The influences of social media toward the development of terrorism in Indonesia

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Abstract This article analyses the influence of the use of social media among terrorist groups toward the development of terrorism in Indonesia. This research is crucial and interesting because the development of social media could be a prominent tool for a particular person or one group's existence. Data were collected through literature reviews and studies on social media publications on the issue. The collected data were checked, classified, and analysed by using Nvivo plus 12. Based on the data analysis, it was found that terrorist groups have already used various social media such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp to recruit, share their ideologies, and spread their threats towards people. Each activity has its target and steps to strengthen their existences. These groups have implemented artificial intelligence (AI) by arranging the content management strategy for using social media within their groups or collaborating with other terrorist organisations' links. The result of this study could be the consideration of government policies in facing the development of terrorist groups, primarily which exist in social media.

Keywords: social media; development; terrorism; media studies

INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites are common platforms for global audiences to receive, exchange, and discuss essential news issues. In the last two decades, social media has become the most popular means of being visited by many people. Therefore, a person has not existed if he is not connected to the social media (Kusyanti et al., 2018). Through social media, a person can be connected with others from various parts of the world. Moreover, the process of finding information is also easy.

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Based on data in 2021, out of 7.5 billion people on earth, 3.02 billion are active social media users. Facebook is the most popular and most prominent social networking platform on the planet, with roughly 2.4 billion users. Other well-known social media platforms, such as Whatsapp and YouTube, also have a massive user base of over a billion people (Poiitis, 2020). The data can be seen in figure 1.
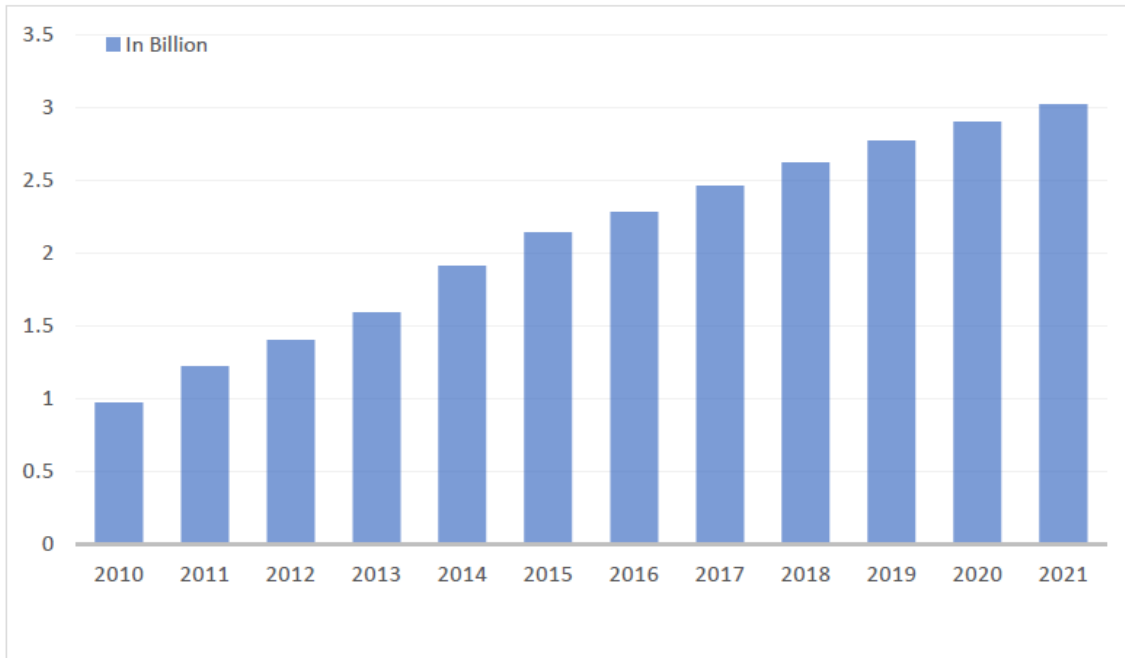

Figure 1. Number of Social Media Worldwide
Source: (Data was modified from Poiitis, Angry M & M's: Aggression Modeling and Minimisation in Online Social Networks, 2020, p. 1)

Out of these numbers, in the context of Indonesia, APJII (Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association) in 2017 informed that the social media users in Indonesia had reached more than 132.7 million people from 256.2 million population (Fahlevi et al., 2019). Every year, the data has increased significantly, showing by 2020 realities, where out of Indonesia's population of 272.1 million, 64% (175.4 million) are internet users, and 59% (160 million) are social media users (Miqdad & Oktaviani, 2021). Such conditions illustrate that more than half of Indonesia's population are active social media users and put this country as the fifth largest social media user globally (Miqdad & Oktaviani, 2021).

