


New variants of ultra-conservative Islamic schools in Indonesia: A study on Islamic school endeavor with Islamic group movement

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Abstract

After the reformation era in 1998, Islamic education, either Pesantren or Madrasah, has witnessed significant growth. Unlike during the Dutch, Soekarno, and Soeharto eras, when Islamic education remained marginalized, Indonesia recently houses the biggest Islamic education system where thousands of Pesantren become homes to Muslim children. Nonetheless, the fall of the later regime in 1998 has hitherto marked the prominence of Pesantren education nationwide along with the rise of Salafi-based Pesantren. This article aimed to discover three novel ultra-conservative variants of Salafi-based Pesantren and their contestation against other Islamic organizations promoting social tension and prejudice. Therefore, using a qualitative research method, the study's main aim is to identify how Islamic school institutions develop influenced by the movement of Islamic groups in Indonesia, specifically Islamic boarding schools. In doing so, this study interviewed 190 informants from 39 of 8 provinces. This study unveiled three Salafi-based Pesantren variants: Salafi jihadist, Salafi Wahabi, and Salafi Haraki. These three variants of Salafi gained little attention from previous studies.

Keywords

Pesantren, Islamic movement, Conservative, Islamic Education, Salafi

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Introduction

The discourse of the education system in Indonesia cannot be separated from two education systems, namely, general and Islamic education. One of the latter takes the form of Islamic boarding schools. In general, Islamic schools in Indonesia are divided into Salaf (traditional) and Khalaf (modern) Islamic schools. The existence of Islamic schools in the country gained little attention from the Soekarno to Soeharto eras, not to mention a lack of awareness regarding political policy from the two governments. This has been regarded as a political inheritance from the colonial Dutch. This is in line with what Asadullah and Maliki have pointed out: “The *Islamic school system in the country was marginalized historically by the Dutch colonial administration and remained so in post-independence years by the Sukarno government*” (Asadullah and Maliki, 2018).

Nonetheless, along with the fall of the Soeharto regime in 1998, many Islamic schools, such as Madrasah and boarding Schools, gained prominence on the national plane. The influences of tradition and Islamic practices have thrived strongly since then. With the beginning of the reformation era between 1998 and 1999 and the withdrawal of repressive control over the politics and movement of Islamic groups, the expansion and activities of the Islamic groups have permeated massively in education (Hefner, 2015, 2018). Therefore, Indonesia recently homes to the largest Islamic education system in the world, where thousands of Madrasah facilitate the educational needs of children from Muslim families (Park and Niyozov, 2008). The development of the Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) does not only relate to the quantity, types, and management models, but also various ideologies. One type of Pesantren that has been recently thriving is Salafist Islamic boarding Schools or Salafism.

In Indonesia, the development of Salafi-based Pesantren is always replete with pros and cons, social prejudice, not mention escalating social tension and riot. For example, the case of the burning of the Assunah Islamic Boarding School in Lombok in 2022. The incident originated from the puritanical content of the Wahhabi Salafi group which blamed the traditions of the local community. In some cases, the da'wah of conservative movement groups often gets a rejection by the community (interview; Rahmah 2022). This accords with what Anton Minardi has pointed out. Some Islamic groups in Indonesia, such as Liberation Party/Hizbat-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), Prosperous Justice Party/*Partai Keadilan Sosial* (PKS) Front Pembela Islam (FPI), Jamaah Ansharud Daulah (JAD), Harakah Tarbiyah (Gerakan Tarbiyah), and Salafi are regarded as the Islamic organizations propagating revivalism, puritanism, and radicalism under the frame of global Salafist movement (transnational Islamic movement). (Rahman, 1982; Maksum, 2017; Minardi, 2018; Sugihartati, Suyanto and Hidayat, 2020). Therefore, the da'wah of these groups is very easy to inflame tensions with the majority group, namely, the *Ahlulul Sunnah Waljamaah* (ASWAJA/Sunni).

It is generally acknowledged that some of these Islamic movement groups establish Islamic boarding schools as the basis for the regeneration of their ideological preaching. Therefore, the research question is whether all Salafism Pesantren are ultra-conservative and against the state? And how is the struggle of the Islamic Salafism movement with their Islamic Education in Indonesia?

This study explores three variants of Salafist Islamic boarding schools after the reformation in 1998 and its contestation against other Islamic groups in Indonesia (Tolchah, 2014). It is also to unveil whether the three types of Islamic schools have similar or contradictory characteristics; and to uncover which propagate conservative, ultra-conservative, and radical ideologies in their education system. The description of the three variants of the Salafist Islamic schools becomes critical because of their prolonged stigma as the Islamic movement advocating conservative and radical Islamic thoughts in Indonesia (Charlene Tan, 2011). Therefore, this study seeks to fill the void of previous studies and find a possible alternative view distinctive from what has been disclosed in the society

often trapped in the stigmatization, prejudice, and generalization of the development of Islamic groups (Malik, 2017). One of the many negative stigmas against the Salafists is first their rejection of the democratic system of governance and propagation of a caliphate system. Second, Salafists fight for the enforcement of Islamic law and reject secular law. Third, Salafism takes the path of Jihad to change the existing social order. The four Islamic boarding schools that have been developed tend to be exclusive in ideology, relations with the surrounding environment, and curriculum.

