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Youth Existence and Radicalism in Aceh, Indonesia

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YOUTH EXISTENCE AND RADICALISM IN ACEH, INDONESIA

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Abstract

In general, the discourse on youth existence and radicalism in Aceh has been started by a radicalism map and ended by analyzing data on youth involvement in countering radicalism in Aceh. The data were presented from previous facts, media publications, interviews, and observations of various sources. The result of the analysis revealed that the intensity of radicalism discourse among youth had increased in 2017. It was the momentum of the development of radicalism discourse. It was reflected by the involvement of youth activists of various community, youth, and university organizations in countering radicalism idea in Aceh. Therefore, the challenge of youth existence in responding to religious radicalism unemployment and drug in Aceh is very important. It is perceived that not every single radical action reflects the ideological belief but due to social and political gaps.

Keywords: Youth, Aceh, Development, Radicalism, Religious



A. Introduction

The biggest event of the radicalism discourse was the gathering of 20 state and private universities in Aceh in a mass lecture on combatting radicalism idea. The lecture was on 28 October 2017 in Banda Aceh. The gathering involved about a thousand students of those universities to declare the commitment against radicalism, terrorism and communism in Aceh. In the declaration, the representatives of the universities stated that One State Ideology which is *Pancasila*, One State Constitution which is *UUD 1945*, One state which *Negara Kesatuan Indonesia*, One Symbol which is *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, and One Commitment which is against radicalism.

Before the radicalism discourse emerged in Aceh, youth focused on several periods; (1) from 1976 to 1998, youth was experienced by separatism movement (Kurniawan, 2018), (2) the period of 1998 to 2003, youth was inserted by the phenomenon of Refendum discourse in Aceh (Aspinall & Chauvel, 2018), (3) during the period of 2004 to 2005, youth involved in post disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction after the earthquake and tsunami (Ismail, 2018), (4) from 2005 to 2016, youth relish of the result of MoU RI-GAM Peace Agreement and (5) during the period 2017 to present, youth involve in anti radicalism and terrorism (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2018).

In historical perspectives, the existency of young people in Aceh could be understood from thoughts and interests of any youth period (Waizenegger & Hyndman, 2010). There were several discourse transformations between local and national movements (Dudouet, 2009). The facts have shown from 1976 to 2016. Youth in Aceh have involved actively in local discourses, such as Free Aceh Movement (GAM), Military Operations (DOM), Referendum Movement, the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA 1 and CoHA 2), the Martial Law, the Civil Emergency, the MoU Helsinki between the Government of Indonesia and GAM, the Earthquake in 2004, the Tsunami, the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, the Reintegration, and the sustainable peace (Marhaban, 2018). But from 2017, the discourse of youth involvement in Aceh changed into radicalism (Subhani et al., 2018).

It is important that the youth involvement in radicalism discourse has been influenced by the military training in a jungle of Aceh Besar in 2010. It was in fact initiated the establishment of the *Khilafah* (Islamic State) in Southeast Asia (Ramakrishna, 2017). Therefore, Aceh is still considered fragile, including infiltrated by radicalism and terrorism. Both ideas are part of insurgencies (Ahmad, 2015). In most recent, some lectures and students indicated as members of *Hizbut Thahir Indonesia* (HTI) which was banned because of their idea of establishing the *Khilafah 'ala Minhaj an-Nubuwwah* (Ichwan, 2013) (Geary, 2018) .

B. Method

The research applied qualitative methodology. The data collection procedures were document analysis, interview, and observation (Katz, 2015). The qualitative was selected to understand the meaning of youth existence and radicalism in Aceh. The resources of the data were humans and non-humans. In human context, the data were on social situation and youth in community in Aceh. Meanwhile, non-human context was documents and physical and nonphysical analysis. The study explored and found mutual knowledge on youth transformation Aceh and how youth existence in countering radicalism.

C. Finding and Discussion

1. Finding

a. Youth and Radicalism

The spirit of the Public State Campaign againsts Radicalism in a field Lapangan Tugu Darussalam Banda Aceh was carried out on the same day of National Youth Oath of Indonesia as a youth expression of commitment on radicalism and terrorism in Aceh. The discourse of radicalism and terrorism is projected an ongoing event along the future years to protect universities, mosques, islamic boarding schools and mass organisations from both radicalims and terrorism. Therefore, youth should be free from the influence.



Globally, it should be admitted that radicalism targets young people as agents of change in a radical movement. One of the youth movements is student and young generation. The interaction between students and radicalism is not simply happening on universities. Radicalism is triggered by communications built by external links of universities. By then, the radical movements tried to assimilate and recruit students (Haider, 2017).