Apart from being influenced by technological advances, social media's development was also supported by the wave of democratisation in post reformation Indonesia (Nisa, 2018). Thus, various social media groups feel they have room for freedom of expression without fear of state leaders' authoritarianism. Since 2015, the government has also actively used social media as a medium for daily communication, conducting campaigns, or communicating in crisis and emergency conditions (Idris, 2018).

The time of Indonesian people spend accessing social media everyday is also quite long. Most of them spend more than three hours and thirty-six minutes a day accessing Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Whatsapp, and other social media (Miqdad & Oktaviani, 2021). Moreover, other data depicts that according to the 2018 Global Digital Report by We Are Social and Hootsuite, YouTube (43%), Facebook (41%), and WhatsApp (40%) are the most popular social media platforms in Indonesia. Age 18-24 has the greatest percentage of Facebook users (16%), while 55-64 has the lowest rate (0.01%). In other words, Indonesian youth whose physically and emotionally developing are the most social media knowledgeable (Irawanto, 2019).

Young people have strong enthusiasm and physical modalities to optimise the use of social media. However, the lack of emotional and knowledge maturity can counter national convenience, for example, being influenced by radical teachings or pornography. Thus, the potential for some of them to be exposed to radicalism is relatively high since terrorist movements also intensively use social media to carry out their movements.

In research conducted by the Syarif Hidayatullah Islamic State University, Jakarta (UIN SH) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 2017, they found that Muslim youths who intensely use social media have tremendous potential exposure to radicalism. It could be seen from the desire of 10% of the 1,859 respondents who support the establishment of an Islamic state. They even allow violence in the name of religion. Also, 88.5% of them stated that the government should ban religious minorities (Ehrmann, 2020). Rahma Sugihartati et al. (2020) also found that even university students often access, consume, and recirculate various online radicals through the social media (Sugihartati, Suyanto, & Sirry, 2020). Moreover, Maghfur Ahmad discovered that most Indonesian youngsters were illiterate in the discussion on religious and state ties during the Indonesian state's founding. Muslim youngsters acquire information, persuasion, and ideology promotion via social media from the transnational Islamic movement, which significantly shapes the younger generation's perspectives on national ideological conflicts (Ahmad, 2021). Therefore, the opportunity to be influenced by radical notions is opened.

Nonetheless, social media is essentially like a sword. With the various information and communications generated, social media has had positive and negative impacts (Untari et al., 2020). It means that the benefits and disadvantages of social media depend on the actors who use them. If social media is used to spread goodness, many benefits will be obtained. For instance, many religious activities are supported by social media. Various studies, sharing of articles, or various kinds of videos with religious themes are disseminated through social media. Many Indonesians become more religious by the existence of social media (Slama, 2018).

However, if social media is used to spread malignity, provocation, and efforts to divide the nation, the harmful consequences will also be more dangerous. Moreover, it also could cause a bad image at the international level causing the travel warning from big countries, such as France, America, and Australia (Mangku & Itasari, 2015). The problems emerge when the use of social media is not only among the general public; it has even penetrated terrorist groups (Kwon et al., 2017). Terrorist groups have started to leave conventional media in face-to-face meetings and replace them with optimised use of social media. They have realised that the use of the internet in spreading their ideology is far more profitable. The internet is less costly than the conventional method, but it can reach a broader target community.

Therefore, they actively build and utilise various social media channels. Sometimes, they share the information, which becomes viral and even published in the mainstream media, for instance, memes (Downing, 2021). It provides an opportunity for terrorist groups to demonstrate their existence more openly. Given the rapid development of social media in this era, they also have more opportunities to achieve their goals. Moreover, if they have carried out an attack, they usually can generate pressure on the government to take a policy and get financial assistance from their supporters (Junaedi, 2017).

