The Root of Islamic Radicalism

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It is worth noting that the Muslim world is too large and too diverse to march to the beat of a single drummer. Many people of the West mistakenly assume that the Muslim world is equivalent to the Middle East. The fact that the Muslim world extends from Morocco to Merauke in Indonesia, from Uzbekistan to Cape Town in South Africa. In addition, more Muslims live in China than in Arabian Peninsula, and more Muslims live in Indonesia than those in the entire Arab world combined.

Although Indonesia is the home of over 85% Muslims, but it is neither Islamic state, nor secular one. Pancasila, which literally means five principles, is the ideology of the nation and the state. Namely; *the belief in the One Supreme God, Humanitarianism, Indonesia national unity, democracy led by the wisdom of deliberations in representative bodies, and social justice for all people.*

The fact that the term *Pancasila* is a human invention derived from Sanskrit and not from religious vocabularies, some observers argue that Indonesia is a secular state. Such an observation is, indeed, incorrect. Indonesia is not a secular state in the true meaning of complete separation between state and religion. In other words, Indonesian nation do not separate themselves from religious life and values.

Despite a greater presence of Islamic values and symbols in the contemporary Indonesian public and social space, the Indonesian people are far from rigidity of their understanding of Islam. The moderate understanding of Islamic teachings among Indonesians is prevailing. The peaceful manner by which the five major religions, namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism were introduced to Indonesia, has left a long lasting positive influence on the promotion of mutual trust and tolerance among the communities of faith.

Unfortunately, the moral, spiritual and social values which made Indonesia a model of religious pluralism and harmony are being challenged everyday by religious, ideological and political radicalism. It is a sad reality that even international efforts to counter radicalism and terrorism often them-selves become radical, and hence counter-productive. We must, therefore, deal with religious radicalism and intolerance not with brute force, but with wisdom and the willingness to address the root causes of these problems.

To date, observers from the West and of Islam have attempted to thoroughly and objectively study the reasons behind the emergence of extremism and terrorism in the Muslim world. Many years after the tragic event of 9/11, clear and rational thinking is beginning to come forth. The

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fundamental question, or the remaining puzzle to be solved, is what encouraged the perpetrators, people of sufficient intelligence and finances, to commit their terrorist act. The puzzle appeared as a question concerning the relationship between the religion of the perpetrators, Islam, and the act of terror they committed.

At this point, I want to encourage all of us to grasp the following analysis of the above phenomena. *First*, it must be acknowledged that terrorism does not recognize the borders of religion, race, nations and geography. Throughout history we have been confronted with terrorist acts committed by groups with various backgrounds and motives. Consequently, countries will occasionally launch terrorist acts toward an intended target. It is widely known in our modern history that there are many terrorist groups in various parts of the world. Some of these include the Tigers in Sri Lanka, Takfirwal-Hijrah in Egypt, Baader-Meinhof in Germany, the Red Brigades in Italy, the Action Directe in France, Tupak Amaru in Peru, Aum Shinri Kyo in Japan, the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines, and lastly, the one that is the focus of our analysis, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) which originally part and parcel of Al-Qaeda led by Osama bin Laden. For the most part, scholars agree that the dominant motivation for acts of terror is revenge or a reaction due to a sense of injustice felt by a certain group.

Though some of the above named groups are from a certain religion, and use their religion as motivation or even base their terrorist acts on its teachings, to make the religion itself a target of hate and criticism is a mistake. No religion, especially not the great religions like Islam, approves of or supports the killing of innocent people. In this regard, the Qur'an explicitly condemns actions that cause loss of life. The Qur'an states that when a man kills a person, it is as though he kills all people (5:32). On another occasion, the Qur'an also explains that the sanction for someone who creates mischief throughout the land is similar to that given to those who fight against God and His messengers (5:33).

The tragic event of 9/11 and followed by the brutal acts of ISIS changed many things, especially life in the United States and the West. No previous acts of terror had as wide an impact as 9/11 and ISIS.. The collapse of the myth that the U.S. was the only super power free from terrorism was a terrible surprise that shocked the United States government and the people of America. It was now apparent that their country was not free from the threat of terrorism. The destruction of the symbol of economic supremacy, the World Trade Center (WTC), and of military supremacy, the Pentagon, was a painful and embarrassing slap in the face. It is only natural that the government and the American people would feel emotionally bitter toward those who do not condemn the act of terror.

