

Critique of radical religious paradigm: an epistemological analysis from principles of Islamic thought

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Abstract

As one important factor enabling Islamophobia, radicalism has been a global issue endangering personal safety and public security. It is strongly associated with incorrect understanding of religious doctrines. This paper aims to present a critique of religious paradigm promoted by the radical groups from principles of Islamic thought (*uṣūl fiqh*) perspective. Using epistemological analysis to uncover the nature of their religious understanding and its justification, this study argues that radical religious paradigm is characterized with monolithic, textual, and rigid interpretation of the sacred texts. According to the radical groups, the sources of Islamic laws or teachings are restricted to only the Quran and the hadith, leaving no space for alternative interpretations. They do not give a place for *ra'yu* (reason) in determining the laws or teachings. In the other hands, *uṣūl*

fiqh maintains that the sources of the Islamic laws or teachings are not restricted to only the two said sources; it also gives a place for *ra'yu* (reason). From *uṣūl fiqh* perspective, the sources can also be found in the form of *isyarah* (signalling) and *ruh* (spirit) of the Quran and the hadith. In this sense, *uṣūl fiqh* refuses the literal interpretation proposed by the radical groups since not all of the texts in the Quran and the hadith can be understood literally.

Sebagai faktor penting di balik munculnya Islamofobia, radikalisme telah menjadi isu global yang membahayakan keselamatan diri dan keamanan publik. Ia berkaitan erat dengan pemahaman yang salah perihal doktrin agama. Makalah ini bertujuan untuk menyajikan kritik atas paradigma beragama yang dianut oleh kelompok radikal dari perspektif *uṣūl fiqh*. Dengan menggunakan analisis epistemologis untuk mengungkap hakikat pemahaman agama mereka berikut justifikasinya, studi ini berpendapat bahwa paradigma beragama yang radikal dicirikan dengan penafsiran yang monolitik, tekstual dan kaku terhadap teks-teks suci agama. Menurut kelompok radikal, sumber hukum atau ajaran Islam hanya terbatas pada al-Quran dan hadits, tanpa menyisakan ruang untuk alternatif penafsiran. Mereka tidak memberikan tempat untuk *ra'yu* (akal pikiran) dalam menentukan hukum atau ajaran. Di sisi lain, *uṣūl fiqh* menyatakan bahwa sumber hukum atau ajaran Islam tidak terbatas hanya pada dua sumber tersebut; *uṣūl fiqh* juga memberi ruang bagi *ra'yu* (akal pikiran). Dari perspektif *uṣūl fiqh*, sumber-sumber tersebut juga dapat ditemukan melalui *isyarah* (pensinyalan) dan *ruh* (semangat) dalam al-Quran dan hadits. Di sini, *uṣūl fiqh* menolak penafsiran literal yang diusung oleh kelompok radikal karena tidak semua teks dalam al-Quran dan hadis dapat dipahami secara literal.

Keywords: *Epistemological approach; Islamic thought; radicalism; religious doctrine*

Introduction

The embryo of radical ideology has existed since the early period of Islam, as Prophet Muhammad pointed out signals of the emergence of radical groups. Shortly after his death, the embryo gradually developed and morphed into a fetus. It is said in the history of Islam that once the *shahabas* (the Prophet's companions) were in dispute dealing with the Prophet's

successor; that is, the one who will continue his noble leadership and who can unite both the Islamic and the state leadership. The dispute ceased after an agreement between the *Muhajirin* (the emigrants) and the *Ansar* (the helpers) was reached. Both groups agreed to the appointment of Abu Bakr as the Prophet's successor and, therefore, the first Caliph in Islam.

However, after the said agreement, the seeds of conflict among the Muslim community began to grow mainly because the agreement did not involve the Prophet's family. This conflict later helped create frictions among Muslims and gave birth to more intense enmities, most of which were even difficult to accept logically.¹ The conflict, for example, contributed to the birth of Muslim group disappointed with the arbitration, known as *hakam*, between Caliph Ali ibn Abi Thalib and Governor Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan concerning the Shiffin War. In turn, this arbitration generated the rise of radical groups who spread fear and hatred among their fellow Muslims. The radical groups are those who could unhesitatingly kill their Muslim brothers and cause destruction on Earth.²

The above described hard-line groups of Muslims still exist and develop until today. They rise and fall, but never disappear completely.³ Since their emergence, the image of friendly Islam brought by the Prophet has changed into a frightening Islam endangering the survival of humanity. They did not hesitate to injure those opposing them and even shed blood of their fellow Muslim. Such a brutal behavior is mainly caused by their wrong understanding of the Islamic teachings. They distort the doctrines and then use their own concepts to understand the religion. The groups

¹Harun Nasution, *Islam Ditinjau dari Berbagai Aspeknya*, 5th ed., Jakarta: Universitas Indonesia Press, 1985, 92-95.

