THE ROLE OF MUSLIM GROUPS IN COMBATING TERRORISM IN INDONESIA: A STUDY OF THE NAHDLATUL ULAMA UNDER THE NEW ORDER

by

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the role of Muslim groups especially Nahdlatul Ulama in combating terrorism in Indonesia. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is one of the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia. It has many followers and sympathizers in Indonesia. Therefore, NU has the important role to participate in fighting terrorism in Indonesia. The series bombings incident in Indonesia have happened since after the 11 September 2001 World Trade Centre and Pentagon attacks in the United States until now influence NU to formulate strategies in fighting terrorism. The main purpose of this research is to analyze the counter terrorism strategy and action undertaken NU. Qualitative method is used by this research. Qualitative research uses some methods such as document analysis and historical method of study. NU has several strategies in countering terrorism namely raising awareness of the United Nation’s Global counter terrorism strategy and expanding the fight against terrorism to include local people and students. NU has conducted several actions to implement its strategies, such as Hasyim Muzadi as NU chair proposed to the Thai government to cooperate between Indonesian Muslims and Thai as a way of resolving tensions within Southern Thailand. NU removed the roadblocks to cooperation namely removing the perception among many Islamic organizations that counter terrorism strategies have aimed for the persecution of Muslim around the globe. NU leaders have worked hand-in-hand with government and common people both Muslims and non-Muslims to create strategy in fighting terrorism and implement the strategy in action.

Key words: Action, Fighting Terrorism, Nahdlatul Ulama, Participate, Strategy.

Introduction

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is one of the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia. Ishomuddin in his research said that people especially Muslim intellectuals interested to discuss about NU because NU has a strategic position in shaping the character and the hallmark of religious life in Indonesia especially
This is reasonable, because historically NU has given contributions to scientific and countering terrorism in Indonesia.

NU has many followers and sympathizers in Indonesia. Haedar Nashir in his book with title “Revitalization of the Muhammadiyah Movement” describes that Muhammadiyah and NU represent fairly large current figure of Indonesian Islam because they were often referred to as the two pillars or wings of Islam in Indonesia (Nashir, 2000).” As the Islamic movement that was born in the 20th century, NU has the important role to participate in fighting terrorism in Indonesia through its campaign in combating terrorism.

Seniwati said in her work that after the first Bali bombing on October 12, 2002 that killed many people, the terrorist groups keep existing to attack anywhere and anytime (Seniwati, 2014: 558). The series bombings incidents in Indonesia have happened since after the 11 September 2001 World Trade Centre and Pentagon attacks in the United States until now, such as in January 2015, terrorist killed three people in Tangkura Village, Poso, Central Sulawesi; police found a mysterious package that look like as bombs at the office of Reuters TV in Makassar, South Sulawesi on March 30, 2015; the kidnapping and the killing of a resident in Lembah Napu Village, Poso, Central Sulawesi in December 2014; 7 terrorists were shot and 13 terrorists were caught by police in Jakarta, Bandung, Kendal and Kebumen on 8-9 May 2013; the grenade exploded in Posam Gladak, Solo, Central Java on August 19, 2012; on September, 25, 2011, there were two death, including the bomber, injured 22 people in the Bethel Gospel Church of Ten (GBIS), Kepunton Solo, West Java; terrorist bombed the Adz-Zikro Mosque in Cirebon City, West Java on April 15, 2011 who killed 1 person and injured 30 people; terrorist bombed J.W.Marriot and Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Jakarta on July 17, 2009. 9 people died in this accident. They are from Australia three people, one New Zealand, two Dutch, three Indonesia and 53 people injured; on October 1, 2005, terrorist bombed Bali that knows as the second Bali bombing. There were 23 people died and 129 injured; on September 9, 2004, terrorist bombed outside Australian Embassy which 10 people died and 160 injured; on August 5, 2003, the car bomb attacked J.W.Marriot Hotel in Jakarta. There were 12 dead mostly foreigners and 150 injured; the bombing happened in a McDonalds outlet and a
car showroom in South Sulawesi on December 5, 2002. There were 3 people died and 11 injured; and the first Bali bombing occurred in Kuta Town in Bali on October 12, 2002.

**Statement of The Problem**

Based on the background above where bombing occurred in other places in Indonesia since 2002 until now caused Indonesia into the forefront of International terrorism. This condition has seriously affected to political, social and economic Indonesia generally. Therefore, Indonesian government through Muslim groups such as NU has conducted several actions in combating terrorism in this country.

**Purpose or Research**

The main purpose of this research is to analyze the counter terrorism strategy and action undertaken NU.

