

ORIGINAL

Data-Driven Redefinition of Radicalism-Terrorism: Understanding the Continuum of Intolerance and Extremism through Indonesian Experience

Redefinición del radicalismo-terrorismo basada en datos: Comprendiendo el continuo de intolerancia y extremismo a través de la experiencia indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: existing definitions of intolerance, radicalism, extremism, and terrorism (IRET) in the global literature—such as Moghaddam’s Staircase to Terrorism, McCauley & Moskalenko’s Two-Pyramids Model, and Sageman’s social network approach—have shaped the theoretical foundation of radicalization studies. However, the Indonesian context presents distinctive dynamics that are not fully captured by these frameworks, including rapid radicalization through digital media, institutionalized intolerance within local policies, women’s roles in online propaganda, and the rise of hybrid terrorism that combines physical and cyber dimensions.

Objective: this study aims to provide a data-driven redefinition of intolerance, radicalism, extremism, and terrorism (IRET) by integrating Indonesia’s contextual realities with established global theoretical models.

Method: a qualitative-quantitative mixed approach was employed. The study critically engaged with existing theories, analyzed metadata and case data from terrorism management in Indonesia, and reviewed relevant scholarly contributions. Secondary datasets on terrorism cases, policy documents, and digital propaganda activities were systematically examined, while recent literature provided comparative perspectives to validate the proposed conceptual model.

Results: findings demonstrate that traditional models of radicalization require adaptation to address emerging trends within the Indonesian context. Quantitative results indicate a significant correlation between social media exposure and the early stages of radicalization, highlighting the role of online networks in shaping extremist attitudes. Additionally, gender-based digital propaganda and hybrid forms of terrorism—combining physical and cyber elements—emerge as critical dimensions influencing radical behavior.

Conclusion: the proposed data-driven redefinition of IRET incorporates these contemporary dynamics, offering a more comprehensive understanding of radicalization and terrorism in Indonesia. This framework enhances counterterrorism discourse by connecting context-specific insights with global theoretical debates. Policy implications include the need for integrated monitoring of digital radicalization, adaptive legal frameworks, and inclusive community-based prevention strategies.

Keywords: Intolerance; Radicalism; Extremism; Terrorism; Data-Driven Redefinition; Indonesian Context; Counterterrorism.

RESUMEN

Introducción: las definiciones existentes de intolerancia, radicalismo, extremismo y terrorismo (IRET)

en la literatura internacional—como el modelo “Staircase to Terrorism” de Moghaddam, el modelo de las Dos Pirámides de McCauley & Moskalenko y el enfoque de redes sociales de Sageman—han establecido los fundamentos teóricos del estudio de la radicalización. Sin embargo, el contexto de Indonesia presenta dinámicas particulares que no son completamente capturadas por estos marcos, incluyendo la radicalización rápida a través de medios digitales, la intolerancia institucionalizada en políticas locales, el rol de las mujeres en la propaganda online y el surgimiento del terrorismo híbrido que combina dimensiones físicas y cibernéticas.

Objetivo: este estudio tiene como objetivo ofrecer una redefinición del terrorismo, el extremismo, el radicalismo y la intolerancia (TERI) basada en datos, integrando las realidades contextuales de Indonesia con los modelos teóricos globales establecidos.

Método: se empleó un enfoque mixto cualitativo-cuantitativo. El estudio abordó críticamente las teorías existentes, analizó metadatos y datos de casos sobre gestión de terrorismo en Indonesia, y revisó contribuciones académicas relevantes. Se examinaron sistemáticamente conjuntos de datos secundarios sobre casos de terrorismo, documentos de políticas y actividades de propaganda digital, mientras que la literatura reciente proporcionó perspectivas comparativas para validar el modelo conceptual propuesto.

Resultados: los hallazgos demuestran que los modelos tradicionales de radicalización requieren adaptación para abordar las nuevas tendencias en el contexto indonesio. Los resultados cuantitativos indican una correlación significativa entre la exposición a las redes sociales y las etapas iniciales de la radicalización, destacando el papel de las plataformas digitales en la formación de actitudes extremistas. Además, la propaganda digital con enfoque de género y las formas híbridas de terrorismo —que combinan elementos físicos y cibernéticos— surgen como dimensiones críticas que influyen en el comportamiento radical.

