

Multiculturalism in the Qur'an As Counter Extremism Narrative

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Abstract. Multiculturalism is the nature of human beings with a variety of cultures, religions, ethnicities, and languages. Even though multicultural Indonesians can live side by side, it is not uncommon for a person or a group to have fanaticism that creates a narrative of extremism that triggers conflict and division. And generally this happens in the name of Islam. In fact, as a guide for Muslims, the verses of the Qur'an are more about peace and tolerance in the midst of diversity. Thus, this article attempts to explain multiculturalism in the Qur'an as an effort to counter extremism narratives.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, fanaticism, extremism, al-Qur'an.

1 Introduction

The Indonesian population has a very complex level of diversity, so it is known as a multicultural society, namely a group of people who live and live permanently in a place that has its own culture and characteristics that are able to distinguish one society from another[1].

The diversity of the people who thrive in Indonesia, provides such great wealth, both in terms of culture, customs, regional languages, and religion, which to this day live side by side with each other, despite having different backgrounds. Because of this, cross-cultural, customary, and even inter-religious marriages are rife in Indonesia. There are even those who in one family or one roof have different religions. So, with these facts, can diversity in Indonesia be called safe from conflict? the answer is no!. Because even though this multicultural has positive values. However, on the other hand, the diversity of tribes, customs, languages, and religions also contains vulnerabilities that can lead to conflicts of interest between groups, between ethnicities, between religions and between regions.

The Denny JA Foundation noted that during the 14 years after the reform period, there were at least 2,398 cases of violence and discrimination that occurred in Indonesia. Of this amount, as many as 65% religious background. While the remaining 20% of ethnic violence, 15% of gender violence, and 5% of sexual violence[2]. This data has not been added to the phenomenon of diversity conflicts that occur today, such as the suicide bombing in front of the Makassar cathedral church (28/03/2021), followed by acts of terror at the National Police Headquarters carried out by a single perpetrator, namely a woman.

There are many factors behind the high number of cases of diversity conflict in Indonesia. In general, conflicts can arise from existing models of social interaction, values in the form of identity or religion, as well as structural domination. In relation to the values of identity and religion[3], conflicts that occur are also caused by a shift in the interests of ethnic and

religious-based groups, who are fanatical about one particular teaching, understanding, or culture, thereby causing a loss of tolerance in the midst of a multicultural society.

M. Quraish Shihab in his book entitled *Wasathiyah* adds that the trigger for the conflict of diversity also arises because of a misunderstanding of religious guidance [4]. M. Quraish Shihab in his book entitled *Wasathiyah* adds that the trigger for the conflict of diversity also arises because of a misunderstanding of religious guidance, which the perpetrators unwittingly use to divide the people through acts of extremism, which are carried out with violence or in the form of narratives, the second of which is the most common. amid the rapid development of technology.

This problem tends to be responded to with acts of violence, which in many cases is counter-productive. One implication is that religious violence constructed as extremism becomes the dominant variable in various acts of violence in the name of religion. Religion which originally had a mission of peace was reduced to contradictory actions.

In fact, the verses of the Qur'an instead emphasize more on peace and mutual respect and honor for each other, if only the perpetrators of extremism did a wider reading of the verses of the Qur'an, of course they could minimize their actions. the. one of the clear evidences of the message of peace conveyed by the Qur'an, one of which we can see through the following verse: which the perpetrators unwittingly use to divide the people through acts of extremism, which are carried out with violence or in the form of narratives, the second of which is the most common. amid the rapid development of technology.

The narrative of extremism is currently increasingly prevalent in the realities of life. Various demonstrations with political, social, economic and cultural content colored people's lives. Some are triggered by religio-political issues, such as local elections, the implementation of sharia in the state, some are facilitated by religio-social issues such as the spread of interaction between religious communities, pluralism and inter-religious relations, some are caused by religious-economic issues such as capitalism, trafficking in women, sending female workers, exploitation of women in the mass media, and religious-cultural issues such as the kaffah application of Islam, the spread of heresy in various variations and increasingly vulgar disobedience. Thus, this problem tends to be responded to with acts of violence, which in many cases is counter-productive. One implication is that religious violence constructed as extremism becomes the dominant variable in various acts of violence in the name of religion. Religion which originally had a mission of peace was reduced to contradictory actions [5].