²Farid Wajdi Ibrahim, *Khilafah: Sorotan dan Dukungan*, 2nd ed., Yogyakarta: CV Istana Agency, 2018, 18.

³Azyumardi Azra et.al., *Deradikalisasi: Kontra Radikalisme dan Deideologisasi*, 1st ed., Jakarta: Balitbang dan Diklat Kemenag RI, 2018, 2.

consider themselves as the best in practicing Islam and their understanding about the religion as the most suitable with the Quran and hadith. They stigmatize Muslims who differ with their views as the infidels, heretics, and lost. They are fond of citing some key conceptions from the Quran and hadith to justify their actions and gain sympathy from wider Muslim community.

Among the most popular terms the radical group use to stigmatize people whose views are different with them are *takfir* and *tadhliil*.⁴ Using these two terms, they blatantly tried to assassinate Caliph Ali ibn Abi Talib and Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan. This group judged and labeled the two Muslim leaders as *kafir* (the infidels), and, therefore, they might be killed.⁵ The mission to kill the Caliph was successfully carried out by a *Khawarij* follower named Ibnu Muljam. At that time, Ali's followers were quite few. Meanwhile, Muawiyah survived the assassination attempt for he was heavily guarded by his loyalists who were increasing especially after the arbitration case or *hakam*.⁶

The arbitration between Ali and Muawiyah divided the Muslims. Historians viewed this incident as the culmination of tragedy in the Muslim world; there were major conflicts in the Muslim world before the arbitration, but agreement for peace was always found. However, there was no peaceful agreement in the arbitration between Ali and Muawiyah. The incident went wild and claimed many Muslim victims, including the murder of Sayyidina Husen, the grandson of the Prophet, in Karbala by the Muawiyah group. Further, this prolonged conflict led to the Muslim

⁴*Takfir* is a term used to label someone as the infidel, while *tadhliil* is to accuse someone of doing a heresy, see Nur Muhammad Ahmad, *Dua Karakteristik Utama Ahlul-sunnah wal Jamaah*, Jakarta: Rabitha Press, 2015, 109.

⁵Haidar Bagir, "Takfirisme: Asal Usul dan Perkembangannya", in <https://www.paramadinapusat.or.id/takfirisme-asal-usul-dan-perkembangannya/>, accessed on September 4, 2020.

⁶Harun Nasution, *Islam Ditinjau...*, 94.

split-up into three groups, the Ali's group (Shia), the Muawiyah's group (the majority of Muslims), and the Ali's ex-group that then opposed both Ali and Muawiyah (Khawarij).⁷ The three groups fought not only in thoughts but also in physical violence and war. They shed blood on one another.

The effect of the triangle conflict has not stopped until today; it continues to exist among Muslim society. The two major groups, i.e. the Ali's group and Muawiyah's group, are still in prolonged dissension that even crystallizes in the state ideology, while the third group rises and falls in the course of Islamic history due to the other domination. This third group (the Khawarij), promoting radical ideology dangerous for the survival of the Muslim world and humanity as a whole, is fought and destroyed by Ali's and Muawiyah's groups representing the majority of Muslim society. In the contemporary period, the *Khawarij* spirit is well manifested in the hard-line Muslims; they morphed smoothly into ISIS, JAD, JI, and so forth.^{8,9,10}

Although the timeline history of Muslim society cannot be replayed—while it is also difficult to find a permanent solution to the triangle conflict—efforts to counter and cure radical ideology within the Muslim society have been endeavoured because such an ideology is clearly contradictory to the goals of Islam, which is to send mercy and compassion to the universe.¹¹ However, such efforts often met failure. Instead of disappearing, the ideology is growing and claims the lives of innocent

⁷Albert Hourani, *Sejarah Bangsa-Bangsa Muslim*, Bandung: Mizan, 2004, 78-79.

⁸Makrum, "Tracing the historical and ideological roots of ISIS: Shi'ite or Sunni?", *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume 6, No. 2 (2016), 209-240.

⁹Akh. Muzakki, "Islamic Radicalism in Southeast Asia: With Special Reference to the Alleged Terrorist Organization, Jamā'ah Islāmiyah", *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Volume 42, No. 1 (2004), 61-87.

¹⁰Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid and M. Zaki Mubarak, "The Rise of Radicalism and Terrorism in Indonesia and Malaysia", *Review of Islam in Southeast Asia*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (2018), 29-43.

¹¹مَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (and we sent you only to bring mercy to the world), Q.S. al-Anbiya verse 107.