Research Methods

This research was conducted in 8 (eight) provinces in Indonesia, namely, Aceh, Banten, West Java, Central Java, East Java, South Kalimantan, South Sulawesi, and West Nusa Tenggara. Five informants from five different Islamic boarding schools from each province were interviewed, thus accumulating 25 informants from each region. The Islamic schools were chosen based on two major categories: Salafiyah Islamic Boarding School and Reformist Islamic Boarding School. It sought to interpret the data gained from the in-depth interviews and observations and categorize them concerning the objectives, conceptual research framework, and research questions as guidelines. After collecting the data, the subsequent step was to analyze them using a thematic data analysis procedure, which aimed to look at the entire data and identify the same issues and main ideas. Data analysis eventually establishes the same and different patterns and concepts that could further delineate the existence of variants of Salafist Islamic schools and their relationship with the discourse of conservative Islamic movement groups in Indonesia after the 1998 reformation.

Finding

Groups of Islamic Movement and the Development of Pesantren in Indonesia

In Indonesia, the Islamic political movement is generally represented by two Islamic groups, namely, *Islamic parties* and *Islamic mass organizations* (Maksum, 2017; Minardi, 2018; Assyaukanie, 2019). The contestation of this movement between the two Islamic parties often triggers the orientation of the Islamic movement (Sakai and Fauzia, 2014). At the outset, the two most influential Islamic organizations were NU and Muhammadiyah. The genesis of these Islamic organizations has been intellectually and ideologically linked to Islamic clerics in Mecca and Cairo. This is justified by the following as remarked by Fazlur Rahman; “The development of Islamic education in Indonesia has long been influenced by Islam in the Middle East, especially the influence of Mecca and Cairo. According to Rahman, the two regions have different influences on the subsequent development of Islam Education in Indonesia. For example, Indonesians studying in Mecca became a typical traditional-conservative Islamic genealogy with Javanese culture, which was then presented by Nahdatul al Ulama (NU). Meanwhile, Indonesians who studied at Al-Azhar Cairo became the forerunner of the birth of a typical progressive and modernist Islam which was then presented by Muhammadiyah. Today, these two Islamic groups have become pioneers in the presence of several Islamic boarding schools and madrasas spread throughout Indonesia” (Rahman, 1982).

Rahman’s view indicates that the intellectual development of Islam in Indonesia depicts the academic story in the Middle East. This contact is considered positive because it positively impacts the development of several ideologies of Islamic movement groups and Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia in the future. On the other hand, the contact of Middle Eastern intellectuals with the genealogical dynamics of Muhammadiyah and NU in the early days was another form of

infiltration of the transnational Islamic movement against the two major organizations. The infiltration of global Islamic movements to the development of Islamic styles in Indonesia does not only occur in Islamic group movements that are thought to be radical and conservative but also in Muhammadiyah and NU as moderate Islamic groups. Based on this case, the infiltration of transnational Islamic movements does not always refer to or is identical to radical ideology.

After the Reformation era, the Middle East Islamic group movement has influenced and infiltrated both Muhammadiyah and NU as the oldest organizations and the recently burgeoning Indonesian Islamic group movements and other Islamic educational institutions for instance Salafism group. Therefore, the Islamic education system in Indonesia has many names, styles, methods, levels, goals, scopes, and ideological affiliations. There are two names of the most well-known Islamic education system in Indonesia, namely, Madrasahs and Pesantren (Asadullah and Maliki, 2018). The latter has been well established as an Islamic education institution since the 19th century (Nilan, 2009). Currently, Pesantren takes more various forms compared to Madrasah. The findings of this study unveiled that the development of these Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia is no longer categorized into only two types of pesantren, namely, traditional (Salaf) and modern (Khalaf) (Asadullah and Maliki, 2018; Shaleh et al., 2020). However, it is divided into three models, namely, traditional, contemporary, and conservative or ultra-conservative Pesantren.

First, traditional pesantren represents the Salafiyah school of thought affiliated with Islam Nahdatul Ulama (NU), Nahdtul Wathan (NW) NTB, and Dayah in Aceh. With this reference, Hefner states that Islamic organization such as NU has a stable influence on the Islamic community. He also opines that *“It is in this regard that social welfare associations like the Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama have played such a positive role in Indonesia. When first established in the early 20th century, these organizations were primarily dedicated to not citizen values per se but the twin objectives of religious education and heightened religious observance”* (Hefner, 2016). Ideologically, traditional pesantren generally accept Pancasila as the consensus (ijma’) of the ulama. Because of this, the pesantren is known to be moderate, rejects the Islamic state, and is pro-democracy (Arifianto, 2019). Even the style of this pesantren, according to Marzuki et al., has a high potential for multicultural awareness compared to other types of pesantren (Marzuki, Miftahuddin and Murdiono, 2020). Based on the findings of this study, there are several Islamic boarding schools that were infiltrated by this NU-style Islamic movement group. Among them are PP Al-Furqon Al-Islami Gresik, PP Sidogiri, and many others. In general, this NU-affiliated pesantren still maintains traditions to NU such as “salvation”, loyalty to Kyai, and others (Interview; Mujiono 2019).