The. one of the clear evidences of the message of peace conveyed by the Qur'an, one of which we can see through the following verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ
O mankind, indeed We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most pious among you. Verily Allah is All-Knowing, All-Knowing. (QS. Al-Hujurât [49]: 13)

In this verse, Allah clearly emphasizes the diversity of mankind from various sides. The representative vocabulary is *syu'ub* and *qaba'il*, which are simply translated as "nations and tribes." These two words, in the context when the Qur'an was revealed reflect the geographical diversity of mankind, while in the context of now represents the geopolitical, cultural and national diversity of the nation [6].

Seeing how much attention the Koran pays to religious harmony, the author attempts to discuss several verses in the Koran related to multiculturalism, which can be seen as counter-narratives of extremism.

1.1 Definition of Multicultural

Multiculturalism comes from the phrase multi (many), culture (culture), then gets an accent of ism (school, ideology) which means a view that emphasizes various cultures that interact and are one culture, but internally manifested from different elements. Multiculturalism then became a cultural strategy that developed in countries that face ethnic and cultural plurality with a background of racial and gender discrimination, as well as multi-ethnic problems, and migrants of color. Multiculturalism is a philosophy that is sometimes interpreted as an ideology that requires the unity of various groups with equal rights and political status in modern society [7].

In the big Indonesian dictionary, Multicultural is translated as cultural diversity [8]. This term is usually used to describe a person's view of the variety of life in the world, or cultural policies that emphasize acceptance of the reality of diversity, and the various cultures (multicultural) that exist in people's lives regarding values, systems, cultures, habits, and politics. which they profess.

1.2 Definition of Counter-narrative extremism

In the Indonesian dictionary, con means the state of disagreeing or opposing [9]. Furthermore, narrative is etymologically defined as a story or description of an event or event [10]. When referred to in the original language, narrative comes from the Latin narre, which has the meaning of telling. From this meaning, it can be concluded that narrative is an attempt to tell an event, although not all information can be referred to as narrative [11].

The word extremism is taken from the word extreme which in the English dictionary means extraordinary, great, hard, and supreme. Meanwhile, in the Indonesian dictionary, it means the very end, the tallest, hard in stance, and fanatical [12]. From this understanding, extremism can be described as activities that include beliefs, attitudes, actions and strategies of one character that go beyond normal limits. Therefore, the perspective of extremism tends to want drastic changes and reforms by means of violence.

From the meaning of the words above, we can conclude the definition of counter-narrative of extremism by looking at Jap Van Eerten's opinion, namely as a narrative in the form of communication that is intentionally carried out to weaken, match and influence the narrative of extremism by providing alternative narratives [13].

2 Methodology

Research is basically a scientific way to get data with a specific purpose and use. In this study, the method that will be used is qualitative, namely a method to explore and understand the meaning ascribed to social or humanitarian problems that focuses on individual meaning and translates the complexity of a problem.

In this research, the author will also emphasize the study of literature, so that it comes from primary and secondary literature in the form of books, journals, encyclopedias, and other

sources that support and relate to the theme of the study. In addition, to increase the accuracy of the research, the author will also include the results of interviews from several related sources.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Phenomenon of Narrative Extremism in Indonesia

History proves that culture in Indonesia is able to coexist, compliment and complement each other. However, such cultural diversity is not without problems. On the other hand, the existing diversity often backfires and turns into potential conflicts that have occurred in a number of areas in the country.