Young people should deepen their understanding on religious dogma in order to eliminate radicalism idea. The limited interpretation of religious dogma would lead to fanaticism and radicalism. Radical movement among students are supported by movements outside universities. The phenomenon of islamic state had been an example of radical movement on campus which was supported by external organisations Aceh Province as an entity always suffers from difficulties whether through a design or not. Conflict, peace, and development are major events in community life circles in Aceh (Bustamam-Ahmad, 2019). These typical transformations have been passed by youth from Indonesian Independency to a Peace Agreement called MoU Helsinki. Youth in Aceh is believed as at the front line of any event.

In 2017, there has been a pattern that youth in Aceh involves in the discourse and campaign againts radicalism. This momentum would be sustainable along the future years until reaching a new discourse on radicalism. Youth involvement has been started from dialogues and campaigns on radicalism in Aceh (Bustamam-Ahmad, 2014). The following table shows that the national campaigns against radicalism and terrorism have been systematically carried out by youth.

Table 1: The Table of Radicalism Discourses in Aceh in 2017.

Date	Venue	Host	Theme
November, 8, 2017	The Post Graduate Hall, UIN Ar-Raniry	<i>Ikatan Penulis Santri Aceh</i> (IPSA)	MassOrganisation Regulation, Intolerance and Radicalism: Leading to whom



November, 4, 2017	The Hall of Universitas Muhammadiyah Aceh	Kopertis Aceh, BNPT, UIN Ar-Raniry, Unimal dan Kodam Iskandar Muda	Bridging the nation to prevent radicalism at universities"
October, 28, 2017	Lapangan Tugu, Darussalam Banda Aceh	20 PTN dan PTS se-Aceh	The Public Lecture on Nasionalism againts Radicalism
October, 28, 2017	Aceh	DPD/Rafli/Serambi Indonesia	Radicalism occurance without government involvement on people
October, 28, 2017	Aceh	Persatuan Pemuda Warga Indonesia (PPWI) Aceh	Indonesian Youth against Radicalism threat
October, 24, 2017	University Hall, STAIN Teungku Dirundeng	KNPI Aceh Barat	Nationalism Dialogue on Youth Oth Day
October, 8, 2017	Leupung Sub district, Aceh Besar District	BEM Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora UIN Ar-Raniry	Nationalism Dialogue, Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora
September, 28, 2017	The Hall of Kesbangpol Aceh	Forum Pemuda Peduli Nusantara (FPPN)	Radikalisme, Terorisme dan Narkoba Bayangi Aceh
September, 28, 2017	ACC Hall Uteunkot Cunda, Lhokseumawe	Wakapolda/Serambi Indonesia	3 universities in Aceh are indentified the idea of <i>Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia</i> (The Role of univerisity in anticipating radicalism)
5 September 2017	Aceh	MPU/Teungku Faisa Aly/Serambi Indonesia	It is impossible to commit <i>Jihad</i> to Myanmar
4 September 2017	Aceh	MPU/Teungku Faisa Aly/Serambi Indonesia	Not agreed on <i>Jihad</i> Campaign for Rohingya



3 September 2017	Aceh	FPI	<i>FPI</i> Aceh opened a recruitment for <i>Jihadis</i> to fight for Rohingya
22 August 2017	Cafe 3 in 1, Banda Aceh	Badan Koordinasi Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (BADKO HMI)	Maintaining the Diversity and Tolerance of Indonesia
24 July 2017	AAC Dayan Dawood Unsyiah	The Public Lecture of Mahfud MD	Advocating the State Ideology againsts the Radicalism
10 July 2017	Blang Padang Public Field, Banda Aceh	Kapolda (Provincial Police Chief) on <i>Serambi Indonesia</i> (the local newspaper)	The Anniversary of Police Corps for 71. (Kapolda: Do not be defeated by the terrorists)
26 April 2017	Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh	The Indonesian University Rectors Forum	The Islamic University Rectors across Indonesia agreed on opposing intolerance, radicalism, and terrorism ideas which againsts the State Philosophy

In fact, radicalism purpose is to ruin the foundation by promoting violence and againsts the civilized characters in community existed. Through smart strategies and approaches, radicalism allows and accommodates unfairs and dissatisfactions. In addition, radicalism closely related to a revolution.

Radicalism has long term plans to create dramatical changes in government, such as a revolution, a civil war or a regional war. Its purpose to change a state ideology by influencing the policies locally, nationally, regionally or internationally by reaching political supports to represent as group or national group.



The major trigger of radicalism was the birth of global radicalism promoted by powerful countries which play double standards, such as how the United States plays on the Muslim world in the Middle East. It will create more radicalism groups that carry out terrors. Terrorism acts are believed to be revenges on what the United States and its allies actions including in Indonesia. Therefore, the emergence of “Islamic Radicalism” is closely related to how a country deals with poverty.

