Roles of the *Turats Ulama Nusantara* Groups on the Counter Radicalism in Indonesia

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Abstract

*Turats Ulama Nusantara* groups are a forum for the dissemination of knowledge and the search for various studies related to Islam in the archipelago which several students pioneered. This group has an impact and color on Islamic studies. It is a pioneer in opening studies that have not been widely revealed, such as the role of Indonesian clerics in providing color for knowledge in the Arabian peninsula and many other things related to Islam in Indonesia. This article aims to look at the role of the archipelago’s ulama turats who are the forum for the formation of counter-radicalism in Indonesia. This article is the result of research using qualitative research methods, based on the data and discourses that were studied in the group to be analyzed as an indication of the function of the *Turats Ulama Nusantara* group to function in counter-radicalism. The results of this article show the role of the *Turats Ulama Nusantara* group in opening discourse and knowledge that makes counter-radicalism in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Roles, *Turats Ulama Nusantara*, Counter, Radicalism

Introduction

*Turats Ulama Nusantara* group is a group that accommodates manuscript activists who have concerned about the spread of Islamic scholarship in the archipelago. This group is concerned with the counter-radicalism movement in Indonesia. This movement began with a search for sources of studies related to the archipelago’s ulama which were still scattered, some of which had not been documented and had not been properly disseminated to all circles of society. The initial anxiety of the founders of this group created and gathered activists and figures who were concerned with the study of the archipelago's ulema. This movement is based on the search, formation, and dissemination of discourse (Hadiz, 2021).

According to Sila and Fealy, counter-radicalism can be carried out by the entire community by developing its full potential. This potential will build awareness of the whole community in the process of counter-radicalism as well as automatically become a stronghold in carrying out and disseminating the concept of
counter-radicalism in the lives of existing people (Sila & Fealy, 2022). This article tries to complement various existing scientific works related to the role of turats ulama in the archipelago in the discourse of counter-radicalism, and how the role of turats ulama in the archipelago is (Schmidt, 2021). Radicalism is a part of religious life in society, however, this movement will be dangerous if various countermeasures are not made (Kashpur et al., 2022; Magnusson, 2022; Matsui, 2022). Efforts to overcome radicalism are carried out utilizing religion (Fodeman et al., 2022; Juni Erpida Nasution & Hendriadi, 2022; Munip, 2017). To do this, it is necessary to have the role of various parties to take preventive steps (Ali et al., 2021; Herman, 2020). This handling step requires efforts to form a strong and basic discourse in the effort to deal with radicalism.

This article is to complement the shortcomings of various discourses related to counter-radicalism efforts and the roles of turats ulama Nusantara groups based on the above literature which tends to see vertically the role of turats ulama Nusantara groups in counter-radicalism. This article maps all discourses related to counter-radicalism efforts above with the roles of turats ulama of the archipelago groups. For this reason, this article is intended to complement the shortcomings of previous studies on counter-radicalism efforts by analyzing how the role of turats ulama in the archipelago in counter-radicalism is: (a) counter-radicalism (emerging concepts, debates, synthesis); (b) Why does the role of turats ulama in the archipelago affect counter-radicalism (discussion on the role of turats ulama in the archipelago, the relationship between the roles of turats ulama in the archipelago with counter-radicalism); (c) What is the role of turats ulama from the archipelago in counter-radicalism. These three questions have given direction to the understanding that the role of turats ulama from the archipelago is a force in counter-radicalism. The study of the role of the Nusantara Ulama group’s turats plays an important role in counter-radicalism.

This paper is based on an argument that the role of the ulema of the archipelago group has an implicit or explicit influence on counter-radicalism. The role of Turats Ulama Nusantara group influences the analysis of counter-radicalism. The role of turats ulama of the archipelago in the exposure implicitly and explicitly influences the analysis of counter-radicalism. Compared to the role of other authorities, strengthening by returning to the role of turats ulama in the archipelago
is very much needed in the discourse of counter-radicalism. When the role of turats ulama of the archipelago only relies on the study of manuscripts, ignoring the role of counter-radicalism, this concept will be difficult to accept as a study of counter-radicalism and difficult to influence the public to take preventive actions against counter-radicalism.

