

## **De-radicalisation of Indonesian Students: A Case Study of UIN Malang**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study is to examine and understand de-radicalisation attempts among university students. University leaders in Indonesia have adopted a policy of de-radicalisation through various programmes in response to the rise in radical religious movements which have swept across Indonesia. This is a case of study of de-radicalisation of students in UIN Malang conducted through the design of personality development courses (MPK) and the character of *ulul albab* in *ma'had* (campus boarding school). Strategy to build and increase awareness and prevent the development of religious radicalism through non-academic activities was also done through strengthening programme and activities of student organisations. This de-radicalisation model undertaken at UIN is directed to students who have not been exposed to radical ideologies, and those who have been exposed to radical ideologies but are not involved in terrorism. Both de-radicalisation models developed by this campus need to be addressed seriously and continuously by involving all relevant elements, as radicalism poses a serious threat to national security.

*Keywords:* De-radicalisation model, personality development courses, radicalism, students, UIN

### **INTRODUCTION**

The fast-moving dynamics of religious movements at universities is one of the

trends that are closely related to the study of changes in political and religious domains. Post-fall of the New Order in 1998 saw the emergence of a number groups and hard-line religious movements (Hasan, 2008). The development of transnational Islamic movements is a subject of an interesting study, because they are inspired by ideological and religious ideas that differ from other mainstream and moderate

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Islamic organisations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah (Arifin, 2014).

The radical Islamic movement views political system in Indonesia as secular which must be replaced by Islamic ideology and political Islam (Hasan, 2010). The people at the helm of the government is considered as infidel. These some radical religious movements highlight aspects of fundamentalism aggression and extremism (Fananie, 2003). Radical Muslim groups are fanatical and aim to replace the prevailing secular systems and political ideologies (Jamhari & Jahroni, 2004). This study is motivated by concerns over the development of radical Islamic movements in several campuses that have ideological and religious basis which have deviated from original Islamic teachings and which have disassociated itself from moderate Islamic movement such as NU and Muhammadiyah. It is also concerned about the ideological basis of student movements such as Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia/PMII) and Islamic Student Association (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam/HMI). Religious universities are increasingly becoming targets of radical Islamic groups and therefore, a de-radicalisation strategy should be of utmost priority.

In 2009 three students of UIN Jakarta was arrested by Detachment 88 and charged with terrorism and sentenced to 4.5 years in prison in September 2010. In 2011, four students of UIN Jakarta and 17 others were arrested for their involvement in

terror events called “book bombs” ([www.megapolitan.kompas.com](http://www.megapolitan.kompas.com)). In 2015, two students of Unsri Palembang was also arrested by the police for keeping the flag of ISIS, and two students were involved in Network Indonesian Islamic State (Negara Islam Indonesia/NII) ([www.lipsus.kompas.com/topikpilihanlst/1244/10](http://www.lipsus.kompas.com/topikpilihanlst/1244/10)). The NII is also looking for new recruits among the students. A former member of the NII, Abduh (2002) states that the number of universities have been infiltrated by the NII, including Universitas Indonesia (UI), Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB), Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB), Universitas Gunadarma, and UIN Jakarta. In response to the phenomenon of radicalism, several universities have set up special institutes. Universitas Gajah Mada (UGM) and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, for example, formed NII Crisis Center. These institutions play an active role in increasing student awareness about the dangers of NII. In UI and ITB, there is annual public lectures on the dangers of radicalism and NII (Kofid, 2015). In UIN Malang, although there has been no student involvement in a terrorist network, but the campus is very concerned about the phenomenon of radical movements and has embarked on de-radicalisation strategies to counter radical ideology.

The change in the institutional status from State Institute of Islamic Studies (Institut Agama Islam Negeri/IAIN) to State Islamic University (Universitas Islam Negeri/UIN), has implications for the opening of non-religious based faculties. This is an attraction for students from various

educational background for admission into the university. On one hand, generally those with shallow religious knowledge may be considered assets or easy targets for radical Islamic groups to reach out and invite them to join their organisation. They might be initiated into the organisation as sympathisers, supporters, members and even activists who have an important position in the organisation or the radical movement. One of the informants for this study is a lecturer in one of the faculties at UIN Malang, who is an active member of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia/HTI (Sumbulah, 2010).

These radical movements have a strong influence among students of public and Islamic universities. As a result, many students have become activists, supporters, and even leaders to spread this radical religious ideology (Kurzman & Naqvi, 2010). Therefore, de-radicalisation programmes should be undertaken by these institutions. For example, the programs can be implemented through the curriculum and other structured programmes organised by student organisations, whose role need to be optimised in de-radicalising these students.

