



## STRUGGLING FOR ISLAMIC CALIPHATE IN A CHANGING MALAY SOCIETY

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**Abstract:** Despite being banned by the government, HTI continues to struggle for the Islamic caliphate as a clandestine movement. This study aimed to explain factors resulting in the relatively successful penetration of caliphate ideology in a changing Malay society, as Bangka Belitung Archipelagic Province represented. It employed a qualitative approach through fieldwork and library study of offline and online data sources to better comprehend HTI's success from a social movement perspective. The research results elaborate on HTI's mobilization strategies as the internal factor and the context of changing Malay society and the dysfunction of moderate socio-religious organizations as the external factor. Mobilization strategies comprising the intensive implementation of religious learning and preaching, publication, public demonstration, good relation and network with local essential figures, and the competent use of communication and information technology become effective in the context of two aspects of political opportunity structures, namely the changing Malay society reconstructing identity and seeking solutions to its social and economic problems, and the dysfunction of moderate socio-religious organizations producing theological vacuum that accentuates HTI's relative victory. Thus, the performance of HTI depends on its internal capabilities and external context and the function of socio-religious organizations in society

**Keywords:** Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, caliphate, Malay society, Bangka Belitung

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### Introduction

ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2020, the educational office of Bangka Belitung Islands Province issued a circular to senior high school principals to instruct students to read and summarize a book entitled *Muhammad Al-Fatih 1453* by Felix Siauw, a Chinese Muslim preacher known as an Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) activist for

his extensive use of social media and visual aesthetics in his *da'wah*.<sup>1</sup> In the circular, students' summaries were to be collected and reported by the school headmasters to the mentioned authority. This has undoubtedly exerted public concern at local and national levels and was viral on social media. As a result, the circular was canceled the following day.<sup>2</sup> Muhammad al-Fatih's heroism is "an effort to revive the glory of Islam by Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, which longs for the revival of Islamic government under a state system called the Khilafah."<sup>3</sup> The circular controversy is, therefore, an indication of the continuous efforts of ex-HTI activists to spread its ideology in Muslim society even though the government officially banned it on July 19, 2017.

Many scholarly endeavors have been devoted to various dimensions of HT from various perspectives and theoretical frameworks, although most scholars emphasize the uniqueness of HT ideology and strategies.<sup>4</sup> Its distinctive nature has made it succeed in recruiting followers and influencing wider members of Muslim communities in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Europe. While several studies focus on HT as a social

<sup>1</sup> Wai Weng Hew, "The Art of Dakwah: Social Media, Visual Persuasion and the Islamist Propagation of Felix Siauw," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (January 2, 2018): 61–79.

<sup>2</sup> Triwinarno, "Nyaris, Buku HTI Jadi Bacaan Wajib di Bangka Belitung," News, last modified March 10, 2020, accessed October 31, 2023, <https://mediaindonesia.com/nusantara/349831/nyaris-buku-hti-jadi-bacaan-wajib-di-bangka-belitung>.

<sup>3</sup> D.I. Ansusa Putra, "Recognizing an Islamic Hero: The Quran-Hadith's Vision about Muhammad al-Fatih In Indonesian Comics," *Ulumuna* 26, no. 1 (July 12, 2022): 119–144.

<sup>4</sup> Suha Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest: Hib al-Tahrir and the Search for the Islamic Caliphate* (London: Grey Seal, 1996); Noman Hanif, "Hizb Ut Tahrir: Islam's Ideological Vanguard," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 39, no. 2 (August 2012): 201–225; Reza Pankhurst, *Hizb Ut-Tahrir: The Untold History of the Liberation Party* (London: Hurst and Company, 2016); Mohammad Iqbal Ahnaf, "Hizb Al-Tahrir: Its Ideology and Theory for Collective Radicalization," in *Expressions of Radicalization: Global Politics, Processes, and Practice*, Edited by Kristian Steiner and Andreas Onnerfors. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 295–320; Mohammad Iqbal Ahnaf, "Between Revolution and Reform: The Future of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia," *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 2, no. 2 (July 2009): 69–85.