Muslims. Consequently, the image of Islam has turned atrocious especially in the eyes of non-Muslims; Islam is equated to terrorism, radicalism, violence, intolerance, and other horrible stereotypes. Indeed, a number of violent acts and suicide bombings in the name of Islam in the last two decades have been believed to cause not a few people to experience Islamophobia, a negative prejudice against Islam and Muslims.

This paper is aimed at presenting a critique of religious paradigm proposed by the radical groups from principles of islamic thought (hereinafter referred to as *uṣūl fiqh*) perspective. It uses epistemological analysis to uncover the nature of religious understanding and its justification followed by the radical groups. This study is of importance because, in addition to the commonly used but less effective repressive approach,¹² radical ideology should be fought with an argumentative approach to deal with the thoughts, concepts, and theories the groups believe in. In this sense, theories developed in *uṣūl fiqh* can function as a fort to stop the birth and development of the said ideology. The better a person understands the *uṣūl fiqh*, the stronger he is protected from radicalism, and *vice versa*.

Narrative on the causes of radicalism

Etymologically, the term *radicalism* comes from the Latin word *radix* meaning *root*. To think radically is, then, to think deeply to the root of problems. In the last few decades, radicalism may popularly refer to what the Great Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) writes, that is, *radicalism* is defined as an ideology or stream of people that demand social and political change using violent actions as a means to justify their “true” beliefs. From this point, radicalism can be broadly understood as a state politics ideology that urges people to conduct a revolution and massive change in favor of

¹²Masdar Hilmy, “The Politics of Retaliation: the Backlash of Radical Islamists to the Deradicalization Project in Indonesia”, *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Volume 51, No. 1 (2013), 129-158.

a new system to achieve significant progress.¹³

Coercion and violence are the salient attribute of the radical groups. They mistakenly use some verses of the Quran, especially verses about jihad and war, to legitimize their radical actions.¹⁴ Any group, including belief-based groups, that refers to this attribute can be categorized as radical groups. In the Muslim context, radical groups are those willing to use threat, coercion, and violence to achieve their ultimate goals, as shown by the triangle conflict in the early period of Islam. They embrace the same radical ideology, but different names. At present, the negative effects of radicalism are even far greater, broader, and more dangerous than those in the early period of Islam. Therefore, preventing such radical movements nowadays is also such a daunting task because they are supported by digital platforms and other modern media.¹⁵

Radical groups are preoccupied with a deep-rooted paradigm in themselves dealing with the concept of *takfir* (infidel) and *tadhilil* (lost) to label those whose opinions are different from theirs. According to them, anyone whose religious belief is textually opposed to the Quran and the hadith, especially in theological matters such the oneness of God and the establishment of laws based on literal interpretation of the scripture, will be stigmatized as the infidel and the lost.¹⁶

Radical groups also use the term *thaghut* as opposed to the term *Allah*, and, thus, whoever is in favour of *thaghut* has opposed the path of Allah's

¹³Dirjen Bimas Islam Kementerian Agama RI, *Radikalisme Agama dan Tantangan Kebangsaan*, Jakarta: Dirjen Bimas Islam Kemenag RI, 2014, 3.

¹⁴Dede Rodin, "Islam dan Radikalisme: Telaah atas Ayat-ayat Kekerasan dalam al-Quran", *Addin*, Volume 10, No. 1 (2016), 29-60.

¹⁵Wahyudi Akmaliah, "The demise of moderate Islam: new media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities", *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume 10, No. 1 (2020), 1-24.

¹⁶The *dalil* (provision) usually used by the radical groups is al-Maidah verse 44: "...and whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed, then it is those who are the infidels/disbelievers".

religion, as mentioned in al-Baqarah verse 256.¹⁷ The rigid use of *Allah* vis a vis *taghut* then characterizes the radical groups. Both of these terms have a diametrical position leaving no room for alternatives. In fact, such a position does not exist in Islamic teachings as the religion always offers other possible ways in the two opposing terms, even in the ulema' consensus. Flexibility is a keyword of Islamic teachings, so that people can adapt to situations and conditions. This notion is what underlies the tenet that Islam is always relevant to the development of time and place. However, by the radical groups, this important tenet is something unacceptable; they insist that anything that is contrary to literal meaning of the Quran and hadith¹⁸ must be resisted and destroyed, including the fellow Muslims.

Factors that have contributed to the rise of radicalism revolve around the political repression, socioeconomic deprivation, globalization, and the so-called Arabia support.¹⁹ Generally, the emergence of radical ideology is triggered by two factors, *i.e.* internal and external. There are three internal factors related to radicalism in Islam. The *first* is the Muslims' failure to respond to modernity. In this sense, they fail to find the right way to deal with modernity, including the advance of science and technology pioneered by the non-Muslim Westerners.²⁰ In general, the Muslims' response toward modernity can be classified into three groups: those who accept it as a whole, those who reject it as a whole, and those who act selectively by taking only what is seen positive for the progress of Muslim society. Each group is equally convinced that their respective opinion is better and more useful for all Muslims.