The role of Turats Ulama Nusantara as the main analysis in counter-radicalism. The relationship between the role of the Nusantara Ulama Turats and counter-radicalism was chosen as the object of research for three reasons. The first reason is that the role of the Nusantara Ulama Turats is an urgent matter in the concept of counter-radicalism. Second, there is a different perception of the role of the Nusantara Ulama Turats in counter-radicalism. Knowledge of the role of the Nusantara Ulama Turats regarding the handling of radicalism. Knowledge of the role of Turats Ulama Nusantara was generated in counter-radicalism with various studies counter-radicalism. Third, an analysis of the role of the Nusantara Ulama Turats in counter-radicalism is indispensable in the discourse of handling radicalism in Indonesia. These three reasons show that a careful understanding of the relationship between the application of the role of the Nusantara Ulama Turats and counter-radicalism is a crucial issue and urgent to be understood as a discourse on the role of Nusantara Ulama Turats as a step in dealing with radicalism.

The relationship between the role of the Nusantara Ulama Turats and counter-radicalism is explained through qualitative research that relies on primary and secondary data. Primary data consists of discourse articles related to the role of Turats Ulama Nusantara as well as information from the media regarding statements of counter-radicalism in responding to various radicalisms. Secondary data consists of various studies related to counter-radicalism. Both primary and secondary data are used as the basis for analyzing the relationship between the role of the Nusantara Ulama Turats and counter-radicalism.

The stages and techniques of data collection were carried out in several stages. The initial stage is carried out by collecting the roles of Turats Ulama Nusantara in counter-radicalism, and the second stage is by analyzing counter-radicalism. The next stage is by synthesizing the discourse on the role of Turats Ulama Nusantara with counter-radicalism. The first data collection technique was carried out according to the key vocabulary regarding the role of Turats Ulama
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Nusantara, counter-radicalism, and anti-radicalism. Second, testing is carried out according to the results of the synthesis. The stages and techniques of collecting data in several stages are used to get the right results regarding the role of Turats Ulama Nusantara in counter-radicalism.

Process of data analysis took place through three stages data analysis and two analysis techniques. The three stages of analysis include (a) analysis of the discourse on the role of Turats Ulama Nusantara, as a process of understanding the discussion related to the role of Turats Ulama Nusantara: (b) analysis of counter-radicalism, as a process of examining discussions related to counter-radicalism: (c) inferring data related to the role of Turats Ulama Nusantara in counter-radicalism, follows the understanding based on the anti-radicalism-based discourse so that it can be applied in the discourse on the role of Nusantara Ulama Turats. The data processed through these three stages were analyzed through interpretation and contextualization methods. The analysis stages and analytical techniques used allowed conclusions to be formulated regarding the relationship between the role of the Nusantara Ulama Turats and counter-radicalism.

**Result and Discussion**

**The Roles of Turats Ulama Nusantara Groups as Counter Radicalism in Indonesia**

Turats Ulama Nusantara was an Indonesian whatsapp groups that was build on 16 April 2016 pioneering by Nanal Ainal Firdaus. He is younger of pesantren alumni and has an perspectives that Turats Ulama (knowledges of Ulama) and manuscripts must be knowns by many Indonesia peoples. Not only that, he was concerned how the knowledges of this groups and also stimulating many data's that it was importans as counter of radicalism now.

This groups was interesting to researching, because this is not only a usual Whatsapp groups. But it was an knowledges whatsapp groups. And in the groups contains of many parts of importans peoples that has an strategic position in the counter of radicalism of Indonesia. They re was an ulama, academician, writers, collectors, stakeholder and also many peoples that has concerns about this topics. Because since this groups was build and also doing discussion about turats and manuscripts. Many member of this groups also stimulating for produces knowledges about this topics. Not only that’s, it is also can to be barters of
information between one members and the others. So, it is not only a whatsapp groups, but it can called as “knowledges-able groups”, that has a roles as counter radicalism in Indonesia.

Based on the researches findings all off produces that published by dialectica of this groups has the contributions of Indonesia counter radicalism. Such as many books that related with ulama-ulama Nusantara by Amirul Ulum, novel of many ulama’s history by Aguk Irawan, many knowledges about manuscripts by Prof. Oman Fathurrahman and also many data that found and share about history or knowledges of Ulama that doesn’t published by others also discussed in this products of this groups dialectica. This groups also initiate the Islam Nusantara Centre in Syarif Hidayatullah Islamic State University, as the offline forum to discuss about ulama nusantara and manuscripts.

The knowledges of this groups very useful as they parts of counter radicalism or as stronghold for answering problem of jihadisphere in Indonesian peoples. Because from this groups many knowledges can be unify from moderates Islamic Religious Organizations in Indonesia, these are NU and Muhammadiyah. So if this groups can be growth as powerfull counter radicalism. It would be effectives for counter radicalism in the radicalism problems.