De-radicalization is a systematic effort to build public awareness that narrow fanaticism, fundamentalism and radicalism give rise to terrorism (Abbas, 2007). De-radicalisation must also be understood as any effort to neutralise radical ideologies through an interdisciplinary approach, such as religion, psychology, law, and sociology (Wijaya, 2010). In this context, the notion of de-radicalisation (Abdalla, 2011) is as an attempt to counter radical religious

ideology using cultural approaches such as through educational institutions. Radicalism among students in UIN Malang, generally has not led them becoming suspects in terror attacks; hence, they are the target of de-radicalisation programme. Therefore, developing moderate Islamic values is the key to countering radical Islam.

## METHODS

This research was conducted at UIN Malang to review the university's de-radicalisation efforts. This qualitative research with phenomenological approach was focused on understanding the reality of subjective form emic perspective of the leaders, lecturers of MPK, *kyai* (teacher) of *ma'had*, and students who have taken MPK. Data was collected using in-depth interviews, observation and documentation and analysed. For maintaining academic honesty and avoiding research bias, the study carried out triangulation methods and sources as well as Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

## DISCUSSION

### Curriculum Design of Personality Development Course (MPK)

The affirmation of Islamic values and Indonesian-ness can be seen in MPK which is developed through institutional curriculum and managed by the university. MPK curriculum in the context of UIN Malang is in the form of basic courses that must be taken by all students from all disciplines and faculties. It consists of

40 credits and is spread over 21 subjects, which are grouped in the Islamic studies (Qur'an and Hadith Studies, Theosophy, History of Islamic Civilization, Fiqh Studies and *Tarbiyah Ulul Albab*); nationality and Indonesian identity (*Pancasila* and civic education); languages (Indonesian, Arabic, English); philosophy and general basic knowledge (philosophy of science, basic natural science and social science base) (BAK Fakultas Syariah UIN, 2015).

The MPK courses are aimed at shaping the character of students, which is reflected in instructional design, learning objectives, learning materials to activities and learning evaluation, for example, in the course on Qur'an and Hadith Studies. In addition to the learning process that upholds and respects the opinion of others, democratic values and is non-discriminatory, learning materials are also enriched with universal values that exist in the Qur'an and the hadith, such as justice, honesty, the unity and integrity, gender equality, tolerance and religious harmony, democracy, and human rights from the perspectives of the two sources of Islamic law. It is also found in the syllabus of other subjects. The Faculty of Sharia has subjects such as Modern Thought in Islamic Law which explores the issue of religious ideology, both radical and non-radical. Likewise, the subject of Sharia and human rights examines contemporary issues such as religious freedom, upholding and protecting human rights, the rights of women and children, both in terms of normativity and historical basis until the

contemporary era (BAK Fakultas Syariah UIN, 2015).

Efforts to de-radicalise Indonesian universities in order to build inclusive multicultural society need an in-depth study by experts and practitioners of Islamic education. In this context, the authors agree with Nursyam (2012) views the best way to de-radicalise is through educational institutions. Therefore, it is necessary to review the curriculum at all levels of education to develop the knowledge, attitudes and actions that promote radical thoughts and radical behaviour. The UIN Malang's effort to design its curriculum, MPK, has a significant meaning. This can be seen from several aspects: (1) by content, whereby study materials help to form the personality of *ulul albab* for students, to balance spiritual, intellectual and righteous knowledge; (2) subjects related to MPK is generally thought at the beginning of the semester (semester 1-2) as a basic introduction to current Islamic studies; and (3) in the course of the study of Qur'an and hadith, History of Islamic Civilization and Theosophy, students are exposed to basics of contemporary issues about Islam, Indonesian identity and nationality. Topics such as honesty and justice, gender equality, unity and integrity, tolerance and religious harmony, democracy and human rights in Islam are also tackled.

This approach to tackling Islamic extremism is supported by Abdullah (2010), who emphasises on the importance of five main tasks of Islamic higher education in

the context of religious diversity, not least in response to contemporary developments. According to him, their tasks are to: (1) discuss contemporary issues facing Muslims, as well as explain classical Islamic teaching; (2) direct its ultimate goal in solving the problems of human relationships; (3) contextualise Islam in life; (4) criticise the suppression of religious education only in the cognitive domain; (5) promote Islam not solely for the development of individual morality, but also of public morality. Azra (2003, p. 45) also saw Islam in Indonesia as “Islam with a smiling face” peaceful and moderate, and therefore, there is no conflict with modernity, democracy, human rights, and gender diversity. Thus, the task of higher education institutions is very heavy to position themselves as agents of change, and to respond to the global issues, not only in the realm of knowledge but also the affective domain. Islam is understood as a teaching related to context of time and place. This is key to the interpretation and *ijtihad*. Thus, Islam will be able to continue to renew itself and dynamically in response to changing times. Islam is also capable of having dialogue with different cultures and societies.