movement.<sup>5</sup> Others see it as a corporate enterprise that provides a solid organizational outlook and clear frames for applying Sharia and establishing a global Islamic caliphate in the war of ideas, distinguishing the organization from other Islamic political movements.<sup>6</sup> In his study on HTI, Osman's argument lies in the critical role of collective identity in the growth of HTI, unrevealing factors contributing to HTI's success, namely political, institutional systems, and non-institutional systems, HTI's resource mobilization strategies, and its ideology.<sup>7</sup> Like other scholars, both Osman<sup>8</sup> and Orofino<sup>9</sup> maintain the uniqueness of the transnational organization as the necessary condition of its success.

In addition to the focus on the uniqueness of the organization, scholars such as Rijal<sup>10</sup> and Orofino<sup>11</sup> tend to see the interaction between the global and local dimensions, while others, such as Osman<sup>12</sup> and Iqbal and Zulkifli<sup>13</sup> focus on its transnational or

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<sup>5</sup> Burhanuddin Muhtadi, "The Quest for Hizbut Tahrir in Indonesia," *Brill: Asian Journal of Social Science* 37, no. 4 (2009): 623–645; Elisa Orofino, "Intellectual Radicals Challenging the State: The Case of Hizb Ut-Tahrir in the West," *Contemporary Social Science* 10, no. 4 (October 2, 2015): 401–412; Ahnaf, "Hizb Al-Tahrir: Its Ideology and Theory for Collective Radicalization"; Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman, "Reviving the Caliphate in the Nusantara: Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia's Mobilization Strategy and Its Impact in Indonesia," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 4 (September 14, 2010): 601–622; Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman, *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia and Political Islam: Identity, Ideology, and Political Mobilization* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> Elisa Orofino, *Hizb Ut-Tahrir and the Caliphate: Why the Group Is Still Appealing to Muslims in the West* (London & New York: Routledge, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Osman, *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia and Political Islam: Identity, Ideology, and Political Mobilization*.

<sup>8</sup> Osman.

<sup>9</sup> Orofino, *Hizb Ut-Tahrir and the Caliphate: Why the Group Is Still Appealing to Muslims in the West*.

<sup>10</sup> Syamsul Rijal, "The Origins of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia: Global and Local Interactions," *Islamic Studies Review* 1, no. 1 (July 5, 2022): 110–27, <https://doi.org/10.56529/isr.v1i1.22>.

<sup>11</sup> Orofino, *Hizb Ut-Tahrir and the Caliphate: Why the Group Is Still Appealing to Muslims in the West*.

<sup>12</sup> Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman, "The Transnational Network of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 18, no. 4 (December 2010): 735–55, <https://doi.org/10.5367/sear.2010.0018>.

<sup>13</sup> Asep Muhammad Iqbal and Zulkifli Zulkifli, "Islamic Fundamentalism, Nation- State and Global Citizenship: The Case of Hizb Ut-Tahrir," *Indonesian*

global aspect. HT's integration of global and local features, including the intensive use of communication and information technology, contributes to the rapid development of its followers around the globe. While many studies tend to see the success of HT, Yilmaz<sup>14</sup> provides the varied performance of HT, namely its success in Britain and Uzbekistan and its failure in Egypt and Turkey. HT's success in the first two countries was due to economic and political deprivation and a theological vacuum. At the same time, its failure in Egypt and Turkey resulted from a solid opposition force from the Muslim Brotherhood and the integration of Islamist political parties into the democratic system. The four cases in the HT chapter show their distinctive characteristics, contexts, and similarities.

As has been widely known, Indonesia's democratic reform has provided room for the rise of popular movements based on either ethnic or religious identity, including HTI. In addition to factors of collective identity, ideology, political opportunity structures, resource mobilization strategies,<sup>15</sup> the success of HTI was due to the increasing public dissatisfaction with the reformation period in which economic, political, and legal reform had no significant effect on the improvement of society's life,<sup>16</sup> besides little hostility from the Indonesian political figures and security authorities because it adopted nonviolent strategies.<sup>17</sup> As far as this research is concerned, most studies of HT cover its movement at a state level,

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*Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 6, no. 1 (June 1, 2016): 35–61, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijjms.v6i1.35-61>.