Again, this is a challenge for Muslims to better put into practice the moral, tolerant and other constructive values found in Islamic teachings. Similarly, the religious leaders of Islam, Christianity and Judaism need to adopt an attitude of inter-faith cooperation. These religious leaders need to be more active in providing information that enlightens and enhances understanding of the common aspects across the three Semitic religions. In this case, the Muslim religious leaders face the greatest challenge. They must reverse the present image of Islam and build a more positive one among Americans who, after 9/11, generally suspect and irrationally fear anything related to Islam and Muslims.

Indeed there is nothing more important today than creating greater understanding between cultures and religions, as we live in a world which is full of hatred and hostility. It is therefore so much need of mutual understanding.

There are many theories presented by experts related to the causes and factors that gave rise to the escalation of terrorism in the Muslim world. For me, the cause of this terrorism originated from a minimum of two sources: external and internal factors.

External Factors

Antipathy toward the U.S. from some in the Islamic world reached its peak with the explosion of the tragedy of 9/11. This feeling of hatred, among other things, was triggered by the deeply-rooted history of conflict between Muslims and Christians. If historically traced, the interactions between the two peoples have fluctuated between positive and negative relations; however negative relations have been more dominant than the positive. History shows that only one hundred years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims were successful in spreading their influence into many areas such as the Middle East, Persia, North Africa, Liberia, Spain and West India. Many of these areas had previously been under Christian control.

In the eleventh century, following two centuries of peace, the two powers moved once again toward hostility. The first Crusade, which took place in 1095, was triggered by the request for aid from the Eastern Christians to the Western Christians to help stop the expansion of Islamic control threatening the capital of the Eastern Christian Kingdom, Constantinople (later changed to Istanbul after Islamic rule). For almost two hundred years hostilities between the Muslims and Christians were recorded in the War of the Cross or the Crusades, which finally ended with the Sixth Crusade in the thirteenth century. During the same century, the Islamic-Turkish army expanded into and began to control many areas of the Balkans, North Africa and actually colonised Constantinople in 1453 and attacked Vienna in 1529. Also in the sixteenth century, the Protestant movement appeared under the leadership of Martin Luther whose writings have become historical witnesses of Christian hatred toward Islam and the Prophet Muhammad. Yet this attitude is understandable as at that time the Christian world was being besieged and facing the threat of the Islamic-Turks. According to Bernard Lewis, since the Muslims colonised Spain and besieged Vienna in 1683 for a second time, Europe has been under a continuous threat from Muslims. The Christian West's counter-attack began in the fifteenth-century when Iberia was brought back under Christian control, as well as Granada in 1492. After the failure of the Islamic-Turk siege of Vienna in 1683, Islamic power diminished as the influence of the Christian West increased often through pockets of colonisation. Until the end of the seventeenth century and followed by the era of Western Christian colonialism into the Islamic world, the interactions between Muslims and Christians have been coloured by confrontation and hostilities.

Reopening the long history of the relationship between Christians and Muslims is important in order to analyse the mysteries hidden behind the tragedy of 9/11. Will the long conflict causes foreign policies of the United States toward the Islamic world to be viewed by Muslims as unfriendly? This suspicion manifests itself, among other things, through the policies of the United States toward the Arab-Israeli conflict that Muslims view as biased toward Israel. This reality has added to the bitterness of the Islamic world that for centuries has felt greatly oppressed. Osama

bin Laden and today ISIS used this to trigger the anger of Islamic hardliners and was successful in recruiting militia personnel who were willing to voluntarily attack the United States interest, innocent civilian and commit terrorist acts.

The tense historical factors between these two civilisations, strengthened by the perceived injustice and imbalance of U.S. policies, are important icons behind the terrorist acts by the Muslim extremists.

Internal Factors

The implications of the Christian West's colonisation of the Islamic world are evident when we explore the history of the birth of modern Arab-Islamic movements. The fall of Islamic Turkish power and the eroding of Muslim conditions under Turkish rule contradicted the rapid progress and development of the European enlightenment.