¹⁷“So whoever disbelieves in *Taghut* and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it”.

¹⁸Azyumardi Azra et.al., *Deradikalisasi...*, 7-8.

¹⁹Akh. Muzakki, “Islamic Radicalism in Southeast Asia: With Special Reference to the Alleged Terrorist Organization, Jamil’ah Islamiyah”, *AlJami’ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, Volume 42, No. 1 (2004), 61-87.

²⁰Akh. Muzakki, “Islamic Radicalism...”, 61-87.

The *second* internal factor is their strong empathy towards their fellow Muslims oppressed in other countries, such as in Palestine, Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Muslims are oppressed when Westerners are prosperous in many aspects of life. This unfair condition raises a resistance and hatred in some Muslims.²¹ These Muslims unite to stand against anyone who is deemed to have hurt and marginalized the Muslims. Next, this empathy triggers radical movements and violent actions to fight against the Muslim enemies by upholding power according to Islamic laws. These are meant to restore the glory of the past Islam and that their struggle is part of *jihad* in Allah's path. If they die, they become martyrs and enter paradise. This doctrine is strongly implanted in them and transforms into strong ideology difficult to change in a short time. They experience an ideological doctrination concerning *jihad*, *martyr*, and *paradise*.

The *third* internal factor is their disappointment dealing with the failure of the state in realizing social justice and welfare for all citizens. In their opinion, this failure is the result of not upholding the Islamic teachings entirely (*kaffah*). If the state embraces Islamic teachings entirely, it will certainly be able to realize social justice and welfare as shown in the Prophet era. With this in mind, the radical groups believe that they are on the right path, that their goals are noble, and that any measures to realize the goals is allowed. This notion can be seen in their demand for immediate implementation of *sharia law* in, for instance, Indonesia.²² However, radical movements in Indonesia do not lead to Islamophobia since Muslims in the country follow moderate Islam promoted by the mainstream Muslims organizations, such as like Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah.²³

²¹Ahmad Fuad Fanani, "The global war on terror, American policy, and its impact on Islam and Muslim societies", *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume 1, No. 2 (2011), 205-227.

²²Greg Fealy, "Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia: The Faltering Revival?", *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2004), 104-121.

²³Etin Anwar, "The Dialectics of Islamophobia and Radicalism in Indonesia", *ASIA Network Exchange*, Volume XVI, No. 2 (2009), 53-67.

Meanwhile, the external factors that help lead to the rise of radical movements include imperialism, westernization, Christianization, the governmental system, economic inequality, secularism, liberalism, and the West's unfair policies towards the Middle East conflicts.²⁴ A project financed by the European Commission under the sixth framework programme arrived at an opinion that the causal factors of radicalism at the external level are summarized in the political, economic and cultural causes.²⁵ However, a study by Rink and Sharma claimed that religious radicalism is also linked to the individual-level psychological trauma in social relations and to the exposure to radical networks.²⁶

Sources recognized by the radical groups

According to the radical groups, Muslims who follow the way of life other than those sourced from the Quran and the *sunnah* are *kafir* (infidels), *munafiq* (hypocrites), and *fasiq* (sinners). They believe that the Quran and the *sunnah* are the only sources that are able to create a social order as well as reflect the Divine truth.²⁷ With this paradigm, they present an absolute and puritanical way of life towards religious differences. They are positioning the texts of the Quran and the hadith literally and spreading hatred, animosity, and violence to not only non-Muslims, but also their fellow Muslims of different views. Everything the radical groups believe and practice will be justified and legitimized as the God's laws, which are absolute to follow.²⁸

²⁴Fathul Mufid, "Radikalisme Islam dalam Perspektif Epistemologi", *Addin*, Volume 10, No. 1 (2016), 61-82.

²⁵The European Commission, "Radicalisation, Recruitment and the EU Counter-radicalisation Strategy", 18-21, retrieved in June 8, 2020 from <http://www.gdr-elsj.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/doc2-WP4-Del7.pdf>

²⁶Anselm Rink and Kunal Sharma, "The Determinants of Religious Radicalization: Evidence from Kenya", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Volume 62, No. 6 (2018), 1229-1261.

²⁷Khaled Abou el-Fadl, *Cita dan Fakta Toleransi Islam*, Bandung: Mizan, 2002, 21.

²⁸Zaprulkhan, *Merenda Wajah Islam Humanis*, Yogyakarta: Idea Sejahtera, 2014, 90.