For terrorist groups, social media's development and function also attract them to use social media to carry out their movements. So far, terrorist groups have used social media for several purposes, such as media recruitment, training, planning attacks, funding, and coordinating with each other in their group (Beale, 2018). They use social media as their means to convey alternative news made by various mainstream media. Therefore, they build a populist model of news and communication, a stunning performance, and various other efforts to convey their perspectives, grabbing massive public consumption. With a straightforward narrative and critical position towards the government policies and efforts to build a better religious life, they have actively used social media in recruitment and propaganda activities (M. Lim, 2013). It is supported by the polarisation of social media issues, having an often sharper difference than conditions in the real world (Salahudin et al., 2020).

Problems arise when media literacy in society is low. Many social media connoisseurs have not been able to think critically in accepting developing thoughts and information (Putri et al., 2018). As a result, they cannot optimise social media for positive purposes and may even be exposed to radicalism. Therefore, analysts' existence in social media studies, especially those analysing the developed realities, such as the issue of terrorism, is needed. They need to be a tool supporting the government in responding to the growing trends in social media. They also need to have a useful communication model with netizens, for example, to influence netizens to find a safe location after a terrorist attack (Khader et al., 2018). Based on these conditions, this article

discusses how the use of the internet among terrorist groups influence the development of terrorism in Indonesia? To limit the problem, social media, in this case, is interpreted as an application-based online media that is used to support social interaction activities in the form of Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp (Hossain, 2015).

METHODOLOGY
To answer the problem formulation in this article, the authors conducted a literature review and in-depth interviews with several people who had been involved in the terrorist movement. Moreover, the authors also analysed some Twitter account affiliated with radical groups, such as @AkhirulZamanWar, @Didiek Murdock, @MuslimahNews, and @NegeriBedebah accounts. They are the most active accounts spreading radicalism based on the information collected from https://unionmetrics.com/ from 10 May to 18 May 2021. The demographic of those accounts can be reached in table 1.

After the data were collected through various journals and some tweets of radical content twitters, the authors checked, classified, and analysed the data. For collecting the data from Twitter, the authors used the NCapture tool. The data were selected by reducing irrelevant ones. The data analysis using Nvivo 12 plus was firstly done by importing articles and social media account data. Then Nvivo 12 plus was used to create coding and cases. In the process of data analysis, the author used the features of framework analysis and crosstab matrix. The framework analysis feature was used to explain the literature data that describes the use of social media among terrorist groups. Meanwhile, the crosstab matrix feature was used to find out prominent topics discussed among them.

Table 1. Demographics of Twitter Accounts with Radical Contents

No	Twitter Account	Number of Followers	Number of Tweet
1	@AkhirulZamanWar	1.765	3.530
2	@Didiek Murdock	4.003	13.900
3	@MuslimahNews	580	104
4	@NegeriBedebah	3.047	1.836

Source: Data was collected from www.twitter.com, on May 18, 2021

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The Usage of Social Media among the Terrorist Groups
Technological development, especially in social media, is an opportunity for terrorist groups to develop their movements. They often use email, chat rooms, forums, and social media networks such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Through these various media, they intensively coordinate in the context of indoctrination and share terrorist manuals and instructions (Hossain, 2015).

For terrorist groups, the existence of social media in this era is very beneficial for several reasons. *First*, they can precisely target the millennial generation since most of the social media users are youth.

With high enthusiasm and immature insight and mentality, youth groups are relatively more susceptible to radical thinking due to information manipulation by terrorist networks.

Not only easily affected, but they also become actively involved in the spread of radical thought spontaneously. Terrorists absorb information that they think is interesting. Usually, it is easy for the millennial groups to forward the information they get to their peers since they have three channels to propagate their radical ideology: open-public, restricted-public, and private (Sugihartati, Suyanto, & Hidayat, 2020). In the end, radical thinking became more widespread.

Second, for terrorist groups, social media is a cheaper yet broader scope compared to conventional methods. For terrorist groups, it is very beneficial because the substance they want is to introduce their thoughts and movements to the public. Internet facilities help them reach their desires without limiting the target with space and time (Bartlett & Miller, 2013).