2. Discussion

a. Radicalism in Aceh

In the perspective of Qardawi, the series of radicalism and terrorism in Aceh have been started since 2008 from the important contribution of Tsauri. It was due to the *mujahiddin* training in the border of Lhokseumawe and Aceh Utara in January 2009. The momentum of mujahidin training in Aceh has been initiated along with the Israel invasion on Gaza, Palestine. This momentum was utilized by the *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI) Aceh Province to establish recruitment posts of mujahiddin training to Gaza to fight with Israel. The location of the first post was in Batoh, Banda Aceh Municipality and the secondly in Dayah Daarul Mujahidin, Lhokseumawe.

In the Mujahiddin Training, Tsauri became the trainer or *muallim*. The recruitment resulted 125 mujahidin candidates. Of the selection result, from 23 to 27 January 2009, it was carried out a semi-military training closed to Daarul Mujahidin Boarding School, Lhokseumawe. After the 5-day training, the selected 16 people were departed from Jakarta to Palestine. In Jakarta, these several people of 16 were trained shooting in Depok District, Jawa Barat facilitated by Tsauri after the physical training in Lhokseumawe and Aceh Utara. In fact, these 16 people failed to leave for Palestine since Israel stopped the invasion to Gaza. As a result of the failure, the 16 people from Aceh broke into two groups consisted of 8 people returned to *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI) Aceh, meanwhile other 8 people remained in Jakarta joined Sofyan Tsauri. The members of those



returned to Aceh assimilated into the community but those remained in Jakarta lived for several months and funded by Sofyan Tsauri.

Among those lived with Sofyan Tsauri decided to join the military training in Jalin Jantho, Aceh Besar District in 2010. In the training, Sofyan Tsauri involved significantly in distributing the weapons availability and logistic support. In addition, he also played role as the trainer. The figure of Sofyan Tsauri in radicalism and terrorism in Indonesia has been known and questioned. In general, of the accurate information available, he was a former member of Indonesian Police Mobile Brigade. Furthermore, he was ever deployed in Aceh and married an Acehnese woman. By having military background, Sofyan Tsauri was well known for his Islamic preaching. Indeed, the military stated that he met several times with Oman Abdurrahman whom he involved in Cimanggis bombing.

The smartness of Sofyan in radicalism and terrorism was tested by his ability to recruit several active Indonesian police members namely Brigadier Satu Tatang Mulyadi, and Brigadier Satu Abdi Tunggal from Logistic Unit of Police Arsenal to provide weapons and bullets in the training location in Jalin Jantho, Aceh Besar District.

Sofyan admitted that his involvement in radicalism and terrorism cell was his own intention. Indeed, his interest and limited knowledge on both issues. The prominent figure of Indonesian Mujahiddin he admired was Dulmatin. Sofyan and Dulmatin met in Aceh during the period of 2008 and 2009. Furthermore, both designed and planned the military for mujahidin in Aceh. According to Sofyan, together with Dulmatin, he lived in Aceh for a month. He travelled across the province and reconnects the frictions of former Free Aceh Movement (GAM) fighters to call for jihad. But, it was very limited responses from GAM factions on the idea. Most followers were unemployed, Islamic boarding school teachers, and universities graduates. In fact, Sofyan did not know Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and likewise.

In common knowledge, Sofyan also married an Acehnese woman and he was also the police personnel for 13 years before he left illegally. In addition, Sofyan joined the Police District in Depok, Jawa Barat by 2000.



He graduated from the Lido Police Academy in, Sukabumi, Jawa Barat District. He used to be part of Community Service Unit and Vital Companies Protection Unit of the district police before was fired in 2006 since he left his duty for a year. Furthermore, Sofyan had been deployed in Aceh in 2004 as a member of security enforcement operation. In fact, the radical doctrine was part of the influence of dissatisfaction on the government and unfairness's on most Muslim countries globally.

b. The Challenges of Youth in Aceh

The basic root of radicalism is not ideology. But radicalism is ignited by gaps in social, economy, and politic. In order to avoid f being tripped in radicalism, youth existence is very important. It is expected that youth in the future should be free from issues above. The following are:

First, radicalism. In historical perspective post of Independency of Indonesia in 1945. In fact, the nationalism toward Indonesia of youth in Aceh is very strong. But the spirit of youth in Aceh is not well managed and not sustainable. Therefore, after 2017, youth movement in Aceh regarding countering the radicalism and terrorism should be systematic, measurable, and sustainable. One of the indicators to check on the radicalism and terrorism discourses movement has been started systematically through a subject at all both state owned and private universities in Aceh.