For the radical groups, the Quran and the hadith are the only answer to solve all life problems. Islam is a straight path (al-sirat al-mustaqim) that has been determined by Allah in the Quran and the hadith as a way of life. It contains a set of laws and rules that serve as the guideline in believing, worshiping, and acting in social life. The only thing men have to do on Earth is to be in full compliance (kaffah) and implementing the God's law as mentioned in the Quran and the hadith. Therefore, for the radical groups, anything in this world must be in line with the Quran and the hadith literally. They do not recognize any truth that comes from outside the Quran and the hadith.

According to radical groups, the understanding of the Quran and the hadith should focus on the linguistic aspects, rather than the socio-historical aspects. For them, the parameter to deal with issues in the public and private spheres is what actually happened at the time of the Prophet PBUH.²⁹ Among the groups that follow this paradigm is Salafism-Wahhabism movements. In the modern era, this puritanism movement emerged as a religious purification movement. They are of opinion that Islamic laws or teachings today have been corrupted and deviated; Islam is not as pure as it was at the time of the Prophet, his companions, and his tabi'in. They then popularized a jargon commonly known as "*the return to the Quran and Sunnah*", but with a literal or textual approach. In the Indonesian context, for example, this jargon is often used to question and attack the validity of rituals practiced by the traditionalist Muslims, such as in the cases of *tahlil* and *haul*.³⁰

The image of the radical Muslims is equated to coercive and violent actions in fighting for the ideals of their struggle. They threaten the

²⁹Abdullah Saeed, *The Quran: An Introduction*, New York: Routledge, 2008, 220.

³⁰Jajang Jahroni, "Ritual, bid'ah, and the negotiation of the public sphere in contemporary Indonesia", *Studia Islamika*, Volume 25, No. 1 (2018), 1-35.

existence of humanity due to the nature of their movement that cannot compromise with other parties. Anyone who does not stand with their opinion will be stigmatized as *kafir* (infidel) and must be fought to death.³¹ The radicalists even declare that any leader who does not implement and follow Islamic laws literally, as they perceive it, is a *murtad* or apostate and, hence, fighting such leaders is part of *jihad*, a divine duty.³²

How the radical groups understand religious doctrines

Yusuf al-Qardhawi maintains that the characteristics of radical groups in understanding the doctrines from the Quran and the hadith are as follows. First, they have a literal tendency (*zahiri*) in understanding the texts. Second, they are busy contrasting the side matters (*furū'iyah*) of Islamic laws while forgetting the core teachings. Third, they are exaggerating in labelling something as *haram* (forbidden). Fourth, they are often mistaken in understanding key definitions of Islamic teachings. Fifth, they show superficial understanding about Islam and the main goals of *sharia*.³³

This improper way of understanding leads radical groups to suffice themselves with literal and textual interpretations. Malik Fadjar argues that the way radical groups learn is characterized with the following features. First, their religious understanding is based on literal meaning of the scripture and denies all forms of contextual interpretation for they think it may reduce religious absolutism. Second, in order to legitimize their religious understanding, they institutionalize a single, monolithic, and authoritative religious leadership, so that an Islamic leader may have the full right to determine the black and white of the religion. Third, as a consequence of the two above-mentioned features, they create a truth

³¹Zuli Qodir, *Radikalisme Agama di Indonesia*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2014, 41.

³²Quintan Wiktorowicz, "A Genealogy of Radical Islam", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Volume 28, No. 2 (2005): 75-97.

³³Yusuf al-Qardhawi, *al-Halāl wa al-Haram fi al-Islām*, Dār al-Baida: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1985, 67.

claim leading to negative prejudice against other groups.³⁴

According to radical groups, the reference to truth must lie in the texts understood literally, that is, as they are. They reject interpretations based on historical or sociological aspects, which are considered to have brought humans away from the true religious doctrines. In this sense, it is the people who must adjust themselves to the scripture, not vice versa. Thus, when traced back to the early period of Islam along with its conflicts, we will clearly find the meeting point between the radical groups in the past and the radical groups in the present time. The radical groups today, whatever name is, are a metamorphosis of the radical Islamic group of the past.

Purpose and scope of principles of Islāmic thought

Ideally, the study of principles of Islamic thought (*uṣūl fiqh*) should have existed before the study of Islamic thought (*fiqh*), even though in practice the latter comes first before the former. As a matter of fact, *uṣūl fiqh* deals with the rules and considerations that must be followed by a *mujtahid* (Islamic jurist) when exercising *ijtihad* to produce *fiqh* (Islamic laws).³⁵

In general, the purpose of *uṣūl fiqh* is to protect the truth of Allah's laws sourced from the Quran and the Hadith. It contains rules and considerations for exploring Islamic laws derived from the scripture. Therefore, anyone who wants to explore the laws from the Quran and the hadith must understand *uṣūl fiqh* properly and correctly. In addition, *uṣūl fiqh* is also an instrument to evaluate and validate the truth of *ijtihad*. It is a science that aims to conserve the teachings of the Quran and the Hadith from being distorted or manipulated. *Uṣūl fiqh* serves not only as a guide in *ijtihad* but also as an instrument for evaluating the results of *ijtihad*.³⁶

Allah has created men as the caliph on Earth. In their capacity as the

³⁴Malik Fadjar, *Merambah Jalan Baru dalam Beragama*, Yogyakarta: Ittaqa Press, 2000, ix.

