

Edited by  
Najib Kailani & Munirul Ikhwan

# THE NARRATIVES OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN INDONESIA

Educational Background and Individual Agency



PusPIDeP

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OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM  
IN INDONESIA  
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND  
AND INDIVIDUAL AGENCY**

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**2021**



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**Edited by**

Najib Kailani and Munirul Ikhwan

**Authors:**

Noorhaidi Hasan, Najib Kailani, Munirul Ikhwan,  
Ahmad Rafiq, Nina Mariani Noor, Mohammad Yunus,  
flahal Misbah

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## PREFACE

In the post 9/11 the studies of violent extremism associated with Islam and Muslims have become one of the research topics that attract a lot of attention from researchers. Some of them focus their research on the backgrounds of radical and extremist educational institutions by examining educational networks and highlighting curricula and religious views circulating in the educational environment. They argue that religious educational institutions have cultivated radical and extremist ideologies. Consequently, pejorative views that portray Islamic educational institutions as the incubators of terrorism and religious extremism often influence counter-terrorism policies and image building by mass media in the West.

This excessive representation, which tends to be reductionist toward Islamic educational institutions, has in turn received a lot of criticism. Several scholars have shown convincing data that many people who study in Islamic educational institutions, which are associated with radicalism and extremism, do not necessarily become radicals or extremists. On the contrary, the facts show that many people are exposed to radical and extremist ideologies in educational institutions, which primarily do not teach religion such as public schools and universities.

In addition, other scholars view violent extremism within the political-economic framework. The political economic perspective argues that instead of educational institutions or religious ideology that expose people to radical and extremist views, vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds, experiences of structural marginalization, and uncertainty indeed lead people to become radicalized and extremist. Other observers point out that the economic background is not the only issue. The issue of identity search and shock as a consequence of globalization is also an important factor that makes someone involved and active in radical and extremist groups.

However, excessive attention to the figures and networks of radical and extremist educational institutions will lead to a generalization of representation and deny individual agency, while neglecting their religious educational background by highlighting identity and structural problems seems reductionist. Enriching previous studies, this book comes to shed some lights on the religious educational backgrounds of former convicted terrorists, returnees and deportees through their biographical narratives and individual agency.

The book in the hands of the readers is a result of research conducted by the research team of Center for Islam, Democracy and Peace Studies (PusPIDeP) in Yogyakarta in collaboration with School of Graduate Studies of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Center for the Studies of Islam and Society (PPIM) of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Convey Indonesia. Through in-depth interviews with 20 informants

from the backgrounds of former convicted terrorists, and the returnees and deportees of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in West Java, Central Java and East Java, this book shows that their religious educational backgrounds appear to have significantly facilitated them to become radical and extremist when mediated by structural problems, identity, social linkages, and ideology.

The outcomes of this study would not have existed without the involvement of ideas and sacrifices from many persons. First of all, we would like to thank the research team involved in this research; they are Prof. Noorhaidi Hasan, Najib Kailani, Munirul Ikhwan, Ahmad Rafiq and Nina Mariani Noor. Without the dedication and seriousness that they have devoted to conducting research during the Covid-19 pandemic, which is currently sweeping the world as well as the hard work and dedication of PusPIDeP's management team: Najib Kailani, Munirul Ikhwan, Erie Susanty and Subi Nur Isnaini, who had overseen this project from the beginning to the end, this book will not reach the hands of the readers.

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Finally, we do hope that the presence of this book can enrich the discussion on radicalism and religious extremism, which specifically sheds some lights on individual narratives and agency in relation to the religious education of former convicted terrorists, ISIS returnees and deportees. Happy reading!

February 26, 2021

Najib Kailani

PusPIDeP Yogyakarta

## GLOSSARY

- Women's Agency : women's active involvement in a group or movement supported by their individual capacities. In Islamic militant movements, women are actively involved, for example, in spreading the ideas of radicalism and extremism, inviting their relatives and friends to carry out jihadi actions.
- Agency : an active subject who has an individual capacity to act independently in determining his own life choices.
- Al-Walā' wa al-Barā'* : loyalty and love for Islam, and to escape oneself from and hate those who are hostile to Islam.
- Amaliyah : Islamic practices. In radical groups, this term is often used to refer to several important actions such as actions to forbid wrong (*nahi munkar*), suicide bombings, direct physical *jihād* or war, indirect jihad by providing material and immaterial assistance.
- Baiat* : oath of allegiance to the leader.

- Deportees : ISIS sympathizers who had left Indonesia with the aim of joining ISIS, but on their way they were caught by a local government, such as the Turkish, and then were deported to Indonesia.
- Digital native : children born as the “native speakers” of the digital languages of computers, video games, and the Internet.
- Digital immigrant : people who are not born in a digital culture, but have begun to enter the digital world because of the media revolution.
- ESQ : Emotional Spiritual Quotient; a training program initiated by Ary Ginanjar Agustian with the goal of character building through the combination of human’s three potentials: intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligences.
- City guerrillas : jihadi actions carried out not in a country in conflict by searching for and attacking the enemies who are in their own territory or country.
- Halaqah* : an Islamic study forum where participants sit in a circle and the

teacher gives instruction on Islam from a certain Islamic book. This study forum is generally open to the public. It is just that the participants tend to be limited because the locations chosen are generally a corner of a mosque or other special places, in contrast to public learning a square or other wider places.

**Islamic heroism** : an understanding, belief, attitude or action that prioritizes courage in upholding truth and justice based on Islamic norms or teachings.

*Hijrah* : literally defined as migration from one place to another. In the case of jihadi groups, *hijrah* is defined as migration from an infidel country to an Islamic state. In practice, *hijrah* has different forms: some interpret it in a physical form, such as moving from Indonesia to ISIS; others interpret it in a non-physical form, such as taking allegiance to the caliph while still living in an infidel state, like the case of ISIS in Indonesia.

*Islam kaffah* : a doctrine about the idea of perfect Islam.



- Jamaah Jihad : an Islamic militant group based in Surakarta with around 50 members and starting its operation around 2010/2011. The group, which was led by Sigit Qardhawi, is a transformation of Tim Hisbah in Surakarta.
- JAD : *Jamaah Ansharut Daulah*; a jihadi extremist organization founded by Aman Abdurrahman.
- Jl : *Jamaah Islamiyah*; an Islamic militant organization operating in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, which is officially declared as a forbidden organization.
- LDK : *Lembaga Dakwah Kampus* (Campus Proselytizing Unit); a student activism unit that focuses on religion and proselytization.
- Life narrative : a research approach that emphasizes the subjective experience of an informant by exploring his life stories from childhood to adulthood, especially important stories that are closely related to the focus of the research.

