Strategy of Cirebon City to Prevent Radicalism: An Ethnographic Study of the Non-formal Education System

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This article aimed to explore the strategy of Cirebon City government in preventing radicalisation. Radicalisation is a particular threat among the younger generation, so action is needed to protect these young people. There are still some suspected perpetrators from West Java according to National Agency on Combating Terrorism (BNPT). This article explains factors that cause radicalisation in the young people of Cirebon City, as well as examining the government’s strategy in preventing radicalisation, including a religious activity program in the form of non-formal education using qualitative ethnographic approaches. The article concludes that the factors causing radicalisation in Cirebon include identity problems, poor character, poor attention of parents and family, globalisation, poor knowledge and a social gap. The government’s strategy is to use a counter-radicalisation program through a classic and systematic perspective. The effort of non-formal education programs in preventing radicalisation is through the development of students’ characters as well as preparing materials and involving the community to oversee the program.

Key words: Factors of radicalisation, Local government strategy, Non-formal education.

Introduction

This article reviewed the government’s strategy on deradicalisation efforts through non-formal education in Cirebon City. Today, the issue of global threats focuses on the threat of terrorism. Key factors are the use of information technology through social networking to strengthen the global terrorist network for financial support, weapons and shelter, as explained in Indonesia’s Defense White Paper (Kementerian Pertahanan, 2015).

Following the terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, critics sought to explain the roots of terrorism. They pointed out that radicalism idea was the underlying factor of terrorism, leading policy-makers, intelligence analysts and law enforcement officers
to trace the radicalisation idea in order to take preventive measures aimed at avoid future attacks (Kundnani, 2015). In order to fight terrorism, the Government of Indonesia decided to prevent the process of radicalisation of the people. The process of radicalisation occurs as part of the impact of the spread of radicalism in society. Based on a neoconservative paradigm, the radicalisation model tends to assume that religious extremist ideas encourage terrorism (Kundnani, 2015). It was therefore decided that the prevention of radicalisation would be based on preventing the spread of radicalism in the name of religion, especially Islamic teachings.

As part of the spread of Islam in the Southeast Asian region, Islam in Indonesia, according to Zachary Abuza (2006), is a tolerant, modern and pluralistic version of Islam. Given that the appearance of Islam is shifting to a militant, violent movement, sometimes interspersed with acts of terror, Bruinessen (2013) invited a number of academics to explore the factors behind this shift, as well as sustainable strategic steps that could stem it, in depth.

The most obvious situation in Indonesia today is when Islam as a religion is associated with the development of radicalism, a situation that may negatively influence both religious and national life. One channel for dealing with this problem is education. A counter-radicalism effort using an educational approach was conducted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs by presenting the Islam Nusantara (Islam in Archipelagic Country) campaign to the world over the past 10 years. The Ministry of Religion actively promotes Islamic teachings that fit better with the culture in Indonesia.

Counter-extremism, especially religious education, is implemented through formal education but it is felt that this has not gone far enough. Due to low learning intensity, non-formal religious education is a path that needs to be taken. This is in accordance with the context of the community in the City of Cirebon as the locus of this study, where the community has embedded cultural wisdom such as Cirebon as the City of Santri (Islamic pupils) with the local habit of learning religion in \textit{tajug}, such as the mosque or \textit{mushalla}. This research was intended to elaborate on how the government synergises the condition of the community through a non-formal education program in Cirebon City based on efforts of the government and the people who actually live in the culture to adapt Islamic Shari’\text{a} ideas against the threat of radicalism.

**Objective**

This study examines the elaborate strategy used by government to prevent radicalisation in the city of Cirebon using ethnographic studies of non-formal education programs in 2017. The study focuses on how the government is able to prevent radicalism in Cirebon and how the non-formal education programs could be optimised to prevent radicalism. The object of
this study is the government strategy, prevention of radicalisation, as well as non-formal education programs.

**Literature Review**

**Strategy**

To explain the phenomenon, this research used Whittington’s (2000) four perspectives of classical, evolutionary, process and systems theory. Classical theory emphasises planning, evolution emphasises openness, process theory emphasises dynamic nature and spontaneity, and system theory emphasises sociological aspects and human behavior (Prasojo, 2018).