**Method of Research**

Qualitative method is used by this research. Tewksbury in his work said that qualitative method uses a range of collection methods (Tewksbury, 2009: 43). Qualitative research uses some methods such as document analysis and historical method of study. This paper focuses on exploring NU’s strategy and action to counter terrorism in Indonesia.

**Discussion and Analysis**

NU has several strategies in countering terrorism namely raising awareness of the United Nation’s Global counter terrorism strategy; expanding the fight against terrorism to include local people and students; recognizing that the causes of terrorism are not simply militant ideologies, but other causes of terrorism such poverty, human rights violations, political grievance, and political marginalization. These strategies bring powerful voices into the fight against terrorism.
NU has conducted several actions to implement its strategies, such as Hasyim Muzadi as NU chair proposed to the Thai government to cooperate between Indonesian Muslims and Thai as a way of resolving tensions within Southern Thailand. This action aims to increase trans-local connections in combating violent groups across Southeast Asia. Indonesia and Thailand are member of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) that highlight a regional Mutual Legal Assistance Agreement as one of action in countering terrorism in South East Asia especially in information exchange area such as intelligence information, modus operandi, and serious or minor offences by the terrorist organization (Seniwati, 2014:138). NU is representative of Indonesian government that also tries to prevent terrorist attack in South East Asia in general and in Indonesia especially through cooperate with Thai government to help Thai Muslims in Southern Thailand.

Kaewsom in his work said that the violence broke out military and police installations, armies and public facilities such as schools, markets, shops, entertainment centers, and health centers in the Deep South of Thailand, namely Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala since early 2004 (Kaewsom, 2015:1). Therefore, Thai government has accepted NU’s help to solve this problem. In March 2005, five senior members of Indonesian group NU were invited by prime ministry, Thaksin Shinawatra to visit Thailand. They also met with Thailand’s King Bhumipol Adulyaded to discuss problem in the Deep South Thailand. They visited the Deep South Thailand to meet the local Islamic leaders. This way is one of action of NU to combat radicalism and terrorism in South East Asia.

As a preventative measure, NU has conducted campaign in countering terrorism such as on March 5, 2010, the 40-million-strong NU in congress vowed it would play a leading role to combat terrorism in Indonesia. This congress conducted in Makassar, South Sulawesi from March 22 to 27, 2010. NU chief Hasyim Muzadi said that Indonesia is predominantly Muslim therefore Indonesia is fertile ground for terrorism movement (Sijabat, 2010:1). Based on this condition, NU and Muhammadiyah as the second largest Muslim organization in Indonesia cooperate to campaign for moderation and deradicalization to prevent terrorism movement in this country. This campaign stressed the importance of a
nationwide campaign of deradicalization. This campaign is also one of the action
of NU in combating terrorism. All NU members and leaders in this congress have
accepted Pancasila as the nation’s ideology and defended the Indonesian unitary
state as well as the democratic political system. This congress also stressed NU
for right now until the upcoming would address terrorism because terrorism is a
crime that could be effectively dealt with by the cooperation between government,
religious organizations and the intelligence agency.

All the participants in the NU’s congress joined to prevent the infiltration
and emergence of extreme ideologies in Indonesia. They also asked the NU
congress can be part of the national consolidation with the government, other
organizations, and intelligence agency. The congress asked the awareness of
leaders and common people about the death and destruction because of terrorist
action that happened in all part in this country. It is important that common
people develop an awareness of how the series of fatal terrorist attacks in the past.
The participants also supported an intelligence law that will allow spy agencies to
carry out deradicalization program in combating terrorism. This counters the
assumption that terrorism is responsibility of government and common people.

Given this background, it follows that NU member’s participation in
various fields, including fighting terrorism can bring better results. For example,
NU cooperates with CGCTC (the Center on Global Counterterrorism
Cooperation) held a conference to raise awareness of the impact of terrorism
actions. This conference invited Civil Society Organizations with some goals such
as seeking to expand the fight against terrorism, recognizing that the causes of
terrorism are not simply ideologies but also social-economic, international,
political factors and other conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. The
CGCTC’s partnership with NU showed a big attention in fighting terrorism
because NU provides the backbone for Indonesia’s culture of tolerance and the
NU’s leaders are among the influential in the Muslim world. This conference tries
to shape the next generation of counter terrorism policies.

The next action, NU removed the roadblocks to cooperation namely
removing the perception among many Islamic organizations that counter terrorism
strategies have aimed for the persecution of Muslim around the globe such a
series of the United States attacks to Iraq and Afghanistan. The United States statement or the United Stated aids to Indonesia in countering terrorism in this country were not well received by the Indonesian public. For many Indonesians, the war on terror was related with a war on Islam. They were suspicious of the correlation between radical Islamic terrorism and 9/11; even to the extent that a number of Indonesian viewed the 9/11 attacks as an elaborate conspiracy by the United States and Israel aimed at discrediting Islam (Lim, 2005: 40-41). As a result, Megawati’s policies to counter terrorism would be viewed as an assault on Islam.

