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THE ROLE OF THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA ON WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN INDONESIA'S TERRORIST GROUPS



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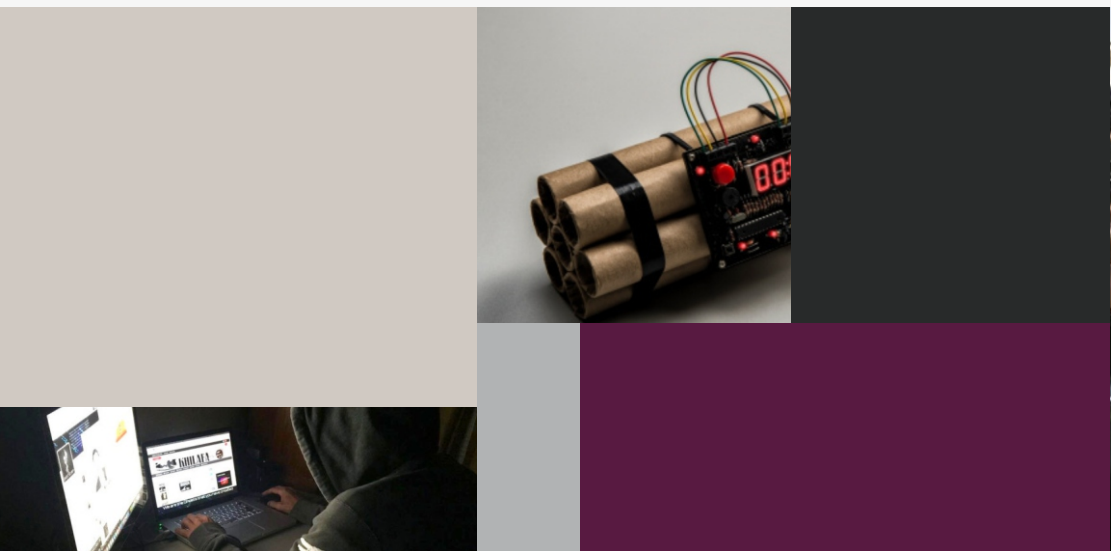
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■ INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Indonesia has witnessed an increasing involvement of women and even family in terrorist groups. This is depicted in the case of the first would be female suicide bomber, Dian Yulia Novi, in July 2016, and the three family suicide bombers in May, 2018. The instance where women take a combat role in an Islamist terrorist group in Indonesia has raised the importance to assess any significant change over the time period that has enabled this increasing level of participation. One variable further discussed in this study is terrorist group's use of the Internet and social media that is argued to play a significant role in facilitating women's increasing number and level of participation.

This study analyse terrorist group's utilisation of the Internet and social media and the level of women's participation in Indonesia's terrorist groups, starting from Darul Islam (1948-1993), Jemaah Islamiyah (1994-2014), and pro-ISIS groups (2014-2017). It aims to assess the changing role of Indonesian women in terrorist group in Indonesia during that time period and also the influence of the Internet and social media as a form of computer-mediated communication in this change. The key two questions in this study are: (1) how has women's participation in Indonesia's terrorist group changed overtime (1948-2017)?; (2) what is the role of the Internet and social media in this change?



■ TERRORISTS' USE OF THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA: THE RADICAL MILIEU

In this study, the concept of radical milieu will be used to assess the influence of Internet and social media on women's involvement in terrorist group. Maura Conway describes violent radical milieu as "the social space in which political experiences are made and violent ideas are generated, tested, and refined."¹ Milieu is, therefore, defined in the context of a social space that designed to instilled specific ideas for the individuals involved in it. In their study, Malthaner and Waldmann explores the term radical in the radical milieu as action, frameworks or orientation, and attitudes that define political conflict in absolute terms, and characterised by a high degree of commitment to one's own side, and include the approval or use of violence against the other sides.² The milieu, or social environment, plays a significant role in the process of political violence as it shapes individual's

pathways to radicalisation and influences the development of the violent groups.³ Individual terrorists "need to feel virtuous or altruistic,"⁴ that their actions are done for a greater good and not a selfish decision, signified by their social environment's approval, support, or even respect of their violent actions.