- Maksiat (immorality) : behavior that is contrary to Islamic teachings or norms.
- Napiter : Former convicts of terrorism who are affiliated with all Islamic militant groups, except ISIS.
- MMI : Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (Indonesian Mujahidin Council); a radical Islamist organization that was formed in 2000 and served as an umbrella for Islamist and jihadi groups at the beginning of the Reformation Era.
- MTA : Majelis Tafsir Al-Qur'an (Council for the Interpretation of the Qur'an); an Islamic organization that focuses on education and *da'wa* founded by Abdullah Thufail in Surakarta in 1972.
- Nahi munkar : An Islamic doctrine that prohibits immorality. In the jihadist groups, the practice of this doctrine is transformed into a frontal and radical movement manifested in raiding places of immorality or other acts of *amaliyah* such as suicide bombings.

- NII : Negara Islam Indonesia (Islamic State of Indonesia); an Islamic militant group, which was initiated by Kartosoewirjo and attempted to establish an Islamic State in Indonesia. After its founder was executed, NII splits up into many groups.
- ISIS : Islamic State of Iraq and Syria; the caliphate state declared by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in mid-2014.
- Returnees : ISIS sympathizers who have left Indonesia and succeeded in joining ISIS in Iraq and Syria, but managed to return to Indonesia.
- Rohis : Kerohanian Islam (Islamic spirituality); an extracurricular activity in high school that focus on religion and *da'wa*.
- Salafis : Muslims who call for a 'return to the pure Islam' by practicing the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition in the literal sense, and following the religious model of the first three generations of Muslims. In practice, they are divided into many models as a result of different

interpretations in applying the pure Islam. Among the many models mentioned by some researchers are purist, political, and jihadi Salafis.

*Sīra* : a branch of Islamic scholarship that discusses the history of Islam with the main focus on the hagiography of the Prophet Muhammad.

Sweeping : an action carried out by a group of people in a convoy heading to a certain location with the aim of eradicating things that are considered contrary to norms. In the case of jihadi groups, they collectively raid the places of immorality with the aim to stop immoral practices in those places.

*Syahid* : holy death guaranteed with heaven because someone dies while defending his religion.

*Taghut* : a term used to denote an object of worship apart from Allah. In the context of Islamic religious politics, this term is also used for tyrannical rulers and their ranks who ignore and even stand against the absolute power and law of God.

*Takfīr / takfiri* : an Islamic teaching or doctrine that easily accuse other Islamic groups with different understanding of being infidel, especially those who do not will to make Allah's law the main law. In the political context, this doctrine launches the accusation of infidelity against the state and all agencies under the state that do not employ God's law as the state law.

Tim Hisbah : a local Islamic militant organization in Surakarta founded by Sigid Qardhawi etc. in 2008. The organization, which consisted of mosques young activists, was active in carrying out the "*nahi munkar*" movement in the community by sweeping the places of immorality. Two years after its establishment, this organization split into two groups: one group led by Sigid Qardhawi changed to Jamaah Jihad with its *takfīr* doctrine, while the other group remained in the old style of movement as it was originally founded, "*nahi munkar*".

*Ukhuwwa Islāmiyya* : An Islamic teaching or doctrine that emphasizes brotherhood among Muslims without considering national and regional boundaries.

TRANSLITERATION

Consonants

ء	'	ز	z	ك	k
ا	a	س	s	ل	l
ب	b	ش	sh	م	m
ت	t	ص	ṣ	ن	n
ث	th	ض	ḍ	و	w
ج	j	ط	ṭ	ه	h
ح	ḥ	ظ	ẓ	ي	y
خ	kh	ع	'	ال	al and 'l
د	d	غ	gh	ة	a (in construct
ذ	dh	ف	f		state: -at)
ر	r	ق	q		

Vowels

Long	آ	ā	Short	ا	a
	إي	ī		ي	i
	أو	ū		و	u
Doubled	يـ	iyy (final form ī)	Diphthongs	أي	ai
	وـ	uww (final form ū)		أو	au

# CHAPTER

# IV







## COMPETING THE SACRED PEDIGREE: Individual Agency Between Text and Authority

*Ahmad Rafiq*



One form of school exam questions is filling the gap with the command to fill in the dots or blank spaces with the correct answers. In school exam questions, usually the question maker provides several alternative choices, a kind of multiple choice to fill the empty space. The religious narrative and educational background of former convicted terrorists, returnees and deportees in West Java could be described as filling the empty space. Like previous studies, this research also did not find any direct relationship between the religious education background of the extremists, if it refers to formal education in schools or registered official educational institutions, with religious narratives that encourage people to engage in acts of terrorism, be it physical violence or involvement in the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The absence of the direct relationship indicates that there is an empty space between the formal religious education background and the religious aspirations of the informants which are triggered by many things around them, ranging from direct experiences, Islamic

literatures accessed, information from the authorities, as well as media provocation. In contrast to school lesson questions where the questioner provides alternative answer choices, in the case of informants in West Java, the gaps actually provide space for the presence of constructions of knowledge and non-formal education - and more dominantly informal education - to fill them. These constructions and institutions are what bridge religious aspirations into extreme religious acts that lead to acts of terrorism or simply being involved in supporting terrorism.

In Indonesian history, West Java which is the locus of this research, is generally one of the centers of the transformation of Islamism into a social activism during the early days of Indonesian independence. This understanding emerged in the form of the DI/TII movement carrying the idea of NII (Dijk 1983). According to Solahudin's notes the traces of this movement, can still be found today. Furthermore, this trail can be used to build a general map of the Islamist movement in West Java in the territorial category. The southern part of West Java is dominated by indigenous people and former enthusiasts of the Islamic State of Indonesia (NII) movement. Meanwhile, the northern part of West Java, including the Bodetabek area, is more dominated by urban communities, which are a mixture of local people and migrants (Solahudin 2011). Because of its nature as a buffer for the capital, the main motive for migration from outside which supports the formation of urban communities in the northern region is the political economy motive. This typology was not

intended as a territorial boundary that localized the former enthusiasts of the NII movement only in the South. However, this typology would like to show that when the remnants of the NII movement, whether in the form of agents or people who carry ideas, or their own understanding, move into the northern region, then these ideas and understandings will take on the symbols and characteristics of urban society in relative terms. For example middle and upper class agency, and the dominance of the influence of the development of information technology on personal or group decision making, and the emergence of women's agencies due to a more open public space ( Castells 1997; Baumann 1999). All informants in this study reside in North West Java. Therefore, we can find the colour of urban society as above mentioned and help to explain the analysis of the research findings.

The notes in this section will not explain in detail the forms of violence or acts of terrorism and its violent networks that can be found in other research reports. This report will only describe qualitatively how the religious aspiration and violence narratives related to religious education background through mediations that could be found in the study, such as structural problems, identity, economy, politics, or even a family or domestic problems. The narratives were obtained from three groups of informants: former convicted terrorists, returnees and deportees which are pointing to how they find and fill the empty space as illustrated above. This narrative will start with former convicted terrorist, and then returnees and deportees.