### **Character Building of Ulul Albab in Ma’had (Boarding School)**

Subjects related to *Tarbiyah Ulul Albab* which are thought in UIN have a balance between aspects of spiritual, intellectual and righteous deeds. This is stated in Qur’an 2: 179, 197, 269; and al-Qur’an 3: 7, 90. In addition, instilling *ulul albab*

character is also implemented at the boarding school. *Ma’had* as one of the sub-system of education in UIN Malang, has a strategic role in shaping the character of students. There is a history of *santri* (students) presenting a narrative of peace, reconciliation, values of tolerance and hospitality in religion. However, in this era of ideological competition, students have to deal with religious radicalism and terrorism. Therefore, it is important to project the values of peace as thought in Islam which can defeat violence and hatred. The social media often portrays negative statements and news containing violence and hatred in the religion. Therefore, *Ma’had* has great potential to initiate discourse on moderation and Islam which would benefit the nation. The key lies in communication between religious leaders premised on the need to bolster national unity. The transmission of scientific knowledge and religious-political strategy to reinforce the ideas of the archipelago (*Nusantara*) are important. In this context, Madjid (1997, p. 5) revealed the word student (*sastri*) in Indonesian has two meanings – literate and apprentice: *Sastri* in Sanskrit meant ‘literate’ while apprentice is someone who follows a teacher of Islam or ‘*alim* to deepen his or her knowledge and expertise. Students also can be an agent for spreading and promoting Islam *rahmatan li al-’alamin*. Students are responsible for boosting the integrity of the Republic, as well as functioning as peacemakers during a crisis. Thus, character development of *ulul albab* for students is vital and relevant. Therefore, students support institutional

efforts in developing and promoting friendly and moderate Islam. Thus, Islamic higher education institutions have a significant role in spreading Islam by adapting to the local culture. The characteristics that Indonesian students must have are: a sense of nationality, spirit of diversity, democratic, sense of social solidarity, sensitivity to local and global information, and able to think global and act local. This can be achieved through civic education and philosophy of science (Lembaga Penjaminan Mutu UIN, 2006).

The development of the personality and attitude as Muslims are marked by the following indicators: commitment, loyalty and dedication to the teachings of Islam; able to think, speak, and act in accordance with the values of Islam; have a sense of responsibility, self-esteem, integrity; sociable; capable of mutual respect between religious communities. This competence is achieved through Sufism and Islamic theology and jurisprudence. Development of personal competence and attitude as a Muslim student are marked by a scientific attitude, the love of science, love of truth, rational, critical, objective, respect the opinions of others, and self (Lembaga Penjaminan Mutu UIN, 2006). Islamic higher education institutions have a strategic role in developing a moderate Islamic ideology through various media and means. These institutions are good medium for strengthening national ideology and identity and to embark on de-radicalisation (Arifin, 2014). Thus, moderate Islam is important in the face of radical ideology in Indonesia

spread through a transnational network. The UIN Malang is expected to give birth to generations of good quality students who are moderate and aligned to two of the largest organisations in the country, NU and Muhammadiyah. Students and alumni are characterised by depth of the spiritual, moral grandeur, breadth of knowledge, and professional maturity. This is the character *ulul albab* which reflects a balance between the aspects of spiritual, intellectual and righteous deeds.

### **Increased Awareness of Religious Radicalism**

De-radicalization at UIN Malang can be done through various seminars, workshops, studies and discussions, dialogue, research, book review forums, mentoring, training, and carnival showcasing culture of the area carried out by the leadership of the university, faculty or students, both intra and extra-campus. Academic forums focusing on this are important such as the national symposium of de-radicalisation religious ideology held in cooperation with UIN Malang, the National Counter-Terrorism Agency (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme/BNPT) and NU. Participants of the symposium are leaders of *ma'had* in Java and leaders of universities throughout Indonesia. The forum provides six recommendations to the government and in this case the Ministry of Defence, especially BNPT, Ministry of Religious Affairs, and NU. In addition, training and workshop on prevention of religious radicalism in Indonesia was held on 24 April 2015.



On that occasion, in his keynote speech, minister of religion noted that Muslims were faced with a big challenge, namely radicalism. This understanding can destroy a moderate Islamic understanding, threatening the cultural plurality of Indonesia and the mainstream ideology founded based on the history of this nation. The minister emphasised that radicalism, extremism and fundamentalism must be addressed seriously (Saifuddin, 2015).