Because, in Indonesia radicalism also started doing recruitments by online jihadisphere, so it can to be as one gates of solutions this problems. Because many Indonesian onliners, doesn’t awares that Islamic knowledges which shares by jihadisphere was parts of radicalizations interpretations of religions. And also they only using this sources, without doing filtering and also asking by experts about Islamic knowledges.

Turats Ulama Nusantara was a groups that pioneering by somes youth of pesantren alumni. They are not parts of higher educations but has concern to the growth of turats ulama nusantara. That is exactly looks likes a simply things, but has the importans effects especially for the problems of counter radicalism or religious moderation. It can be agents and center of islamic counter radicalism.

How have terrorist organizations benefited from social media advances? The short answer is that social media has delivered advantages across many varied operational spheres and hence, have come to be a greatly beneficial modern asset to terrorist organizations. Social media activities of terrorist organizations can broadly
be grouped into two categories. These categories are not mutually exclusive to each other and as will be discovered, there is often crossover between the aim and activity of these two categories. The first category could be termed as the communication benefit, which encompasses recruitment through reaching out to potential radicals, creating group forums, collaborating with terrorist associates, administering digital training environments, coordinating organizational activity and propagating terrorist organization material (Dodego & Witro, 2020; Halim & Kesuma, 2019; Selçuk & Panagiotou, 2020).

Furthermore, the social media revolution has provided a level of secrecy and clandestine communication, avoiding detection through easily delivered, yet effective encryption protocols that are provided by services such as Whatsapp and some Apple.inc platforms (Arzroomchilar, 2022). This shows that explore social media as a prominent strategic aspect of terrorist organizations modus operandi that has become intrinsic to recruitment, operational planning and engaging between radicals and organizations beyond intervention (Aly, 2016; Klausen, 2015; Conway, 2016). The second category of activity could be termed as operational digital action, which includes digital activities of terrorist organizations that are intended to spread terror. These operational digital actions may include cyber-based sabotage of infrastructure, or propagating fear of attack through threat (Nusantara & 2020, 2020). Furthermore, operational digital actions also take in activity that exploit open and restricted source data holdings in order to obtain intelligence assets, support operational financing, operation planning and coordinating activities (Riccardi-Swartz, 2021; Sablina, 2021).

**Radicalization and Deployment**

Related to the above points, radicalization also warrants discussion, as this aspect of terrorist organization activity that has greatly benefited from social media (Torok, 2013). In plain terms social media has bridged communication barriers and provided ready access to both potential recruits as well as easy access to propaganda. The virtual communities of terrorist organizations that function through the internet are advantageous to terrorist radicalization within numerous focuses (Kaya & Benevento, 2022).

These perspectives include both online radicalization involving interaction between a potential terrorist and a party to the terrorist organization, as well as
lone wolf terrorists who are self-radicalised online through exposure to non-interactive materials and have no interactive contact with a terrorist group (Von Behr, Reding et al, 2013). Social media has aided terrorist organizations in radicalizing Jihadis through the methods of recruitment within both online radicalization and online self-radicals.

This has been supported by the social media aspects of access to information as well as potential Jihadis, the borderless nature of virtual communities, as well as the access to platforms from which propaganda can be disseminated (Koehler, 2014; Heickerö, 2014). However, the social media advantage to radicalization does not end there. While social media provides such extensive access to a virtual community, simultaneously they also limit interaction with the normative world and isolate potential radicals from circumstances outside of the cyber environment (Torok, 2013).

The isolation of a potential terrorist is conducive to that person becoming radicalised at some time, as the potential recruit may seek out commonality and comradeship, which may be provided by a terrorist organization (Ali, 2013; Atran, 2015; Jones, 2015). This ability of terrorist organizations to isolate and then connect with vulnerable recruits with offerings of commonality and comradeship would be greatly reduced if social media was just not available.

What this means is that social media platforms have provided a communications advantage that is being expertly exploited by terrorist organizations to radicalise potential terrorists. The radicalization of potential terrorists over great distances, as is possible through social media provides two further benefits. Firstly, social media is a means used to inspire radicals to travel to terrorist group bases, as well as cultivating what have been termed ‘homegrown terrorists’ to carry out activities within the terrorist’s home country (Neumann, 2012; Jones, 2015; Ministry of Education and Home Office, United Kingdom, n.d).