<sup>14</sup> Ihsan Yilmaz, "The Varied Performance of Hizb Ut-Tahrir: Success in Britain and Uzbekistan and Stalemate in Egypt and Turkey," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 30, no. 4 (December 2010): 501–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2010.533448>.

<sup>15</sup> Osman, *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia and Political Islam: Identity, Ideology, and Political Mobilization*.

<sup>16</sup> Muhtadi, "The Quest for Hizbut Tahrir in Indonesia."

<sup>17</sup> Ken Ward, "Non-Violent Extremists? Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 63, no. 2 (June 2009): 149–64, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357710902895103>.

such as in Indonesia,<sup>18</sup> Malaysia,<sup>19</sup> Australia,<sup>20</sup> Kazakhstan,<sup>21</sup> Uzbekistan,<sup>22</sup> and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>23</sup> This article, however, takes the Bangka Belitung Archipelagic Province, Indonesia, inhabited by the Malay majority, as a case study. It is a new province that experienced political, social, and economic changes. At the same time, it has become an arena of power struggle among various radical groups with different ideologies, and HTI has been the most active movement in spreading its ideology to members of the society.

This article aims to explain the penetration of Islamic caliphate ideology in a changing Malay society, focusing on three factors: mobilization strategies of HTI, the changing characteristics of Bangka Belitung Malay society, and the dysfunction of moderate socio-religious organizations. This study argues that HTI's offer of change in the political, economic, and social system will likely be readily accepted by members of a changing society. The success of HTI depends not only on its mobilization strategies or internal factors but also on political opportunity structures as an external factor, namely, the changing condition of society as a product of regional autonomy and the dysfunction of the existing moderate socio-religious organizations. This study utilized a qualitative approach to gain a comprehensive explanation of the HTI's

<sup>18</sup> Muhtadi, "The Quest for Hizbut Tahrir in Indonesia"; Ward, "Non-Violent Extremists?"; Osman, *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia and Political Islam: Identity, Ideology, and Political Mobilization*.

<sup>19</sup> Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman, "Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia: The Emergence of a New Transnational Islamist Movement in Malaysia," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 47, no. 1 (June 26, 2009): 91–110, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2009.471.91-110>.

<sup>20</sup> Orofino, *Hizb Ut-Tahrir and the Caliphate: Why the Group Is Still Appealing to Muslims in the West*.

<sup>21</sup> Emmanuel Karagiannis, "The Rise of Political Islam in Kazakhstan: Hizb Ut-Tahrir Al Islami," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 13, no. 2 (May 17, 2007): 297–322, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537110701293567>.

<sup>22</sup> Emmanuel Karagiannis, "Political Islam in Uzbekistan: Hizb Ut-Tahrir al-Islami," *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 2 (March 2006): 261–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668130500481444>.

<sup>23</sup> Emmanuel Karagiannis, "Political Islam and Social Movement Theory: The Case of Hizb Ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan," *Religion, State and Society* 33, no. 2 (June 2005): 137–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09637490500118638>.

struggles in mobilization strategies for the Islamic caliphate in Bangka Belitung from social movement theoretical perspectives, particularly by McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, who emphasize the role of opportunities, mobilization, and framing in social movements.<sup>24</sup> Applying a qualitative approach is suitable in this research because it examines the topic profoundly and comprehensively and interprets it from a contextual and holistic perspective. Data were obtained by intensive library research, collecting both online and offline sources, in addition to my communication with Bangka Belitung's FKPT (Forum Koordinasi Pencegahan Terorisme, Coordinating Forum for Preventing Terrorism) executives and my personal experience in interaction with ex-HTI activists, NU and Muhammadiyah branch executives. Books, research reports, monographs, media reports, and journal articles were collected to understand the topic in question comprehensively. All collected data were processed and analyzed qualitatively using the content analysis technique to look for relevant themes and categories for research purposes. Systematically, before discussing the three factors, it begins with a brief description of the Hizb al-Tahrir caliphate ideology.