Conclusión: la redefinición del terrorismo, extremismo, radicalismo e intolerancia (TERI) basada en datos incorpora estas dinámicas contemporáneas, ofreciendo una comprensión más integral de la radicalización y el terrorismo en Indonesia. Este marco enriquece el discurso sobre contraterrorismo al conectar perspectivas contextuales con los debates teóricos globales. Las implicaciones políticas incluyen la necesidad de una vigilancia integrada de la radicalización digital, marcos legales adaptativos y estrategias de prevención inclusivas basadas en la comunidad

Palabras clave: Intolerancia; Radicalismo; Extremismo; Terrorismo; Redefinición Basada en Datos; Contexto de Indonesia; Lucha Contra el Terrorismo.

INTRODUCTION

The threat of intolerance, radicalism, extremism, and terrorism (IRET) in Indonesia continues to exhibit complex and multi-dimensional patterns. Between 2014 and 2017, the influence of ISIS and affiliated networks, such as Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), expanded through digital recruitment, transnational propaganda, and domestic acts of violence, including the 2016 Thamrin attack in Jakarta.⁽¹⁾ These dynamics demonstrate that IRET-related threats extend beyond physical violence to ideological, social, and digital domains, highlighting the need for a data-driven and context-sensitive redefinition of these concepts.

Classical models of radicalization, including the Staircase to Terrorism,⁽²⁾ the Two-Pyramids Model,⁽³⁾ and the Four-Stage Model,⁽⁴⁾ have traditionally guided academic understanding of psychological and social stages of radicalization. However, recent critiques emphasize that these frameworks are overly linear, individualistic, and insufficiently responsive to structural, social, and technological developments in the digital era.^(5,6,7) In Indonesia, radicalization can occur almost instantaneously through social media or become embedded within discriminatory local policies, phenomena that linear models fail to fully explain.

Empirical observations in Indonesia reveal additional layers of complexity. Communal conflicts in Poso and Ambon, patron-client networks within radical organizations, and bai'at (pledge of allegiance) practices in correctional facilities indicate that radicalization arises not only from individual grievances but also from social structures, historical trajectories, and local political contexts.^(8,9) Recent trends further highlight the active participation of women and children in producing digital propaganda and engaging in violent acts, underscoring the urgency of developing definitions of IRET that reflect contemporary sociopolitical realities.

This study aims to provide a data-driven redefinition of intolerance, radicalism, extremism, and terrorism, grounded in Indonesia's experiences with ISIS and affiliated networks. By integrating metadata from terrorism case management and digital communication analyses, the proposed redefinition addresses the limitations of classical models while offering a framework for counter-narrative initiatives and digital deradicalization strategies. Moreover, this approach contributes a Global South perspective to the broader literature, which remains underrepresented in mainstream terrorism studies.⁽¹⁰⁾

Intolerance refers to the unwillingness to accept or respect beliefs, values, or convictions different from

one's own, often manifesting in discriminatory practices, social exclusion, or threats toward targeted groups.^(10,11) From a data and metadata perspective, intolerance can be systematically mapped using case records, social media interactions, and policy analysis to identify patterns of exclusion and discriminatory behavior. Such analyses enable the quantification of intolerance trends and inform targeted interventions in both digital and physical spaces.

Radicalism originates from the Latin word *radix*, meaning “root,” initially denoting a deep understanding of ideology or belief. When such commitment becomes exclusive or absolutist, rejecting alternative perspectives, it transforms into a form that may legitimize violence.⁽¹²⁾ Conceptually, radicalism can be understood as both a cognitive and social process, encompassing responses to perceived injustice, catalysts for social change, and mechanisms for collective mobilization.^(13,14,15,16)

In Indonesia, radicalization often occurs rapidly through social media or becomes embedded within institutional frameworks, highlighting the limitations of classical linear models such as the Staircase to Terrorism and Two-Pyramids Models.^(2,3) Metadata analysis of digital communication networks and case management datasets can reveal these instantaneous or institutionalized patterns, allowing researchers to detect early signals of radical mobilization.⁽¹⁷⁾

Radicalism is not solely negative. In certain contexts, it may embody constructive reform (*islah*) or renewal (*tajdid*) efforts within religious and social domains.^(15,18) Nevertheless, radical ideologies can escalate to violence, particularly when interpreted doctrinally as infallible or exclusive, as observed in some Islamist networks in Indonesia.^(19,20,21,22) Data-driven approaches, including content analysis of digital propaganda, network mapping, and longitudinal tracking of radical actors, can empirically validate these theoretical patterns, providing a systematic understanding of how radical ideas evolve into extremist behaviors.