### **Former Convicted Terrorist: Heroism, Identity, and Social Linkage**

The stories of the former convicted terrorists in this case study share the same Islamic aspirations regarding the narrative of heroism, contestation of identity in urban spaces, and social linkage that mediates informal education in each case with religious narratives and social activism that contain violence to terrorism. The some part of the heroism narratives are the imagination and marker of masculinity that calls upon their moral and even physical and material responsibilities to fight for Islam. At the same time, the urban space provides for each person with an actual experience of their shaken Islamic identity, in addition to the issues of justice and Muslim humanity at the global level which are presented through reading and informal gatherings that 'call' solidarity among Muslims. In the context of social linkage, urban space may not have a distinctiveness compared to rural space because it also provides limited meeting spaces to answer personal and group religious aspirations that are apart from the construction of religious knowledge offered in formal educational institutions. The difference may occur in the construction of new knowledge that is used to fill the gap which is also formed by new industrial products, especially information technology. Some of these distances occur naturally due to the limitations of religious learning materials, but some are deliberately created because of the long-running interests of identity, economic, political, and even cultural contestation. The following three cases will explore about this topics in their respective accounts.

*The first story: the alienation of religious aspirations and the narrative of heroism*

The first case, Soleh who became a “media darling” because of his involvement in terrorism with its status as the country’s security apparatus. His first involvement in acts of terrorism namely since the provision of equipment until training of Muslim militias affiliated with the al-Qaeda network, has actually started since he was still an active police officer. By keeping his name disguised as the informant’s right, his story can be easily confirmed in many other sources which is open to public. His position as an active police status and conscious involvement indicate the strong construction of religious knowledge he has carried as well as the large distance to knowledge he must close.

He comes from a police family background who migrated to Depok (read Jakarta and its surroundings), Soleh completed his primary and secondary education in the urban environment of Jakarta and its surroundings. He claimed as a child who liked to fight as an expression of his manhood, continued until he entered high school at a vocational school in Jakarta. However, it was also in this school that he found a turning point. By keeping his previous violent narrative to claim his manhood through brawls, now he has turned to show his heroism to defend religion. It was at this vocational school that he began to be active in Rohis or Islamic organisation organized by students in school which reversed the designation of the persistent narrative of violence. Still in his teens in the early 90s, through Rohis activities he

was acquainted with Tarbiyah and jihadist Islamist literatures at that time. This religious background motivated him to continue his education to non-formal Islamic education institutions, Islamic boarding schools in one of the main bases of Nahdliyyin in East Java. He was briefly familiar with classical literature in various fields of basic Islamic studies, such as tauhid, fiqh, tasawuf and Arabic languages. At the same time, he still maintained the narrative of Islamism from the literature he read when he was active in Rohis. He even still remembers how his classmates saw him as strange because he read Sayyid Qutb's publications, an authoritative figure of al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun in Egypt who is one of the key references to the Tarbiyah movement in Indonesia. I call this point as the alienation of religious aspirations which will later become increasingly distant from their religious educational background and seeking to cover their distance elsewhere.

Only lasted about 2 years, Soleh returned to Jakarta without completing his education at Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*). In this research interview, he tried to remember and reflect, maybe that's why he could be different from other *santri* friends who were not easily tempted by new Islamic narratives outside the *pesantren*. His return was at the request of his parents for him to join the police, as were his father and siblings. At the same time, the spirit of Islamic education that is still maintained encourages him to continue his religious education in Islamic education institutions as well as da'wah institutions in the vicinity of his residence. This new institution is affiliated with Tarbiyah movement, where some

of the teachers were the founders of Tarbiyah movement-based political parties in Indonesia. He mentioned a number of names who became national figures of the party. In this institution, he «matured» the construction of his Islamic knowledge which refers to Islamism, but was not explicitly charged with violence and terrorism. This indecisiveness which then underlies him to enter into other informal institutions which he thinks are more assertive.

After being accepted as a member of the police in 1998, his involvement in *Tarbiyah*-based Islamic education institutions became a way for Soleh to remain active through informal education on the same ideological basis through *halaqah*. In this *halaqah* he even found a life partner, up to more than one. In a number of reports, this issue of marriage later became the cause of his accompanying dismissal from the Indonesian police, in addition to his involvement in military training and other terrorism-related activities. Along with the increasingly complex social reality and media information that he faced in the urban environment, he found new patrons through informal education which he thought were more able to provide answers to the actual problems he faced. The new patrons were no longer *Tarbiyah* but they were jihadists. These patrons were not really new if it refers to his experiences to senior high school when he firstly accessed to Islamist jihadists literatures such as Abdullah Azzam and Sayyid Qutb which managed his heroic path as Islamic. Up to this point, Soleh had been in a new social network and still accessed Islamist literature which accelerates his religious



knowledge to answer the problems of Islam and Muslims. The answers that he did not find from in Islamic educational institutions both formal and nonformal before including Tarbiyah's *halaqah*.

For Soleh, his personal experience and the information he received about the oppression of Muslims asked for answers that were more than just the knowledge of Islam he had so far. In interviews and in a number of media reports, Soleh mentioned about his bad experience when he had to negotiate his Islamic identity with his job which in fact sometimes contrasted to his religious position. However, he believed that it was not the only reason he finally involved in terrorism. The Islamic study groups or *halaqah* where he joined in including Tarbiyah emphasized their messages on propagating Muslim brotherhood and united in various places. Islamic identity is thus not only tested in his daily life which he assumed contradictory but also the passion and demand for one direction with Muslims all over the world, to strive together, even though what is meant by "together" can be interpreted in various ways. It can mean physical involvement wherever Muslims are oppressed and must be defended, such as fighting abroad, or building up the military force (read: militia) of Muslims in the country to defend the same rights.

In the identity contestation as mentioned above, Soleh involved to build and maintain internal strength in the country, without losing its relationship with the similar jihadist movement abroad. The reason made him active in the

establishment of Al- Qaeda at the Southeast Asian regional level based in Indonesia. From *Tarbiyah halaqah* Soleh in turn, actively moved to a new *halaqah* which circulated Islamist jihadist lessons, such as Islamic study groups led by Aman Abdurrahman and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir. Moreover, with a relatively adequate Islamic studies background he became actively recruiting people to fight for Islam by taking up arms, starting with the supply of weapons and finally being active in military training in Aceh where he had served as an active police officer. This military training also led him to become a convicted terrorist in 2010.

In religious aspirations, Soleh can fluently explained some religious authorities and literatures which became his references in studying Islam. These literatures were not only received but also transmitted through *halaqah* as an informal educational institution. This *halaqah* binds its members including Soleh in a very strong social network and linkage as long as they are in it. The strength of *halaqah* as a space for knowledge transmission can defeat the individual preferences in it. Soleh mentioned that his Islamic education which he got from traditional Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) occasionally appeared in his mind to negotiate the current choices. However, these negotiations were always won by the violent narratives which supported in the individual relationships within the social network. The narrative was also strengthened by internal characterizations of the authorities referred to in the network. Finally, social networks are not only a medium of interaction or friendship but also mediating

and determining choices of knowledge that can be obtained to perform heroic acts of violence. Social networks have been keeping the “sacred pedigree” of religious knowledge which believe that their Islamic narratives are the only truth and the basis of their current conditions namely war.