The potential for conflict is one of the most common due to the rise of extremism narratives that are spread in the community, either through social media or directly. This phenomenon can be clearly detected in three forms:

1. Harsh speech such as excessive swearing, lies, and spreading negative issues or excessive praise material.
2. Behaviors/actions, both in the form of worship that are exaggerated from what is taught by religion or not.
3. Hearts and feelings, both in the form of trust and emotions and love.

Some examples of extremism narratives that are familiar in Indonesia include:

- Non-Muslims are infidels and it is lawful for their blood to be killed, and Muslims who fight against unbelievers will be martyred and placed in His Paradise. One of the phenomena associated with this is the suicide bombing that occurred in front of the cathedral church in Makassar (28/03/2021). In his will, he said that what he did was to follow the path of the Prophet/Rasul of Allah, so that they could gather in heaven someday.

- Jihad is considered as the pinnacle of one's faith. We can also see this narrative through the terror act at the National Police Headquarters (31/03/2021) which was carried out by a woman, because of her extreme action, she was shot dead by the police.

- The government system is damaged in Indonesia, therefore it must be replaced with the Khilafah/Islamic Shari'a system. We can hear this understanding or generally declared by HTI, which has been dissolved by the government, but seems to still have associations that are actively discussing/conducting studies on their ideology.

This phenomenon can be born from those who are very religious and sincere in their religion. Here the extremity is caused by a misunderstanding of religious guidance. It is this unconscious misunderstanding that often accompanies every actor in the attitude of exceeding the limit. the perpetrators or proponents use verses of the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet, but understand them textually and out of context. Or they read the works of old scholars who have contributed to providing solutions to the people, but the solutions are no longer in accordance with the conditions of the people after them, due to changes in time and situation as well as the development of science and technology [14].

Jan-Jaap Van Eerten in *Developing a Social Media Response to Radicalization: The Role of Counter-Narratives in Prevention of Radicalization and De-Radicalization* and Sara Zeiger in *Counter-Narratives for Cutting Violent Extremism (CVE) in South East Asia*, show in their research that the narrative of extremism can be identified from at least three things [15].

First, exploitation of suffering and threats. Extremist narratives generally use a strategy of exploitation against the Muslim community [16]. *Second*, the propaganda of war jihad (qitâl). This understanding occurs most often in various forms of action. Third, interpreting the Qur'an ideologically. To strengthen the propaganda of war jihad, the extremists base their narratives on verses from the Qur'an, in order to gain legitimacy from the crimes they commit.

Indeed, there is no single cause in cases of conflict in Indonesia. However, some of the conflicts that have occurred have begun to raise questions about the diversity that we have and what steps should be taken [17]. Therefore, in the next material, the author will discuss verses of the Koran related to multiculturalism, so that it is hoped that they can be counter-narrative of extremism.

However, as a country with a multi-ethnic, cultural and even religious population, Indonesia should place local culture and local wisdom proportionally. Differences between ethnicities, cultures and religions should not be an element that cracks togetherness, on the contrary diversity should be a complementary wealth of treasures.

3.2 Multiculturalism in the Qur'an as a counter-narrative of extremism

Al-Qur'an is the last holy book revealed by Allah swt. to the Prophet Muhammad. which is then distributed to the people [18]. As a universal book of guidance, the Qur'an contains verses that contain guidelines and basic rules that are needed by humans to regulate their lives, both those related to faith, as well as regulations that regulate human behavior and ways of life. both personally and communally. What is meant by guidance and light is tolerance, harmony, and peace. Therefore, multiculturalism is a necessity to encourage tolerance and eliminate narratives of extremism in the intra-religious and inter-religious realms.

In the following, a number of verses of the Qur'an will be discussed that give encouragement to multiculturalism. So that the discussion will be very useful to restore the character of the Qur'an as a holy book that invites people to peace and harmony [19].