Extremism is closely related to radicalism but typically denotes the adoption of rigid or uncompromising positions that may justify actions outside social norms, including violence.^(12,20) Terrorism is the operational manifestation of radical and extremist ideologies, often planned and executed to achieve political, ideological, or religious goals.⁽²²⁾ Integrating case datasets, metadata from judicial and security reports, and social media analytics enables researchers to identify correlations between radical beliefs, extremist attitudes, and acts of terrorism, supporting predictive modeling and decision-making in counterterrorism policy.

In summary, combining classical theoretical insights with data-driven methods allows for a more nuanced and context-sensitive understanding of IRET. Metadata analysis, digital footprint mapping, and structured case datasets provide empirical evidence to complement conceptual models, particularly in the Indonesian context where hybrid forms of radicalization—both online and offline—pose new challenges.^(1,17,22)

Beyond intolerance and radicalism, extremism warrants a clear conceptual and empirical definition. Extremism broadly refers to ideologies and behaviors characterized by rigid beliefs, intolerance of dissenting opinions, and tendencies that often lead to violations of social norms and ethical principles.⁽²³⁾ In the political context, extremism is typically associated with anti-constitutional and anti-democratic positions, reflecting rejection of the core values, procedures, and institutions underpinning democratic governance.⁽²⁴⁾

Scholars differentiate extremism into value-based and action-based components: (1) extraordinary, excessive, or intolerant political opinions or activities; (2) violent political action; and (3) activities directed against constitutional democratic institutions.⁽²⁵⁾ Religious extremism, in particular, represents a politicized and authoritarian interpretation of spiritual teachings, often deviating from authentic religious doctrines to advance political agendas.⁽²⁶⁾

From a data-driven perspective, extremism can be analyzed through systematic mapping of social networks, online interactions, and metadata derived from digital and institutional sources. Such approaches enable researchers to detect early patterns of radical thought, potential mobilization, and the transformation of ideology into action.⁽²⁷⁾ Violent extremism, which encompasses violent radicalization, can be conceptualized as: “A non-linear process through which an individual, group, or state undergoes systemic transformation—behavioral, socioeconomic, psychological, identity-based, political, and/or ideological—leading them to support or facilitate the use of violence against individuals or groups in pursuit of their goals or visions of social change”.^(28,29)

International literature has profoundly shaped academic discourse on intolerance, radicalism, extremism, and terrorism (IRET). Classical models, such as Moghaddam's Staircase to Terrorism,⁽²⁾ depict radicalization as a gradual progression from dissatisfaction to violent action. The Two-Pyramids Model proposed by McCauley et al.⁽³⁾ differentiates between radical attitudes and radical behaviors, highlighting that not all individuals with radical beliefs engage in violence. Sageman⁽²²⁾ emphasizes the role of social networks in forming emotional and ideological bonds that facilitate engagement in terrorist activities.

Despite their contributions, these models have been criticized for linearity and individualistic assumptions.^(5,6) More recent studies underscore the role of digital propaganda in instantaneous mobilization of sympathizers.⁽⁷⁾ However, such perspectives remain underapplied in Southeast Asia, particularly in the Indonesian context, where empirical evidence shows more complex patterns of radicalization.

Case data and metadata analyses reveal diverse pathways of radicalization in Indonesia. For instance, interrogation reports indicate that certain actors (Sa) used small religious study groups (*pengajian*) to propagate intolerant ideologies, while others (Su) leveraged semi-formal educational institutions for the internalization of radical ideas. Covert paramilitary training (Hj) accelerated transitions from radicalism to armed extremism, whereas organizational strategists (Ar) maintained global links with jihadist networks in Afghanistan and Syria. These findings demonstrate that radicalization in Indonesia is shaped not only by individual psychology but also by institutions, social networks, and transnational dynamics.⁽²⁸⁾

Indonesian data also indicate that intolerance can be institutionalized through discriminatory local regulations. Radicalism may arise instantly through digital interactions, while extremism thrives within closed online subcultures (e.g., encrypted Telegram channels) that normalize hate speech. Terrorism increasingly takes hybrid forms, combining physical attacks with online propaganda or cyber operations.⁽²⁹⁾ Metadata-driven analyses of digital communication, online networks, and case reports are therefore critical for mapping these patterns and identifying emergent threats.