It is at this time that modern Islamic movements appear. They can be grouped into two categories.

1. The Salafi movement a puritan movement that argued for the purity of Islamic teachings by returning to the original doctrines and rejecting all forms of Western culture. This movement has become associated with *literalist, strict and puritanical approaches to Islam.*

2. The modern Islamic movement which has attempted to find a compromise between Islam and European modernisation. Jamaludin al-Afghani and Sheikh Mohammad Abduh are the pioneers of this movement.

Let us try to elaborate the Salafi movement from which the doctrine of ISIS originated.

The Salafi movement is often described as synonymous with Wahhabism, to denote a school of thought which surfaced in the second half of the 19th century as a reaction to the spread of European ideas. In general, Salafism can be divided into three trends:

One; focusing on Education and missionary work to solidify the concept of *Tawhid* (the Oneness of God). The group focus on non-violent mission, education and " purification of religious beliefs and practices. They dismiss politics as " a diversion or even innovation that leads people away from Islam. This group are the dominant and prevailing doctrine in Saudi Arabia being endorsed by the Saudi clerics and rulers.

Two: focusing on re-establishing a caliphate through the means of evolution, but not violence; this group sometimes called Salafist activism.

Three; sharing the similar political goals as the second group, but engaging in violent Jihad and carrying arms. This group some-times is called Salafi-jihadism. An example of such orientation is the loud voice of Salafi cleric Mahmoud Shaban on a religious television channel of calling the death of main Egyptian opposition figures Mohammed ElBaradei- a Nobel peace prize laureate.

The above third group of Salafism is precisely in line with ISIS doctrine and practice of killing those who (in their belief) to be the enemy of Islam.

While the first two groups of Salafism are pacifists, the third group which are minority voices within the Salafi movements adopts militarist position. They consider a military *jihad a binding obligation*, maintaining perpetual conflict against Secular rulers from Muslim lands—non-Muslim governments that have militarily intervened in Muslim lands.

However, there are some general characteristics and points of consensus that are present in all manifestations of Salafism. Namely:

- They consider themselves alone as correctly espousing the teachings and beliefs of the *salafsaleh* (Pious Predecessors) of the first three generations of Muslims.
- They categorically reject any possibility of metaphoric or symbolic interpretation of the Divine names.
- They oppose all innovations (*bidah)* which are all religious practices non-existent during the prophet time.
- They oppose any manifestation of Shiism, both the moderate and extreme versions.
- They oppose Philosophy and consider it as an infiltration of Greece Culture foreign to Islamic teachings
- They oppose Sufism (*tasawuf) as* being alien intrusions of Hindu/Buddhist to Islam.
- They follow the religious orientation of both Sheikh Ibn Taymiyah (of 13th Century) and Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahab (of 18th century).
- They highly revere both Ibn Taymiyah and Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab as the main inspirations for their religious orientation. Their writings are still being used as references for their religious interpretation and action.
- The Salafists are highly critical of the teachings of Christ, which they view had been altered by the his followers

In general the two above reformist movements tried to purify Islam from all aspects of weakness and erosion. The Salafi movement, however, assumed a hard-line stance in its vision and mission.

The two main sources of inspirations of the Salafi movements are:

1. Ibn Taymiyah was born in 1263 in Harran, Northern Syria when Islam was confronted with various dangers, both internally and externally.

   Externally Islam was facing a clear threat from Christianity, which proclaim itself as the only saviour of humanity. To counter the threat Ibn Taymiyah emerged as the leading contender to counter Christianity . He wrote a book refuting Christianity in a critical reflection against its doctrines entitled: The Right Response to Those who altered the Religion of Christ (Al Jawab al Sahih liman Baddala Dinal Masieh).

   He is known to have a sharp tongue and a hazardous scholar and his discussion was quite contentious. Refuted many great Muslim scholars such as the renowned Sufi master Ibn Arabi, Philosopher Ibn Sina (Ave Siena) and even the universally recognised thinker Al Ghazali.

Islam also was under the threat of Mongol invasion. During this time the entire world of Islam was trembling with the Tartal invasion.