The ability to deploy ‘home-grown terrorists’ is a distinct advantage to terrorist groups as it requires minimal action and resources (other than an internet connection and a smart phone) on the part of the group, but supports the spread of terror and fear amongst an audience in an arena that perhaps had not previously been considered a conventional terrorism realm (Dubouloz and Wilner, 2015).
In fact, within the Unites States Homeland Security Project report, Neumann refers to the weight that should be given to addressing home-grown terrorism in stating: “Arguably, the use of the Internet to radicalize and recruit home-grown terrorists is the single-most important and dangerous innovation since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001” (Neumann, 2012, pg. 9). Closely related to home-grown terrorism is the lone wolf terrorist, involving a potential terrorist becoming radicalised through isolated non-interactive exposure to terrorist material (Von Behr, Reding, et al, 2013).

Social media advantages relevant to lone wolf terrorism, to a terrorist organization are very similar to the advantage that a terrorist who is radicalised online through interaction with a terrorist organization, being that that both the lone wolf terrorist and organization led online radicalised terrorist have the potential to commit attacks in home countries far from the organizations base (McCauley, Moskalenko and Van Son, 2013; Dubouloz and Wilner, 2015).

The advantage of the lone wolf terrorist to a terrorist organization, over the organizationally orientated terrorist is the very minimal effort that is required to expose a vulnerable person to extremism (Edelman, 2015). Essentially, nothing further than uploading an extensive library of terrorist propaganda is required, no ongoing coordination is required and the prospect of indiscriminate attack is likely to spread terror further than coordinated attacks that may be perceived as being more predictable (Edelman, 2015).

The benefit to terrorist organizations that can be taken from both category of online-radicalised terrorists is that there is potential for terrorists to be radicalised exclusively within a cyber environment (Teixeira da Silva, 2021). Furthermore, in the case of lone wolf terrorists, further than providing an accessible library of material, no further action on the part of the organization is required. In this situation, the risk weighed against potential outcome is beneficial to a terrorist organization.

**Online VS Offline Interactions**

The majority of the literature takes a nuanced position that asserts the importance of online influences without negating the requirement of offline interactions. Some researchers stress that the impact of the real-world environment on an individual, and not just the influence of peers, is crucial in determining their
vulnerability to turning to violence. Briggs, for example, argues that offline contacts are still a critical part of the radicalisation process (Briggs, 2011:3).

However, she also concedes that, in the future, instances of individuals radicalising “entirely online” may increase (Briggs, 2011:3). Theories that emphasise the appeal of being part of a close-knit group and the importance of physical networks in the radicalisation process also regard the concept of solitary Internet ‘self-radicalisation’ as unconvincing (Hussain and Saltman, 2014; Hughes and Vidino, 2015).

As we have already seen, Sageman highlights how interactivity between members online gives participants an opportunity to be swayed by the ideological content and begins to facilitate an “in-group love” that makes radicalisation more likely. Hoffman, meanwhile, places the onus on the importance of hierarchy within terrorist organisations, stating that ‘official websites’ and the ideological elite play the key role in facilitating individuals’ radicalisation (be it through online or offline methods) (Halim & Kesuma, 2019).

Conway and McInerney support a synthesis of both positions. They suggest that Sageman’s bottom-up theory explains the initial entry for youths seeking extremist content, while the Internet can enable the radicalisation of individuals with no prior connection to the movement by providing contact between them and extremists/would-be extremists online ((Aprili Yanti et al., 2021)).

Hoffman’s top-down approach then explains how terrorist organisations actively seek to connect with these vulnerable youth. In their study of American ISIS sympathisers and members on Twitter, Hughes and Vidino found that “purely web-driven” radicalisation is undeniable. However, they also demonstrate that, in many cases, radicalised individuals “initially cultivated and later strengthened their interest in ISIS’s narrative through faceto-face relationships” (Selçuk & Panagiotou, 2020).

Like Conway and McInerney, they conclude that “online and offline dynamics complement one another” (Hughes & Vidino, 2015:ix). Neumann takes the centrist view that the Internet radicalises because it provides a platform for like-minded individuals to build a network and potentially turn their terrorist aspirations into a reality. For terrorist recruiters, “it has also offered a pool of potential
members that can be tapped into, with less risk than there would be involved in approaching an individual in the real world” (Neumann, 2012:19).