- **QS. Al-Mâidah [5]: 48**

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ
عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا
الْخَيْرَاتِ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

And We have sent down to you the Qur'an with the truth, confirming what was before, namely the books (which were revealed earlier) and a touchstone against the other books; So judge their case according to what Allah has sent down and do not follow their desires by forsaking the truth which has come to you. For every nation among you, We have given rules and a clear path. If Allah had willed, He would have made you one people (only), but Allah wants to test you against His gift to you, so compete in doing good. To Allah all of you will return, and He will inform you of what you have disputed about,

In this verse, Allah clearly conveys that He sent down the book, namely the Qur'an [20] as the bearer of the truth which is reflected in all the contents of the verse, in all matters of faith and the Shari'a, all the information it preaches, and the instructions it carries. The Qur'an is the final reference in all matters which cannot be matched or replaced. Therefore, all disputes must be returned to this book for a solution. Both disputes in the perception of faith among followers of the divine religion, as well as in the field of sharia contained in this book, or disputes that occur among the Muslims themselves [21].

Allah has blessed the religion of Islam as a way of life for all human beings [22] Although previously, Allah has made the Torah, the Gospel, and the Zabur as a guide for worship and the Shari'a for his followers, but it is through the Qur'an that other religions are served. Thus, we should never decide a matter based on lust or not based on Allah's explanation of truth and law in the Qur'an [23].

Allah's next word, "... If Allah willed, He would have made you one people (only), but Allah wants to test you against His gift to you, so compete in doing good..." Emphasizing that Allah has power and the ability to make human beings one people. But He made their Shari'ah and Minhaj different, so that Allah could test them with His Religion and Shari'a, and all the gifts He gave them in life. They go their own way. Then everything will return to Allah. Then He informed them of the actual situation, and calculated their value according to the manhaj and the way of life he had followed. If so, no one should think of acting rashly and recklessly against the Shari'a with the intention of uniting people of different sects and ways of life, because after all they will not be able to unite [24].

At the end of the verse, Allah calls on mankind to "...then compete in doing good..." i.e. hasten to obedience, one way to do this is by prioritizing obligations rather than delaying them. And the word of Allah "...To Allah all of you will return, and He will tell you what you have disputed about." Namely (then Allah will inform you) of what you disputed, so that doubts will disappear [25].

- **Q.S. al-Israa [17]: 84**

قُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَىٰ شَاكِلَتِهِ فَرُبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ هُوَ أَهْدَىٰ سَبِيلًا

Say: "Each person acts according to his own circumstances". Then your Lord knows best who is more righteous in the way (QS: Al-Israa'[17]: 84)

This verse emphasizes that each person acts according to the innate and morals that have been created for him. The commentators, including al-Alusi, az-Zamakhshari, emphasize that this verse emphasizes the existence of individuals who carry out their respective activities, regardless of their status, position and faith. They act, do activities, work in harmony with their respective findings, paths, models, methods and methods, which of course differ from one another.

Buya Hamka in his interpretation explains that the nature of each individual has been determined by God since he was still in his mother's womb, with different conditions ranging from color, appearance, and temperament, so that no one is similar to the others. Until the sound of a human's voice and fingerprints, nothing is the same.

At the end of the verse, there is an editorial "So your Lord knows best who is more correct in his path." Because only Allah knows better the better path we should take. Therefore, it is inappropriate for someone to force others to follow the will/ideology that he understands. Furthermore, buya Hamka interprets the end of this verse that our duty is to always try to approach God, seek His pleasure, carry out what He is commanded and stop the actions/actions He forbids, so that He will guide people on the right path [26].

This phrase can also be brought to the understanding that the diversity of products, be it culture, customs, social institutions, and even civilization. These diverse individual creations also create diversity in various segments, including values. Customs, manners, community customs procedures can be different from other communities. This diversity must then become an invaluable wealth for a multicultural society, so it must be mutually tolerant, respectful of each other's culture, so that there is no feeling of discrimination. This verse is also a counter-narrative of extremism which always assumes that the ideology/belief it adheres to is the most

correct, and assumes that it is wrong for people outside of it to be infidels whose blood is lawful to kill. This narrative is certainly not correct if it is associated with the verse above, because only Allah knows who is the most righteous in His way.

