



A Socio-Technical Study Of The Narratives Of Three Pro-ISIS Indonesian Women In The Perspective Of Actor-Network Theory

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Abstract. The phenomenon of individuals becoming radicalised and joining extremist movements through media platforms, particularly social media, poses a significant concern. The online sphere has transformed into a sinister domain that fosters several perilous possibilities for the spread of extremism, radicalism, and terrorism. This study undertook an extensive inquiry to acquire a more profound comprehension of the process of radicalization through digital media. This study utilises the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) approach, which comprehensively considers both the technical and non-technical (social) components in order to comprehend social reality in its true form. Furthermore, the examination of individual radicalization sometimes involves analysing the shift in political ideologies and the extent of social influence. This platform functions as a means of shaping, testing, and improving political experiences and conceptions of violence, which are explicitly explained using the ANT technique. The result of this investigation is the suggestion of a conceptual framework that can facilitate a more comprehensive comprehension of the process of individual radicalization. Following that, the conceptual framework will be utilised to evaluate the experiences of three women in Indonesia who had prior involvement in pro-ISIS groups.

Keywords: radical milieu, social media, actor-network theory, social penetration, political ideology spectrum

1 Introduction

The wave of global political violence is getting stronger when the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) carries out propaganda and acts of terrorism [1] This ISIS movement has spread in various countries and in stark contrast has involved women and children. In the context of mobilization, this movement is strong because it has used digital media to spread radical political ideas to recruit movement members [2] The influence of the ISIS movement has also been the cause of several theoretical events including those that occurred in Indonesia. In Indonesia, many cases of

terrorism motivated by the ISIS movement involve women. Women's participation in ISIS can be attributed to two distinct aspects: push and pull influences. Contrary to push factors, pull factors, as described by Ulas[2] operate within the domain of ideology. Pull factors are influenced by the utilization of optimistic narratives about the establishment of an ideal society known as the 'Caliphate'. ISIS employs a propaganda strategy that capitalizes on naive romanticism to construct its 'Caliphate' narrative. In addition, if traced further, it turns out that the role of women in the circle of radicalism and terrorism is not passive or mere victims in this political violence. This is a finding from recent research such as that conducted by Azca et.al and Gayatri & Ahanf[2][3] that women also have a role as agency.[3]

This article will try to explore the complexity of the radicalization process of individuals who sympathize with the pro-ISIS movement by contextualizing digital media as a radical milieu. When studying radicalism and radical political ideas, the context of communication cannot be ruled out, because without communication it would not be possible for radicalism and terrorism to emerge as messages that then influence thoughts and actions. Likewise, concepts such as changes in the spectrum of political ideology are explanatory for the possibility of any variables for a person to change their political ideological views.[4]

It can be argued that there are many variables that influence an individual to become[5] radicalized. To better understand this, this article proposes the use of Actor Network Theory (ANT) [5] [6][7] to understand the complexity of variables influencing radicalism in digital media. ANT is considered to have the strength of being open to existing concepts and exploring them. ANT understands reality through the logic of relationships and networks, thus concepts are not treated as objective "matters of fact", but relationships and networks will reveal the facts and reality in the concept. This is what makes ANT have a distinctive view, "matters of concern", which focuses on what problems, issues, entities in the social or scientific world are the center of public attention [7][8]. In this effort, this article offers a conceptual framework for understanding radicalism in digital media. Furthermore, in the last section, this article presents three narratives of women's experiences involved with pro-ISIS movement groups. From these cases, it will be studied how an individual reaches or does not reach the translational process, namely about a set of relationships and networks. Whether these relationships and networks can change their political spectrum to become radicalized.

2 Methodology

This research employs a qualitative approach that focuses on in-depth interviews and document analysis to gain an understanding of how the transnational network of the ISIS movement influences women and motivates them to engage in acts of terrorism in Indonesia.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Analisis Kerangka Konseptual Radikalisasi Individu dan Media (Sosial) Platform

In this section, we argue that the use of a pragmatic approach can help scholars to better understand and analyze the complex and intricate empirical phenomena that describe the interaction between individuals and pro-radicalism/ terrorism/ extremism groups. As can be seen in the figure below, we introduce four main concepts in our conceptual framework - three concepts related to factors that influence the radicalization process, namely radical milieu, social penetration, and political ideology spectrum and one concept of approach in understanding the radicalization process - namely ANT which we will discuss further in the next section (Figure 1).