³⁵Amir Abdul Aziz, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*, Mesir: Dār al-Salām, 1997, 24-25.

³⁶Ade Dedi Rohayana, *Ilmu Ushul al-Fiqh*, Pekalongan: STAIN Press, 2005, 35.

caliph, they must be in obedience to devote themselves to Him. Devotion to Allah can be done in two ways. The first is *hablum minallah*, which is maintaining a good relationship with Him. This vertical relationship, without an intermediary between a servant and Allah, is also called *ibadah mahdhah* (pure worship). It is called so because this worship is a pure and direct communication between a servant and God without mediation.³⁷ The second is *hablum minanas*, which is to worship Allah by maintaining a good relationship with fellow humans. This horizontal relationship is between fellow beings as a medium to worship Allah, which is also called *ibadah ghair mahdhah*. It is called so because it is an impure and indirect communication between a servant and God through mediation.³⁸ Both of these relationships must be kept and run in balance; Muslims must be good to Allah and to humans as well.³⁹

Later, the form and procedure of serving God and maintaining a good relationship to fellow humans must be based on the revelation sent by God. Al-An'am verse 38 explains that nothing is missing from the Book of Allah.⁴⁰ Another verse says that the Quran has been perfect and nothing needs to be added.⁴¹ However, the Quran does not explicitly mention whether Allah's guidance in the Quran applies in detail or globally. Regarding this case, the Muslim jurists agreed al-An'am verse 38 has indicated that the guidance is global.

The problems explained in detail by the Quran are very few in number compared to those faced by mankind throughout the ages. The Quran

³⁷Ibnu Rusyd, *Bidāyah al-Mujtahid wa Nihāyah al-Muqtaṣid*, Juz 1, Shirkah al-Nūr Asia, n.d., 6.

³⁸Ibnu Rusyd, *Bidāyah al-Mujtahid...*, 6.

³⁹طَرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلَّةُ أُنزِلَ مَا تُنْفَعُوا إِلَّا بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَخَبْلٍ مِّنَ النَّاسِ "They have been put under humiliation by Allah wherever they are overtaken, except for a covenant from Allah and a rope from the Muslims" (Q.S. Ali Imran: 112).

⁴⁰ما فرطنا في الكتاب من شيء "We have neglected nothing in the Book" (Q.S. al-An'am: 38).

⁴¹الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا "This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed my favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion" (Q.S. al-Maidah: 4).

explains the human problems in outline, so that it will need explanations from the Prophet through his traditions or Hadith. Unfortunately, not all of the Prophet's explanations are given in detail. Many of them still require rational reasoning from the *mujtahid*. Since the time of the *shahaba* (the Prophet's companions) until today, the *mujtahids* have an important role in explaining Allah's guidances, both from the Quran and the hadith, that are still global.⁴²

Moreover, since most of the Prophet's explanations are simple, they are unable to reach all events of the Muslim lives. Indeed, many events do not have a literal justification from both the Quran and the hadith.⁴³ Despite this notion, we cannot say that those events are out of Islamic law or *sharia* since all human actions are under Allah's law. Muslims believe that every problem in life has been given their way out by Allah. In this sense, Allah's guidances can be found in the Quran, either literally (*manthuq/explicit*) or non-literally (*mafhum/implicit*).

Thus, Allah's provisions or rules can be found in the three possibilities. The first is the ones that can be found literally in the Quran or the Hadiths. In *uṣūl fiqh*, such rules are called *manthuq* or *manshushah* (the explicit ones). The second is the ones that cannot be found literally in the Quran or the hadiths, but they can be found through *isyarah* (cues or signalling) given by the Quran or the Hadiths. In *uṣūl fiqh*, such rules are called *mafhumah* or *ghair manshushah* (the implied ones). The third is the ones that can be found neither in their literal sources nor in their *isyarah* in the Quran or the Hadiths, but they can be found in *ruh* (spirit) of the Allah's laws. In *uṣūl fiqh*, such rules refer to *maqasid sharia*.⁴⁴

⁴²Mahmud Syaltut, *Islam: Akidah dan Syariah*, A. Zain (trans.) 2nd ed., Jakarta: Pustaka Amani, 1998, 327-328.