*The second story: migration and traces of heroism in humanitarian missions*

In almost the same urban space, another case study can also be found, Hasan, who migrated to Jakarta at a young age and was involved in acts of terrorism. According to Hasan, the construction of his religious knowledge began when he first moved from Lampung to Jakarta. His primary objective was continuing his education to university after graduating from vocational high school of automotive in Lampung. He claimed that had been registered at UI but he did not explicitly mention where he completed his study. His primary education was pursued at Muhammadiyah elementary and junior high schools before continuing to vocational high schools. The basis for religious education is only obtained from there. He mentioned that his family, especially his parents having religious education. His mother comes from Central Java and had Islamic boarding school educational background, while his father is from Jember with a strong Nahdliyyin Islamic tradition. He did not feel there was anything special about his previous religious education with reference to his family or school. He studied in Muhammadiyah institutions because they were close and dominant in Lampung. He claimed that

basic religious education he received from family environment and education. When he being asked to recall his religious knowledge, with mentioning the word “past” Hasan referred directly to his experience in Jakarta not in Lampung. From the beginning, Hasan identified Islamic religious knowledge that influenced his social activism with the migration process, which ultimately did not only take place once, but repeated to other physical spaces.

Although he did not mention any particular location of university or college he studied, in the context of Islamic knowledge and experience Hasan pointed to regular Islamic study groups at Islamic Propagation Council or DDII. When he moved to Jakarta, he was active in DDII activities which he called Moderate Salafi. This study is not in the context of confirming the Moderate Salafi label. DDII is known in the context of the Islamic organization in Indonesia as mass organization founded by the leaders of Masjumi. Apart from the political dynamics of Masyumi history, DDII was never known as an anti-NKRI organization, even though its founding fathers were known as figures with relatively strong Islamic thoughts and social activism. At DDII, Hasan obtained the spirit of defending Islam and solidarity among Muslims both at the national and global levels. At the same time, in those years there was the Ambon war which exposed openly by various print and electronic media and even digital. When DDII formed the KOMPAK wing organization (Crisis Management Committee) to provide humanitarian assistance to Muslims in Ambon, Hasan involved and was sent to Ambon

as a volunteer to help Ambonese Muslims , according to media news he received, was oppressed and fought by infidel people. According to Hasan, the context of his involvement fully followed KOMPAK DDII's humanitarian agenda in Ambon at that time.

If DDII can be said to be Hasan's first informal education space that formed the spirit of his Islamic social activism, Ambon has just become the second informal education space , which dominantly transforms his Islamic spirit into the Jihadist Islamist movement. In Ambon Hasan started to know Jihadist terms and was involved in *tadrib askari* (military training). He met some jihadists alumni of the Afghanistan war as trainers who were later on recognized as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members. Not only military knowledge as a means of self-protection on the battlefield, Hasan also studied the ideology of Islamism. Returning from his "humanitarian" activities in Ambon, Hasan continued to communicate with the jihadists. Hasan was involved in the Poso war indirectly, even to the war in the Philippines, even though he was limited to being a weapons courier. Moving from one place to another and changing names and identities to disguise himself, apart from fighting, he continued to be active in Islamic study groups through *halaqah* which in turn strengthened his jihadist Islamism ideology. As similar as Soleh, Hasan also eloquently mentioned a number of authorities and Jihadist Islamism literatures as sources of knowledge. The authorities and literatures partly intersect with the authorities and literatures mentioned by Soleh earlier. These reinforce hi

himself about “sacred pedigree” of his religious knowledge as the only truth at that time.

As similar as Saleh, religious educational background of Hasan was being accelerated by identity crises. It was just that Soleh’s identity crisis was initially not triggered by personal experiences like Hasan, but through the spirit of Islamic solidarity with fellow Muslims. Because of this, its first mission was aimed at “humanitarian”, which later narrowed down to armed defense. This identity crisis is also constructed by its social network from DDII and KOMPAK. At the same time, the space and atmosphere of the Ambon war as spatial linkage both limited and directed the spirit of solidarity to become an armed movement. The same spirit may produce different movements when it exist in another space. Once again, the case of Hasan showed empty spaces of religious education which he got in his hometown Lampung with new religious he received from Islamic study groups in DDII. The void is even wider when he was in social activism such as war in Ambon, which does not have a single answer from his previous religious knowledge . The ideas of jihadist Islamist offered by the jihadists and their ideology at war has been provided practical answers.

Although Hasan also experienced “internal negotiation “ in himself like Soleh. Soleh on several occasions recalled his experience of studying religion in Islamic boarding school which made him a little restrained, even though he was finally defeated by the pressure of the social networks where he was. Hasan also experienced the same thing. In an

interview for this research and in several other interviews were covered by the media, Hasan explicitly mentioned about the assassination order against a person convicted apostate and infidel by his group. Having carried out several times (he mentioned three times) of surveillance of the person in question, Hasan felt an internal conflict. The conflict is resolved by returning to one of the religious leaders where he was first exposed through DDII Islamic studies intensively what he called it as moderate salafi. From his discussion with the *ustaz* he decided to leave the order on the basis of argument that the action to be carried out was the right of the state or people who were authorized by state law, even if the allegations of heresy and apostasy were true. This pattern confirms that the empty spaces are not completely filled by new Islamist narratives. The narratives also still leave other empty spaces that are new. It was then that more moderate and open comparative narratives could enter. Hasan who had higher education, though hampered by the activity of “humanity” and terrorism, a little more build literacy and alternative construction in his mind.

Starting from the humanitarian mission, Hasan migrated from several cities in Indonesia and overseas where conflict in the name of religion take place had called his heroic spirit. Migration which happened many times was also becoming increasingly informal education which accelerated his religious aspirations and narratives of violence, leaving the basic knowledge of religion which he had received previously in Lampung. This even made him in jail three times with three

different cases which are all related to acts of terrorism, from engaging in any act of terrorism to the most mild form of possession of firearms.

*The third story: the religious aspiration and expression of masculinity*

We can find a stronger formal religious education background in the third case study, Malik. Born and raised from a family of educators, and pursued basic education in madrasa and religious schools until they entered university into a state Islamic university. After graduating from SDIT, MTs and private MA in Jakarta, Malik went to the Diploma Program in the Faculty of Islamic Education in Jakarta from 2002 until the end of 2005. Malik repeated his undergraduate program in the same department in UMJ (University of Muhammadiyah Jakarta). Feeling free when writing his thesis, Malik studied again at the same time at an Arabic language institute affiliated to the Kuwaiti government, in 2009, with the same major as well, but with the preface to the Arabic language. In the end, both the latest education nothing can be completed because of its involvement in military training in Aceh in 2010, which landed him in prison and a drop out of the two campuses.

