

May The Laugh Be with You! The Role of Humor for Combating Radicalism to Increase National Security

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Abstract

This study delves into an unconventional method for combating radicalism, namely through the use of comedy or humor, with cases drawn from Indonesia and Jordan. It suggests that comedy can serve as a means of easing societal tensions and countering extremist ideologies. Utilizing a qualitative approach through literature review, the research highlights the efficacy of humor in combating extremism, particularly evidenced in the Jordanian context. This success suggests that humor could become a potent tool in the global fight against radicalism. This perspective is in line with a growing acknowledgment of the importance of non-traditional mediums, such as humor, in comprehensive strategies to combat radical ideologies, as demonstrated in a study focused on countering the Taliban. Moreover, the study identifies a lack of significant attention to the role of comedy in preventing radicalism in Indonesia. It predicts that in the future, entities such as the Indonesian Ministry of Defense and the national counter-terrorism agency may incorporate comedy or humor as a proactive measure against radicalism. The implications of this research extend to educational reforms, highlighting the need for multifaceted strategies to address the complex challenges posed by radicalism in diverse societies. The study utilizes a qualitative research method, employing a literature review approach to gather insights and evidence from existing studies and sources. It finds that comedy has been successful in combating extremism, especially in Jordan as the case. Additionally, it highlights a limited focus on the role of comedy in preventing radicalism in Indonesia. The research resulted that humor is able to become a potent weapon in the global battle against extremism. It anticipates that organizations like the Indonesian Ministry of Defense and the national counter-terrorism agency may adopt comedy as a proactive measure against early stage of radicalism in the future. Moreover, it underscores the necessity for comprehensive strategies, including educational reforms, to tackle the complexities of radicalism in varied societies.

Keywords: Defense Management, Radicalism, Humor, National Security.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is demographically gifted with its productive generation which can have a significant impact on the development of the country's prosperity in the future. This demographic bonus will reach its peak in the 2030-2040 range, therefore there must be thorough preparation in managing human resources. Apart from that, Indonesia is also known as a pluralistic country, which is a sign that the country has ethnic, racial, cultural and religious diversity (Ariyani, 2023). Known as a country with a high level of religiosity, Indonesia has six officially recognized religions, namely Islam, Protestant Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. (Bourchier, 2019). Based on census data released by the Institute of Southeast Asia Studies (2003), there are more than 300 ethnicities in Indonesia, which makes this country a diverse country. This multicultural diversity is certainly unique for Indonesia, but it is prone to clashes regarding sources of conflict and division. The greater the distance that exists because of differences and intolerance, the more fertile the potential for conflict in society (Lestari, 2021). This is what fuels one of the factors in the formation of community organizations which have a tendency to carry out acts of intolerance.

It is unavoidable that to this day intolerant attitudes are still widespread and give rise to radicalism, terrorism and extremism in society. In Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) radicalism is defined as an ideology or sect that wants change in a violent or drastic way. In Indonesia itself, radicalism is a complex issue that has been developing for several years and is often linked to radical political movements, economic, social and religious motives.

Imran Tahir (2020) explains that radicalism can be interpreted as positive and negative as well as constructive and destructive. A radical movement will be considered positive or constructive if it is protected by an attitude of tolerance or restraint in society. Meanwhile, negative or destructive radicalism is an action that has a strong goal of bringing about change quickly and is very fanatical, so that using violence to achieve its goals is commonplace. Negative radicalism will seriously endanger the order of society because it creates the roots of other problems such as terrorism which harms innocent people and destroys property. Negative radicalism is also capable of destabilizing a country or region, causing economic instability.

Currently, negative radicalism is still rampant in society, often targeting university students, which will be very dangerous for the nation considering that the majority of students are in the productive age category of the demographic bonus. This happens because the average student is still in the stage of seeking a new paradigm in understanding religion, while the curriculum in universities, especially state ones, is proven to be insufficient to fulfill their curiosity (Wardah & Fathiyah, 2021). The student's task is to be an agent of positive change and universities should be a place where students can get education and rational thinking (Yulianti, 2023). Regulations related to radicalism and terrorism are contained in Republic of Indonesia Law Number 5 of 2018 where the crime of terrorism can be accompanied by ideological motives, or political motives, or certain goals and other goals of a personal, economic and radical nature that endanger state ideology and security. country (DPR RI, 2018).

Comedy or humor has long been society's preferred medium for discussing taboo or polarizing topics. Apart from that, comedy is also known as an unconventional way to overcome extremism and radicalism. Waller (2007) explained an illustration of Team America on World Police, a television programme that uses puppets to save the world and is created by the same people who created South Park. The film makes fun of Kim Jong Il, the dictator of North Korea, and Al-Qaeda—two topics that aren't usually seen as comedic material. The Team also stirred up controversy when they portrayed the prophet Muhammad as Santa Claus in a bear suit and since it attracted public anger, the show was eventually boycotted and no longer aired.