Gendered dimensions further complicate the landscape. Women and children in Indonesia actively participate in radicalization processes, including the production of digital propaganda and execution of violent acts, such as suicide bombings. These trends highlight the necessity of incorporating gender-sensitive analyses and data-driven approaches to understand the full spectrum of radicalization.⁽³⁰⁾

The literature review suggests two major insights. First, while international frameworks provide conceptual scaffolds for understanding IRET, they inadequately accommodate local variations. Second, Indonesia's experiences reveal new dimensions—digitalization, institutionalized intolerance, hybrid terrorism, and gendered participation—that classical models fail to capture. Consequently, redefining IRET is urgent to bridge theoretical gaps and to inform contextually relevant counter-radicalization strategies.⁽³¹⁾

Empirical findings also indicate that radicalization in Indonesia does not follow linear trajectories assumed in many classical models. Instead, multiple and overlapping pathways emerge from non-formal education, organizational structures, religious patronage networks, and transnational jihadist connections. Comparative metadata analysis, combining case reports, social media activity, and network mapping, provides a robust basis for understanding these complex pathways.^(28,29)

Overall, these insights underscore the need for a data-driven, context-sensitive redefinition of IRET. Such redefinition can refine analytical precision, align theoretical terminology with empirical realities, and guide counter-radicalization policies tailored to contemporary Indonesian sociopolitical conditions.

Table 1. Comparison between Classical Models of Radicalization and the Indonesian Context

Aspect	Classical Models (International Literature)	Findings in the Indonesian Context
Intolerance	Understood as an individual attitude of rejecting differences. ⁽³⁰⁾	Extends beyond personal attitudes and becomes institutionalized through discriminatory policies and religious legitimization (cases of Sa & Su).
Radicalism	A gradual process from attitude to behavior. ^(31,32)	May occur instantaneously through digital interaction on social media; often emerges within non-formal educational settings (<i>pengajian</i> , <i>pesantren</i>) (Sa, Su).
Extremism	Internalization of violent ideology, usually within collective groups. ⁽³⁴⁾	Arises within closed digital subcultures (<i>echo chambers</i>) that normalize violence; accelerated through covert paramilitary training (Hj).
Terrorism	Organized violence aimed at political objectives. ⁽³⁵⁾	Evolves into <i>hybrid terrorism</i> : physical attacks combined with online propaganda and cyber operations (Ar, ISIS-affiliated networks).
Gender Roles	Rarely discussed in classical models.	Women and children actively participate in digital propaganda, fundraising, and even acts of violence.
Transnationalism	Emphasized through global networks. ⁽³⁶⁾	Local networks (JI, JAD) maintain links to Afghanistan, Syria, and the Philippines, connecting to broader global jihad movements (Ar).

The comparison above underscores the need to revise and enrich international models with local perspectives to better capture contemporary dynamics. In Indonesia, intolerance is no longer merely a personal disposition but has become institutionalized; radicalism can emerge instantly through digital media; extremism thrives within closed online subcultures; and terrorism manifests in hybrid forms that blend physical violence with digital propaganda.

Furthermore, gender involvement and transnational linkages reveal additional dimensions rarely addressed

in classical literature. All of these factors point to the urgency of developing a more *contextualized redefinition* of IRET—one that will be elaborated in the following section on Conceptual Methodology.

METHOD

Desain

This study employs a conceptual-comparative analytical approach, integrating international theoretical frameworks with empirical data from Indonesia to redefine intolerance, radicalism, extremism, and terrorism (IRET). Unlike hypothesis-testing quantitative studies, this research focuses on systematic comparison and contextualization, enabling the identification of gaps between established theories and observed phenomena in Indonesia.^(2,3,22,28)

Data Sources

Data were collected from two main categories: 1) international academic literature, including classical models such as the Staircase to Terrorism,⁽²⁾ the Two-Pyramids Model,⁽³⁾ and the Social Network Approach,⁽²²⁾ complemented by contemporary critical analyses.^(5,6,7,31) These sources provide foundational definitions and conceptual frameworks for understanding IRET, 2) Indonesian empirical data, comprising official reports, court rulings, publications by the National Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT) and the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC), and documentary analyses of interrogation records of key actors. For ethical considerations, individuals are anonymized using initials (e.g., Sa, Su, Hj, Ar).^(28,29)