Second, modernist pesantren, which are unlike the traditional pesantren, do not highlight Mazhab scholars’ views. Instead, they emphasize a return to the Qur’an and hadith in terms of worship and aqidah (religious principles). Modernist Islamic boarding schools are not a single entity but are represented by several different variants. Modernist Islamic boarding schools tend to be skeptical or pessimistic about rituals in local culture because they are considered sinful. In terms of teaching methods, some accept modern educational practices from the West as long as they do not contradict religious principles. In terms of ideology, some accept Pancasila as a part of the negotiations, but some reject it because it is deemed not in accordance with the Qur’an and Hadith. This type of Pesantren is generally represented by the modernist Islamic organization affiliated with Muhammadiyah. This accords with what Nilan states as the following *“Muhammadiyah remains the vanguard ‘modernist’ Islamic movement in the country and has influenced even ‘the traditionalists to adopt new methods of teaching and new subjects of study within their own pesantren schooling system”* (Nilan, 2009).

Among several pesantren that are infiltrated by the Muhammadiyah Islamic movement group are Pesantren al Ikhlas Muhammadiyah Bima NTB, Islamic boarding school Ummul Mukminin Aisyiah

South Sulawesi, Islamic Boarding School Al-Furqan South Kalimantan, Islamic Boarding School Darul Arqam Kendal Central Java, Islamic Boarding School Darul Arqam City Serang Banten. So far, Muhammadiyah schools have a close and strong relationship with the government, although there are often differences of opinion with the government on certain issues. However, Muhammadiyah has consistently taken democratic and dialogical steps in responding to differences of opinion with the government. As the leadership of the Al-Furqan Islamic Boarding School in South Kalimantan admitted, that “this government should be accompanied and advised in a good way. So the da’wah that needs to be done is polite without criticizing. Base on history that harsh methods never worked and even only gave the chaos” (Interview; Phlipi 2019). The same thing was conveyed by the administrators of the pesantren al Ikhlas Muhammadiyah Bima that the existence of the Al-Ihklas Muhammadiyah pesantren here is a part to revive the State itself. This means that what we are doing here is a form of concern for the State (Interview; Supriyadin 2019)

The third category of the Pesantren is Ultra-conservative. This Islamic boarding school refers to any type of Islamic school strongly affiliated with the Salafist movement. This school is intentionally differentiated from modern pesantren, although they have slightly similar puritan orientation, mainly Muhammadiyah and *Persis* (Islamic Union). In practice, this type of Islamic school tends to oppose the traditions of local culture as it is committed to rigid Islamic understanding and ideology *Salaf al-Shalih* of the seventh century. Cited in Abubakar, etc., tastes that Salafists tend to be ultra-conservative and even can be radical in the political sphere on the extreme plane. However, other Salafist groups resist challenging the legal government. Based on this finding, the Pesantren and Salafist movement in Indonesia can be categorized into three types: 1) Salafi - Wahabi, 2) Salafi Haraki, and 3) Salafi Jihadis (Abubakar, Irfan, Malik, 2020).

1998 Reformation Era and the Milestone of Pesantren Development

One of the oldest types of the Islamic education system in Indonesia is the salaf pesantren, see also (Park and Niyozov, 2008). Salaf or traditional Islamic boarding schools are a type of original Indonesian Islamic education with a distinctive culture, history, and ideology. So far, this identity has been attached to the pesantren developed by the Islamic organization Nahdatul Ulama (NU) with two main criteria, namely, the yellow book and spiritual leaders called Kyai (Niam, 2020). The development of the Islamic education system in Indonesia from the beginning was dominated by NU-style pesantren until the end of the New Order era. This is not the case with Islamic education after the 1998 reform era. The development of Islamic educational institutions showed a significant change amid the emergence of various Islamic boarding schools (Azra, Afrianty and Hefner, 2010).

The Reformation Era in 1998 was a turning point for a radical change from the politics of Islamic education in Indonesia, where previous Islamic education, especially Islamic boarding schools, was homogeneous, turning into being very heterogeneous. One of the factors that have pushed the new variant of pesantren recently is the existence of free space as a consequence of the reform policy by the government. The reformation era in 1998 provided ample space for several conservative Islamic groups that had been monitored and even experienced pressure and persecution by the two previous governments (Soekarno and Suharto) such as the Laskar Jihad group, the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (MMI), Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) Indonesia. Not only that, the reformation era has provided great space for international Islamic group ideologies such as global Salafism ideology, Indonesian Hizbat-Tahrir, and global jihad (ISIS) (Hefner, 2018). Both Islamic movement groups affiliated with practical politics such as PKS (Prosperous Justice Party/Social Justice Party) and non-participating Islamic organizations such as the Islamic Defenders Front/Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), the Laskar Jihad, the Mujahidin Council of Indonesia/Indonesian Muslim Council (MMI), and Liberation

Party/Hizbat-Tahrir (HT) (Minardi, 2018). Some of these Islamic groups are then regarded as revivalism and ultra-conservative (Maksum, 2017). They are striving to revive the ideal Islamic values as a response to the legal, social, and economic injustice on the national level by being opposed to the government (Abbas, 2012).

The emergence of the abovementioned Islamic organizations does oppose not only the government but also offers a new social and educational paradigm, including an alternative Islamic ideology. This includes upholding Islamic principles as the panacea to crimes and implementing the Islamic Khalifah system as the alternative to the absurd democratic system, which generally occurs nowadays including promoting Islamic puritanism through Islamic education preaching to purify the misconducts of Islamic practices within the Islamic community. John L. Esposito regards this phenomenon as a prominent political movement of Islamic activities (Maksum, 2017). This is justifiable because the Islamic groups are strongly affiliated with the transnational Islamic movements that tend to propagate radical and conservative ideologies. The presence of the Islamic movements and Pesantren has been regarded as a threat to the government and the tradition of the societies.