Thus far, it is suggested that radical milieu plays a great role in shaping how individuals could transform its radical beliefs towards violent actions. This study will further elaborate how the Internet and social media has serve as the social environment or the radical milieu itself. The radical milieu, in fact, doesn't need to be a physical environment where people could do a face-to-face interaction. As stated by Maria Conway, that "the internet, and Web 2.0 in particular, has been shown to

facilitate the virtual establishment of strong social and personal bonds in many different context, including amongst violent political extremists.”⁵ The Internet and social media as a radical milieu can be seen in the establishment

of online community that foster communication between likeminded individuals that are not situated in the same physical environment.

■ ARGUMENT

Women's involvement in Indonesia's terrorist group have changed overtime, mainly shown by the increasing number of women as members of the groups. Women's role inside the group is also seen to have shifted—from a passive to more active supporters—as shown by the cases where women became the perpetrators of violent attacks. The Internet and the advanced use of social media by ISIS in the most contemporary era, compared with the DI/TII and Jemaah Islamiyah's periods, are seen to serve as a permissive factor that allows for women's greater involvement in many public activities, including in the terrorist group. While face-to-face communication between men and women is mostly prohibited in a religious motivated terrorist group, the Internet and social media has served as a medium that allows for women's greater influence and involvement.

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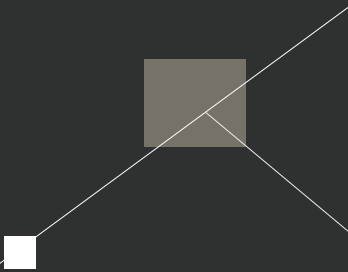
The Internet and social media serve three main roles: (1) information provision or propaganda for radicalisation purpose; (2) support for online activism to fund the terrorist activities, and (3) as a recruitment tool. In the recent years, we have also witnessed the occurrence of e-dating and e-marriage between female and male jihadists that further engage them with the terrorist group. The Internet has served as a radical milieu where communication within the radical communities is established and provides

supports for violent actions. Further, terrorists' use of the Internet and social media alone is acknowledged to be not directly resulting in women's changing participation inside Indonesian terrorist groups. It engages with several other factors, such as the influence of external international group and also the organisational structure and doctrine itself, that when they are combined, it results in the increase of women's participation for terrorist groups

■ DATA AND METHODOLOGY



This research is using desk research method, or the collection of secondary data that is available in the public domain. The data sources are based on books, newspapers, journal articles, documented interviews, websites or online databases, and government and NGO reports. Weight will be given to more credible sources when inconsistencies emerged. Longitudinal observational studies is chosen as it observes the independent variable that is already exist in the world, and evaluate the theoretical claims.



The independent variable that is observed is the terrorist groups' use of the Internet and social media and the dependent variable is the changing women's participation in Indonesia's terrorist groups. The Indonesian terrorist groups in this study referred to the Darul Islam movement in 1948-1992, Jemaah Islamiyah in 1993-2014, and the most contemporary Indonesia's pro-ISIS terrorist groups in 2014-2017 that includes: Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT), Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT), Jamaah Tauhid wal Jihad (JTJ), Ring Banten, Gema Salam, Mujahidin Indonesia Barat (MIB), Forum Aktivis Syariat Islam (FAKSI), and Jamaah Ansharut Daulah. The three different groups are chosen because they are considered as the most prominent Islamist terrorist groups that operated in Indonesia. This study seeks to identify and describe patterns from each time periods in regards to the groups' utilisation of the Internet and women's role inside the group, then attempt to understand and explain these patterns and themes that occurred.

The use of the Internet and social media in the period of Darul Islam, Jemaah Islamiyah, and pro-ISIS terrorist groups is observed through these organisations' utilisation of these technologies as depicted by: the availability and accessibility of terrorist group's websites, video channels, and social media use such as: Twitter, Facebook, and group chat applications including Messenger, WhatsApp, and Telegram. The dependent variable, the changing women's participation, is observed through women's activities in different level of supports group inside the terrorist organisations. These different level of supports group are divided into four number of categories: leaders, operational cadres, active supporters, and passive supporters.⁶ The increasing role of women can be seen when women are becoming a more active members inside the group, with leaders being the highest level.

FROM DARUL ISLAM TO ISIS: INTERNET AND INDONESIAN WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN TERRORIST GROUPS

This study finds that a more advanced use of the Internet as a tool for propaganda, online activism, and recruitment, is correlated with the increasing number of participation of women and more importantly, the increasing level of women's participation inside the terrorist group. However, terrorist groups' different approaches in using such tools are also resulting in different results. Data shows a higher level of women's participation in the pro-ISIS terrorist groups than in Jemaah Islamiyah. In the pro-ISIS groups, the women had been positioned as operational cadres, while in Jemaah Islamiyah they stay behind as supporters. In assessing these differences, this chapter will discuss how different groups utilised the Internet and how it influence the level of women's participation in terms of number and operation inside the group.