Internally, Islam was faced with Theological philosophy which resulted in various sects and movements. Such as mystical and divine mysteries which were mixed with Islamic faith. Philosophical and rational approaches to Islamic teachings were also on the surface.

In other words, many new converts came into Islam and brought some of their culture and tradition from their old religion and incorporated into their new religion, namely Islam.

This resulted, in Ibn Taymiyah's view a clear deviation from the true teaching of Islam. In short he identified 4 kinds of deviation which were the main factor of Islam's set back from its past glory (Christianity, Shiism, Philosophy and Sufism).

Consequently he cried for purifying Islam from what he called "Alien culture", blasphemy or Shirk. He therefore called for returning to the purity of early age of Islam or SALAF.

2. Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab born in Saudi Arabia in (1703-17910. He was widely known as sincere Muslim scholar who was heavily influenced by Ibn Taymiyah's religious orientation. He encountered almost similar environment as his mentor Ibn Taymiyah regarding many deviations from Islamic teaching.

    Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab is considered to be the founder of Salafi/ Wahhabi and Sunni-Puritan movement who rejected all religious practices that had been adopted after the third century of the Islamic calendar *Hijrah*. These religious practices were tied to philosophy, Sufism, Shiism and other local practices even if they were consistent with the spirit of Islam (or *bid'ah*). It was this movement that popularised the term of *bid'ah*, or innovation---acting on one's own initiative without a teacher's guidance, which surely contradicts pure Islam.

The "external factor," namely an imbalance and sense of injustice by the West toward the Islamic world alluded to above, combined with the "internal factor" within the Islamic world itself, have created one or many societies who feel frustrated and hopeless. This "internal factor" namely an awkward textual explanation toward understanding the sources of Islamic teachings and their implications namely, a perception among some that their very existence is threatened by the existence of other religions. Feelings of frustration and hopelessness, in turn, will encourage them to adopt radical and extreme behaviors and attitudes in the name of their religion.

Indonesian Encounter with Radical Islamic Movements

Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world today. Indonesia also is the largest archipelagic state in the world, spread out in around 17000 islands, which stretch along the equator from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific, covering a distance of 5,100 kilometers between its farthest point, east to west. That is comparable the distance between Los Angeles and New York.

It may, however, be important to stress two important facts, namely that Indonesia was not conquered by Muslim armies for Islam, rather it was won by the piety and good examples of immigrant scholars, traders and Sufi masters. The second, in Indonesia, communities of faith representing many, if not most of the world religions, most of the time live side by side in amity peace and concord.

Currently, Indonesia is suffering from one of the most harrowing and gravest socio-political problems it has ever faced since its official inception in 1945. Our homeland has survived colonialization, significant and prolonged political struggles, and it has even withstood one of the most ferocious economic downturns in its history in the late 90s. What we are currently facing, is a beast that potentially could ravage this nation and uproot all the seeds that have been planted by our forefathers.

Indonesia is a culturally and racially diverse nation which takes absolute pride in embracing its religious differences and racial variety as one of its pillars laid out in Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, the nation's official principles.

For many decades Islam in Indonesia had enjoyed and continued beamingly to to represent a moderate version of Islam. The two largest Islamic organisations namely Muhammadiyah were established in 1914 and nu in 1926 remain the main the solid foundation of inclusive and tolerant Islam.

However, this very foundation has been recently rocked and de-stabilised by the increase in intolerance, hateful religious rhetoric, the spread of radicalism and the cancerous growth of a religious sect that has infiltrated all levels of society which intends to expunge all of what Indonesia has stood for since its inception.

Some studies like one from Setara Institute show that religious intolerance towards people of different faiths or different interpretations of the same faith is the starting point of religious terrorism. Members of this intolerant group would then join a terrorist organization which would enable them to carry out their murderous plans. This has been seen repeatedly in countries such as Syria, Yemen, Pakistan, Iraq who show the exact same initial trend as we are currently witnessing in Indonesia.

Religious Intolerance and radicalism within the Indonesian community has its roots from the Wahabi and Salafi movement. Both of these inseparable and conjoined movements have a clear track record of destructive behaviour in Indonesia ranging from divisive vitriolic language to actual terror attacks in the Republic. This issue has turned grave and has become a tangible threat to the security and in turn the sovereignty of the nation thus needing unprecedented counter measures to eradicate the root of this conundrum.