In addition, the penetration of the transnational Islamic Salafism into Islamic education potentially sidelines the diverse and moderate Islam, which become the core or *local genuine* of Pesantren in Indonesia. In this regard, Greg Fealy describes it as the return of conservatism in the life of Indonesian Muslims (Kholis et al., 2020). This phenomenon may replace the influential role of Nahdatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah as the mainstream of moderate Islamic organizations in Indonesia. However, some Salafist movements do not aim to challenge the existing Islamic ideologies. Therefore, the main subject of this research was the development of variants of Salafists that have been regarded as ultra-conservative, such as Salafi Wahabi, Salafi Haraki, and Salafi Jihadis.

All these Salafist groups are deemed to underlie conservative and even radical ideologies (Antúnez and Tellidis, 2013; Anwar, 2018; Malik, 2018). Salafism since the 1990s has seen a rapid development along with its Pesantren. Nonetheless, not all the Salafists in Indonesia embrace the conservative and radical ideologies, nor all of them are the result of the transnational Islamic movements. Hence, unraveling the distinctions and developments of the Salafist variants becomes paramount to view the development of Islamic education in Indonesia after 1998. In Indonesia, some Pesantren that are strongly affiliated to Salafism, include Pesantren Umar Bin Khatab (Salafi Jihadis-Bima) NTB, Pesantren Ibnu Mas'ud (Salafi Wahabi) NTB, Pesantren Abuhurairah (Salafi Wahabi) NTB, Pesantren Wahdah Islamiyah (Salafi Haraki) Sulawesi Selatan, Pesantren Ali Bin Abi Tholib (Salafi Wahabi) Jawa Timur, Pesantren Al-Muttaqien Jepara (Salafi Wahabi) Jawa Tengah, and Pesantren Al Hasan Bekasi (Salafi Wahabi) Jawa Barat. Some of the pesantren above, even though they are both affiliated with Salafism, differ in responding to several aspects, for example aspects of the relationship between Salafism and the government. In general, the Wahhabi Salafis are more accommodating to the government than other Salafis. As stated by the leader of the Abu Hurairah Islamic Boarding School (Salafi Wahabi), that "after all the mistakes of our government must not criticize or oppose the government in any form as the Salafi Wahhabi teachings are unlawful against the legitimate government" (Interview; Sidik 2019)

Salafi Wahabi (Puritanism)

In Indonesia, Salafi groups are well known as the founding units of Islamic schools or Pesantren. This is evidenced by the mushrooming of Abuhurairah, as-Sunnah is almost in ever Indonesian province. Salafism in this study refers to the one popularized by Syaikh Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-

Wahhāb (w. 1792) who was influenced by prominent ultra-conservative Islamic clerics, such as Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (w. 855), Ibn Taimiyah (w. 1328), and his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyah (w. 1350) (Kholis et al., 2020). For this reason, the growing Salafists in Indonesia are regarded as the ones affiliated with Syaikh Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (w. 1792). The term Wahhabism is often seen as derogatory by the majority of Islamic groups in Indonesia. It receives consistent resistance from Sunni Islamic groups in general even though this rejection does not correspond to the community's acceptance of Wahabi Salafi Islamic boarding schools. Several Salafi proponents have recently tried to replace the term Wahhabism with the word "Sunnah." Despite this, the former term remains more popular than the latter.

Krismono states that Salafi Wahhabi ideology focuses on several things, such as tauḥīd (oneness of Allah), shirk (fellowship in slavery), bid (innovation in religious practice), takfīr (ex-communication), ijtihād and taqlīd (independent interpretation and bound to one of the schools of law), manḥāj (religious method), and alwalā wa'l barā' (loyalty and disloyalty) (Kholis et al., 2020). Based on this view, the ideological orientation and movement of all the Salafi variants are literally considered similar. In contrast, this study's findings show that there are fundamental differences between the three variants. However, they have some parts in common, such as the ideology of Salafism which both rely on the slogan "al-Rujū' ilā al-Qurān wa al-Sunnah 'alā Fahm al-Salaf al-Ummah" (back to al-Salaf al-Ummah).

Although Wahabi Salafis are associated with transnational Islamic movement groups, they undergo contextualization in several aspects of education, especially adopting the national curriculum in their schools. Having a direct network and full support from the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia, the Salafists can quickly establish Islamic boarding schools that are in the style and interests of the Wahhabi Salafi movement. Meanwhile, they resist the other aspects, such as the tendency not to carry out flag ceremonies and not to participate in national holidays. In the political sphere, they have strong ideological principles, such as being loyal to the legal government, not against the legal government, and forbidding criticizing the government, such as through demonstration, although the latter commits mistakes or wrongdoings. Although this condition does not represent the overall position of all the Wahhabi Salafi groups' relationship with the government, it can be deemed as absurd or pseudo loyalty for being, suffice to say, radical in several aspects (interview; Salik, 2019)

The position of Wahhabi Salafi, which is apolitical and loyal to the authorities, has become social capital for the group in developing educational institutions so far. However, the closer the relationship between an Islamic education institution or a Pesantren with the government is, the higher the level of its resilience to an ultra-conservative ideology will be. On the other hand, the lower the story of its vulnerability to ultra-conservative ideology. This stance differentiates Wahhabi Salafi from other Salafi groups. Nonetheless, their Islamic campaign remains conservative in the public eyes as they propagate the issue of takfiri ideology (infidelity), deviating from other religious groups (exclusivism). Also, they categorize NU and other Islamic groups, such as the Tablighi Jama'ah group, as deviant Islamic groups from the actual Islamic teachings.