Roles of Internet

Women's Role Inside the Group

Propaganda

**Online
Activism**

Recruitment

**Passive
Supporters**

**Active
Supporters**

**Operational Leaders
Cadres**

DI (1948-1993)



Jl (1994-2014)



(limited on channels; mainly use websites, blogs)



(fundraising, money transfer from international supporters)



(little use of Internet for this, often recruit male supporters who are already part of the initial member's circle)



Pro-ISIS Groups (2014-2017)



various channels: websites, social media, instant messengers)



(fundraising from international donors, propaganda on social media)



(recruit both men and women through different channels: social media platforms)





■ Darul Islam (1948-1993)

In this period, there was no apparent use of the Internet for any of Darul Islam's activities as the Internet has not been established in Indonesia. In correlation to this, women's participation level inside the group is also very low and limited, that they only play roles in the domestic level as wife, daughter, and mother.⁷ It is seen that under Darul Islam movement, male members held the main positions inside the group. This is shown by the organisation's rule of conscription, in which the male aged between 16 to 24 years old were required to enrolled in a military training to become the Darul Islam vanguard.⁸ The same rule didn't applied for women, that therefore, it is stipulated that there may not be a very active involvement of women as operational cadres in this organisation during its early years, because only male members are required to join. However, it is acknowledged that, the non-use of the Internet may not directly contribute to a limited women's participation inside the group. In regards to women's participation, one might argue that the ideological doctrine that is adopted by Darul Islam at that time, the Salafi jihadism, have played a larger role than

the inexistence of the Internet itself. Also, with the nature of the organisation as a clandestine group, they might not seek to invite new members through an open space like the Internet. Darul Islam's case signifies the prominent role of terrorist group's ideological doctrine and structure that is implemented in how they see women's role in their organisation.



■ Jemaah Islamiyah (1994-2014)

At its beginning, Jemaah Islamiyah has been quite active in using the Internet as a platform to spread its propaganda about jihad through mailing lists and blogs like tibb.beritaislam.com, MIRC Channel called [#cafeislam](https://twitter.com/cafetislam), and www.anshar.net that have been banned now.⁹ This evidence can be seen as the group attempt to reach larger audience that is not limited in the region where they operate, attracting supporters and sympathisers. Nonetheless, in reality, the access for joining the mailing list and group chats had been severely restricted to those who already had a recommendation from the existing JI members. The first website that was available for public, www.anshar.net, was quickly discovered and banned by the government.¹⁰ Therefore, it is seen that Jemaah Islamiyah's move towards



the utilisation of the Internet is merely to reinforce the beliefs and doctrines within the already established community in the offline space.

The group has only exploited the use of Internet in terms of online activism for the financial motives. It can be utilised by two means: act of hacking and fund raisings, that they disguised it as a charity project for Poso conflict.¹¹¹² Again, although JI has utilise the Internet for this purpose, they did not stated their true intention to fund their operation in the region, as most donors might have believed that their money went towards the victims of the conflict.¹³ Without having stated its true intention, one could argue that this act can't establish a radical milieu. A radical milieu may be formed once people who gave the charity had truly invested in JI's original objectives as a group, which shows a sense of belonging and solidarity as a community.

Although the group had the opportunity to establish the online radical milieu with the emergence of mailing list, MIRC, and other messenger applications, they did not utilise the Internet as much as they could have done. The community is still largely formed through physical meetings, relations between student-teachers, friends, and family linkage. In response to that, women's participation is also largely ignored. As with Darul Islam, the pattern of kinship continuously plays a significant role in Jemaah Islamiyah. According to Noor

Huda Ismail, there are three different roles of kinship inside the group to strengthen members' loyalty: sibling relationships, in-law relationships, and father-son relationships.¹⁴

In this kinship relationship, women play vital role in shaping the group's network with the practice or inter-marriages between a member's sister or daughter to the other member. By having marital relationship, JI tries to ensure the member commitment. This case reflected in Mukhlas or Ali Ghuftron's marriage to Paridah binti Abbas, a younger sister of Nasir bin Abbas who once served as chairman of JI's Mantiqi 3.¹⁵ Another role of women in this terrorist group is mainly as passive and active supporters. For example, they help the financial arrangement for the group as most of the funding is transferred through the wives' bank account to avoid authorities' suspicions.¹⁶ Women's participation is, therefore, still limited as both passive and active supporters. There has not been an instance where women in Jemaah Islamiyah have played a more active role outside of the domestic sphere.