Compared to other former convicted terrorist, Malik's formal religious education background is relatively well. It is influenced by his parent who worked in education sector. His father, who has been a junior high school teacher, was a lecturer at a private university in Jakarta. He graduated from State



Islamic University in Bandung and obtained a master degree in Jakarta. Meanwhile, although only a housewife took care of her children, before passed away, her mother completed an undergraduate degree in Sharia Economics at a campus in Jakarta. His brother was an alumnus of an Islamic boarding school Tahfiz Al-Quran in Central Java and had taught at Islamic boarding school in Kalimantan, recently teach Al-Qur'an with him at the school in their neighbourhood. Furthermore, because of his father was a prominent figure in the community, many residents come to his home to learn reciting Al-Qur'an. Since junior high school, Malik had taught reading Al-Qur'an to his friends. This kind of Islamic study group is what his family still maintains until recently.

With a formal and informal education background in the family, Malik concluded that never get any violent ideas from his educations. In contrast, he learnt from his parent and schools he had attended only basic Islamic teachings such as reciting Al-Qur'an, prayer, and worship practices. He claimed that he did not get much knowledge apart from these basic materials.

The situation above is different from the informal education he received at the same time as his formal education in tertiary institutions. The *liqā'* or *halaqah* model that he actively participated in an Islamic party during his college days was admittedly very influential on his way of thinking and religious aspirations. For him, attending *halaqah* is learning with the teacher, so that knowledge is not only a text, but also sees the teacher's ways, attitudes, and morals. Although,

it was influential for him Islamic education through the *halaqah* of this party was not enough, until he met Aman Abdurrahman and attended his sermons and lessons who for him answered concretely what Muslims should do under current conditions. In addition to basic Islamic materials such as Arabic, Fiqh and Tauhid, through Aman Abdurrahman he also felt that he had learned to practice directly in the field. The practice he meant was the defense of Muslims with the obligation to attend war training ( *tadrīb* ‘ *askarī* ). Although he did not mention in detail the defense in question, Malik seemed to build the same narrative as Soleh and Hasan before, namely the willingness to act for fellow Muslims who did not get their explanation from the formal education he had taken, even when he took three different educations in three schools. It is believed that the three educational institutions have provided him with powerful tools to further directly enter Islamist literature especially those in Arabic.

Ties with the figure like Aman Abdurrahman, as experienced by Soleh and Hasan has made them familiar with Jihadist-Islamist literatures as their favourite readings. While recognizing familiar with foundational references such as *Sahih Al- Bukhari*, the four schools of jurisprudence, Imam Ghazali’s *Ihya Ulum al-Dīn’* , these materials have not prevented them accept Salafi Jihadist literatures namely Abdullah Azzam’s book, *Tarbiyah Jihadiyah*. Malik claimed had read finished the 12 volumes of the book. Of all the cases above, Malik is the only one who mentioned Imam Samudera’s book *Aku Melawan Teroris*. Malik was even more

fond of other Islamist literatures such as the works of Hasan al-Banna. Malik asserted that the Islamist literatures have constructed his Islamic knowledge and religious aspirations to attend the military training in Aceh. Although he did not look at their figures recently, Malik admitted that when he decided to involve in military training, Jihadist Islamism figures were his reference, whether he met directly such as Aman Abdurrahman and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir or simply through literature like Abdullah Azzam and Hassan Al-Banna. The significant location of these authorities has in turn made Malik to meet Abdullah Azzam in a dream.

For Malik himself, the names become important because they meet the criteria that *dakwah bilhal* (Islamic propagation by practice) which he interpreted with actions, not just words. This narrative that made him comfortable with guns and war because it met the criteria for real action. Although he realized the war he meant was not possible at this time in Indonesia, the narrative heroisms and masculinity is still visible from his current social activism disaster volunteer movements -both that he was involved directly or by reading from media— and fitness with the many weights he lifts. This narrative is also evident from his assumptions about the education of boys and their duties in the family. If a girl, like the only child he currently has, is educated with what he calls as “lure” meanwhile a boy must be educated with lure and punishment, because he is the one who later responsible for earning a living and fulfilling the family needs, while women only serve at home.

After being released from prison, Malik also began to distance himself from the religious authorities he mentioned earlier. However, he still carried similar religious aspirations with them. Although he has a similar family background as Soleh and Hasan, namely from the Muslim traditional Islamic background or *Nahdliyyin*, Malik did not refer to religious authorities from the Nahdliyyin circles as Soleh and Hasan did. Soleh and Hasan returned to Gus Baha who did not circulate the narrative of Islamism. Malik still accepts the narrative of Islamism but referring to salafi *manhājī* (doctrinal orientation) authority, and has left *jihādī-ḥarākī* ( jihadism). Malik particularly mentioned the authorities such as Ustadz Firanda and Ustadz Nurul Zikri. In contrast his previous references he recently refers to new figures above mentioned through digital media.

In general, there are two patterns of radical religious narratives that lead to violence and terrorism in the three cases above mentioned. The first pattern shows that there is an empty space for each religious aspirations caused by the accumulation of information from media, especially digital media and personal experiences, with knowledge of Islam obtained from previous formal educational institutions. The empty space is also shaped by religious aspiration which did not find its expression in any particular religious education. The empty space is then filled with narratives of violence and terrorism offered by informal education circulated by Jihadist Islamists. The offer came simultaneously through authorities and jihadi Islamism literatures. They fully

believe to both authority and literature as the only evidence of religious knowledge and accepted them as sacred pedigree.

The presence of the narrative of violence in empty space accelerated by many things, either in the subjectivity of former convicted terrorists or spaces around them. Digital media and personal experiences raise the issue of identity including spirit of religiosity in the form of performing piety and the spirit of Muslim solidarity through heroic action. The issue of identity is also strengthened by the impulse of masculinity such as feeling threatened masculinity or superiority of maleness. At the same time, the structure of society outside the subject in form of social networking and networking space have played a significant role in limiting the rise of the internal dynamics in the process of establishing the knowledge authority of the former convicted terrorists in their time respectively as depicted above.