Analytical Procedures

The analysis was conducted in three stages: 1) identification of classical definitions. Key IRET concepts were extracted from global literature and metadata sources to establish a baseline for comparison, 2) contextual evaluation. Classical definitions were assessed against empirical evidence from Indonesia. This stage incorporated data-driven methods, including analysis of digital radicalization patterns, gender participation, institutionalized intolerance, and hybrid forms of terrorism. Metadata from online networks, case reports, and institutional documentation were leveraged to map patterns and detect anomalies. 3) redefinition. Findings from the contextual evaluation informed the development of new, adaptive definitions of IRET concepts. These redefinitions aim to capture Indonesian realities while remaining aligned with global theoretical frameworks.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure conceptual validity and reliability, the study employs source triangulation, integrating academic literature, official documents, and case metadata. Peer review was applied to reduce interpretive bias. The combination of structured case data and literature-derived metadata allows for a data-driven conceptualization of IRET, providing a robust foundation for designing counter-radicalization and digital deradicalization interventions in Indonesia.^(29,30,31)

RESULTS

Empirical Findings on Counterterrorism in Indonesia

Empirical findings derived from security-agency interrogation documents provide critical insights into the dynamics of intolerance, radicalism, extremism, and terrorism (IRET) in Indonesia, revealing patterns that frequently exceed the explanatory power of international theoretical frameworks.^(28,29) Recruitment often begins in small religious study groups (*pengajian*), where actors such as Sa embed ideas of intolerance within simplified religious narratives. These forums demonstrate that intolerance is not merely an individual attitude but a socially cultivated phenomenon, transmitted through structured collective interaction. The intimacy and trust inherent in these study circles facilitate the internalization of ideology without attracting external scrutiny, illustrating that in Indonesia, intolerance can operate as an institutional mechanism systematically producing anti-pluralist attitudes.⁽³⁰⁾

Semi-formal educational institutions, such as pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), also function as critical sites for ideological transmission. Interrogation data indicate that actors like Su exploited these institutions to embed radical and intolerant narratives into daily curricula and student life, normalizing radicalism from an early stage. This empirical evidence challenges classical models, which often conceptualize radicalism as merely a precursor to violence.^(2,3) Within pesantren, the authority of religious leaders lends legitimacy to ideological narratives, highlighting the interplay between local religious authority and the institutionalization of radical thought. As a result, radicalism in Indonesia encompasses not only beliefs and behaviors but also power relations that facilitate the widespread validation of ideological frameworks.^(28,31)

Additional evidence from paramilitary practices organized by actors such as Hj illustrates a direct transition from radicalism to armed extremism, bypassing the gradual stages outlined in classical theories. Covert military-style training programs, including weapon simulations and strategic exercises, accelerated recruits' progression

toward violent extremism. These activities show that radicalization can occur non-linearly and rapidly when ideological indoctrination is paired with technical skill acquisition, revealing a multidimensional process in which ideology, technical capacity, and social networks reinforce one another.^(29,31)

The combination of ideology and practical training also provides recruits with a reinforced sense of belonging and purpose, further consolidating their commitment to extremist objectives. This multidimensional perspective emphasizes that extremism in Indonesia cannot be fully understood without considering the interactions between social institutions, transnational networks, digital and physical training environments, and localized cultural and religious authority. Data-driven analysis of interrogation records, institutional documentation, and network metadata is therefore essential for capturing these complex pathways and for developing context-sensitive counter-radicalization strategies.^(30,31)

Empirical findings from actors such as Sa, Su, and Hj indicate that classical theories of intolerance, radicalism, extremism, and terrorism (IRET) are overly simplistic when applied to Indonesia’s complex reality.⁽²⁸⁻³¹⁾ Classical models, including the staircase and pyramid frameworks, emphasize sequential progression, yet field data reveal parallel pathways. Recruitment and ideological indoctrination can occur simultaneously in “*pengajian*” and “*pesantren*”, while extremism can be accelerated directly through paramilitary training. These observations demonstrate that radicalization in Indonesia is not solely an individual journey but emerges from interactions among social institutions, religious authorities, and militant organizations.

Organizational elites play a strategic role in sustaining extremist movements. Interrogation records show that actors such as Ar were involved in leadership regeneration within Jamaah Islamiyah while maintaining transnational connections with networks in Afghanistan, Syria, and the Philippines. These findings suggest that radicalization in Indonesia is influenced by global jihadist currents adapted to local contexts, complementing Sageman’s⁽²²⁾ argument regarding the importance of social networks while emphasizing the centrality of elite patronage.⁽²⁹⁾

Family and gender factors constitute additional dimensions of radicalization. Women and children are active participants, managing logistics, disseminating digital propaganda, and in some cases engaging in violent acts. Children are socialized as ideological successors through informal education and household practices, illustrating cross-gender and intergenerational mobilization. Emotional bonds within families make ideological transmission more resilient to external intervention, highlighting the limitations of counter-radicalization strategies that focus exclusively on adults.^(30,31)

Hybrid strategies are evident in both organizational practice and operational execution. Radical groups in Indonesia combine physical violence with digital propaganda and social engagement, creating a multilayered threat ecosystem. Ar, for example, coordinated connections between overseas militant operations and online narrative dissemination within Indonesia. This hybrid approach amplifies the psychological impact of attacks and underscores the role of digital communication in extending the reach of local acts of violence. Such findings corroborate Aly, Macdonald, and Jarvis⁽⁷⁾ regarding the mobilizing effect of online propaganda, while highlighting the importance of local social networks and institutional legitimacy in reinforcing extremist messaging.