⁴³Wael B. Hallaq, *Sejarah Teori Hukum Islam*, E. Kusnadinigrat and A.H. Wahid (trans.), 1st ed., Jakarta: PT. Raja Grafindo Persada, 2000, 9.

⁴⁴Amir Syarifudin, *Ushul fiqh*, 3rd ed., Jakarta: Logos Wacana Ilmu, 2005, 114-115.

Uṣūl fiqh scholars have been in agreement that not all human problems have their provisions in the Quran or the *sunnah*. For them, the literal texts of the Quran and *sunnah* alone are not sufficient to answer all human problems.⁴⁵ This notion seems to make sense because the Quran and the *sunnah* are limited, while the human problems in life are unlimited.⁴⁶ Therefore, the scholars argued that *ra'yu* or reason still has a place to contribute to the exploration of the Islamic laws. In the *uṣūl fiqh*, this place is termed with *ijtihad*, which is a serious effort of a *fiqh* expert in the pursuit of Islamic laws or teachings (not precisely covered by the Quran or hadith) from their primary sources (*dalil*).⁴⁷ In a *hadith shohih*, it is clearly said that the Prophet PBUH recognized this *ijtihad*, as shown by a hadith about Mu'az bin Jabal when he was appointed as the Ruler of Yemen:

كيف تصنع ان عرض لك قضاء؟ قال: أقتضى بما في كتاب الله. قال: فان لم يكن في كتاب الله؟ قال: فبسنّة رسول الله صلّى الله عليه وسلّم. قال: فان لم يكن في سنّة رسول الله؟ قال: أجتهد رأيي لا آلو. قال: فضرب رسول الله صلّى الله عليه وسلّم صدري ثمّ قال: الحمد لله الذي وفق رسول رسول الله صلّى الله عليه وسلّم لما يرضى رسول الله صلّى الله عليه وسلّم (رواه أحمد)⁴⁸

“How will you judge if you are asked to do so? Mu'az said: I will judge according to the Book of Allah. The Prophet said: and if you don't find it in the Book of Allah? Mu'az said: the I will judge according to the *sunnah* of His messenger. The Prophet said: and if you don't find it in the *sunnah* of His messenger or in the Book of Allah? Mu'az said: then I will do my *ijtihad*. The Prophet then patted the chest of Mu'az with his hand and said: all praise is due to Allah who has guided the emissary of His messenger towards that which He guided his messenger” (Narrated by Ahmad).

⁴⁵Mushthafa Ahmad al-Zarqa, *Hukum Islam dan Perubahan Sosial*, A.D. Rohayana (trans.), 1st ed., Jakarta: Riora Cipta Publication, 2000, 1-2.

⁴⁶There is a saying: *al-Nuṣūṣ mutanāhiyah wa al-ḥawādith ghair mutanāhiyah* (The Qur'an and the Sunnah are limited, while human problems are unlimited).

⁴⁷Muhammad bin 'Alawiy al-Maliki al-Hasani, *al-Qawā'id al-Asāsiyah fi Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, 1st ed., Beirut: Dār al-Hawiy, 2019, 86.

⁴⁸Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal*, Vol. 8, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1991, 233.

This hadith about Mu'az bin Jabal shows that Prophet Muhammad PBUH gave permission for Mu'az to perform *ijtihad* in matters that did not exist or were not explicitly mentioned by the Quran or the *sunnah*. Therefore, it is obvious that the sources of Islamic teachings are not limited only to the sacred texts of the Quran and hadith, but also to *ra'yu* (reason) in the form of *ijtihad*. In fact, *ijtihad* has a pivotal position in adapting the scripture to human life; it enables the verses of the Quran and the Prophet's traditions to always be relevant to the development of time and place.

Ijtihad is the essence of *usul fiqh*. *Uṣūl fiqh* itself is a science that provides a set of methods of exercising *ijtihad*. That is why among the requirements to be a *mujtahid* is the capacity to master the science of *uṣūl fiqh*.⁴⁹ In fact, an independent *mujtahid* will rank the highest level. In *uṣūl fiqh*, an independent *mujtahid* is known as *mujtahid mustaqil* or *mujtahid muthlaq*, such as Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik ibn Anas, Imam Shafi'i, and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal.⁵⁰

Principles of Islamic thought on radical religious paradigm

The above description shows that radical religious paradigm is obviously different from the principles of Islamic thought (*uṣūl fiqh*) perspective. In general, the difference can be grouped into two points. *First*, according to the *uṣūl fiqh* scholars, the sources of Islamic teachings are not limited only to the Quran and the *sunnah*; they allow for *ra'yu* (reason) to determine the Allah's laws. For those scholars, it seems impossible to say that the Quran and the *sunnah* must explicitly answer all of the human problems. Hence, the use of *ra'yu* (reason) reduces the sacredness of neither the Quran nor the *sunnah*. In fact, the *ra'yu* itself has gained legitimacy from Prophet Muhammad PBUH to face various problems of life, such as the one narrated in hadith about Mu'az ibn Jabal.