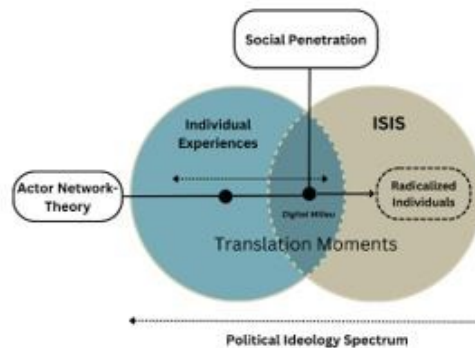


Diagram 1. Conceptual framework for studying the radicalism movement and digital (social) media platforms.

Source: Research Team (2023)

3.2 Radical Milieu: Assessing the Power of Social Penetration and the Changing Spectrum of Political Ideology

Technology of information and communication has become a transformative environment. According to Maura Conway, a radical environment is a place where political experiences and violent ideas are formed, tested, and refined [2]. Secara sederhana, lingkungan radikal adalah tempat di mana norma-norma sosial dibentuk. This pertains to the fact that a radical environment has

proliferated in the online realm, with particular attention being given to the utilisation of the internet and social media. The radical group has expanded their presence in the virtual space, as revealed in the research conducted by Putri [2]. This study documents the increase in internet usage by terrorist groups in Indonesia, in line with the advancements in information and communication technology, spanning from Daulah Islamiyah (1948-1993), Jemaah Islamiyah (1994-2014), to Pro-ISIS Terrorist Group (2014-2017). The study by Putri (2018) also highlights the role of women and terrorist groups in the utilisation of the internet.

The occurrence of terrorism is inconceivable without a process of communication, just as the understanding of an individual's political beliefs that leads to extremism and radicalism. An effort to comprehend radicalism can be initiated by understanding the political spectrum provided by Leon P. Baradat. Someone or a group within the radical political spectrum have an extreme understanding and dissatisfaction with the existing societal conditions. Within this political context, an individual or group in a radical political position is characterised by their impatience for fundamental change. Here is an illustration by Baradat depicting the position of radical groups throughout the political spectrum.

Furthermore, in the current situation, the advancement of information and communication technology also plays a crucial role in the shift of individuals or groups towards radical political positions. The presence of information and communication technology enables individuals or groups to acquire and interpret social reality. Information and communication technology has a crucial role as a very influential channel in shaping social constructs. The process of constructing social constructs by individuals or groups involves social interactions. The concept of social construction involves the stages of understanding carried out by each individual towards their environment and external factors. This stage involves the processes of externalisation, internalisation, and objectification. In this context, it may be understood that individuals or groups influenced by ISIS undergo a process of comprehending social realities that leads to a radical political perspective.

Baradat defines radicalism as the belief held by individuals or groups who are extremely dissatisfied with the current social conditions. They lack the patience to wait for profound changes and are eager to witness fundamental changes occur immediately. Baradat demonstrates that there are at least four factors that underlie an individual's shift in the political spectrum, namely economic pressures, age and attitude towards the status quo, individual psychological tendencies towards liberalism, conservatism, or other ideologies, and finally, views and perceptions of human nature.

Currently, radical-terrorist groups perceive the behaviour of society and the government as a representation of negative, evil, discriminatory, corrupt, tyrannical, and inconsistent human nature with Islamic principles. Some of them perceive this situation as an extreme outcome of the advancement of capitalist societies, which has led to severe social injustice and inequality. In this context, societies that have reached advanced levels of capitalism may also face challenges that could trigger the emergence of radicalism and terrorism. The situation becomes increasingly complex when several factors, such as feelings of alienation and dissatisfaction, identity issues,

economic crises, and advancements in information and communication technology used for radical purposes, such as the dissemination of extremist propaganda, terrorist group organisation, fundraising, and recruitment through various means, contribute to the potential for radicalism and terrorism.

3.3 Actor-Network Theory and Social Facts

In the previous section, it was explained that radical space is an arena that tests an individual against radical political ideas. There are at least some concepts that are then variables that explain the process of radicalization of individuals, namely the possibilities of changing the spectrum of political ideology which is then reinforced by social penetration that occurs through the process of interaction and communication in digital media. However, all of this will only be a presumption or justification because we tend to stand in a zone that is a priori towards what is a change in the spectrum of political ideology or the power of social penetration that is intertwined. Thus, ANT contradicts this traditional view, instead ANT will see the spectrum of changes in political ideology and the power of social penetration starting from the form of relationships and networks. And one very important thing is to question the quality of interaction and communication that occurs in digital media which is transformed as a radical milieu that has a strong determination to make individuals become radicalized.