Collectively, these data-driven observations demonstrate that classical IRET definitions fail to capture Indonesia’s contemporary realities. Intolerance manifests as institutionalized policy rather than individual disposition; radicalism can emerge instantaneously via digital channels or educational institutions; extremism develops within digital subcultures and paramilitary contexts; and terrorism operates as a hybrid strategy integrating physical attacks with cyber operations. These insights form the basis for redefinition, offering formulations of IRET that are both theoretically robust and practically relevant for context-specific counter-radicalization and deradicalization policies in Indonesia.^(32,33)

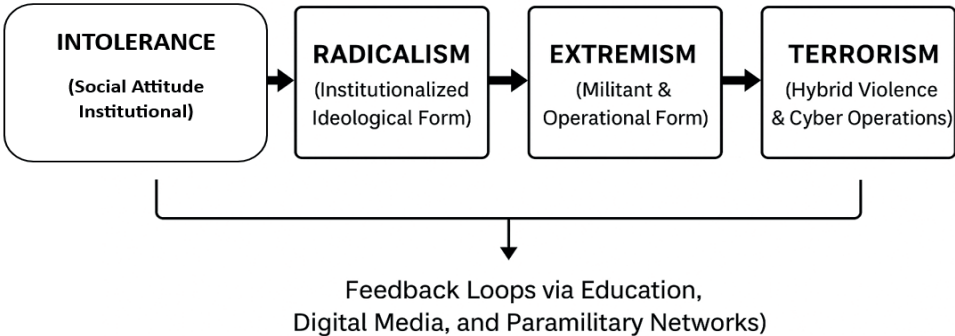


Figure 1. Dynamics of Intolerance, Radicalism, Extremism, and Terrorism (IRET) in Indonesia

The empirical evidence emphasizes that radicalization trajectories in Indonesia differ fundamentally

from the assumptions of classical models. A data-driven, context-sensitive approach is therefore required to capture the multidimensional nature of IRET, informing policy design and contributing to global scholarship by integrating insights from the Global South.⁽²⁸⁻³¹⁾ The next section presents the proposed redefinitions of intolerance, radicalism, extremism, and terrorism based on this comparative and empirical analysis

Proposed Redefinitions of IRET

In classical literature, intolerance is often conceptualized as an individual attitude of rejecting difference, manifesting in behaviors such as discrimination or bullying.^(32,33) Empirical evidence from Indonesia indicates that intolerance extends beyond interpersonal interactions; it can be institutionalized through local regulations and legitimized by religious authorities. Examples include restrictions on house-of-worship construction and exclusionary policies targeting minority groups. These cases demonstrate that intolerance operates simultaneously at social, institutional, and structural levels. Therefore, intolerance can be defined as an attitude, action, or policy that rejects differences in identity or belief, occurring not only between individuals but also embedded within social norms, institutions, and formal regulations.^(28,29,30)

Radicalism, in classical models, is typically framed as a stage toward extremism, unfolding gradually over time.^(2,3) In Indonesia, radicalism can emerge instantaneously through digital interactions, bypassing traditional community-based pathways. Evidence from actors such as Sa and Su shows that radicalization is cultivated via *pengajian* groups and non-formal educational institutions, where intolerant narratives are normalized. Consequently, radicalism in the Indonesian context can be understood as a belief system or movement seeking sociopolitical change through unconstitutional or extra-legal means, characterized in the digital era by the rapid dissemination of radical narratives through social media and educational spaces.^(28,31)

Extremism, according to international literature, represents the internalization of violent ideology, often within a collective framework.⁽³⁴⁾ In Indonesia, extremism frequently manifests within closed digital subcultures, such as encrypted messaging channels, which create echo chambers and normalize intolerance and violence. Additionally, evidence from Hj indicates that extremism can be operationalized through paramilitary training, linking ideological commitment directly to tactical readiness. Therefore, extremism can be defined as the internalization of violent ideology expressed within intolerant subcultures—digital or physical—that normalize violence as part of collective identity and prepare participants for acts of terror.^(35,36)