Social linkage, authority relationship and literatures accompanied it, seems to differentiate the relationship between religious education background with religious aspiration nuanced by violent extremism of the former convicted terrorists if we compare to returnees and deportees as follow

### **Returnee and Deportee in One of Big Dipper**

In the context of the cases in this study, the different categories of returnee and deportee are actually not very significant. They actually come from a large group connected by a family linkage. On their way to ISIS, because of their large number, they were divided into four groups which

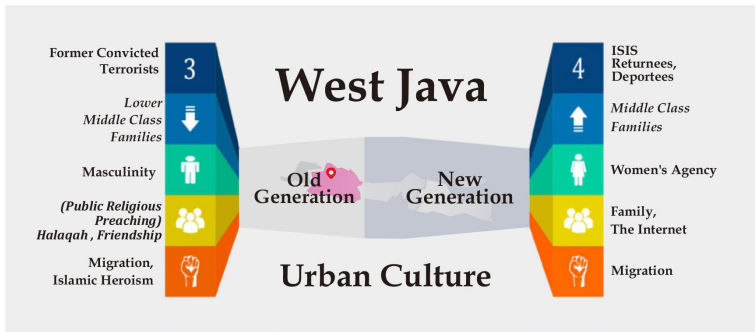
entered Syria separately. Unfortunately it could not be achieved, the first group consist of someone who appointed as a reference for Islamic questions in the family just failed to enter Syria and was arrested by Turkish government officials, until he was being deported to Indonesia. Although they are connected as one big family, this group consists of a number of families which have their own dynamics. This study will only take three family case studies to show the dynamics as well as the general pattern of religious aspirations and issues of religious education background in each case.

***Three stories in one group: women's agency, family economy, and welfare narrative***

Soleha, is the wife of an ustaz who teaches complete Islam and "straightforward". Soleha did not have any formal or non-formal religious education background. In addition to her informal religious education in family (read husband) and the virtual world in the future, sometime before *hijrah* (migration) her formal religious education was relatively simply received from school since elementary school, junior high, up to senior high school in the early 90s. He was familiar with -but not really familiar- religious traditions in the place of her origin in one of the cities in East Java with a strong tradition of *nahdliyyin*. However, she claimed that she is not part of that tradition. There is only little Islamic knowledge she could remember unless the religious practices of everyday life. Moreover her moving to Jakarta did not any relationship with religious reason, except for working in one company, to

meet with the husband who then becomes her religious. Her marriage with the religious mentor is not the first marriage.

From various sources can be obtained, Soleha repeatedly confirmed the two sources of religious knowledge that forms her religious narrative namely the family especially her husband and cyberspace. There is no particular religious authority or Muslim figure in local, national, and global, which impressed Soleha. There are no specific Muslim authority which whom she has referred to as well as any specific religious literatures that she could remember and refer in a number of conversations except in an interview for this study and also in some of the interviews with her in social media that she often refers to the story of the Prophet and Al-Qur'an and hadist directly. The absence of religious authority, literature, and other narratives has only made the two sources of informal religious knowledge are very significant in the instruction of religious narratives.



Meanwhile, she has to deal with economic and family issues at the same time with two children from her first marriage and one child with her current husband who is

polygamous. Both of these issues, the economy and the family have possibly significant to mediate religious narratives and to constructs her religious education in earlier informal channels. The notion that Islam we call 'straightforward' above mentioned is characterized by the need for religion to specifically and explicitly solve the actual problems faced by Muslims. The news about the declaration of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) which framed calling to emigrate (*hijrah*) and promised social welfare and piety in the state seemed to be the answer to the above economic and family issues. Of course, with a background of inadequate religious education, religious aspirations that prompted him to involve constructed by her husband through informal education in family and supported by knowledge she got from surfing in cyberspace.

The virtual world actually offers many choices, even relatively very and too many choices to answer those economic and family issues. However, Soleha's construction of religious aspirations relatively became the compass of choice for information chosen. Her Islamic aspiration is relatively puritanical in term of concerned with the purity of Islam in accordance with the basic teachings and the first source. In the interview, along with absence of religious figures and Islamic literatures being referred, Soleha put pressure on two things: first, monotheism or *tauhid* as the most important in religion than others; and second, Al-Qur'an as the main reference. In the first, instead of remembering many things that might be difficult for him, what is important is



the lesson of *tauhid*. In her understanding about tauhid she locates subjects are insignificant. In fact, he also used this to determine the choices of social groups that could be a space for her informal education, such as Islamic study group which he wanted to participate in. "I used to participate in one Islamic study group, but it teaches this should be read etc, afterward I never come again to the Islamic lesson group" she said. In line with this attitude, she will find the answers for all problems to verses of the Al-Qur'an. Against formal and informal Islamic education as mentioned previously, the ability to refer and call the meaning of foundational texts is relatively good and interesting to mark this puritanical nature.

Soleha's position as a woman even though her religious narrative was significantly constructed by her husband, made family relationships not only a medium for transmitting knowledge, but also a point of making decisions and involving more subjects. His two young children were relatively not in a position to choose whether to be involved or not, except with their mother, not their father. The same situation also applies to older children, who at the time of the decision to leave were in their teens. In an interview on a private TV station, her eldest son clearly stated that he decided to go to Syria because he did not want to be left alone, without having certain ideological knowledge or beliefs about the purpose of the trip. This reinforces the previous thesis saying that women's involvement in social activism including joining with ISIS is relatively will involve more subjects, especially in the circle of nuclear family like the wife to the husband,

mother to children, or children to parents. We can see this pattern later in other cases as well.

The position of women agency who never became a single subject confirmed by a second family story of this large family. In contrast to Soleha, Denok, the second of third children from middle to upper class families who are relatively well-off economically and socially. Both of her parents completed higher education, even her father holds a master's degree and occupies an important position in a state-owned company outside Java. They are connected with their extended family in Depok and usually gather in moments of large family gatherings at Denok's grandmother's place in Depok. Her mother was the brother-in-law of her husband and was also Soleha's religious adviser, Pak Huda. The extended family meeting that took place was not just an ordinary meeting, but in a certain period also family Islamic lesson which led by Pak Huda. From this Islamic lesson, Denok got information about the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Due to the long distance, the frequency of Denok and his family's attendance at this extended family Islamic study group is relatively limited. He filled this limitation by surfing in cyberspace. Denok's agency is generally the same as Soleha. He managed to convince his mother, who had stopped working at a state-owned bank, with an attempt to build his own, less successful business, to join him. The participation of her mother finally brought her two siblings who were also women, even her father who explicitly stated that he was only involved to accompany the family, which was all women, without

understanding deeply the religious issues that accompany it, except for the jargon of a prosperous Islamic state. Even her father himself, acknowledged that he has not a good Islamic understanding. His involvement in family Islamic lesson was more as a family member, not because of the acceptance of religious understanding that is conveyed. Hence, his decision to get involved, even provided financial support, was more due to Denok's encouragement and his mother which he said were more dominant in teaching him religion.

Denok, who is a digital native has received his Islamic basic education from SDIT and SMPIT in Batam city. He continued his schooling to favourite high school in Batam which had to be completed with the package C exam due to her migration to ISIS. In an integrated Islamic school, Denok did get religious materials, such as worship, memorization of Al-Qur'an, and Arabic language, but she did not feel it was something important at that time. Even today, not many impressions have lingered in his memory from those lessons. Although there are lessons in Islamic history such as the stories of the prophets that she remembered, for her those lessons did not have much influence on his current religious aspirations. In fact, it was informal education in the family Islamic lessons that stimulated her thoughts further about the Islamic state, which for her was not found in the previous formal education. The low intensity of attendance at family Islamic lesson due to distance makes her digital native character s work well by seeking and confirming information from cyberspace. ' Algorithm' psychic worked to select sites

and information that confirms positively about ISIS which provides prosperity compared with the information about the backward of Muslim countries including in Indonesia, which stimulated them to emigrate. There is no other authority that confirmed aspirations and narrative except her family Islamic lesson. Consequently, she back again to the virtual world. In a number of interviews, Denok was able to specifically mentions the sites and social media he referred to. The site which also presents a number of “ muhajirah « figures , Asian and European women of the same age who have emigrated to NIIS which further convinced him with the promise of prosperity and piety of the Islamic state made by Abu Bakr al-Baghadi .