3.4 Individual 'Calculation Space' in the Radicalization Process: Narratives of Three Women's Experiences

Before joining the militant group, IPS (case 1) was an ordinary woman working as a female migrant worker (TKW) in Hong Kong (to see IPS' social network with ISIS terrorist group, see Figure 1). During her time abroad, IPS spent her free time following news of the wars in Palestine and Afghanistan through the Al-Mustaqabal website, created by M. Fachri, a student of Aman Abdurrahman, the main source of thought on the website. He also viewed war videos from the site and YouTube links. Meanwhile, Bahrun Naim, an IS propagator in Indonesia, fought in Syria and positioned himself as a Syrian journalist who wrote heroic narrative articles, including about the Paris bomb attacks. With the money raised during her work as a migrant worker, IPS intended to support jihad with her donations and established an online recruitment network through Telegram, starting with Riswandi who later recruited Zaenal Akbar, who also became her husband and managed the financial administration of their group to finance terrorist acts.

Furthermore, within this network, Abdullah Azzam was influenced by Zaenal Akbar, and they joined the Telegram group Waddu, which consists of individuals who have undergone selection and are ready for actions that include self-sacrifice. Abu Jundi, the active treasurer of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), openly supported IS, while IPS needed funds for its donation amaliyah. Dian Yulia Novi was involved in the pot bomb case, with her husband Nur Solikin. Ahmad Supriyanto became IPS' second husband after divorcing from Zaenal Akbar, and the latest

information suggests that Zaenal Akbar's status is still not categorized as 'green' by BNPT (National Counterterrorism Agency), while IPS and her husband have been recognized as such.

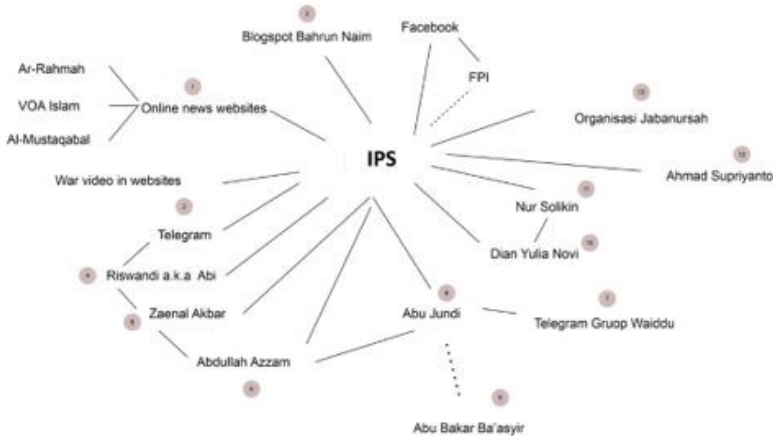


Figure 1.Case1. IPS Social Network with ISIS Terrorism Group

Source: Research Team (2023)

SNA's (case 2) journey towards pro-ISIS groups began with her involvement in university studies and her membership in UKM Dakwah at UPI (to see SNA's social network with ISIS terrorism groups see Figure 2). She later left this organization in 2017. SNA's interest in Islamic State led her to become a member of NII Commander 9. Dissatisfied with the concept of Islamic State introduced by some previous organizations, SNA searched for 'new studies' through Telegram and found several channels. After joining these channels, she ended up in a group.

SNA was then added to a WhatsApp group called 'Turn Back Crime' with around 40 members. In this group, she met Dita Siska, with whom she felt she had a shared vision, and they became close. This WhatsApp group was led by an online ustazah, whose actual identity remained unknown to SNA throughout the trial. In addition to the online ustazah, the group was also influenced by Abu Kembar, or Koswara, a follower of Aman Abdurrahman. Koswara had previously visited Aman Abdurrahman and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir in prison. SNA's trip to Mako Brimob was triggered by Vido Abu Ibrahim, who told of the riots at Mako Brimob and the need for Muslims to unite against 'Thagut' (referring to the police, civil servants and their colleagues). On the day of her

arrest, SNA intended to give food to terrorist prisoners in Mako as a form of support against 'Thagut'. However, she was arrested and became a suspect after a pair of scissors was found in her bag, which raised suspicions regarding her involvement in the planned attack.