The theological and ideological foundations of the Salafi preaching movement in Indonesia generally refer to the religious thoughts and practices of the early Islamic generation known as Salaf because it is considered a puritan, conservative, and revivalist movement. Unlike the case in the context of Islamic boarding school education, the pattern of the pesantren education system is oriented to the modern education system or Khalaf. This makes the ideology of Wahhabism in their schools less visible, although the symbols indicating affiliation and infiltration remain legible and visible. Nevertheless, the presence of Wahhabi Salafi pesantren with a modern education system remains a separate choice for non-Salafi Wahhabi Islamic communities.

Salafi Haraki (Revivalism)

According to Krismono, the conflicts and dynamics of various Salafis' thoughts in the Middle East, especially in Saudi Arabia, are the driving factors for the emergence of multiple types of Salafi that were initially apolitical to becoming political-ideological (Islamism) (Kholis et al., 2020). Suffice it to say, the birth of the variant began with the contact of the Saudi kingdom as the authority to promote the Wahabi movement along with *Ihkawnul Muslim* (IM). This penetration results from the direct involvement of IM figures, such as Muhammad Qutb and Sayyid Qutb, in determining the education system and modern curriculum of Saudi Arabia (Wagemakers, 2022). This contact success, namely, *Tawhid* and *hakimiyah* (no rule except god's). This concept is subsequently inherited and crystallized by the generations that give birth to the Salafi Haraki group, which is supposed to be conservative.

Even though both the Wahhabi Salafi and the Haraki Salafis have the same ideology, the former is likely more conducive to the ruling government, while the latter prefers to politically oppose the government. Therefore, in the Indonesian context, the Salafi Haraki group is more dynamic and pragmatic in ideas and movements as seen in several actions such as political practice (party), demonstrations, and criticism of the government.

The former characteristics of the Salafi's Islamic education were the same as the Salafi Wahabi in general, such as inclusiveness and puritanism. These include the effort of WI (Wahda Islamiyah Boarding school) to accommodate the values of the nation-state and place the Islamic principles in them. Then, the actions of WI tend to adopt the model of Islamic education-based NU and Muhammadiyah as the mainstream organizations underpinning moderate Islam Indonesia (Chaplin, 2018). However, WI has maintained conservative views against the democratic system, not as the best governance for Indonesia. Also, WI accommodates the political practices and movements by directly participating in demonstrations against government policies. Therefore, the activity of this Salafi Haraki aims to reform the politics leading toward revitalizing the Muslim community. (Antúnez and Tellidis, 2013).

In Indonesia, the Salafi Haraki Islamic institution has been prominent along with the emergence of Wahdah Islamiyah (WI) Pesantren, which is the biggest in South Sulawesi (Interview; Hamid, Pamujianto 2019). WI has 170 Islamic education schools across the Indonesian archipelago. Krismono opines that Salafi Haraki in Indonesia is represented by WI that underlies all of their activities, such as preaching, social, education, female, information, and health-based Salaf al-*Ṣālih* school of thoughts. Pesantren WI is legally under the auspices of Yayasan Pesantren Wahdah Islamiyyah (YPWI) built in 2000. The Islamic ideology of Salafi Haraki derives from the Islamic principles in the book of *al-Thahawiyah* authored by Salafi ulema. At the same time, their fiqh is based on the book of Ibnu Suja (Kholis et al., 2020).

The conservative track of WI Pesantren is evidenced by the split between the male and female students in the teaching and learning processes and the use of niqab for female students. The two features remain prominent in all variants of the Salafi. These two characteristics are often regarded as the symbols of militant and exclusiveness against modernity. The conservatism of Salafi can also be seen in their high commitment to developing the Islamic schools over the value of *Tawhid* and *Sunnah*. This commitment results in the group's worry against secularism recently deemed to uproot Islamic values in Indonesia. The process of secularism is often regarded as a threat to the faith. Hence, the emergence of Islamic schools based on Salafi Haraki does not only become a means of systematic and planned ideological dissemination but also acts as a moral movement of the Islamic community that accords with Salafism.

Salafi Jihadist (Ultra-Conservative)

Of all the variants of Salafi, Salafi Jihadist belongs to the Salafi group that promotes radicalism and terrorism across the globe. Thus, the growth of Salafi is generally associated with the rising number of radicalism and terrorism cases in Indonesia. Cited in Juan Carlos Antunez Moreno that Salafi jihadist is a minority group in Islam, where the majority of the religious adherents are against violence. However, this ideology is prone to be radicalized, and the doctrine of global Salafism can be exploited to justify extremism as found in terrorist groups in the Islamic world ([Antúnez and Tellidis, 2013](#)).

Theologically, Salafi jihadist does not have significant differences from the mainstream variants of Salafi, yet the Jihad movement characterizes its movement. The interpretation of the word “Jihad” and the choice of Jihad as a way to defend and fight for the rights of Muslims around the world becomes the group’s global perspective. The Salafi jihadist group believes that the enemies of Islam are currently persecuting Muslims in various parts of the world. Therefore, there must be a global jihad movement. The sense of being persecuted that brings the spirit of Jihad and ukhwa Islamiyah becomes the most distinctive feature of Salafi Jihadis from other variants of Salafism.