Rationally, terrorist groups calculate that social media can be developed as a form of online terrorism (Dean et al., 2012). With cheap capital, the movements and actions they carry out can get public attention through free social media advertising. Therefore, social media is a useful tool to develop their movement (Bartlett & Miller, 2013).

The spread of radical understanding used by terrorist groups, for example, can be seen in https://unionmetrics.com/, by checking the following terms like a caliph, jihad Indonesia, *ghuroba* (foreigners), *and tauhid harga mati* (tauhid at fixed principle) used in Twitter. The use of the word caliph on Twitter, for example, has reached an incredible number, namely the potential reach of 84,429, with an impressive potential of 97,100. In addition, there were more than 100 tweets related to the Indonesian caliph within six days (see figure 2).
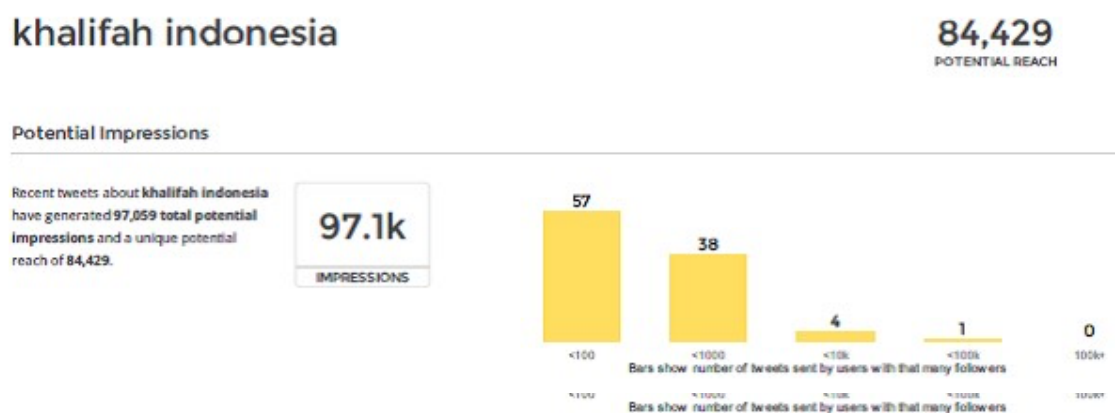

Figure 2. Potential Impression and Activities in Twitter with Keywords Khalifah Indonesia (Data was analysed from https://unionmetrics.com/, date of access: May 10, 2021, 11:55 PM - May 18, 2021, 6:02 AM UTC)

Moreover, regarding the use of Indonesian jihad and *ghuroba* (foreigners) terms, each has a potential reach of 504,596 and 71,384.

The potential impressions are in positions 582,800 and 81,300, with each activity of the Indonesian word jihad totalling 88 tweets in nine days and 48 tweets about *ghuroba* for seven days (figure 3 and figure 4).
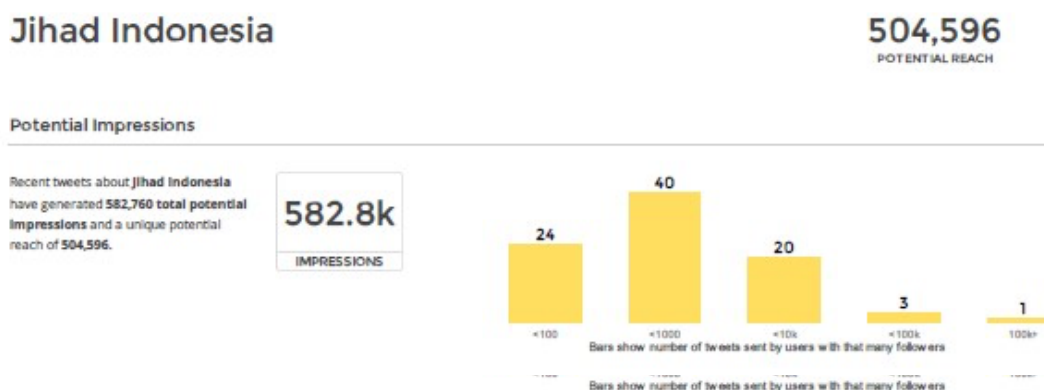

Figure 3. Potential Impression and Activities in Twitter with Keywords Jihad Indonesia (Data was analysed from https://unionmetrics.com/, date of access: May 10, 2021, 1:34 PM - May 18, 2021, 2:34 AM UTC)