Just like Soleha who has a puritanical view of Islam when he decided to migrate could be also found from Denok. Its emphasis on pure tauhid as well as direct reference to the verses of the Al-Qur’an marked its position. Even though Denok had a formal education with Islamic nuances at the primary and secondary education levels, according to her, that position was not obtained from there. However, he got it from family Islamic lessons and from surfing in cyberspace. Denok also often refers to the verses of the Al-Qur’an to mention the understanding about the actual conditions of Muslims. In fact, when she was asked about Islamic reference she mentioned Al-Qur’an, the story of the Prophet also refers to the Koran which has explained everything completely and covers all aspects of life, including government.

In contrast to Soleha, when Denok being invited to reflect on her situation after returning back from ISIS to

Indonesia, Denok seems to recognize Islamist figures and Islamic literatures, which previously never come to her mind. He mentioned such figures including Buya Syafi'i Ma'arif and his writings, as well as Irfan Amalee and his peace movements. As a digital native, a bad experience during stay at ISIS which forced her and her family to find a way home has reorganized and expanded her algorithms to understand the existing situation, including her Islamic aspirations.

The third story comes from a male returnee which demonstrates female agency as illustrated in the previous two stories. Fadli who had written the story of Syria in the book that already disseminated to many cities in Indonesia, indirectly involved in the exodus to ISIS because of his mother. Fadli lived with his mother, who still has a family relationship with Pak Huda as uncle and also brother in-law, after his parent divorced. As similar as Denok, Fadli's parents who live separately are relatively well-off economically. Fadli was not regularly attending his family Islamic study group and he did not know about his mother and big sister as well his extended family planning to go to ISIS. Far away from his mother and staying alone made him longing family especially his mother. As a result he decided to go to ISIS in order to meet his family.

From an urban middle class famil, Fadli only received religious education from primary and secondary schools in public schools. In high school level, accompanied by dynamic discussions with his family as he tells of in his book, Fadli finally decided to pursue a homeschooling education model. A claim that there was no Islamic religious lessons from schools

did not necessarily lead to Fadli's acceptance of the ISIS religious narrative. There is no religious authority he refers to as well. Within the family, he also relatively has no preference for certain religious groups and practices, because his mother has Muhammadiyah religious preference while his father has a NU background. However, this "empty" condition as a significant problem later on. When he found out that his family had left him to join ISIS for formal reasons of religious aspirations, he had absolutely no reference to respond. With a similar pattern to Denok, his 'algorithm' works to find justification and a way to join ISIS for the sake of being with his family, mother and brother.

Marking a new generation, Fadli also experienced the same experience as Denok namely expanding his algorithm after returning back to Indonesia. Although he asserted the influence of her mother in shaping his informal religious education in family, the character of the digital native remains significant. Fadli even recently refers to some authorities such as ustaz Nur Huda who recruited him at [ruangbaca.com](http://ruangbaca.com), Irfan Amalee with the Peace Generation movement, and Habib Husein Ja'far, the pioneer of the *Islam Cinta* movement. The three names are figures who are active in cyberspace to counter the religious violent extremism aspirations.

### ***Returnees : agency, mediation, and aspiration***

The case studies in West Java as explored above indicate the dominance story of female agency among the returnees. The significant location of women agency is related to the issues

which mediate the construction of religious knowledge obtained through informal education. The mediation resulted in the agent involvement in religious extremism in the form of moving to ISIS. The issues include family economy namely economic problems faced by a family, but can also be the welfare issues in a broader sense namely economic welfare. These two issues meet in the narrative and imagination of Islamic way of life. The issue of welfare coupled with piety can emerge as one of the markers of the urban middle classes as illustrated in the second and third cases.

The significant location of female agency also has an impact on the involvement of more subjects of the perpetrator. Women's agency does not emphasize the heroic side of social activism but the family linkage. As a result, female agencies will often involve other family members. A wife or mother will have the potential to invite her husband, children, and even parents. A girl has the potential to invite both parents, especially male parents, for protection or other reasons.

The emergence of a new group of religious extremism from digital native generation such as their involvement in ISIS also characterized by a weakening of social linkage in the form of cells of Islamist group. Instead of social network as happened among former convicted terrorists, this new phenomenon emphasizes on family linkage and individual search-based virtual world.

The three points above mentioned are also connected by the normative content of formal religious education which

is considered by those involved in acts of religious violent extremism as failing to respond to religious aspirations or to narratives of violence they receive from domestic issues in the family or those who exposed by news in cyberspace. The three cases indicate a uniqueness of each person at various age levels. This requires Islamic education formulae that are dynamic and responsive to religious aspirations.

### *Deportee: Romance and Masculinity*

In the midst of a pandemic atmosphere when this study being carried out, this research will only present one deportee case study. As similar as the three case studies about returnees above, the following deportee of ISIS occupies a key position in shaping Islamic religious knowledge of the returnees. He was identified as deportee due to his failure to enter ISIS territory. He was arrested, returned to Indonesia. Meanwhile, most of his family, including two of his immediate family members can manage to go to ISIS.

His religious knowledge was originally constructed by social networks such as old generation of former convicted terrorists as above described through NII. After being disconnected with the NII, he still maintained the romance about Islamic state through social media to find information about NII propaganda. This propaganda brought his old knowledge about the imagination of the Islamic state. In contrast to the initial pattern when the NII are tried to set up Islamic state in Indonesia, the new model encourages to move to ISIS. Pak Huda in terms of age and character, his religious



construction becomes a model of intermediary between old model of religious violent extremism dominated by former convicted terrorist and a new model which is dominated by returnees who are characterised as digital natives. In the late 80s and early 90s, Pak Huda was indeed involved in NII.

Pak Huda's knowledge construction is relatively similar as the returnees above mentioned except for the content of knowledge which is relatively more, because of its position as a resource person. He did not mention the educational institutions he had attended. However, in an interview we carried out, he explicitly mentioned that he has been active in the NII in the late 90s and also attended non-formal education in Islamic boarding school. Therefore, although he refers to the verses of the Al-Qur'an and hadith directly as appeared among the returnees he was able to provide a relatively more complex explanation of the verse or hadith that he quoted. The similarity of this pattern illustrates the strong influence of Pak Huda on the knowledge construction of the two women returnees. However, having as a position as religious reference for them Pak Huda has a broader knowledge. Pak Huda described that one day when he was in prison he managed argumentation with a number former convicted terrorists who lost to argue religion with him. Consequently, this made him hostile because he was considered to keep terrorism prisoners away from the jihadist ideology that became the ideology of the movement.

