usually begins with the formation of solidarity with Muslims in conflict areas, which then develops into discussions about the "obligation of jihad" and ultimately leads to a commitment to join terrorist groups or carry out acts of terrorism. Thus, the Hamas-Israel conflict has triggered feelings of solidarity with Hamas among some Muslims in Indonesia. Here, extremist groups use narratives about resistance against oppression, which they claim to represent the Muslim world.

Case Study: Daulah Islamiyah's Actions in Utilizing Social Media as a Propaganda Tool

With the emergence of hardline Islamic groups that use jihad rhetoric and mobilize their followers to wage jihad in areas where there had previously been no inter-religious conflict, no one can deny that Islamic radicalism has emerged in Indonesia. There is a difference between radical Islamism and terrorism. Broadly speaking, all groups are radical by definition, but not all radical Islamic groups are terrorists (Lim, 2011).

This hatred towards Israel is not only related to the Palestinian issue, but also to the belief that Jews exist to destroy Islam and rule the world. This is not only a reaction to Israel's existence, but also to anti-Semitism, including that which originates in the West (Lim, 2011). In November 2023, Densus 88 successfully arrested a terrorist network operating in East Java that was part of the Jamaah Islamiah (JI) and Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) networks, known as the "Surabaya-Malang Network." (Naibaho, 2023). Spokesperson for the National Police Headquarters' Anti-Terrorism Special Forces (Densus 88), Brigadier General Aswin Siregar, explained that the seeds of

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radicalism were sown when the victim joined a radical group, interacted on social media, and eventually joined a paid group (Mabes Polri, 2024).

Within the group, the victim received many videos related to ISIS or Daulah Islamiyah propaganda, such as ISIS executions and warfare. This made the victim curious about Daulah Islamiyah and prompted him to join two Telegram social media networks that spread international radical teachings. From these sites, the victim was taught that governments that do not adhere to Islamic law must be fought. This correlates with the theory of radicalism, whereby they develop extreme thinking and attempt to rebel against it through acts of terror (Moghaddam, 2005).

This network consists of 12 people with a demographic composition that reflects contemporary radicalization patterns: 7 people aged 20-30 (mostly students and young workers), 3 people aged 30-40 (professional workers), and 2 people aged 40-50 (including the network leader). This is supported by a statement from AI Chaidar, a terrorism observer from Malikussaleh University in Aceh, in his interview with Liputan6, that Daulah Islamiyah mostly targets young people, such as students, because they are easily influenced (Yulika, 2024).

The age composition, which is dominated by the younger generation, shows this group's particular vulnerability to the global jihad narrative. According to life-course criminology theory, individuals aged 20-30 are in the "identity formation" phase, which makes them more susceptible to the influence of extremist ideology. In this context, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict becomes an "identity anchor" that gives meaning and purpose to the lives of individuals who have previously experienced a "meaning crisis" (Bruinessen, 2013).

The radicalization process began when members of the network were exposed to content about the suffering of Gazans on social media. A 22-year-old engineering student admitted that he began to question "world justice" after seeing videos of wounded Gazan children (Pradipta, 2024). This phenomenon shows how collective trauma can trigger individual trauma through the mechanism of "empathetic distress," which is the emotional distress experienced by a person when empathizing with the suffering of others (Dowling, 2018). Hoffman (2000) explains that individuals can experience intense emotional distress when witnessing the suffering of a group they identify as their "in-group." (kompas.co, 2023). In this case, religious identity creates a strong emotional bond between Indonesian Muslims and Gaza Muslims.

After the brain processes information from outside sources, network members begin to seek answers through religious studies. They join study groups that initially focus on humanitarian aid for Gaza. However, the network's leader is an alumnus of Afghanistan, who gradually introduces the concept of offensive jihad as an obligation for members.

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CONCLUSION

The Middle East conflict, with the case study of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the period 2022-2024, has a significant influence on the development of radicalism in Indonesia. The process of radicalism begins with feelings of injustice arising from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, followed by the emergence of extreme ideas and involvement in terrorist networks. This is in line with the theory of radicalism, which explains that dissatisfaction with social conditions, coupled with propaganda-like attacks on social media, causes people who were initially sympathetic to become influenced and even fanatical. Added to this is the theory of relative deprivation, which explains that a perceived gap between expected values and actual values, in other words, a process of frustration between individuals, occurs.

Basically, the beginning of this incident was a form of sympathy between individuals or groups. Then this was exploited by a handful of people who had an interest in dividing people or who had fanatical interests. After that, psychologically, they were carried away by people with vested interests. Then massive recruitment and networking took placeUnder the pretext of religion and jihad, individuals who were initially sympathetic became radicalized. This is what happened in Indonesia, where a network of solidarity with Palestine was formed. In fact, the goal degraded into inter-religious conflict because the target of the attacks was a group perceived to be Jewish, which led to terrorism.

The author believes that social media is the most effective medium for disseminating information. Many people are still unable to distinguish between hoaxes and real information. Through social media, stakeholders can convey and organize their interests in order to gain more sympathy from the public.

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