Although similar to other Salafi ideologies, the adherents of the Salafi Jihadist group are significantly different from those who reject its doctrines and views. Their core narrative is about “we” (Umat, community, or Ummat al- Mu’minin, community of believers) and against “them” (unbelievers who carry out alleged “War against Islam”), or rulers who do not run the government based on Islamic law is the demarcation line for the group’s identity. In the terminology of the Salafi jihadist group, such a government refers to Togut (infidel), which subsequently deserves to be punished. Because of this, the Salafi Jihadist group is often stigmatized as a group that adheres to Takfiri ideology. Some of the main criteria of this group above make it more visible as an ultra-conservative group within the body of Salafism.

According to Krismono, the growth of Salafi jihadists in Indonesia is inseparable from the Islamic figures, such as Abubakar Baasyir, who has a solid ideological affiliation with international jihadist groups, such as Al-Qaeda and Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) ([Kholis et al., 2020](#)). In Indonesia, the JI group undergoes fragmentations that split into two groups, Jamaah Anshorut Daulah (JAD), previously linked to ISIS. The Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT) group led by Aman Abdurrahman remained strongly affiliated with ISIS until recently. The latter separated itself (Interview; Muhajir 2019).

Like other Salafist groups, the Salafi jihadist Islamic group in Indonesia manages several Islamic boarding schools as preaching institutions and the center for developing Islamic education. However, the existence of Salafi Jihadist Islamic Boarding Schools is less rampant than that of Wahabi and Haraki Salafi Islamic Boarding Schools; the government and public regard the latter’s pesantren to have links with the development of terrorism and radicalism issues so far. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that some of the main figures from this Salafi group are suspected of being involved in several cases of terrorism and religious radicalism in Indonesia. However, the management of Salafi jihadist Pesantren has often vehemently denied the claim.

Krismono opines that Aman Abdurrahman was supposed to promote the ideology of Salafi Jihadists in Indonesia after translating numerous influential books of this Salafi group, such as Abū Muḥammad al- Maqḍīsī, known as the teacher of leaders of Al-Qaeda, Abū Mus’ab al-Zarqāwī. Also, Aman Abdurrahman is recognized as an Islamic teacher and cleric in several Pesantren in Jakarta and West Java ([Kholis et al., 2020](#)). Nonetheless, the features of this Salafi jihadist group cannot represent the characteristics of other variants of Salafi in Indonesia.

In Indonesia, jihadist Salafi pesantren are known for their exclusive ideological and social style. Because of this, their Pesantren remains less visible than that of other Salafi groups. Among the pesantren that are considered Salafi jihadists are the Umar bin Khattab pesantren located in Bima Regency and several other pesantren with the same criteria. Even though the Umar Bin Khatab Islamic boarding school has now been banned after its affiliation to the terror attack in the Regency, some of its superintendents established new ones (Interview; Muhajir 2019).

Specifically, the characteristics of the Salafi Jihadist Islamic boarding school include their concept of Islamic law, Jihad, and Islamic leadership, which is often referred to as Islamic figures who are considered to support radicalism, such as Muḥammad Quṭb, Sayyid Quṭb, Hasan al Banna, Abū Muḥammad al-Maḳḳīsī, dan Abū Mus'ab al-Zarqāwī. Additionally, its curriculum is oriented toward the concept of *fiqh Ahkamudimmah* (fiqh Jihad), and Aqidah Islamiyah authored by the abovementioned figures. Another feature can be seen from the management of the Pesantren, which tends to be traditional. They do not issue any official diplomas. They also do not adopt the official curriculum from the government and reject the official flag ceremony and any kinds of curricular activities. They are also not affiliated with the government (Interview; Anwar 2021). These characteristics of the Jihadist Salafi Pesantren often become the government's judgment over their schools as ultra-conservative Pesantren.

Discussion

(Mis)recognition of Islamic Education

Based on the above descriptions, most of the Pesantren growing up in Indonesia have a strong affiliation to the Islamic movement. All of the movements underpinning the fundamentalist view have specific characteristics. In general, the Islamic movement has the following features as coined by Ben-Dor, “including political space, the ability to penetrate inter-state boundaries, Islam as a protest movement, the total adherence of believers to a set of behavioral tenets, the difficulty of separating state from religion, a strong orientation to things collective, Islamic legitimacy of states, the commandment of jihad and the immediacy of faith in the life of believers” (Ben-Dor, 1996). On the other hand, other experts, such as Oliver Roy, John L. Esposito, and Marshall GS Hodgson, regard this Islamic movement as a part of Islamic politics like other big religious movements across the globe (Abdullah, 2017; Maksum, 2017).

In general, Islamic political movements have tended to be viewed as derogatory and discriminatory, although Islamic political movements have various variants in Indonesia. Therefore, the alleged link between radicalism and Islamic boarding schools is only a stereotype that cannot be justified and attested. This false assumption derives from the hegemonic view of the authorities and media that are often impartial (Göl, 2011). This view is merely based on (mis)recognition of the image of Muslims in the media. It has created a series of new problems in ignorance and misunderstanding about the relationship between terrorism and the sphere of Islamic education.