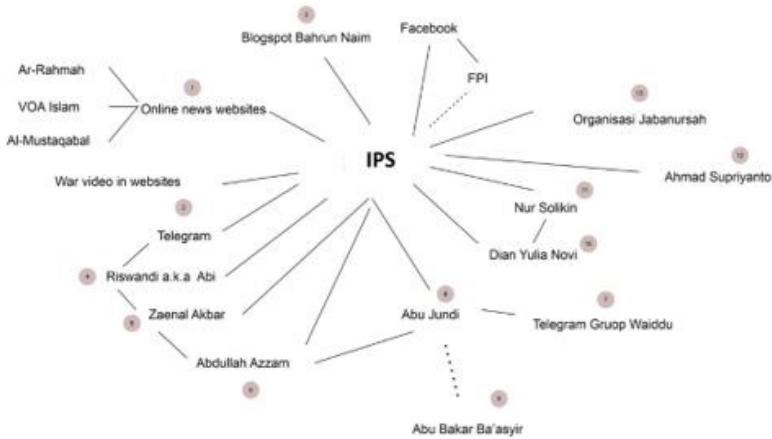


Figure 2. SNA's Social Network with ISIS Terrorism Group

Source: Research Team (2023)

The third female figure connected to the ISIS group is APA (to see APA's social network with the ISIS terrorism group, see Figure 3). SNA's case is the one with the least contact with digital media, and her involvement is due to family relations. APA is part of the Villa Mutaiara family terrorist network in Makassar that supports ISIS. The Pondok Tahfidzul Qur'an that APA attended, led by Ustad Basri, is a pro-ISIS school. SNA is the daughter of Rian Rullie and Ulfa Handayani, the suicide bombers at the Cathedral Church in Jolo Island, Philippines. Before they went to the Philippines, the family took their children, including SNA, on trips to IS-linked countries, including an IS community camp in Turkey.

This network stems from a series of events involving a number of IS-linked individuals and groups in Indonesia. FPI leader Habib Rizieq Shihah declared support for IS, triggering the Makassar branch of FPI to hold a tabligh akbar and mass allegiance to IS. Ustadz Basri, who was involved in the tabligh akbar, also has a history of ties to FPI and terrorists. Muhammad Rizaldy who is the leader of the Villa Mutaiara Makassar family network that supports ISIS. Muhammad Rizaldy is the brother-in-law of Rian Rullie and the older brother of Ulfa Handayani. The couple's other two children, Yusuf Ismail Salteh and Rezky Fantasya were also involved in traveling to IS-linked countries. Yusuf Ismail Salteh managed to enter Syria, but his whereabouts and condition are

still unknown. Meanwhile, Resky Fanstasya, who followed his parents' trip to the Philippines, was found in Abu Sayyaf Camp before being thwarted in a terrorist action plan after the bombing in Jolo, Philippines.

APA has never been actively involved in ISIS and is the only one in the Villa Mutiara terrorist network who has never pledged to ISIS. In addition, the radical environment comes from the family. APA's exposure to ISIS content on digital media came after being introduced by his family. APA used YouTube and Telegram in the context of seeking information and confirming what her parents told her about ISIS. However, these links and relationships with socially close actors earned him a three-year prison sentence.

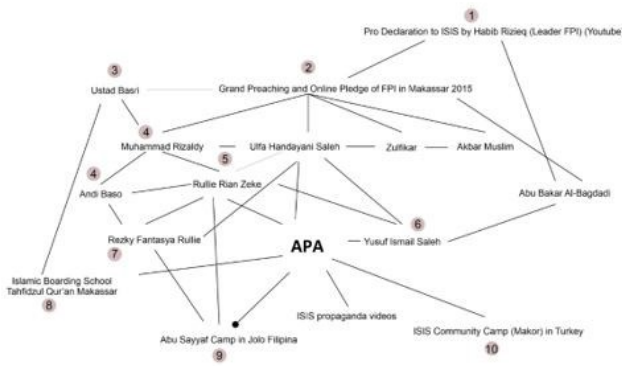


Figure 3. APA's Social Network with ISIS Terrorism Group

Source: Research Team (2023)

4 Conclusion

Through the ANT approach, we understand the process of individual radicalization as a process of a series of complex relationships and networks. ANT can be used as a bridge in understanding changes in the spectrum of political ideology driven by the process of individual social penetration of radical political ideas. Whether or not an individual arrives at radicalism or engages in a new form of agency as a pro-radical group individual is strongly influenced by the process of interaction and communication in the radical environment, and in this case digital media

as a radical milieu. The process of interaction and communication in reality involves individuals or entities with technical and non-technical dimensions

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