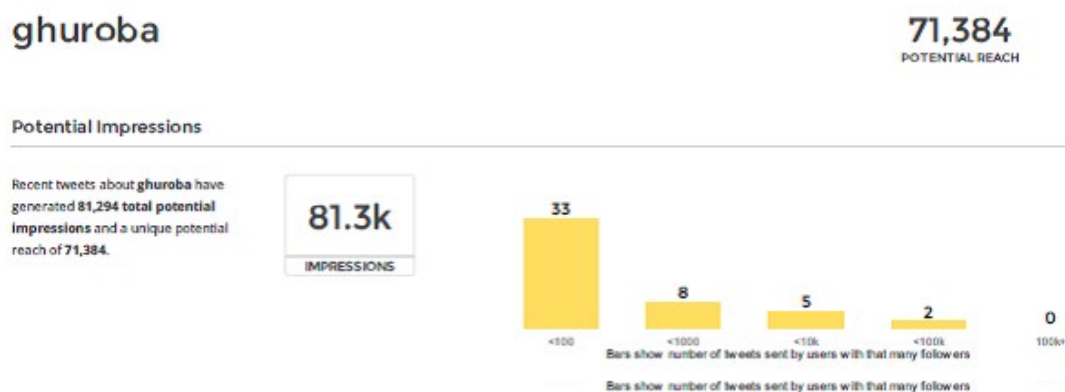**Figure 4.** Potential Impression and Activities in Twitter with Keywords Ghuroba/Stranger (Data was analysed from https://unionmetrics.com/, date of access: May 10, 2021, 9:41 PM - May 18, 2021, 7:00 AM UTC)

Meanwhile, the ideology that is considered behind this spirit is coming from the spirit to diverge the Indonesian state's foundation by establishing a state based on religion. The term often used among radical groups on social media is *tauhid harga mati* (tauhid at fixed principle), with a potential reach of 10,958 with 13,800 potential impressions (Figure 5).

This condition illustrates that radicalise and terrorist groups have intensely used social media to benefit their movement. Not only that but the widespread of their ideology among netizens also needs to be anticipated by doing a moderate counter-narrative.
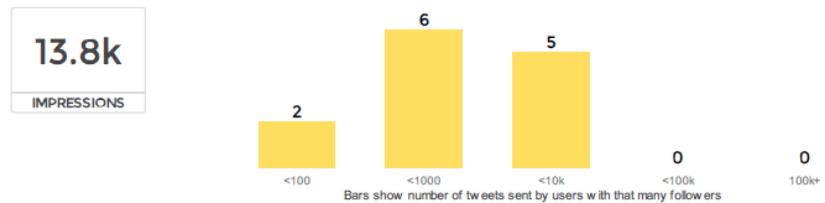
Figure 5. Potential Impression and Activities in Twitter with Keywords Tauhid Harga Mati (Data was analysed from https://unionmetrics.com/, date of access: May 10, 2021, 3:06 PM - May 18, 2021, 6:55 AM UTC)

Based on the description above, it can be seen that among the terrorist groups, social media is used to perform several functions as follows:

First, as a medium of recruitment. Previously, terrorist groups often recruited their family members, close friends, or business associates rather than strangers. They were afraid that their movements could be recognised. However, in its development, this pattern has changed along with the advancement of social media.

Usually, they introduced their movement through social media toward the targeted people who are considered easy to accept radical thought. It could be seen from the friendly community on social media or from the status created by the targeted cadre candidates. When intense communication has been made, and the targeted person has accepted the terrorist movement, small meetings would be held with the militant group's network. This meeting was held privately and could not be entered by other people except those of their network (Huey, 2015).

At the international level, terrorist groups are quite successful in using social media as a recruitment medium. For example, in the case of ISIS, they succeeded in recruiting cadres from more than 100 countries through the social media (Sutrisno, 2020). Such conditions also influence the spirit of the local terrorist movement.