Similarly, the Salafi movement in Indonesia mirrors the Middle Eastern version as in both regions the movement has varying branches. The political Salafi branch views Islamic universality is more rooted in political problems rather than religious problems. There is also the non-political Salafi wing who holds harsh views on others who do not share their religious ideologies. And lastly, there exists the salafi jihadi sect who not only harbor harsh views on differing viewpoints but also act

upon their indifferences with actions of terror that range from mild violence to murderous rampages.

The Indonesian Islamic constellation is not separated from historical ties, political development and traditions from the Middle East. For example and relevant to this discussion, the spread of modern Salafism in Indonesia is heavily tied from the petrodollar factor which has flooded Indonesia since the 1980s via government, official and non-official organisations. The funds from these sources have been the catalysts for the intolerant ideologies which consequently have birthed terroristic organisations such as ISIS in Indonesia.

These funds have been linked specifically to a number of organisations of some Middle Eastern countries such as Al-Haramain (AHIF) from Saudi Arabia and Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS) originates from Kuwait. Both of these organisations have been registered into the UN as terroristic organisations. Although a Qatari organisation has not been included in this registry, Qatar Charity has been labelled as a fund source for Al-Qaeda and other organisations which are directly affiliated to Al-Qaeda. All three of these organisations have their own network in Indonesia.

The emergence of these hardline Salafi Jihadi groups in Indonesia such as Jammaah Islamiyah is connected and is evidence from these harmful developments. It has infiltrated all forms of media from television, radio and most importantly social media where these extremists ideologies are able to reach all levels of society from grade school all the way to the campuses.

It is thus not strange and quite frankly expected if there exists a break in harmony due to a difference of beliefs which have led to radical thoughts of abandoning the tolerant official national principle of Indonesia (PANCASILA) and to initiate attempts to overthrow the government itself.

For these reasons, there needs to be a systematic counter to halt the spread of this extreme religious doctrine especially through television and social media. There also needs to be an empowerment of moderate clerics financially and logistically to balance and overtake these harmful ideologies with a message of inclusivity, tolerance and above all love for all humankind.

To properly act against these radical groups and their hateful messages, it is imperative that the Indonesian government continually monitor and implement effective programs to curb their influence.

These radical groups have these tell-tale signs:

1. Oppose the basic founding tolerant principle of Pancasila and the government of Indonesia.

2. Are followers of the extreme portion of the Salafi/Wahabi sect which condemns different theological beliefs as blasphemy.

3. Related and affiliated with terroristic organizations directly or indirectly whether local or international.

4. Is a leading cleric who adheres to points 1-3 with a significant influence in the country.

5. Who owns a significant following through real or virtual means, either appearing or stealthy.

These are all valid reasons in how to aid to combat and necessary, however it is far from complete and frankly naive and irresponsible if that is all that Indonesia does to combat this evil empire. We must simply reflect within ourselves and reflect ourselves in the mirror to fully comprehend how Indonesia's tradition of corruption is a significant reason for this ever growing problem. The problem is not caused only by external influences as I laid out before, but very much tied into the internal health of Indonesia. For the past 50 years, Indonesian political actors have intentionally and unintentionally marginalized the middle class all the way down to the farmers, fishermen and domestic workers. They have treated this demographic as a mere inconvenience in their path of greedy success, while at the same time failing to realize this group of people are the actual backbone of Indonesia.

The growing distrust and apathy of Indonesian people toward their leaders have created such a gap that it has been much easier for these unwanted invaders to penetrate and strengthen itself in Indonesia. While our current president Joko Widodo is a blessing for the country in terms of establishing integrity and transparency, the damage done in the past has been too profound to heal in such a short time.

Many will say that is the modus operandi of politicians worldwide, however it is of a different level in Indonesia. The powerful have not only stripped the marginalized in terms of finances, but also of education and awareness which have yielded an opportunity for extremist groups to capture their frustrations and inject it with a perceived hope for their unwavering loyalty. It is easy and natural to shift blame directly to the perpetrators, but it is nearly impossible to admit that such malevolence could also be our un-intended contribution.

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