■ Pro-ISIS Terrorist Groups (2014-2017)

It is in the Pro-ISIS terrorist groups where we start to see a clearer role of the Internet as a radical milieu. In these groups, as they have been utilising the



Internet and social media in a more sophisticated way than its predecessors, the Internet plays part as the environment where the community is created. What the Internet do for the women in the Pro-ISIS terrorist groups is significant since in most Islamist groups that adopt Salafi jihadism, women's movement are restricted in the domestic sphere. The cases of the first would-be female suicide bomber in Indonesia, Dian Yulia Novi and Ika Puspitasari, have shown the increasing role of women that they do not merely act as passive and active supporters in the group. The two women were initially seeking for a community where they can learn more about Islam.¹⁷ Their occupation as domestic workers abroad highlighted the salient role of this virtual community because they were not able to be present in any of the group's offline-meeting. Based on the findings of Nuraniyah,¹⁸ in the encrypted group chat of Indonesian's

pro-ISIS terrorist groups, the interactions are mainly about mundane everyday things such as personal issues and religious discussions that are not directly related to ISIS. The fact that these women do not always talk about jihad activities shows an even stronger sense of a community, which creates the radical milieu.

In Dian's case, we see how significant is this virtual community in infusing their ideology to its members that in turn could lead to actual terrorist attack. Through a private interview with TIME Magazine, Dian acknowledge how the online group chat has successfully injected the ISIS' perspectives on Islam and also motivated her to execute an actual attack under the supervision of Bahrin Naim, an Indonesian and a leading ISIS recruiter and propagandist in Syria.¹⁹ In an interview with TEMPO,²⁰ Dian said that she was first interested to

learn more about Islamic teaching when she worked in Taiwan as a domestic worker. During her breaks, she often searched for information online and even connected to one jihadi account named Ulama binti Gulam, whom she said is living in Syria and always answered all her questions and curiosity regarding Islamic teaching.²¹ Before executing her attack, she had communicated in three occasions through Telegram with Bahrun Naim, Indonesia's leading ISIS militant who at that moment was in Syria. It was also Bahrun Naim who decided the target of operation and ordered Dian to execute the attack.²²

An interesting side to this story is the element of physicality that also took place in order for these women to perform their attack. On one side, it is assumed that the nature of the Internet is very vital in enabling women's participation due to its online invisibility. However, on the other side, in order for women to plan and perform their act, they can conduct offline meeting with the men members. In Dian's cell, conducted by Muhammad Nur Solihin, her husband whom she had married through the Internet,²³ there are five other people involved in this operation: Agus Supriyadi as the driver, Suyanto and Khafid Fathoni as the bomb-makers, Arinda Putri Maharani as the organiser of funds for the bomb-making, and Wawan Prasetyawan who had stored the materials and components needed for the bomb-making.²⁴ Nonetheless, the

Internet plays as a major enabler for this cell to be established as the cell's leader, the cadre, and the bomb-makers each have communicated with Bahrun Naim to receive the order and money. From then, they were able to create the small cell under Bahrun Naim's supervision through the encrypted chat application.

The Pro-ISIS terrorist groups are also seen to be the most successful in engaging its audience, in this case particularly, women, in the online media. Aside of the emergence of operational cadres, which is very significant, there are also instances where women and their family are travelling to ISIS' territory in hope for a better life under the caliphate.²⁵ As a group that branded itself as an Islamic state, women's participation is highly encouraged. This also drives the occurrence of online marriage between ISIS jihadist and women sympathisers who are willing to travel to the territory. For this purpose, a Telegram group designed for ISIS matchmaking had even been established and administered by an Indonesian woman.²⁶ Although the estimation number varies, women and children are contributing a significant number among 500 to 700 Indonesian citizens in ISIS territories.²⁷

Drawing from the facts above, in the pro-ISIS groups, the radical milieu is well established through the use of Internet for propaganda means, online activism, and recruitment. Dian, who was once an outsider of the jihadi community could

become a part of the group, even perpetrate an attack through her involvement in the online community. Her initial search for a deeper Islamic teaching through the Internet had led her to the ISIS' propaganda, further invited her to engaged and communicated with the propagandists themselves. ISIS' use of the Internet and social media has been proven effective and attractive to recruit new supporters, sympathisers, and committed members. In the online community, the members were also able to conduct fund-raising to support the groups' operations such as bomb-making, as illustrated in the case of Bahraini Agam and Rio Priatna Wibawa, the captured bomb-makers, who had successfully collected approximately 30 million Indonesia Rupiah from his