The phenomena above also result in less affirmative terms regarding the relationships between Islam and terrorism, and between terrorism and Islamic schools or Pesantren, such as “Islamist, fundamentalist, radical, Salafism, jihad, Wahabi, and *takfiri*”. J.C. Antúnez and I. Tellidis state that “this terminology has led to a stigmatization of the Muslim faith and its followers, who, in many cases, have become the targets of attacks by non-Muslim groups and/or individuals precisely because of their faith” (Antúnez and Tellidis, 2013). These terms stigmatize Islamic groups and are often used out of context. However, the terms referring to Pesantren often connote negative assumptions about the Islamic groups or their schools. So far, Islamic boarding schools have firmly

rejected the slogans despite prominent stereotypes, prejudices, and extreme stigmatization in the public eyes.

Surprisingly, Pesantren, home to genuine local cultural development, turns into a place associated with radicalism and terrorism. The Bali Bombing has even legitimated this assumption. Azra et al. state that “The October 2002 bombings in Bali, Indonesia, in which more than 200 people died, raised concerns in Indonesian and Western policy circles about the possible involvement of some of Indonesia’s modern Islamic schools (*madrasah*) and traditionalist boarding schools (*pesantren*) in promoting religious radicalism. Police investigations traced the Bali bombers back to a small *pesantren* in Lamongan, East Java” (Azra, Afrianty and Hefner, 2010). This remark is reinforced by the views of Western analysts who state the US-led conflict against the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan is politically similar to the situation in Indonesia in the 1980s and 1990s until recently. The involvement of Pesantren in terrorist violence raises the question of the extent of support for political extremism in Islamic schools in Indonesia (Azra, Afrianty and Hefner, 2010). This view explicitly unveils the possibility of a link between pesantren and radicalism growth in the country.

Nowadays, a strong argument indicating the connection between Islamic boarding schools and radicalism is the direct involvement of Pesantren alumni in several terrorist cases in Indonesia (Azra, Afrianty and Hefner, 2010). It is, however, not adequate to be the indicator for the pesantren to promote radicalism and terrorism. It is even totally counter-productive to the role and function of Pesantren as educational institutions that support religious moderation, especially pesantren affiliated with NU and Muhammadiyah Islamic mass organizations (Assyaukanie, 2019; Salik, 2019). This paradoxical view recently presents various interpretations and prejudice against the existence of Pesantren as an Islamic educational institution.

It is generally thought that the Islamic movement groups are dissatisfied with the current government system in that they intend to make radical changes to it. As a result, a growing stereotyping regards education of pesantren strongly affiliated to the Islamic movement groups as being more potentially conservative than non-affiliated pesantren (Minardi, 2018). This view is justified by some Muslim scholars stating that the affiliated Pesantren in Indonesia remains exclusive, sectarian, and primordial. Muslim scholars support this view that, in general, the pattern of Islamic education affiliated with Islamic movement groups remains still exclusive, sectarian, and primordial (Abdullah, 2017). Therefore, the last section of this article delineates why most Islamic education systems (*pesantren*) affiliated with Islamic movement groups in Indonesia tend to be suspected of being ultra-conservative and radical.

Portray of Transnational Islamic Movement

The Islamic ideologies propagated by several lately emerging Islamic mass organizations are considered not to have strong roots in Islamic traditions that have developed for quite a long time in Indonesia. This can be seen in the Islamic movements of recent Islamic organizations, such as PAN Islamism, which was popularized by Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, the Islamic model (Salafi) developed by Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) and Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865–1935), Hasan Al Banna, and Abul A’la Al-Maududi founded Jami’ ati Islami in India (1947). This transnational Islamic movement is considered more formalistic, militant, and radical (Minardi, 2018). In terms of doctrine and ideology, the Islamic groups underlie the doctrine known as *al-walla’ wa al-barra’* (loyalty and disavowal) that tend toward the ideology of *takfir* or *takfiriyyah* with the political aim to realize the system of *Khilafah Islamiyah* (Abdullah, 2017; Maksum, 2017; Assyaukanie, 2019; Salik, 2019). This subsequently becomes the background of Islamic studies to examine how the Islamic

organization movements propagate their ideological cloning or Islamic understanding in their Pesantren.

Furthermore, the Islamic organizations' movement often becomes the indicator for judging and categorizing whether certain Pesantren is conservative, ultra-conservative, radical, transnational, or moderate. Such categorization has some drawbacks, according to Arifianto, the use of the terms moderation and radicalism itself is problematic and controversial. These two terms often become biased and political, in which groups or individuals who have different views or disagree with the government or state are labeled as radical, whereas those who support the government will be labeled moderate. For this reason, Arifianto advised scholars to develop a clear definition of the use of the two terms (Arifianto, 2019).

Referring to Arifianto's opinion (2019) above, the typology of this Islamic movement is often linked politically to make a radical and non-radical distinction against existing groups. There are at least four popular Islamic movement groups in Indonesia. First, Nahdatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. It is undeniable that these two groups of Islamic movements have encouraged the birth of Islamic boarding schools as pioneers of modern and traditional Islamic education (Park and Niyozov, 2008; Nilan, 2009; Hefner, 2019). The second is the Tarbiyah movement (PKS), an Islamic movement affiliated with the transnational organization Ihkwanul Muslimin (IM). Third is Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), and the fourth is Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) (Arifianto, 2019). Some of the Islamic activities affiliated with the last three organizations are often categorized as being conservative, (Mietzner and Muhtadi, 2018) along with their influence on the mid and grassroots of Indonesian society. The presence of these movements gain the government's immediate attention, mainly because they influenced the future of Indonesian Muslim education. This is in line with what Hefner states as the following: "*The rise of transnational movements in reforms Indonesia is important for matters of citizenship and Islamic civil ethics because these movements are disinclined to ground their vision of Islamic public ethics on the proud achievements of Indonesian Muslim education*" (Hefner, 2019).