### **Increased Understanding and Strengthening of Islamic and Indonesian Identity**

There have been efforts to increase insights, understanding and affirmation of Islamic and Indonesian identity via various academic forums. Among these is the 2012 international conference on Islamic Studies in Indonesia and interfaith dialogue, organised in cooperation with the foreign ministry, the ministry of religion, *Al-Hikam* Boarding School and Lebanon in 2012. Participants from both countries represented all major religions. Participants represented the elite from Lebanese Muslim and Christian communities as well as Sunni and Shiite elites. This is to enhance inter religious understanding and community life of other religions. It is believed radical attitudes stem from lack of understanding of and respect for religions. Fundamentalism and radicalism are threats to multiculturalism, pluralism and religious harmony. Interfaith dialogue is a positive step to increase importance and awareness of multiculturalism. A workshop on the integration of science

and Islam to strengthen Islamic identity and values of tolerance in Islam (PSIS-LP2M UIN Malang, 2014) is another good example. The UIN also organises workshops for new teachers in order to understand religious and cultural diversity in Indonesia Eastern and Western scientific traditions and methodologies are also thought here, such as hermeneutics as well as a study of thought leaders and contemporary Muslim scholars (PSIS-LP2M UIN Malang, 2014). In addition to the symposium, seminars, and workshop, UIN Malang also has made various efforts to strengthen and showcase Islam as a religion of peace that supports pluralism and multiculturalism. The UIN also conferred an honorary degree (Dr. H.C.) to the Governor of North Sulawesi, Sarundajang, a government figure directly involved in the resolution of conflicts and violence in the name of religion (UIN Malang, 2012). The university also regularly receives delegation of religious figures through various national and international events.

### **Strengthening Student Activities**

De-radicalisation is also attempted via intra and extra-campus academic and non-academic activities. These activities are conducted through seminars, studies and regular discussions. Extra-campus organisations are PMII and HMI, includes an outline of the organization, policies and work programs are prepared to anticipate the radical movement. Realising the emergence of radical movements are a threat to the existence of these organisations to spread

values of Islam which characterise the nation and Indonesian identity it is necessary to establish policies and programmes that can provide a positive effect on the students, especially freshmen. Additionally, student executive boards attempt to stem radical movements in campus by reviewing orientation programmes and conducting discussions, seminars, and book reviews on a regular basis. Student organisations also organise one-year mentoring programme for new students, workshops and seminars which aim to promote Islamic values an inclusive and tolerant. In addition, there are seminars and training which aim to promote identity of Indonesia by strengthening of the four pillars of nationality, namely: *Pancasila*, the 1945 Constitution, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), and Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (NKRI).

Among efforts made by student executive board in preventing the spread of radical ideology is monitoring movement of intellectuals, cooperating with student activity units, and cooperating with regional organisations to conduct a carnival culture and showcase local traditions of each region. At the university, there is also a centre for religious and social studies which focuses on developing a multicultural society. This annual activity is expected to increase acceptance of diversity. It can foster an attitude to uphold principles of tolerance, appreciation and understanding each other. This attitude is certainly necessary for the realisation of awareness about the beliefs of others, as opposed to the ideology of radical groups. Radicalism is one of the biggest

threats to realisation of harmony in diversity. This is because one of the characteristics of radicalism is rejecting pluralism promoted by liberal Muslims (Hefner, 2001).

De-radicalisation efforts are also undertaken by extra-campus student organisations such as PMII and HMI. Among the efforts undertaken by PMII is organising Aswaja schools, seminars on NII, peace and interfaith dialogue, and book review on religious radicalism. It can also enrich and strengthen Islamic identity of the archipelago, which is different from Islam practised in Middle East and in other places. According to JPNN.com (2016) nationalism and *Pancasila* is not an empty container without contents. It promotes tolerance, unity and diversity. The *Pancasila* and the 1945 Constitution 1945 were founded to promote and unite a culturally diverse Indonesia premised on toleration. The values of *Pancasila* and the Constitution are still relevant in strengthening *NKRI*, especially in the face of radicalism and terrorism. In this context, JPNN.com (2016) was convinced that if the Indonesian people were able to practice the values of *Pancasila* and the Constitution, radical ideologies will have difficulty in spreading their wings. Therefore, student and academic forums are important to strengthen this unique Indonesian identity.

## CONCLUSION

De-radicalisation strategies in institutes of higher learning are vital to promote a moderate tolerant and version of Islam. These will pave the way to build an inclusive



and multicultural Indonesia, and stem the widespread radical religious movements, especially among undergraduate and post graduate students. In this case, the most important thing to do is reorient the vision of Islamic education targeted exclusively towards inclusive and multiculturalism. Strengthening Islamic moderation will contribute significantly to destroy seeds that sow religious conflicts and subsequent acts of radicalism in the name of religion. Affirmation of moderate Islam which characterises Islamic higher education institutions is the key and which requires political and social commitment of leaders of university, faculty, and *ma'had*. The efforts at de-radicalisation in UIN Malang have been adhoc and not consistent. Therefore, it should be pursued more seriously by the academic community for better results and a for a safe and peaceful campus life.

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