In 2012, Goodall et al. stated humour as "rhetorical charms," or stylistic seductions based on unexpected language and/or image usage intended to elicit laughter, upend conventional wisdom, and refute accepted notions, which help create new channels of influence in the globally interconnected world of terrorism. Supported evidence also found from a statement by a stand-up comedian from Indonesia named Tretan Muslim in an interview conducted by Najwa Shihab on YouTube content entitled "Why Do We Need Comics" in 2022 where in the content there is a statement as follows:

"The national counter-terrorism agency found that comedy can ward off radicalism. It is true that when someone has become a terrorist, the person who will handle this is Densus 88. However, before someone has an understanding of radicalism, it has been discovered that comedy or humor acts as an antidote or saving agent. When a tense issue occurs in society, comedy or humor is a tool to reconcile it" (Shihab, 2022)

Overcoming radicalism through comedy or humor is indeed considered non-conventional, but this thing which is considered trivial actually requires special attention in order to create civil human resources, namely those who have manners in building, interpreting and living their lives.

From the perspective of defense management itself, humor plays a role in leadership and organization. However, its effectiveness for deradicalism and national security has not been well established, even though humor has great potential in preventing more humanistic deradicalism.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study of “May The Laugh Be with You! The Role of Humor for Combating Radicalism to Increase National Security” was prepared using a literature study using a qualitative descriptive approach as the main writing approach (Pratama & Mutia, 2020). Apart from that, the data used in this article is secondary data based on a comprehensive review of journals, reports and archives (documentary data). The data collection technique in this research is also generally carried out by (a) literature study by collecting literature, reading and processing research materials; (b) carry out documentation by reading previous writing reports and journals that are relevant to writing this article; (c) collect data through discussing ideas with competent people according to the article topic; and (d) involves the author's opinion about the problem being discussed intuitively and subjectively.

Defense Management Theory

Effective management of a nation's defence system necessitates a thorough understanding, Halstead (2015). declares that a national security policy that lays out the broad aims and objectives of the defence industry must serve as the foundation for any defence strategy. Internal and external elements that could endanger national security must be taken into account by this policy. These elements highlight the pressing need for defence management.

Sarjito (2023) in his book "Defence Management" discovered that Cranfield University created defence management as an art and science to guarantee the supply of efficient and effective defence and security capabilities to meet present and future needs by strategically integrating people, processes, and technology in the appropriate organisation (Cranfield, 2021). This claim emphasises the significance of a comprehensive strategy that covers a range of defence management components, such as organisational structure, resource allocation, technology deployment, and strategic planning. Furthermore, defence management is the process of planning, arranging, and directing activities inside a nation's defence industry, according to Sarjito.

In the book "Defence Management: An Introduction," by Tagarev, Fluri, and Marcu (2009) provide a universal explanation of defence management. can be used to clarify that this merely encapsulates the notion that defence organisations must put defence policies into effect while working to create and maintain infrastructure, support systems, and planning mechanisms. Humor in defense management is however useful for an organization or individual in forming good human resources. Humor is considered a useful tool in forming good human resources in defense management. Incorporating humor can build trust, and foster a positive mindset.

Theory of National Security

The protection and defence of a sovereign state, including its people, institutions, and economy, is referred to as national security. Over time, the idea of national security has expanded to include non-military issues. Various theories exist regarding national security, such as liberal, psychoanalytic, and sociological theories. Global security, or the capacity of the international community to confront threats on a worldwide scale like pandemics, terrorism, and climate change, is frequently contrasted with national security. Another way to think about national security is through the lens of securitization theory. This theory holds that when political issues

are securitized by actors like politicians, security experts, and the media, they become extreme security issues that need immediate attention.

According to Dr. Murat (2022) a review of the various approaches to national security within the field of international relations was elaborated and summarised as of the cold war era and beyond. Mainstream approaches related to national security in the discipline of international relations were illustrated. The Cold War-era international relations paradigm attempted to explain the international security system in terms of broader ideologies and grounded its understanding of security in a straightforward, practical, anarchic environment that expressed the state's incapacity to dominate other states and placed the state and its military might at its core.

Humor is useful and can be used as a tool to combat radicalism in national security. Some ways which can be used in humor are satire to mock extremist ideologies and expose their flaws and inconsistencies. Parody can be used to undermine extremist propaganda by creating humorous versions of their videos or messages. Additionally, comedy can be used to promote national unity and social cohesion by bringing people together through laughter. It shows the feature diverse comedians can help to break down stereotypes and promote social cohesion.

Theory of Radicalism

Radicalism is a threat to a country's security and peace. In addition, radicalism is often associated with views or actions that are identical to the use of violence, even though they essentially have different meanings. Radicalism is actually a way to achieve truth in the study of philosophy by searching for its roots (radical). However, as time goes by, when this term is associated with the issue of terrorism, radicalism has a negative meaning so that it is known that radicalism is synonymous with violence, is perceived as anti-social and is also synonymous with an attitude of resistance and being ready to make sacrifices to defend itself. (Tahir, 2020).