One of the influences of the Islamic group movement is evident in the ability of the group to present Islamic educational institutions (Islamic boarding schools in particular) and involve the proponents of the conservative Islamic movement groups in Islamic boarding schools. Based on the empirical findings in this study, Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia are generally based/affiliated with certain types of Islamic organizations, including the conservative Islamic movement groups. So far, there have been differences in affiliation models that occur in each of the existing pesantren variants. It is also evident in the involvement of their adherents as administrators, founders, donors, and teachers of the pesantren.

In Indonesia, traditional pesantren are in general more affiliated to the Nahdatul Ulama (NU) organization that marks the development of Pesantren characterizing the organizational figure or called "Kyai." Also, this pattern is presented through the ability of Islamic boarding schools that have social competence, and competence of the pesantren to create a harmonious relationship with the government and the societies. This characteristic can also be found in Muhammadiyah-based Pesantren with more modern features (Sakai and Fauzia, 2014). This social linking competence then encourages NU and Muhammadiyah pesantren to be more inclusive with the outside world. Meanwhile, Islamic boarding schools with Salafism pattern infiltration are determined by their relationship with Wahhabis (Salafi in Saudi Arabia) and other transnational Islamic movements. These two Islamic movements spread their ideological concepts through their pesantren with these two infiltration patterns. Therefore, social bonding has been widely used as a strategy for spreading their ideology by creating social bonds among the communities (Abubakar, Irfan, Malik, 2020). Concerning this, the latest research by the Center for The Study of Religion and Culture (CSRC)

2020 claims that social bonding can be used as social capital in the context of pesantren resilience to the influence of radicalism. On the other hand, it can encourage pesantren to be more exclusive and sensitive to novel and different things coming from outside. This condition often occurs in Salafi-style Islamic boarding schools, Wahhabi Salafi, Haraki Salafi, and Salafi jihadis. (Abubakar dkk).

One of the Islamic movement groups that have social bonding is the Salafi Jihadist group. Since the beginning, Salafi jihadis have been promoted as an ultra-conservative, radical, militant, and extremist movement. Although the group's infiltration is not as massive as other Salafists, the group has strong social bonds with its fellow communities. This is caused by several things; First, the group's cells actively build networks through small studies or *halaqah*. Second, this movement group tends to take advantage of the issue of injustice experienced by Muslim minorities around the world to attract public sympathy. Third, this group also takes advantage of the failure of the government and the weakness of the democratic system to gain wider support and conduct protests while proposing alternative ideologies that are claimed to be problem-solving (Darmadji, 2011).

The ultra-conservative movement, such as radicalism, is sparked mainly by the global and local social spectrum (Yuli, Thohir K, Fauzi and Jamil, 2015). This signifies that various factors turn people to be radicals. It is generally claimed that belief, education, social, and economic backgrounds are the primary reasons they are radicalized. Although the infiltration of Islamic movement groups into Islamic boarding schools is not always related to the radicalization process of pesantren, it is more likely to the issue of system reform and the value of Islamic education. Despite this, it has hitherto had no significant outcomes on the formation of morals and piety. However, religion and education in the context of pesantren are like two sides of the same coin and coexist in the cultural transformation of Muslim society in Indonesia (Tolchah, 2014). In addition, the rise of Islamic education, mainly Pesantren-based Salafi in post reformation era, can be seen from the resistance against the dominance of secular education. The description of this issue has been ignored in the discourse of Salafi-based Pesantren to date.

Conclusion

After the reformation era in 1998, Islamic education, especially Pesantren, gained its prominence and full support to thrive. The development not only relates to the number and variants of the Islamic schools but also gains support from the Islamic communities. These emerging Pesantren even come into contests competing with the existing Islamic schools affiliated to NU and Muhammadiyah. The main factor for the emergence of many Pesantren after the reformation era was the national political situation that opened freedom to every element of society, including Islamic groups that underwent political marginalization, such as Islamic groups who were considered ultra-conservative. Among the growing Islamic movement groups include HTI (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia), JI (Jamaah Islamiyah), Halaqah Tarbiyah (PKS), and Salafism. The development of the Islamic boarding schools in this article cannot be separated from the rise of Islamic movements. One of the variants of the emerging Pesantren after the 1998 reformation is the Salafi-based Islamic Boarding Schools. These schools fall into three categories. The first is the Salafi Wahabi variant, the mainstream pesantren that is considered to have the most massive development compared to other variants. The affirmative relation with the government causes this. The second variant is Salafi Haraki Islamic boarding schools. Although they tend to take a stance critically against the government, they still deem the democratic system as a way to express aspirations despite their negative view of democracy. The third form of Salafi school is the Salafi Jihadist Islamic boarding school. This Islamic boarding school is entirely against the government because this Salafi group rejects the democratic system and considers all of its components as *Togut* (infidel).

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