**Radicalisation**

In recent years, the term ‘radicalisation’ has become highly politicised in many domains, from the terrorism used in political games through labelling and blaming attribution (Horgan, 2011, in Schmid, 2013). In this article, the term ‘radicalisation’ is based on the definition of Schmid (2013) – namely, the socialisation of extremism that manifested itself in terrorism. Schmid (2013) adds that the causes of radicalisation that lead to terrorism can be found not only at the micro level, but also at the meso and macro levels.

**Counter-radicalisation**

Deradicalisation refers to a program that focuses on radical individuals or groups that are suspected or sentenced in order to rehabilitate and reintegrate them into society – or at least prevent them from further political violence. Counter-radicalisation, on the other hand, has an anticipatory impulse. It aims to prevent members of non-radicalised populations from being exposed to radicalisation without resorting to repressive coercion, as this is seen as potentially counter-productive (US Bipartisan Policy Center, 2011, in Schmid, 2013).

In 2010, the Government of Indonesia established a special agency to combat terrorism, the National Agency for Combating Terrorism (BNPT). BNPT runs deradicalisation programs with two aims: (1) to coordinate government agencies in an effort to counter terrorist radicalism; and (2) to empower the power of civil society.

**Non-formal Education**

Based on the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 year 2003 on the National Education System, non-formal education is a pathway that can be implemented in a structured and tiered manner. Article 26, paragraph 1 explains that non-formal education is provided for
community members who need educational services that serve as substitute, enhancement and/or complementary formal education in order to support formal education.

**Culture of Cirebon**

Cirebon City is nicknamed ‘Shrimp Town’ (Kota Udang) and ‘City of Islamic Pioneers’ (Kota Wali). In addition, it is known as Caruban Nagari (marker of Ceremai Mountain) and Grage (negeri gede in the Cirebon-Java language means a vast empire). As a melting point of Javanese and Sundanese culture for several centuries, Cirebon’s population often uses two languages in daily conversation: Sundanese and Javanese.

As the nickname of Kota Wali indicates, Cirebon was at the centre of the spread of Islam in West Java around the sixteenth century. Sunan Gunung Jati was the most known wali (Islamic pioneer) in Indonesia, who spread Islam in Cirebon and West Java, affirmed the assertion that Cirebon was Kota Wali. His most famous advice was ‘Insun titp tajug lan fakir miskin’, which means, ‘Please take care of tajug and poor people (for me)’. Tajug is the local term for a place where the Muslim community prays. The emphasis on the poor is advice for citizens of Cirebon to give donations to poor people as a way of practising the relationship between God and the people, according to the holy book of the Qur'an.

Therefore, the existence of tajug – in this sense, similar to a mosque or mushalla – has an important role to play in shaping the character of a person in the social structure of the community in Cirebon. Religious education is taught in tajug in the form of the principles (aqidah), noble character and its application, followed by Islamic learning that can be understood and practised easily. Also taught is the customary education: learning about morals, and to speak and behave correctly, and to be polite in the community.

**National Defence**

State defence is held to defend the sovereignty of the state, the unity of the territory in the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia and to protect the entire nation from threat and disruption to the integrity of the nation and state (Article 1, paragraph 1 of Law No. 3 of 2002). These threats include terrorism, radicalism, separatism, armed rebellion, natural disasters, border disputes, sea piracy, theft of natural resources, disease outbreaks, cyber attacks, espionage, trafficking, illicit drugs and open conflict or conventional war.

**Methods**

This research used a qualitative approach. Herdiansyah (2014) explains that the essence of qualitative research is to understand what others feel, to understand the mindset and
viewpoint of others and to understand a central phenomenon based on the viewpoint of a particular group of people in a natural setting. In this study, to understand the phenomenon that has been described, researchers analysed the government’s strategy to prevent radicalisation in the city of Cirebon and also reviewed non-formal education program in the city.

The approach used for this study was qualitative ethnographic research. Ethnography is an inquiry strategy through which researchers study intact cultural groups in their natural environments over long periods of time by collecting data – especially observational data and interviews (Cresswell, 2009). The research process is flexible and usually develops contextually in response to the realities of life encountered in the field (LeCompte & Schensul (1999), in Windiyani & Nurul, 2016). Wolcott (in Herdiansyah, 2014) also adds that a research question in an ethnographic strategy provides researchers with follow-up questions related to the description of the context and main theme analysis, as well as the interpretation of cultural behaviour.