Second, as a tool to spread the ideology. Usually, the process of spreading ideology is the initial stage to attract people to join radical groups. Their writings do not directly teach the public how to be terrorists but rather attempt to build up the people's emotions by reading their writings or watching their videos. This method is often applied in Indonesia as a strategy for terrorist groups not to attract public attention to reject their existence. Therefore, in terms of the material presented, it looks the same as most of the teachings of other Islamic groups in general. However, systematically, they successfully inserted some radical teachings into the material.

Moreover, in early 2000, various terrorist group media delivered material related to ideological propaganda by building awareness of global jihad. They did not openly convey material relating to manuals on how to carry out terrorist movements. However, they indicated some people had been successfully influenced by their thinking, either through the approach taken by the terrorist leader (top-down), or fans who were fascinated by the appearance of the terrorist leader (bottom-up), they would immediately take an enthusiastic approach (Nuraniyah, 2019). Finally, they joined the *baiat* activities, where they pledged allegiance to join radical groups.

Before the development of social media, the cadre recruitment process took a long time, ranging from 5 to 10 years. Nevertheless, with the development of social media, it took only a few months from the first contact with a terrorist network until someone decided to join a radical network (Ehrmann, 2020). Usually, they participate in various studies presented by terrorist leaders; only then some of the thoughts conveyed affect their thinking. Among the beliefs they have is that democracy is not compatible with Islam, such as in the case of Indonesia (Renaldi, 2018). Therefore, efforts to replace a democratic government system with an Islamic government need to be realised immediately. This notion can easily be found on various online and social media.

In social media, the word caliph is often used on social media such as Twitter. Some Twitter often talks about the caliph, for example, https://twitter.com/NewsMuslimah, and https://twitter.com/hidcom, based on the collected information from https://unionmetrics.com/.

Even in spreading ideology, the use of social media has created difficulties for the police in tracking their existence. The material exists, but the writer is unknown. Sometimes they also spread their understanding by sending as many messages as possible with radical content. They even have unique applications that can automatically convey messages and reach as many targets as possible in spreading their ideology (Melki & Jabado, 2016). Therefore, these sensitive and dangerous materials have influenced many new cadres with the potential, enthusiasm, and lack of Islamic understanding (Huey, 2015).

Third, as a tool to do propaganda. Recently, terrorist groups have used the internet and social media for jihad propaganda purposes (Close, 2014). In various ways, they make various forms of propaganda that are considered capable of attracting the attention of social media users. Even when carrying out attacks, suicides, or other violent activities, they often present it through real-time programs in social media (C. Lim, 2008). With great attention from social media users, terrorist groups exist and often use this propaganda to recruit new cadres. (Solahudin, 2018).

Among the propaganda they do is an attempt to criticize various unpopular government policies. Thus, the public can sympathize with them. This point is more visible in several social media that they upload via Twitter, such as the @AkhirulZamanWar, @Didiek Murdock, @MuslimahNews, and @NegeriBedebah accounts. Based on some of the

Twitter accounts they convey, their enthusiasm is to improve the state, people, regime, and system (figure 6).

Hence, in various incidents of terrorist attacks, suicide bombings are the ones that often attract attention. The identities of the terrorists were often found in the vicinity of the suicide bomb attacks. Through these methods and brutal attacks, they wanted to create panic in the public (Djelantik, 2019). With social media facilities, terrorists disseminate their existence and transmit their influence and attack programs, even to the international world (Steckman Laura, 2015).
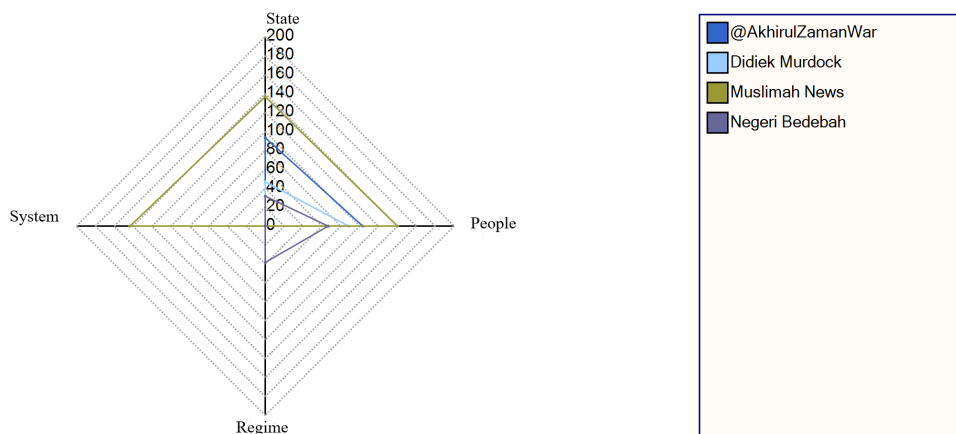