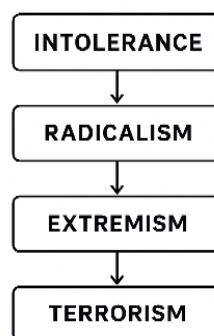


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of the Proposed Redefinitions of Intolerance, Radicalism, Extremism, and Terrorism (IRET) in the Indonesian Context

Terrorism is classically described as organized violence aimed at political objectives.^(37,38) Recent Indonesian developments, however, illustrate that terrorism increasingly adopts hybrid forms, integrating physical attacks with digital operations such as online propaganda and cyber activities. Field evidence from Ar shows that local networks maintain connections with global jihadist movements, implementing dual strategies that combine armed operations with digital campaigns. Accordingly, terrorism may be defined as organized violence—physical, digital, or both—intended to generate mass fear, undermine state legitimacy, and advance ideological, political, or religious objectives through hybrid methods.^(39,40)

DISCUSSION

The redefinition of intolerance, radicalism, extremism, and terrorism (IRET) proposed in this study underscores the necessity of expanding classical conceptual frameworks to address contemporary complexities in Indonesia.^(41,42) Traditional models often depict IRET as a linear progression, yet empirical findings demonstrate that these processes do not always follow sequential patterns. Intolerance, when institutionalized within educational institutions or *pengajian* networks connected to militant actors, can escalate directly into armed extremism, highlighting non-linear pathways of radicalization.^(43,44,45)

This observation supports critiques that radicalization is not uniform but context-dependent, influenced by social, political, and institutional factors.⁽³⁰⁾ Classical models, focused primarily on individual psychology, fail to capture how structural and policy-level mechanisms shape ideological development. In Indonesia, discriminatory local regulations and legitimizing discourses of religious authorities amplify intolerance, producing systemic effects that extend beyond interpersonal interactions.^(46,47,48,49)

The integration of structural factors into the redefinition of intolerance allows for a more comprehensive analytical lens. Intolerance should therefore be conceptualized as an attitude, practice, or policy that rejects differences in belief or identity, operating both between individuals and within social, institutional, and formal regulatory frameworks.^(50,51,52,53) Recognizing this dual dimension enhances the capacity of policymakers to evaluate and mitigate systemic drivers of radicalization.

Digital technologies introduce an additional layer of complexity. While classical literature emphasizes small-group organization, face-to-face interaction, and physical networks,^(54,55,56,57) Indonesia's cases demonstrate that social media platforms facilitate rapid radicalization without direct contact. Telegram channels, WhatsApp groups, and YouTube videos create echo chambers that normalize extremist ideologies, accelerating internalization of radical beliefs.^(58,59,60)

Consequently, radicalism must be reconceptualized as a belief system or movement capable of mobilizing followers through both physical and digital means. This includes non-formal educational settings and online subcultures that operate beyond the reach of conventional monitoring and counter-radicalization measures.^(61,62,63,64)

Extremism, similarly, cannot be confined to collective ideology transmitted in physical communities. Evidence from paramilitary training programs in Indonesia demonstrates that extremism also integrates operational skills and tactical preparedness, directly linking ideological conviction with action.^(65,66,67,68) This highlights the multidimensionality of extremism, encompassing digital, physical, and organizational domains.

The involvement of women and children in radicalized networks represents another critical dimension that classical models often neglect.^(69,70) In Indonesia, women act as content creators, fundraisers, and, in some cases, operational actors such as suicide attackers. Children are socialized as ideological successors through family and educational settings. These patterns illustrate that gender and intergenerational dynamics are central to the propagation of extremist narratives, rather than peripheral variables.^(71,72,73,74)

A gender-sensitive conceptualization of IRET is therefore essential for accurately mapping radicalization pathways and developing effective intervention strategies. Recognizing these actors as integral to extremist networks expands the theoretical and empirical understanding of radicalism and extremism.^(75,76,77,78)

Hybrid terrorism further complicates the landscape, merging physical violence with digital operations, including online propaganda and cyberattacks.^(79,80,81) Traditional definitions of terrorism, focused solely on kinetic actions, are insufficient to account for the psychological amplification and strategic coordination enabled by digital media.^(82,83,84)

The empirical evidence shows that hybrid attacks can magnify fear and disrupt social cohesion far beyond the immediate physical consequences. Small-scale local attacks, when amplified through online networks, achieve psychological and symbolic impact disproportionate to their scale, demonstrating the significance of integrating digital phenomena into terrorism studies.^(85,86,87)