Although Pak Huda was the source of informal knowledge for the two women returnees he brought up his own issue

which mediated his religious background with his decision to join ISIS. The issue of masculinity as the person in charge of family welfare, which is not only in the form of economic but also health problems, met with ISIS propaganda on welfare and piety in digital media. During that time his religious aspiration met with his desperate condition about the failure of democracy in Indonesia. This aspiration is linked to the NII romance that he has been followed. NII's romanticism does not occur in cases of the women returnees. In contrast to the returnees case that relies heavily on digital media to cover the empty space between the religious knowledge of formal education and their religious aspirations, Pak Huda added "religious romance" as the former of NII to cover the empty space. So, even though he also surfed in cyberspace his 'algorhythm' was relatively more established which guides him to determine the intended construction of knowledge.

In the cases above, the returnees and deportee have a similar pattern of religious narrative which did not have any religious authorities and literatures but they made Al-quran and hadith as a direct reference. In Islamic history such patterns can be found in the social activism of modern Muslims especially modernists and reformers (Afsaruddin 2007; Brown 1999). In several interviews with informants they were consistently referring to Al-Qur'an to strengthen their narrative constructions. They did not find the narratives in formal education, but on their own way. Deportee who is the ideologue of the group has refreshed his memory about NII with basic commands from the Al-Qur'an and the hadith that

he remembered. Meanwhile, the returnees referred all their arguments by showing the number of verses of the Al-Qur'an. There was no authorities or literatures that they referred to.

### **Closing Remarks**

Being in one big dipper, the cases of returnees and deportee in this study simultaneously reaffirmed the same general pattern with the former convicted terrorists. The pattern realised in the form of an open gap between religious educational background, especially in formal and informal education, and their religious aspirations. Even though they are both influenced by the development of information technology as one of the markers of urban society, the case of former convicted terrorists shows a slight difference between returnees and deportee. The development of information technology among former convicted terrorists did not close the empty space, but plays a significant role in accelerating the problem of identity, solidarity movement, and gender crisis which makes religious aspirations distant from religious knowledge previously acquired in formal and non-formal education. Finally, the empty space is closed through informal education which is built through social networks and space networks. In this network, former convicted terrorists used to tie themselves to authorities and literature as personal agency. Meanwhile, in the case of returnees and deportee, information technology does not only accelerate the opening of the empty space between their religious knowledge and their religious aspirations. Moreover, information technology also

fills that space as an impersonal authority, namely an authority that does not rest on the character of a particular authority or literature. This phenomenon is a typical phenomenon of digital society in the contemporary era where returnees and deportee live (Bunt 2003; Bunt 2013; Campbell 2021; Larsson 2011). Social and spatial networks among former convicted terrorists have been replaced by family networks and digital media among returnees and deportee.

In other words, the primary issue about the relationship between education background and religious aspiration which led to religious violent extremism is an empty space in between. The main issue is not the positive relationship where the former affects the latest. Even so, we also did not care about the fact that a number of formal education space that facilitate direct or indirect present and growing religious violent extremism which provide a justification in the future. We can refer to specific case such as Islamic literatures read by Rohis students in school, or the presence of a mentors from outside school to manage Islamic activities with the agenda of Islamism he brought, or even the presence of a teacher in non-Islamic education field of study which actually becomes a place to complain about religious issues and bring students into direct or indirect narratives of violence (Noorhaidi 2018).

From the above cases it can also be concluded that the presence of informal education does not necessarily mediate extreme religious aspirations into violent behavior in religion, including terrorism. Informal education fills the gap between

formal and non-formal education with religious aspirations which are constructed relatively and vary by each person: economy, politics, identity crisis, structural problems, media information, and even gender crises. The religious aspirations at this context produce an extreme religious narrative. Aspiration and religious narrative is then accelerated by social structures and social networks, family network and even spatial network to be a practice of violence and terrorism. Changing structures and networks can also affect to the change of violence, become more violent, or even weaken. In a broader scale, Schulze (2002) demonstrates that the spread of *al-Ikhwan al-Muslim* Brotherhood in the Middle East and Asia produces different religious violent practices or in contrary, it becomes an open ideology.

In line with the general symptoms above, the research findings above also confirm the differences in the practice of violence which involve female agencies. The difference can be started from the religious aspirations of women in the above case which emphasizes the issues of welfare and piety related to domestic issues, family welfare. Family welfare can be in the form of family economic or health issues. In contrast to male agencies that emphasize masculinity and heroism. Even so, in some cases, the prominence of masculinity is sometimes indicate an expression of masculinity problems in the domestic space, such as the issue of fulfilling the family economy, childcare arrangements, or the division of public and domestic responsibilities that challenge male masculinity. Due to heroic reason the men agency are more

often single, compared to women agency. Women agency will attract more subjects to engage with, as shown in the differences in the number among the former convicted terrorist, returnees and deportee. In general, women agency ultimately determine religious aspirations and narratives as well as possible violent practices ( Taskarina 2018; Loveihm 2013)

Finally, the empty spaces that were present to be filled provide opportunities for the presence and growth of religious aspirations and narratives that had violent extremism in all its forms. Even though this empty space does not suddenly exist, the accumulation of various mediating factors which fail to respond appropriately causes it to turn into aspirations, narratives, and even violent practices. A turning point that can also be found in some of the cases above occurs when aspirations and narratives of violence are responded to appropriately in existing educational processes, both in formal, non-formal, and informal institutions. The alternative narratives which existed among the students did not marginalize them in the process in the educational space, whether formal, non-formal, or informal. *Allah knows best* .

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# THE NARRATIVES OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN INDONESIA

Educational Background and Individual Agency

This book examines religious educational background of the former convicted terrorists, returnees and deportees through their biographical narratives and individual agency. In order to extend and enrich the exiting studies on religious extremism which pay much attention to figures and networks of violent extremist groups and emphasize structural and identity analysis, this book argues that religious education background also exposes a person to radical and extremist ideology when it is mediated by structural problems, identity crises, social networks, and ideologies. These factors shape or direct certain religious understandings significantly towards religion-based extremism.

This book demonstrates that there are two categories of generations within the discourse of religious violent extremism when viewed from the their perspectives and sources of religious knowledges. The former is characterized by social networks, while the latter is open to information related to religious aspirations. The first generation is dominated by former convicted terrorists informants. They generally come from lower middle class family backgrounds and are exposed to the ideology of radicalism and extremism through social networks: Islamic study groups and social linkages. Meanwhile, the second generation is dominated by ISIS returnees and deportees. They typically come from an affluent family and have an urban culture background. Family networks and the internet are important contexts that expose them to radicalism and extremism.



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