Figure 6. Prominent Topics Discussed in Twitter Among Radicalise Links
Source: Nvivo Analysis Result with Crosstab feature, 2021

Fourth, social media is a tool of communication in networking among members of terrorist groups. The members of terrorist groups are connected to build strong solidarity. Among the facilities they use is social media. According to several studies, social media platforms developed by terrorist groups are more effective than state-owned platforms. For terrorist groups, there is no pre-work and standard ethics in communicating as a country has (Bertram, 2016). Therefore, social media displays and contents created by terrorist groups tend to be more creative.

Concerning the internal network of terrorist groups, they discuss fundraising, bomb-making exercises and coordinate attack plans through social media. In raising funds, they discuss the donations made by potential members or efforts to approach potential donors and reports on the progress of funds collected.

As for bomb-making, terrorist networks use social media to learn how to assemble bombs. They optimise social media users to share information related to the procedures they have mastered or information on the development of new bomb types. Because what they learned was not procedural, several failed cases occurred, which led to an explosion (Desk, 2019). Misleading information often happens because even some groups that are not formally connected to terrorist networks can become

virtual partners in the bomb-making process (Koehler, 2014).

Meanwhile, in terms of coordination of attack execution activities, terrorist networks often conduct intense contact through social media (Ghifari, 2017). They often communicate the methods to find other ways to carry out attacks to avoid the government's deradicalisation programs. They are pretty dynamic in changing their attack strategy according to the development of government policies (Hendroy, 2018).

Last one, social media is a means of spreading terror after conducting their attacks. For terrorist groups, their real desire is not just to destroy the place they are attacking or kill people around the attack location. Further, they want the effects of the attacks to spread so that the feeling of terror becomes a public feeling, encouraging the government to make a policy based on their wish. Because of that, they intensively use various social media channels with hundreds of radical content every day (Renaldi, 2018). In fact, according to Gabriel Weimann, from 2003 to 2005 alone, there were at least 4300 websites indicated to be affiliated with the terrorist movement (Wiemann, 2006). This number is expected to increase, and its content is increasingly spreading with the recent development of social media.

They usually spread their thoughts through social media by copying radical content to various social media. In November 2018, Facebook stated that it had removed more than 14 million contents containing messages of terrorism from ISIS, Al Qaeda, and other terrorist movement affiliates (Rohmah, 2019). In Indonesia, at least 3,128 contents of various radicals and terrorism have been blocked from January to October 2019 (Choirul, 2019).

However, access to social media cannot be entirely restricted by the government. The terrorist network uses various social media in different languages, such as English, Arabic, Urdu, Indonesian, Albanian, Turkish, Somali, and Ethiopian (Corera, 2020). In addition, various data show the emergence of social media among personal terrorists without revealing their organisation's name. As such, it is increasingly difficult to trace their whereabouts. Even so, radical understanding continues to develop in society.

In this way, terrorist groups have won digital warfare. If sophisticated technology that can detect radical content cannot be developed, the government needs to fight hard to protect its people, especially millennials. They should access the internet safely and avoid the influence of radical thinking (Ehrmann, 2020).

The Influences of Social Media Using Among Terrorist Groups
Terrorist groups have set their targets and steps to strengthen their existence. They have already used artificial intelligence in social media by arranging the contain management strategy. For this purpose, they optimise their internal group modalities and collaborate with other terrorist organisations' links.