**The Creation and Evolution of the ‘Jihadisphere’**

Within the online radicalisation literature, the Internet is seen as allowing for the creation of a virtual community for groups and movements that can support existing physical networks while disseminating different ideologies. In the case of violent extremists, this online milieu is often based in support of, or opposition to, an abstraction; in the case of global jihadism, an allegiance to the ummah (Mealer & Michael, 2012); in the case of the British far right, an alliance against what they regard as extremist Islam and the so-called ‘Jewish conspiracy’ (Goodwin, 2013; Bartlett & Littler, 2011).

That these communities can exist is the result of the evolution of the Internet, a medium that has developed into an increasingly complex “data-exchange system”. The phrase ‘Web 2.0’ is commonly cited in the literature and refers to the Internet’s transition during the new millennium into a space encompassing “a growing array of interactive communications systems facilitated by a rapidly expanding set of platforms” (Amble, 2012:339).

It gave birth to the platforms that we recognise today – “numerous websites, blogs, forums and message boards” (Ducol, 2012:51) – while laying the foundation for the most modern iterations of applications (or ‘apps’) and instant messaging services that have been seamlessly interwoven into the modern media landscape. This evolution in the use of the Internet by jihadist groups led to the coining of the neologism ‘Jihadisphere’. First used by Ducol, it is defined as a loose network of online communities that support the movement (2012:51–52). The individuals that are part of the Jihadisphere can be divided into three groups: passive members that tend to only consume online material (Ducol, 2012:58–59); producers of material that belong to various media arms of jihadist groups (Conway, 2012:5); and “Jihobbyists” (Neumann, 2013:435).

Indeed, Brachman (who coined the term) describes these “Jihobbyists” as the backbone of the milieu. Likely aware that they are playing an important role, they feel empowered and more invested in the movement. For example, as a British far-right extremist interviewed by Behr et al. explained, his online activities “made him feel part of a group and important” (Behr et al., 2013:5). Combined with
propaganda that encourages individuals to act in furtherance of their cause, violence becomes a distinct and very real possibility (Soraya & Wibowo, 2021).

Static Websites

The online platforms upon which extremist groups rely to support their interactions have themselves evolved over time. The first of these platforms were official, or “top-down” websites (Zelin, 2013:5), created by ideologues and formal hierarchical groups as a way to communicate their goals and collective grievances on a cost-effective and uncensored global platform (Neumann, 2012:16).

Others have also noted how this has allowed extremists to keep a memory of what a group has done by storing the documents produced as an archive or database. Websites for extremist political parties tend to be the most rigidly hierarchical, unlike the more progressive alternative media in which a dialogue and a relationship is built between producer and consumer (Ummah, 2021).

In the case of the British National Party, Atton concludes that this rigidity has palpable real-world effects, for example, on supporters’ ability to construct their own identities. These websites aimed to better disseminate the ideology and facilitate contact through, for example, the posting of email addresses. The use of novel methods, particularly among the far right, transferred from the offline to the online world (Amin, 2020). Groups that once experimented offline with “fax-machines, ‘dial-a-hate’ hotlines, and AM radio programs” (Schafer, 2012:347), moved toward the creation of racist and violent video games once online. According to a study by Selepak the games required the player to violently kill, wound, and maim minorities in order to advance to the next level (Selepak, 2010).

Traditional (and often official) websites that have controversial or violent histories and exist within a hierarchical management structure are now in decline due to a combination of them being blocked or taken down, a growing paranoia among users that they were being monitored by government agencies and a general online shift to social media platforms (Hussain & Saltman, 2014:32; Zelin, 2013:5).

This, in turn, has seen the rise of websites that produce a subtler narrative that slowly and more implicitly escalates in rhetoric, eventually pushing the user into more hard-line and extremist views (Hussain & Saltman, 2014:32). In the context of far-right movements, often these narratives use fictional storytelling as a way of promoting their vision (Bizina, 2021). The power of storytelling lies in its
ability to “make an argument without eliciting mental resistance” which leads to fewer counter-arguments and less resistance to persuasion (Bizina, 2021).

Conclusion

The role of the Turats Ulama Nusantara group in opening discourse and knowledge that makes counter-radicalism in Indonesia. Turats Ulama Nusantara groups are a forum for the dissemination of knowledge and the search for various studies related to Islam in the archipelago which several students pioneered. It is a pioneer in opening studies that have not been widely revealed, such as the role of Indonesian clerics in providing color for knowledge in the Arabian peninsula and many other things related to Islam in Indonesia. This groups very useful as they parts of counter radicalism or as stronghold for answering problem of jihadisphere in Indonesian peoples. Because from this groups many knowledges can be unify from moderates Islamic Religious Organizations in Indonesia, these are NU and Muhammadiyah.

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