The involvement of 20 state owned and private universities in Aceh in countering the radicalism root and terrorism on 28 October 2017 in *Lapangan Tugu* big square between Universitas Syiah Kuala and Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry was the momentum for all universities in Aceh to act. It is clear that the State Ideology (*Pancasila*), the State Constitution (*UUD 1945*), One Nation (*Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*), the Unity in Diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*), and a comprehensive goal to counter both radicalism and terrorism.

The idea of advocating radicalism as a subject at all universities after 2017 would be a strategy to counter local discourse become part of national discourse of Acehnese youth. Politically, the Government of Aceh



(the governor) and provincial parliament, including the cultural body in Aceh called *Wali Nanggroe* does not provide a political opportunity on radicalism discourse development, therefore, the effort to block the radicalism discourse such as what had happened to the ideas of local self determination, flag, hymne, budget sharing between central and provincial governments, and other local agendas.

Furthermore, radicalism discourse does not have continual political support and space in Aceh. As a result, to achieve it, youth existence is believed a good road to campaign the discourse on universities in Aceh through a compulsory subject. One good example is at Ar-Raniry University which supports the implementation of Islamic Law by establishing a-two hour subject called "Syariat Islam" for all students.

Second, unemployment. In May 2016, the Central Burea of Statistic Office, Indonesia released the rate of unemployment in Indonesia, which was; Kepulauan Riau province reached 9,03%, Kalimantan Timur was 8,86%, Jawa Barat stood at 8,57%, Aceh was at 8,13% and Banten was 7,95%. The data in 2016 shows that the rate of unemployment in Aceh during the period of February 2016 was the highest in Indonesia followed by Kepulauan Riau, Kalimantan Timur, and Jawa Barat. Then, the other five provinces were lower which were; Bali was at 2,12%, Sulawesi Barat was 2,73%, Yogyakarta reached 2,81%, Papua stood at 2,97% and Maluku Utara was 3,43%.

In 2017 the statistic authority released the data on employment rate in Aceh Province in August stood at 2,289 people. The number decreased slightly about 41.000 compared to February 2017 which reached 2,330 people. Referring to August 2016, the number was 2,258 people, which changed a bit of 31.000 people. In term of the unemployment in August 2017, Aceh reached 6,57%, lower about 0,82% of February 2017 which was 7,39%, much lower 1,00% of August 2016 was at 7,57%. In fact, the unemployment rate in 2017 decreases to 0.18 %. But the poverty rate is at the top of the list compared to other provinces in Sumatra Island. It is hoped that it would be an initiative to promote youth existence in Aceh in 2018. Indeed, it should be an alarm for stakeholders to allocate proportional budget to combat unemployment rate and counter the radicalism idea.

Third, drug. In 2017, Aceh Province stands at ran 8 nationally in drug violation. Aceh is mentioned as a marijuana producer and part of international cell of drug dealers. Geographically, Aceh lies at the border of Malacca Strait. Therefore, there are often the transactions between marijuana and drug.

The transformation of marijuana to crystal drug is influenced by several aspects. Firstly, the life style transformation. Secondly, the social ignorance. It is fact that in wedding events in communities, there are ignorance typical. Thirdly, the occurrence of newly rich people as a result of national or international drug dealers who decided to return to Aceh and become inspiration people for youth. It is seen as an instant way to make money and being “successfully people”. Furthermore, is expected that youth challenge after 2017 would be harder and not only drug. Drug is believed not the only social challenge for youth but also being a political and religious domains. Therefore, the root of youth radicalism should be responded through religious understanding, unemployment solution and drug selling combating. These would be major challenges for youth in Aceh in the future.

D. Conclusion

The radicalism process is happening in Aceh, which means that the army training in Jalin forest of Aceh Besar district in 2010 involved many backgrounds such as state employees, format guerillas, universities alumni, and Islamic boarding schools alumni in Aceh. The fact of their involvement could not be separated from a scenario. But should be considered an important fact to find a better solution so that Aceh remains peace and secured. One of the important considerations is the youth existence in Aceh in 2018 in three important issues namely radicalism, unemployment and drug. Although there is another crucial issue which is HIV/AIDS, but theologically, the youth in Aceh has been portrait radical due to social and political unfair. As a result, one way to transform nationalism on youth in Aceh should both locally and nationally in order to be effective through sustainable knowledge transfer. The sustainable



system to internalize the nationalism values would be through a two-hour university subject in all state and private universities in Aceh. It is believed that countering radicalism at youth should be a preventive act. The introduction of basic knowledge and culture by promoting similarities values, background uniqueness, social economy advantages or disadvantages, races and genders realities, etc. By establishing a subject, it would be a sustainable way to contribute and promote critical youth existence in Aceh without involving in radicalism.

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