As a result, the impact of social media in the development of terrorism in Indonesia has become quite significant. Some of these influences can be described in figure 7 and explanations.
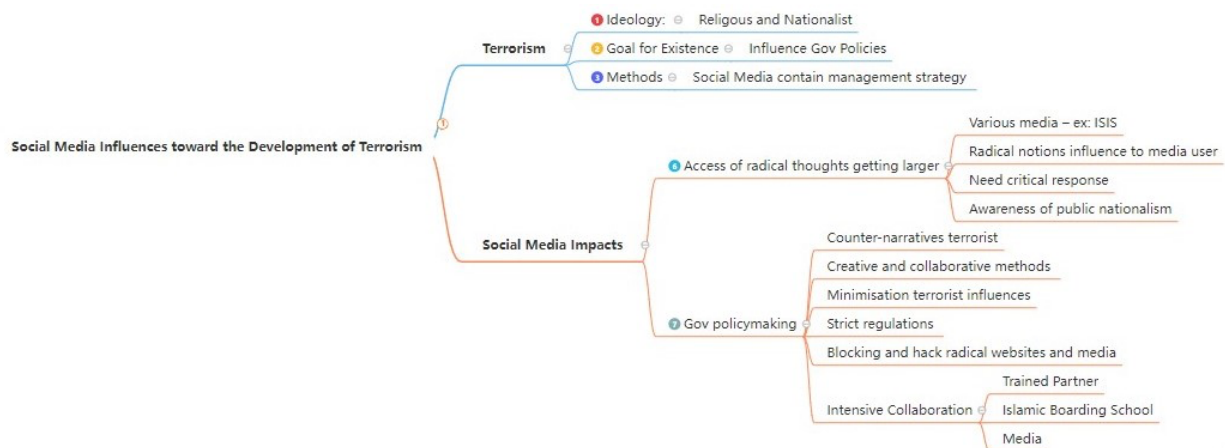

Figure 7. Flowchart of Research Implication on Social Media Influences toward the Development of Terrorism
Source: Using GitMind tool, 2021

First, access to the radical thoughts of terrorist groups is getting larger. Through social media, nowadays, it is not difficult to find various thoughts of radical groups. If the information is not read critically, social media users could potentially be influenced by radical notions. For example, in the case of Indonesia, some ISIS sympathisers admitted that they were influenced by and supported the ISIS struggle because they received information related to ISIS through social media. Even some of them are ready to go to Syria to fight against the Bashar Al Assad regime.

Therefore, the government needs to take this condition as a consideration in policymaking. Appropriate and immediate solutions should respond to the problems. Control over social media content that contains radicalism needs to be increased, if necessary, by using sophisticated technology. Besides, the awareness of public nationalism, especially the younger generation, needs to be further improved. They should not be part of the factor destroying the nation's integrity, togetherness, and peacefulness (Putra, 2017).

Second, the need for various creative and collaborative methods to create counter-narratives terrorist groups' notions. For this purpose, the government needs to make strict regulations to prevent social media from being used as a tool by terrorist groups, for example, by blocking radical websites (Sutrisno, 2020). Apart from that, the government also needs to hack online sites owned by radical groups (Reuter et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the government's counter-narrative notions towards terrorist groups should be based on religiosity and nationalism (Schmidt, 2018). It is essential because their religious thoughts influence many people who are involved in terrorism movements. However, they mislead the understanding of religion.

For this purpose, the Indonesian government needs to be supported by many personnel, who are trained, and able to develop counter-narratives against the thoughts of terrorists (IPAC, 2015). In this case, cooperation with Islamic Boarding School is necessary, considering that the preachers from Islamic boarding Schools have good knowledge of the Arabic language and understanding of Islam. The government also needs to collaborate with various media and other influential actors to achieve short and long-term goals to fight against terrorism (Hossain, 2015). This collaboration aims to help the government protect people from various radical content (Sari, 2017). Indeed, the evaluation during the collaboration is essential to optimise the minimisation efforts of terrorist groups' influences within the society (Mahyudin, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that social media has become one of the effective media for terrorist groups to carry out recruitment, ideologisation, propaganda, internal communication, and spread terror in society. Their strategy using social media is well organised and connected at the national level and the international level. Even when there is an attempt to block the site and their account, they quickly create new sites and accounts. For them, social media is a cheap means and can reach many people.

Therefore, the government needs to carry out excellent strategies to win the war against terrorists, both on the regulatory aspect and various creative and collaborative programs. Moreover, the government also needs to develop counter-narratives against the notions of terrorist groups. It requires collaboration with multiple parties, including Islamic boarding schools and the media. Such conditions also influence the media studies to concern the academic effort to protect the development of media using among the terrorist groups.

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