- **Q.S. al-Hujuraat [49]: 13**

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

O mankind, indeed We created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most pious among you. Verily Allah is All-Knowing, All-Knowing. (QS. Al-Hujurat [49]: 13)

The 13th verse of Surah al-Hujurat according to the narrative of several commentators related to the companion of the Prophet named Bilal when he gave the call to prayer at the Kaaba in the Mecca fathu incident, Atab bin Usaid bin Abi Al Ish then said, 'Praise be to Allah who has taken my father. so that he does not see today.' Meanwhile, Al Harith bin Hisham said, "Muhammad did not find a mu'adhin other than this black crow." Suhail bin Amr said, "If Allah wills something, he will change that something." Abu Sufyan said, 'I will not say anything, for fear that the Lord of the heavens will tell it (to Muhammad). The angel Gabriel then came to the Prophet. and tell him what they said to him. He then called them and asked what they were saying, and they admitted it. So Allah also sent down this verse to forbid them to be proud of their lineage and wealth, and forbid them to despise the poor. Because the measure is piety. The meaning of the word of God is, all humans came from Adam and Eve. Therefore the glory comes from piety [27], not skin color or lineage.

In the interpretation of ibn al-Arabi it is explained that Allah created men and women with different backgrounds / genealogies, tribes and nations, nothing but for mutual understanding, namely knowing each other so that relationships can be established between each other [28].

Wherever people go, they will find out where someone comes from, where they come from, because they want to have a relationship or affinity with other people. So that those who are far become close, those who are far apart become close. The conclusion is that humans are essentially descended from one lineage. So even though the distance is far apart, but still from the origin of the one. Therefore, there is no difference between one another, and there is no need to discriminate because "Indeed the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the one who is the most pious among you." The end of this verse emphasizes to humans that the true glory that is more valuable in the sight of God is the glory of the heart, character, morals, and obedience to God [29].

This is stated by Allah through his verse to erase the feelings of half humans who claim to be better than others, because for example descent, wealth, physical, ethnicity, customs, or even religion. Thus, the context of the revelation of the verse can be understood as an early warning from the Qur'an about the degree of a person's glory which is not measured by race, skin color, social status or physical destiny, but by the degree of piety to Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala.

In the end, through the description of several verses above, of course this is a counter-narrative of extremism which often favors its understanding or is fanatical, so that it often ignores the presence of a diverse (multicultural) society. Diversity should not be used as a tool to divide a community, especially in the context of life as a nation-state in Indonesia. On the other hand, diversity is a positive thing, considering its existence is legitimized by many

verses in the Qur'an, which function as glue for social cohesion in society. Optimal efforts made by the founders of the Indonesian nation and state who realized the importance of the diversity that existed in Indonesian society required real thoughts and actions from the next generation to realize a better Indonesia in the future based on religious texts [30].

4 Conclusion

The diversity of religions, cultures, languages and customs of mankind is the wealth of a nation. However, on the other hand, it can backfire for a multicultural society that lives side by side, if the community and government do not maintain this diversity by knitting peace and tolerance between each other.

In general, the narrative of extremism in Indonesia is mostly related to Islam. Jihad in the name of religion, or carrying out rebellions because they see the government as a tagut. This phenomenon occurs because of the narrow understanding of religion from the reading of extremism narrative actors. Which usually only cites a few verses that can legitimize their actions, regardless of the cause of the revelation and the context of the verse.

Although it does not deny that the Qur'an contains verses of Jihad, but these verses were revealed in a different context from today. In addition, the author would like to convey that the verses of peace and tolerance between fellow humans are much more conveyed in the Qur'an. As the verses that the author includes in this article. Obviously Allah SWT. instead ordered mankind to respect each other, glorify one another, and not impose their will. Indeed, Allah is omnipotent and has power over all things, including in guiding mankind on the right path. Thus, the deeper we understand the verses of multiculturalism in the Qur'an, it will minimize the emergence of narratives of extremism in society.

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