**Data Sources**

Research subjects are people who are directly involved as a resource, or to assist with understanding of the data, such as being interviewed, the person who filled questionnaire or being a participant in the experiments. Thus, the informant is a subject who understands the information needed about factors causing radicalisation in Cirebon City, the Government's strategy to prevent radicalisation in the city of Cirebon, as well as efforts of non-formal education programs in preventing radicalisation.

The technique used to determine sources in research involves researchers entering certain social sites, making observations and interviewing people who are seen to know about the social situation (Sugiyono, 2013). Resource subjects in this study are listed in Table 1.
Table 1: Resources and informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title/occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Asep Dedi</td>
<td>Secretary of Cirebon City Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rokhilah</td>
<td>Section Head of Ideology and Nation Insight of Kesbangpol Agency of Cirebon City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Letkol. Inf. Heri Rustanto</td>
<td>Head of Military District Unit (Kodim 0614) of Cirebon City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>AKBP. Adi Vivid Bachtiar</td>
<td>Chief of Police of Cirebon City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>KH. Solihin Uzer</td>
<td>Chairman of Islamic Figures Assembly (MUI) of Cirebon City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jaja Sulaeman</td>
<td>Head of Education Agency of Cirebon City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ahmad Sanukri</td>
<td>Representative Head of Ministry of Religious Affairs of Cirebon City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Slamet</td>
<td>Section Head of Islamic Community Development of Ministry of Religion Affair of Cirebon City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ahmad Yani El-Muchtary</td>
<td>Custodian of Great Mosque of At Taqwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Subardi</td>
<td>Teacher and Lecturer (former 21st Mayor of Cirebon City of 2003–13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the next stage of research, with a very important function. The results of the research must be analysed through a process of data analysis in order to be shown to be valid. The essence of data analysis is to parse and process raw data so that it can be interpreted and understood specifically and recognised using a scientific perspective. Data analysis techniques in qualitative research can be implemented with manual techniques, with the help of data-analysis software. Data analysis in this research was undertaken by a manual technique using the interactive model by Miles and Huberman (2017), which consists of four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display and conclusion/verification.

Results

Factors that Cause Radicalisation for People in Cirebon

Radicalisation in Cirebon City still does not exist, although some sources have found ‘potential’ that may lead to radicalism. Brawls, motorcycle gangs or delinquency of children and adolescents may lead to radicalised behaviour. A brief description of the results of the study is viewed through the matrix described in Table 2.
Table 2: Matrix of cases of radicalisation and triggering factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Case of radicalisation</th>
<th>Triggering factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary of Cirebon City Administration</td>
<td>Cases of radicalisation do not exist; however, juvenile acts that may lead to radicalisation do exist in Cirebon (although the level is decreasing)</td>
<td>Poor family attention from parents, poor education (dropped out of school)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section Head of Ideology and Nation Insight of Kesbangpol Agency of Cirebon City</td>
<td>Real cases of radicalisation do not exist, but there is some ‘potential’ that is being observed and watched despite no threat having yet occurred.</td>
<td>Social discrepancy and injustice in economic development issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Military District Unit (Kodim 0614) of Cirebon City</td>
<td>Real cases of radicalisation do not exist, but there is some ‘potential’ that is being observed and watched despite no threat having yet occurred.</td>
<td>Social discrepancy and injustice in economic development issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief of Police of Cirebon City</td>
<td>Real cases of radicalisation do not exist but, based on public opinion, the vocal person is a radical person.</td>
<td>Dissatisfaction, slow response to public need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman of Islamic Figures Assembly (MUI) of Cirebon City</td>
<td>Real cases of radicalisation do not exist.</td>
<td>Radical acts are from behaviour that cannot be controlled or managed due to weak personality or individual traits, poverty, low education, injustice in economic development issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Education Agency of Cirebon City</td>
<td>Real cases of radicalisation do not exist, but juvenile act may lead to radicalism (despite the number of reported acts is decreasing)</td>
<td>Poor family relations, especially from parents, globalisation, poverty, unemployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subardi (Former Mayor of Cirebon)</td>
<td>Real cases of radicalisation do not exist, but people from Cirebon who have radical thoughts may exist.</td>
<td>The person was late to study about religion or the person’s knowledge about religion is poor or non-existent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The culture of local people in Cirebon, as a meeting point between Sundanese and Javanese culture, strengthens Cirebon as Kota Wali. Sunan Gunung Jati’s famous advice, ‘Insun titp tajug lan fakir miskin’ affirmed the essence of Cirebon community life as based on Islamic Shari'a Law. It is a strong culture in a traditional community in Cirebon City. The Cirebon culture is also influenced strongly by the teachings of Islam that originated in the Qur’an and Hadith. This true custom must not be changed at all because it has become a provision. Thus, studying Islam, and learning to recite and understand the Qur’an is a must for the Cirebon community.