Moreover, hybrid strategies in Indonesia illustrate the interplay between global jihadist narratives and local socio-political contexts. Transnational connections provide ideological reinforcement and strategic guidance, while local institutions offer legitimacy and operational support. These combined dynamics challenge linear, context-agnostic models and highlight the need for locally grounded conceptual frameworks.^(88,89,90)

Redefining radicalism to include instantaneous digital mobilization emphasizes that radicalization can occur without prolonged exposure to physical communities. Social media and digital subcultures function as accelerators of ideological commitment, enabling widespread dissemination of extremist narratives in ways classical theories did not anticipate.^(28,91)

Similarly, extremism in Indonesia manifests within insulated digital communities that normalize intolerance and operational readiness. Paramilitary practices further reinforce this dimension, linking ideological indoctrination to practical capabilities. Such findings suggest that extremism should be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon that merges ideology, skill acquisition, and social network reinforcement.⁽⁶³⁾

Terrorism, when redefined to incorporate hybrid methods, accounts for both physical and digital dimensions of violence. Online platforms extend the reach of terror operations, enabling coordinated campaigns that combine kinetic attacks with information warfare, cyber disruption, and psychological manipulation.^(30,64)

The proposed redefinitions also highlight the importance of structural and institutional factors in shaping radicalization. Intolerance, radicalism, extremism, and terrorism are not merely individual attitudes but are embedded in family networks, educational institutions, religious authorities, and broader socio-political frameworks.^(28,64)

By integrating digital, institutional, gendered, and transnational dimensions, the redefinition offers a

comprehensive, context-sensitive framework for understanding IRET in Indonesia. This approach bridges the gap between global theoretical models and the empirical realities observed in the field.^(29,64)

Practically, these redefinitions provide actionable insights for counter-radicalization strategies. Policymakers, security agencies, and civil society actors can design interventions that address both online and offline pathways, incorporate family and gender considerations, and leverage local institutional frameworks to mitigate radicalization.⁽³⁰⁾

Furthermore, recognizing the multidimensional and hybrid nature of contemporary terrorism informs the design of digital deradicalization programs, which must account for online subcultures, social reinforcement mechanisms, and transnational influences.^(7,31)

Theoretically, this study contributes to global scholarship by introducing perspectives from the Global South, offering evidence that challenges linear, Eurocentric, or context-agnostic models of radicalization.⁽²⁸⁾ Incorporating these findings enriches comparative terrorism research and encourages the development of more adaptable, data-driven conceptual frameworks.

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that IRET in Indonesia operates through overlapping, non-linear, and multidimensional pathways that classical definitions fail to capture. Redefining these concepts based on empirical and metadata-informed analysis is therefore crucial to advancing both theory and practice in counter-radicalization efforts.^(29,30,31)

CONCLUSION

This study proposes a redefinition of four core concepts in terrorism studies—intolerance, radicalism, extremism, and terrorism—based on both international literature and empirical evidence from Indonesia. The findings indicate that classical definitions, often linear and individual-focused, are insufficient to capture contemporary dynamics, where intolerance is institutionalized, radicalism can emerge instantaneously via digital platforms, extremism is reinforced through closed online subcultures and paramilitary training, and terrorism operates in hybrid forms combining physical and digital strategies.

Intolerance is redefined as a discriminatory attitude or policy present at individual, institutional, and structural levels. Radicalism is conceptualized as a movement seeking sociopolitical change through unconstitutional means, facilitated by digital media and non-formal education. Extremism denotes the internalization of violent ideology within closed communities, whether online or physical, and terrorism is framed as organized hybrid violence aimed at generating fear, undermining state authority, and advancing ideological, political, or religious goals.

These redefinitions provide a multidimensional and context-sensitive framework that aligns with Indonesia's sociopolitical realities while contributing to global theoretical discourse. The findings underscore the importance of including digital, institutional, gendered, and hybrid dimensions in counter-radicalization strategies. Families, educational institutions, and community networks are highlighted as both potential sites of radicalization and critical points for intervention, informing the design of practical policies and deradicalization programs.

In conclusion, the proposed IRET framework bridges global theory with local realities, offering actionable insights for policymakers, security agencies, and civil society organizations. By integrating empirical evidence into the conceptualization of radicalization and terrorism, the study provides a replicable model that can enhance both academic understanding and practical efforts to counter contemporary extremist threats in Indonesia and similar contexts.

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