Facebook fundraising and donation from some Indonesian women migrant workers.²⁸ It can be argued that the sense of community that is created in the Internet has built a sense of trust and confidence among members that they willingly donate their money despite the lack of transparency provided. As the charities and fund-raising often accompanied with emotional stories, it has been successful in attracting donation from women who are seen to be more susceptible to such narrative. These facts have shown how women's participation is highly encouraged for ISIS and this support have been well-executed through its Internet strategy, making it a radical milieu that resulting in a significant rise of women's participation.

■ WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN TERRORIST GROUPS: ORGANISATIONAL DOCTRINE MANIFESTED IN THE INTERNET STRATEGY

Deriving from the discussion above, we have seen how different utilisation of the Internet and social media have contributed to a different number and level of participation of women in the terrorist groups. Extensive use of the Internet by the pro-ISIS terrorist groups has resulted in the creation of a radical milieu, a space where the radical ideas are embraced and transformed into violent actions. Whereas Jemaah

Islamiyah's limited utilisation corresponds to a considerably low level of women's participation, as their most significant role are limited in the domestic sphere. The non-use of the Internet in the Darul Islam period also corresponds to a very low level of women's participation.

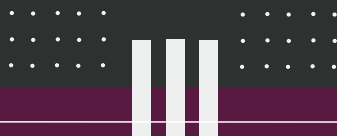
The Internet and social media offered online visibility and attracting women's involvement in the pro-ISIS terrorist group. Through the Internet, they can access the group's propaganda or being the propagandist themselves, contributing to the group's discussion, and also recruit more members without having to conduct a physical or face to face interaction that is strictly limited for women under the Islamist terrorist group. In results, women are participating in a larger number than in any previous terrorist groups. With the creation of radical milieu in their online community, as they start to embrace the radical ideas, they are more likely to be willing in participating in a more active operation by being the operational cadres. The group's ideological openness in using women as operational cadres has paved these women's aspiration to conduct an actual attack like their male counterparts.

However, in assessing the correlation between the Internet and women's participation in the terrorist group, one must also look at what drives the said group to exercise such Internet strategy that enabled the creation of online radical milieu for women, specifically. The advanced use of the Internet and social media can be seen in the group's utilisation of it as a tool of propaganda, online activism, and recruitment. While the more advanced attributes of the Internet in the pro-ISIS groups is perceived as a given considering the time period that they operated, when

compared to Jemaah Islamiyah, it is seen that one key driving factor of the group's Internet strategy and its decision to embrace women's participation lies primarily in the group's organisational structure and doctrine itself.

The groups' structure and doctrine determines how the group will use the Internet and whether it will accept women's involvement in the firsthand. One might argue that if ISIS operated just like Jemaah Islamiyah and Darul Islam with the militia and clandestine organisational structure, the existence of the Internet and social media technology may still not support women's involvement. Hence, the Internet and social media mainly serve as a permissive factor, supporting greater role of women's participation in terrorist groups under the condition that the group's ideology, organisational structure, and doctrines allowed it to happen.

The use of women and more recently, children, as operational cadres or suicide bombers is relatively new in Indonesia's terrorist groups. ISIS' state-narrative has attracted the involvement of more people within the Indonesian Muslim community regardless of gender, age, or professions. It is important for the Indonesian government and counter-terrorism agencies to adopt a more inclusive approach for preventing and dealing with the acts of terrorism, especially those that are related to ISIS.



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ABOUT CfDS

Center for Digital Society (CfDS) is the research center established by the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada. The institution is created under the concern over the contemporary dynamics of socio-political condition of the world that is accentuated by the impeccable influence of information technology. The phenomenon triggers the new patterns and complexities in the society, and thus requires new approaches in managing such complexities.

CfDS pledged to delve more on the study of contemporary digital society, including related issues surrounding the topic; such as the issues of smart city and urban development. The emphasis is then put on the utilization of technology to shape the society in becoming digitalized, as well as to bring solvency to social issues.

Vision

Solving Social Problem and Accelerating Prosperity through Indonesia Digital Society

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2. Dissemination and Publication
3. Education and Policy Advocacy

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