Related to this, Cecep Sumarna, academician and researcher from Cirebon’s state-owned Islamic Academic Syeh Nurjati, expressed that, based on the socialisation of radicalism prevention event that was covered by a number of media in early January 2017, studying the Qur’an correctly may develop proper understanding of Islam. This is important because someone who has a superficial understanding of religion can easily fall into the radical group due to the promise of heaven. Thus, people in Cirebon City who have learned and understood the Qur’an from childhood, in accordance with the custom, become strong and are protected against radicalisation.

Moghaddam developed an analytical model called the Six-stage Staircase to Terrorism Model to investigate the relationships and interactions between the needs of individuals, groups and broad community support for the use of violence and terror. According to him, the process of becoming a terrorist could be likened to climbing the stairs in stages (Moghaddam, 2005, in Arifin, 2014). Based on Moghaddam’s perspective, someone who is already at the level where they will be a terrorists and commit to it in a meaningful way has reached the highest leve – namely the fifth level (fifth floor). Prior to the fifth stage, people will pass through the stages or steps below are: Ground Floor – Psychological Interpretation of Material Conditions; First Floor – Perceived Options to Fight Unfair Treatment; Second Floor – Displacement of Aggression; Third Floor – Moral Engagement; Fourth Floor – ‘Us’ vs ‘Them’; Fifth Floor: The Terrorist Act and Sidestepping Inhibitory Mechanisms.

Moreover, factors that may cause radicalisation found by researchers in Cirebon City can be analysed through three levels using Schmid (2013):

1. **Micro level – the individual level.** As explained by the sources, teenagers at the age of psychological development are in the stage of self-discovery, which can lead to an identity crisis so that the individual characters may become less powerful. The sources also explained that the development of child psychology is strongly influenced by social interaction through family, school and community environment. If the parents’ attention to the child is very low, then it will inhibit the development of the child’s self-esteem during the period from adolescence to adulthood. A summary of cases that worked at the individual level can refer
to two aspects: (1) the violence issue related to identity and social vulnerability in children or in the adolescent stage; and (2) an inability to protect children from the spread of bad information as a side-effect of globalisation. This should also be a concern for the government of Cirebon City, because in the previous discussion the researchers also found that globalisation factors were a potential cause of radicalisation.

2. **Meso level.** Based on the results of the data analysis, it is known that Cirebon City is an Islamic community because of the strong Islamic culture of the city as described in the previous paragraphs. People in such environments become stronger so that they are protected against radicalisation. However, with the discovery of ‘potential’ that may lead to radical ideas, there is still some weak element that will act against radical understanding.

3. **Macro level.** The data analysis revealed that the factors that enter into this approach are social discrepancy, poverty, injustice, dissatisfaction and unmet needs because of the demands of life. The existence of social discrepancy may arise because of a gap in economic development conducted by the government, which increases the gap between the rich and the poor. The consequences of such social discrepancy may be poverty that fosters a sense of injustice, dissatisfaction and stalled needs due to the demands of a very tough life during this globalization period.

Based on the previous explanation, radicalism emerges from society, so wherever there is a society there must be a latent danger of radicalism. There must be a person or group who has such thoughts, and who is constantly waiting for the right time to act to realise the goals they want to achieve.

**Non-formal Education Program to Prevent Radicalisation in Cirebon City**

This was in accordance with Article 26 paragraph 1 of the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 year 2003 on National Education System where non-formal education is held for community members who need education services that serve as a substitute, enhancement and/or complement of formal education in order to support lifelong education. Non-formal education is very structured and carefully arranged by the city government of Cirebon, ranging from curriculum to teaching materials and teachers.