Prior to the first Bali bombings, Megawati was warned by the leader of Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (a radical Islamic group) taking an “un-Islamic” stance meant “playing with fire” and risking social unrest (Wain and McBeth,2002:47). Megawati was too afraid to cooperate closely with U.S. demands for arrests and other measures left her vulnerable to attack not radical Islamists but by secular nationalists. This is because Megawati’s policies are influenced by the political threat posed to her position by Vice President Hamzah Haz, leader of the largest Muslim party who has personal ties with leaders of militant Muslim groups and espoused a fundamentalist Islamic doctrine and by the chairman of the upper house, Amien Rais.

Thus while international pressures for strong action against suspected terrorist organizations remained, Megawati also needed to convey that she was able to defend “the Islamic interests of Indonesia” (Wain and McBeth,2002). In her public discourse Megawati steered clearly the association of terrorism with security, and was criticized for “refusing to acknowledge the extent of the terrorism problem (Jones,2004).”

After President Megawati’s announcement for supporting the GWOT, several car bombs blasted a shopping mall in Jakarta’s central district. There were so many researcher and thinker suspecting a link between the announcement and the attacks. After the WTC attack, on September 23 and 24, groups in the central Java city of Solo opposing to U.S. policy undertook “sweeps” to identify American citizens and forcibly remove them from the country (U.S.Embassy,2001).
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A day later, Dien Syamsudden, secretary general of the Indonesian Council of Ulemas (Indonesia’s top Islamic authority), asked for all Muslims to carried out a jihad against the United States if Afghanistan was attacked (Grigg, 2001). A Gallup Organization Poll carried out shortly after the defeat of the Taliban regime regarded large majorities of Muslim sure that the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan was “morally unjustified.” In Jakarta, the U.S. embassy stated that the Indonesian Islamic Council (DDII) sitting 10 radical Islamic groups conducted a press conference at the al-Furqan Mosque in Jakarta and threatened jihad if the U.S. attack Afghanistan (U.S.Embassy, 2001). Moreover, Muhammad Kalono, a spokesman for the Islamic paramilitary groups, stated that “if America drops even one bullet in Afghanistan, God willing, we will wipe out all U.S. facilities and interests here” while the Islamic Youth Movement threatened to kill U.S. Ambassador Gelbard if the U.S. attacked Afghanistan (Tkacik, Jr. et.al. 2001). The Council of Ulemas, reflecting the mainstream leadership of Indonesian Muslims, said that if America strikes on Afghanistan would be an strike on Islam, that’s mean the connection between the war on terror and the war on Islam. In the days after the Bali bombing, Indonesian people including NU formally supported the United States’s petition to the United Nations (UN) that Jemaah Islamiyah be added to the U.N.’s list of terrorist groups.

NU has promoted counter terrorism through religious outreach (dakwah), education, business networks, religious study, and religious tolerance.
literally means the “awakening of religious scholars” has considerable contribution to fight terrorism in this country. As Indonesia’s largest Islamic organization, NU has promoted religious tolerance as noted above in practices of life, such as in its meetings, NU asks state and society actors, religious and secular alike to defend the country’s national pluralist ideology (Pancasila) and the national constitution (UUD 1945) as the foundation of nationhood and ethno-religious brotherhood. K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid gave instruction to NU’s youth wing, and Banser to send its members to churches across the country in order to protect Christian places of worship and to guarantee the safety of Christians, especially during Paskah and Christmas.

In January 2013, NU held the great conference (Konferensi Besar Nahdlatul Ulama) in the city of Cirebon in West Java. This conference issued a number of fatwas and recommendations concerning religious issues, inter-group relations, and public affairs facing today’s Indonesian societies. This conference is one of campaign in fighting terrorism.

Conclusion

NU leaders have worked hand-in-hand with government and common people both Muslims and non-Muslims to create strategy in fighting terrorism and implement the strategy in action. Embracing the ideology of Pancasila, they established a public culture of citizenship and established a political basis for a deeply plural society in the newly established nation-state of Indonesia. NU challenged terrorist bombing in every where in this country. Based on this condition, NU works together with common people especially with religious organization and police force to secure religious freedom, guarantee interreligious tolerance, and to defend Indonesia’s plural ethno-religious societies from terrorism threats attempts posed by people who support terrorist actions. The strategy of NU in combating terrorism is fit with Indonesia’s plural condition. Therefore, NU’s popularity in Indonesia increase because NU’s actions get attention and support from other Muslim organization and common people.

References


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