Terrorism is a transnational crime that threatens human safety throughout the world (Indonesia Risk Assessment, 2021). There is a very significant relationship between radicalism and terrorism where radicalism is the root of the birth of terrorism which wants total and revolutionary change by drastically reversing values through violence (Fatoni, 2018). Apart from that, terrorism is defined as a criminal act that involves the deliberate use of violence or threats of violence, directed against civilians and/or civil society in an indiscriminate manner, carried out in an organized manner and giving rise to widespread fear and motives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Negative radicalism brings harm to the world community because it gives rise to acts of terrorism and extremists everywhere. In Indonesia itself, the most famous cases of terrorism are the Bali bombings in 2002, in the Sarinah area, and on Jalan Thamrin, Central Jakarta in 2016. Mulia (2019) found that various regions in Indonesia show worrying symptoms of intolerance accompanied by increasing identity politics. There are many young people exposed to religious information that contains suspicion and hatred which tends to deny or oppose the fulfillment of citizenship rights for other groups they dislike, as well as justifying and supporting radical actions or movements. This study finally offers a solution to the need to strengthen government authority (executive, judicial and legislative) by upholding the values of Pancasila, the constitution, democracy and fulfillment of human rights, the need to strengthen economic actors to uphold social justice and equal distribution of welfare and prevent socio-economic inequality,

increasing open discussions and dialogue with radical groups, as well as strengthening citizenship education based on diversity, tolerance and pluralism.

Even though regulations and the role of educators are needed to counteract the massive amount of radicalism circulating, there are ways that are considered unconventional in countering radicalism, namely through comedy or humor. As supporting evidence, there is a study carried out in Jordan by Ledesma (2016) who succeeded in proving this unusual step in minimizing extremism in Jordanian society to ward off radicalism. In 2005, a comedian named Ahmed Ahmed felt fed up with how the American media portrayed Middle Eastern people and from here he gathered several other famous comedians from Iraq, Palestine and South Korean comedians who were fluent in Arabic to carry out a stand-up comedy tour. This tour aims to refute the narrative that Middle Eastern people are evil people who love the destruction of America and finally this tour managed to penetrate into many countries and this project even received praise from Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan.

The research also focuses on three social components in Jordan, namely the government, comedians and society and 75% of respondents believe that comedy has an important role in countering extremism and ideas. Therefore, this research also predicts that comedy is a powerful tool for fighting extremism and the government will also be active in promoting comedy as a means of fighting terror.

Inayatullah (2009) carrying out a study on alternative humor in defeating the Taliban. This study concludes that although humor, ridicule must be the main principle of any long-term strategy to fight the Taliban, several factors also deserve attention such as developing radio or TV shows and even cartoons that must create an image that the Taliban is not as scary as it is and must be brave to defeat it.

Additionally, Scott (2021) explained humour is a characteristic that is exclusive to humans and is essential for reducing stress, fostering social bonds, and pricking promposity. Apart from that, there have been many studies on radicalization conducted online, but most of the research carried out only focuses on Islamic extremism, ignoring the threat of other groups, so it requires a different approach. therefore, there must be a systemic approach rather than just focusing on individual actors and tactics. In the end, how to communicate is above all, as is how to combine humor to overcome radicalism.

CONCLUSION

Diversity of Indonesia, underlining the need for careful management of human resources as the country approaches the peak of its demographic bonus in the 2030-2040 range. The multicultural nature of Indonesia, with its various ethnicities and officially recognized religions, adds richness to the country but also poses challenges, as evidenced by the potential for conflicts fueled by differences and intolerance. The text underscores the prevalence of negative radicalism in Indonesian society, particularly among university students, posing a significant threat to the nation's future given the demographic concentration in this age group. The study suggests that inadequate curricula in universities contribute to the susceptibility of students to radical ideologies. The existing regulations, as outlined in the Republic of Indonesia Law Number 5 of 2018, aim to address crimes related to terrorism and radicalism by encompassing ideological, political, and personal motives that endanger national security.

Interestingly, the unconventional approach of countering radicalism through comedy or humor is discussed, supported by examples from Indonesia and Jordan. Comedy is proposed as

a tool to reconcile tense societal issues and even as an antidote or saving agent against radicalism. The success of comedy in countering extremism, as demonstrated in the Jordanian study, prompts the prediction that comedy could be a powerful tool in the broader fight against extremism. This perspective aligns with the idea that humor, ridicule, and alternative forms of media can be crucial components of a long-term strategy to combat radical ideologies, as exemplified in the study on defeating the Taliban. Additionally, in Indonesia there is no significant attention regarding how comedy plays a role in preventing radicalism, but however it is very likely that in the future the Indonesian Ministry of Defense and the national counter-terrorism agency will include comedy or humor as a component of preventing radicalism.

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