The non-formal education program was implemented for Muslim students in form of a Short Islamic Boarding School in Fasting Month (*pesantren ramadhan*), comprising praying adolescent and dawn training conducted in all mosques and *mushala* in Cirebon City. Institutions/parties involved in the implementation of non-formal education programs are not only the education department and ministry of religion of Cirebon City, but also require participation from the community itself, including community leaders, religious leaders, teachers and parents.
Prior to the existence of religious activity program, the people of Cirebon embraced the culture of learning religion in *tajug*. Learning in *tajug* forms the character of the younger generation of Cirebon. *Tajug* have an important role to play in the social structure of Cirebon community because they are not only religious places, but also contribute to the transformation of cultural and religious values (see Table 3).

**Table 3:** Non-formal education efforts to prevent radicalisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Efforts to prevent radicalisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary of Cirebon City Administration</td>
<td>Strengthen basic religion knowledge to students. Improve ethic among students based on Cirebon culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section Head of Ideology and Nation Insight of Kesbangpol Agency of Cirebon City</td>
<td>Improvement in knowledge and understanding about religion for children to prevent radical thoughts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Military District Unit (Kodim 0614) of Cirebon City</td>
<td>Educate children through religious knowledge. Protect students from impact of globalisation. Develop youth to be a quality generation and able to be leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief of Police of Cirebon City</td>
<td>Involvement of students in religious education in mosque to prevent bad behaviour. Maintain the content of good knowledge materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman of Islamic Figures Assembly (MUI) of Cirebon City</td>
<td>Involvement of students in religion activities to guard and prevent students from the impact of globalisation. Strengthen the character of student so they can think and thus prevent wrong conduct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Education Agency of Cirebon City</td>
<td>Strengthen the character of students through religious education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Religion Affair of Cirebon City</td>
<td>Strengthen the character of students through religious knowledge and good morality. Improve the morals of children from early childhood. Develop children’s character and morals through intensive togetherness, responsibility and relationship/family activity. Study Islamic religion from early childhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custodian of At Taqwa Great Mosque</td>
<td>Study Islamic religion from early childhood. Provide basic knowledge about radicalism in order to introduce children to the dangers of radicalisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subardi (Former Mayor of Cirebon)</td>
<td>Study Islamic religion from early childhood. Develop strong children’s character through religious activity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Government Strategy to Prevent Radicalisation in Cirebon City

Strategy means long-term goal-setting and resource utilization to achieve a target. In practice, the implementation of the counter-radicalisation program that has been designed by BNPT includes the implementation of socialisation or dialogue, as implemented by the Government Agency for National Unity and Politics (Kesbangpol) of Cirebon City since 2013. The socialisation was termed ‘Socialization on Handling of Radicalism’. In 2017, the event invited all community leaders to participate. The goal of the program was to socialise handling of radicalisation in order to strengthen the community’s early awareness of the spread of radicalism and to introduce and socialise the impact of radicalism on young people.

Discussion

Factors that may lead to radicalisation in Cirebon City are poor attention from parents and families, globalisation, social inequality, poverty, injustice, dissatisfaction, inhibited needs, lack of or incomplete knowledge about religion, and poor individual character.

Based on the results of the data analysis, it is known that there are currently no cases of radicalisation in Cirebon City. Several sources stated this. The strong culture of Cirebon, which is embraced by the society through Sunan Gunung Jati’s famous advice ‘Insun tip tajug lan fakir miskin’, creates a strong character for the people of Cirebon city. There could be other interesting phenomena for research. It could also be carried out with other methods, such as quantitative or mixed methods, to delve deeper into this subject.

Conclusion

Based on the above discussion of the research, the following conclusions were reached:

1. Factors that cause radicalisation by the people of Cirebon City are in the form of identity problems, weak character, lack of attention from parents and family, globalisation, low levels of knowledge and a social economic gap.

2. The government’s strategy to prevent radicalisation in Cirebon City is to use a counter-radicalisation program based on a classic perspective, considering long-term goals and systematic perspectives influenced by Cirebon culture. Both approaches are synergised in the implementation of the Cirebon City government program.

3. The efforts of a non-formal education program to prevent radicalisation in Cirebon City are through the development of student character through religious and mixed education held at tajug. Preparing the non-formal education program thoroughly may avoid the presence of radical understanding in the education. The role of the community that oversees the course of non-formal education may also prevent radicalisation of students.
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