

EXCERPT

Creative Approaches in Peace Building Initiatives in Indonesia

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With the worrying growing tendency of religious radicalism in most parts of the world, Indonesia, with its little more than 200 million Muslims (87 percent of total population), the largest Muslim population in a country in the world, is certainly not immune from this global phenomenon. Being often dubbed as the world's third largest democratic country, its democratic future is challenged by what some observers called as a "conservative turn" in Indonesian society (Bagir, 2014; van Bruinessen, 2014).

For example, the recent event in Marawi in the Southern part of the Philippines, where an armed militant group associated themselves with ISIS took over the city for around two months, certainly alarmed governments in the region. Indeed, there were Indonesian and Malaysian fighters who joined in the attack (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2017 & "ISIL invasion," 2017). Furthermore, the government has estimated that around 500-600 Indonesians (including women and children) have joined ISIS ("Foreign Ministry," 2017), and many of them are involved in the violent fighting. Along with the demise of ISIS, some of these people are returning to Indonesia which naturally triggers some concern from both the authority and the society.

This concern is certainly justified, although, according to some observers (e.g. Friedman, 2016), Indonesia has been successful in some degree, although probably for temporarily, in reducing terror acts in the country. The latest and more recent terror attacks that happened in Indonesia are much smaller in scale compared to previous attacks, indicating that the capability of the terror network seems to be dwindling. It must

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be pointed out, however, that this is a completely new phenomenon, because Islamic conservatism in various forms, and in varying degrees with regards to its relationship with the state and the rest of the society, has always been part of Indonesian history (see Solahudin, 2011). This phenomenon has taken into a new dimension with the growingly unstable Middle East and the proliferation of new communication technology and social media use to make a globally interrelated conservatism around the world.

Moreover, there are signs showing that the conservative approach to Islam is gaining ground in Indonesia. For example, some research reveal that radical view of Indonesian youth is increasing (Azca, 2013; Fananai, 2013; Gaus, 2013; see also “Survei: hampir 50% pelajar setuju tindakan radikal”, 2011). The radical or conservative views, for a lack of better terminologies, certainly do not necessarily lead to violent expressions manifested in terrorism acts. But since all terrorism attacks certainly initially stem from such radical views on religion, then peace building efforts to prevent such atrocities from happening need to be taken. The state Islamic organizations (such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama) and other non-state civil society organizations actors have dealt with this issue with different approaches, executions and results.

This paper will discuss the peace building program conducted by organizations that have been working on this issue for about a decade: Peace Generation and Yayasan Prasasti Perdamaian (YPP)

Peace Generation

Peace Generation was founded in 2007 by two friends, Irfan Amalee and Erik Lincoln (an American living in Bandung, Indonesia). It was the journey of their friendship from two people with a set of prejudice and who were strange to each other to becoming best friends that lead the establishment of the organization. Amalee works professionally as one of the CEO in Mizan Groups, one of the most prominent publishing groups in Indonesia, and has played a very important role in the digital initiatives of the company. He earned his master’s degree in Peace Studies from Brandeis University, Boston, USA, in 2012. Amalee was listed as one of the 500 most

influential Muslims in the world by the Royal Institute for Islamic Studies, Amman, Jordan, for two years in a row: 2010 and 2011 (Amalee: 2107). His co-founder of Peace Generation, Eric Lincoln, is a teacher of an international school.

Peace Generation formulated what they call 12 *Nilai Dasar Perdamaian* (12 Basic Values of Peace), which is derived from Islamic teachings, to serve as its platform for any their peace building initiatives. The first initiative was to create a module consisting of 12 books to be used in the training. The training has covered as many as 45 regions in Indonesia, involving more than 30 thousand youths—and they are called “agents of peace”—and more than 500 school teachers. There are now seven versions of the modules published for different target audiences: Muslims (in Indonesian and English), Christians (in Indonesian), Aceh (in the local language Acehnese), children, Malaysians and Mindanao (The Philippines). Peace Generation uses one of the most innovative and recent method for training and learning called Accelerated Learning method in the module. A study conducted by psychologists from the State Islamic University Bandung, albeit with a small sample, shows that the aggressiveness level among student participants decrease 31,6 percent and the EID (emotional intelligence and diversity) among teacher participants increase 30 percent (Peace Generation, 2017; see also Rusyana, 2015).

Other than peace trainings using the module, Peace Generation has explored and organized some creative events in its peace building program line, e.g. Rock The Peace, Walk The Peace, Rock The Peace, Peacetival (2015, 2017) and PeaceZone (2017). These various programs are intended to give example or insights for the agents of peace to conduct similar or modified, if necessary, programs in their own local settings. The first big event was when Peace Generation held a rock concert called Rock The Peace in 2009, with main performers The Mahad (a rock band which members are students of the Islamic boarding school Pesantren Darul Arqam Muhammadiyah, Garut) and the indie rock band North of Here from Georgia, USA (see also Tan 2014). Around one thousand youngsters attended the concert which was filled with peace themed songs.

Walk The Peace, held once only in 2011, attracted forty participants—consisted of five participants from both South Korea and the US, and the rest of the participants were youths coming from various provinces in Indonesia. The participants walked from Bandung to Pangandaran, which is about 200 kilometers apart, for ten days. Along the way they stopped and met Peace Generation communities to learn and teach about peace at schools or local communities.