⁴⁹Satria Effendi, M.Zein, *Ushul Fiqh*, 1st ed., Jakarta: Kencana, 2005, 251-254.

⁵⁰Satria Effendi, M.Zein, *Ushul Fiqh*..., 256-257.

Unlike the *uṣūl fiqh* scholars, radical groups argue that the legitimate source of Islamic teachings is only the Quran, while the Prophet's hadith must come through a rigorous selection based on their own criteria. They do not give proper space for *ra'yu*, so that their understanding of religious doctrines is often incorrect and even deviates from the spirit of the Quran. For example, radical groups are very rigid in dealing with the term *kafir* (infidel), and many times this incorrect understanding leads to negative prejudice endangering the other groups. Indeed, if they gave a little space to *ra'yu*, the *asbab nuzul*, and spirit of the Quranic verses, they would certainly find a correct conclusion. As a matter of fact, there are many texts of both the Quran and the hadith that talk about *kafir*, as well as other texts that can be used as a comparison for their extreme, misleading arguments.

Thus, after comparing the two paradigms, the writers argue that the paradigm promoted by the radical groups is incorrect and deviates from the Quran and the hadith. These two primary sources of Islam clearly indicate that not all of the human problems are explained in detail in both sources. Indeed, the Quran has repeatedly commanded the Muslims to think or use their reason (*ra'yu*). The Prophet's hadith concerning his dialogue with Mu'az also shows that a place for *ra'yu* is always possible. Therefore, arguments by radical groups saying that the sources of Islamic teachings are restricted to only the Quran and the hadith, while closing a room for reason, is contrary to the Islamic teaching.

Second, radical groups employ literal meaning (*manthuq* or textual) in understanding the Quran and the hadith. Indeed, not all verses of the Quran and the hadith can be properly and correctly understood using only the literal approach. Sometimes, they need to use non-literal approach (*mafhum* or contextual), *isyarah* approach (signalling) or *maqasid sharia*-based approach to find out messages behind the literal meaning.⁵¹ This

⁵¹Muhammad Abu Zahrah, *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, Mesir: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, n.d., 115-117.

implicit paradigm to understand the Islamic teachings has been applied not only by the *mujtahid* or the *uṣūl fiqh* scholars, but also by the Prophet and his *shahaba* (companions). Therefore, the literal understanding by radical groups is contrary to the *sunnah*, *atsar* of the *shahaba*, and *ijtihad* tradition. The Prophet, *shahaba* and *mujtahids* have clearly indicated the possibility of the use of non-literal approach.

In short, it becomes obvious that the religious paradigm meant by *uṣūl fiqh* is contrary to the paradigm followed by radical groups. These two opposing paradigms result in different understanding of religious doctrines. For the *uṣūl fiqh* scholars, arguments expressed by radical groups, such as in the concepts of *takfir*, *tadhilil*, *thagut*, the sources they recognize, and the way they understand the Islamic teachings, are not in accordance with Allah and His Prophet's guidance. Such incorrect understanding of religious doctrines is caused by a paradigm that gives extreme emphasis on literal, textual approach.

Conclusion

The present study was undertaken to present a critique of radical religious paradigm. It first investigated the nature of religious understanding and its justification believed by radical groups, and then evaluated such understanding and justification from *uṣūl fiqh* perspective in an analytical way. The study has confirmed that radical groups, in determining Islamic laws or teachings, have strictly relied on literal understanding of the Quran and the hadith. They do not give a place for *ra'yu* (reason). Radical groups believed that the reference to the truth must lie in the texts understood literally; that is, as they are. In this sense, it is the people who must adjust themselves to the scripture, not *vice versa*. In contrast to the radical groups' religious paradigm, *uṣūl fiqh* maintains that the sources of Islamic laws or teachings are not restricted to only the Quran and the hadith; it also

gives a place for *ra'yu* (reason). In fact, from *uṣūl fiqh* perspective, such sources can also be found in the form of *isyarah* (signalling) and even in the form *ruh* (spirit) of the Quran and the hadith, *i.e.* the *maqasid sharia*. These findings have significant implications for the understanding of how literal and textual approach of the Quran and the hadiths has helped lead to the absolute, puritanical, and intolerant stance towards differences, especially in the matters of theology or *aqeedah*. The insights gained from this study may be of assistance to counter the thoughts, concepts, and theories radical groups believe in. With this argumentative approach, it also becomes possible to invite them to the merciful, compassionate, and friendly face of Islam. However, further studies on the development of religion-based radical thoughts are still needed in order to establish a greater degree of accuracy on this matter.

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