Following the success of Rock The Peace, Peace Generation expanded the concept to what it called Peacetival, a portmanteau from the words peace and festival, and held in Bandung in 2015. It was a 12-hour event with various types of programs, such as a rock concert, film showings, talk shows and workshops, games, exhibition from around twenty institutions related to peace building (including such organizations as UNICEF, UNESCO etc), booths for peace-themed merchandise and environmentally friendly foods, and the launching of BobotohBageur (literally means “nice and kind football fans”—since the local football fans was known to be quite notorious and rough) campaign. The Mahad, the indie rock from the *pasantren*, also performed, and a rock band from Canada called Air Marshall Landing was the guest performer. It was estimated that more than five thousand people attended the festival. In early 2017, with some small modifications to meet the local needs, Peacetival was held in Makassar, the capital city of South Sulawesi Province.

The latest event Peace Generation organized in mid-2017 was a funfair called PeaceZone. The event was held in upmarket shopping malls in Greater Jakarta, intended to attract children to play various games in twelve zones specially designed and created to promote the 12 basic values of peace formulated by Peace Generation. Around two hundred children participated in this Peace Generation new initiative to teach peace.

Yayasan PrasastiPerdamaian (Institute for International Peace Building)

Noor Huda Ismail worked as a special correspondent for the Washington Post Southeast Asia Bureau when the first Bali Bombing which claimed more than 200 lives (most of them were foreigners) happened in 2002. Later on, when the police announced

the perpetrators of the atrocity, Ismail recognized one of them as his roommate and close friend when they studied together at Pesantren Al Mukmin, Ngruki, Solo—a pesantren which it's leaning to radical Islam was widely known. It was a watershed moment for him to seek more understanding about Islamic radicalism and to do something about it (Ismail, 2010). In 2005, he continued his study for a Master's degree in International Security at St. Andrews University, Scotland, under a Chevening Scholarship awarded by the British government. He also met with some former IRA leaders that had been successfully reintegrated into the society, which gave him the confidence that terrorists could be rehabilitated. Upon his return to Indonesia, he established Yayasan Prasasti Perdamaian (YPP) or International Institute for Peace Building in 2008. Ismail's writing and interviews on Islamic radicalism have appeared in national and international media outlets. He has also given public talks on this matter in many countries around the world. Currently he is doing his Ph.D. at Monash University on an Australian Award Scholarship with dissertation research on Indonesian foreign fighters.

Ismail believes more on disengagement rather than de-radicalization with regards to rehabilitation of people who already hold radical or violent view on Islam. Replacing a type of strongly held, albeit misleading perspective on religion with a more inclusive and tolerant perspective (i.e. de-radicalization), is much more difficult than trying to disconnect the person with their previous social network by giving the person chances to do something different and form new social networks (i.e. disengagement).

Disengagement is seen as a more natural process of reintegration to society rather than de-radicalization. For this reason, one of YPP programs serves similar to a business incubator of especially for ex-prisoners who intend to start a new life and to abandon violent acts. The most successful program which had got wide attention and even international publicity (e.g Bend, 2014) is Dapur Bistik, a restaurant with around 100 seats run by Yusuf Adirisma, an ex-convict serving seven years sentence in prison. Since YPP's inception, there had been about 35 ex-convicts and/or their spouses who are in this program with varying degrees of success and failure in doing the business (Yayasan Prasasti Perdamaian, 2017).

YPP also had helped the government by conducting capacity building for parole prison officers. Certainly, the inmates who have extreme views on Islam, whom even had committed violent acts in the name of the religion, have very different characteristics compared to ordinary inmates. Consequently the parole and prison officers need to have some different approaches in dealing with those inmates, something that they are mostly not trained in and lack the experience to do so. YPP also engages selected inmates who are receptive to more moderate perspective on Islamic ideas with the hope that they will be able to persuade the other more militant inmates to gradually soften their positions and therefore more open for further dialogue (Yayasan Prasasti Perdamaian, 2017).

YPP also has taken another different approach by producing a documentary film *Jihad Selfie* in 2016. This film, directed by Ismail himself, tells the story of Teuku Akbar Maulana, a young Indonesian studying in Turkey who was ready to join ISIS and later on abandoned the idea. It shows how social media has been an effective tool for recruitment. It also reveals that it is not always ideological reasons for somebody to become interested in joining violent extremism—some other factors like masculinity or identity searching frequently play a more important role. The film was screened at more than 80 places such as campuses and schools, media outlets, NGO offices, and community centers across Indonesia. *Jihad Selfie* was also screened in Geneva Forum on Countering Violent Extremism, and other special screenings in other countries such as Singapore, South Korea, Australia, and the UK. Other than Dapoer Bistik, *Jihad Selfie* is one of YPP's programs that had been frequently covered by the media, both national and international media (e.g. Topsfield, 2016).

Some Lessons

Countering violent extremism (CVE) programs, or its other terminology, preventing violent extremism (PVE), are usually divided into three categories: first, programs intended to the general society to prevent them from being attracted to radicalism; second, programs dealing with specific communities or even individuals

already drawn to the radical views and may have thought of violent acts as an option; third, programs aimed to deal with groups or individuals who have committed violence and are now still serving their sentence or trying to reintegrate with society (Sumpter, 2017). Peace Generation's programs largely fall into the first category, by exploring many creative initiatives and events. Meanwhile, YPP touches all the three categories largely thanks to Ismail's background as a journalist and personal relationship which enable YPP on many cases to build direct access to, and win the trust of terrorism perpetrators.

Both YPP and Peace Generation carry out their programs with no, or very little at the least, coordination with the national counterterrorism agency *Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme* (BNPT). There is some reluctance even to deal with BNPT because its approach is seen to be too top-down, and, by its nature as a state body, is seen cautiously and even distrustfully by the radical groups or terrorism perpetrators. Both YPP and Peace Generation have strong and wide grass-roots networks and hands-on experience that can be shared with other non-state actors, and even with BTPN, as well.

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