### HTI Ideology

HTI (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia) was a part of the larger HT organization. Founded in 1957 by Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani (1909-1977) who his followers also consider as a true reformer of Islam,<sup>25</sup> Hizb al-Tahrir (HT) describes itself as a political party with the ideology of Islam, not as a socio-religious organization as it was registered in Indonesia. It has the sole goal of implementing the Islamic way of life and reviving the world's Muslim community through the establishment of a single Islamic caliphate,<sup>26</sup> as

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<sup>24</sup> Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, "Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes: Toward A Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movement," in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*, eds. Doug McAdam, John McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1-20.

<sup>25</sup> Orofino, *Hizb Ut-Tahrir and the Caliphate: Why the Group Is Still Appealing to Muslims in the West*.

<sup>26</sup> Pankhurst, *Hizb Ut-Tahrir: The Untold History of the Liberation Party*...95.

outlined by al-Nabhani in his writings. There are two essential elements in HT's political ideology: the necessity of Islamic Sharia regulating all aspects of human life and the Islamic caliphate (Islamic state) establishing a just society, which can only be achieved through a political entity. Thus, there is no separation between religion or faith and politics.<sup>27</sup> Al-Nabhani writes:

Hizb ut-Tahrir is a political party whose ideology is Islam, and its goal is to resume the Islamic way of life by establishing an Islamic state that implements Islam and carries its da'wah to the world. The Hizb has developed a party culture, which includes Islamic rules about life's affairs. The Hizb calls for Islam as an intellectual leadership that emanates systems that address all problems faced by human beings, whether political, economic, cultural, social, or others.<sup>28</sup>

HT believes that the return to the Qur'an and Sunna is the basis of establishing the Islamic caliphate. Based on its claim to fully follow the methods of setting up the Medina state and the political system of the Prophet Muhammad, HT outlines three stages of establishing the Islamic caliphate: the first is culturing, that is, recruiting cadres in ideological struggle while engaging with members of society to expose non-Islamic way of life and fighting against imperialist influences and conspiracies on Muslim umma to shape mind and emotion. At this stage, the party's methods and strategies are educated to the recruited cadres, who might become the party's elites and be responsible for disseminating its ideology. The second is engaging in collective action with the goal of Islamizing society, namely, its version of Islamic ways of life for individuals, society, and the state. The third is establishing the Islamic caliphate, where the Islamic way of life is implemented and disseminated to the world.<sup>29</sup>

Indonesia has become a fertile ground for the development of HT. It was brought to the country in the early 1980s by

<sup>27</sup> Emmanuel Karagiannis and Clark McCauley, "Hizb Ut-Tahrir al-Islami: Evaluating the Threat Posed by a Radical Islamic Group That Remains Nonviolent," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 2 (July 2006): 315–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550600570168>.

<sup>28</sup> Taqiyuddin Nabhani, *Concepts of Hizb Ut-Tahrir (Mafahim Hizb Ut-Tahrir)* (London: Khilafah Publications, n.d.).

<sup>29</sup> Iqbal and Zulkifli, "Islamic Fundamentalism, Nation- State and Global Citizenship."

Abdurrahman al-Baghdadi, an Australian of Jordanian Lebanese origin, who ran a pesantren (Islamic boarding school) in Bogor, of which graduates pursued their study at Institut Pertanian Bogor. Operating underground at university campuses during the New Order era, HTI enjoyed a successful position with thousands of followers and university campuses as its main base during the reform era. Officially launched as a formal organization in June 2000, HTI carried out a series of strategic programs such as the publication of *the Al-Wa'ie* journal in June 2000, the re-launching of *the Al-Islam* bulletin in July 2000, and the first international caliphate conference in the Senayan Tennis Indoor Stadium in Jakarta, which more than 2000 people attended. This officially boosts the organization to the public.<sup>30</sup> As Fealy has described, HTI has exerted influence quickly in the last three decades in terms of both the number of followers and organizational structure. In 33 provincial chapters and more than 300 cities and regencies throughout Indonesia, active HTI branches organized varied activities. In addition to establishing good relationships with prominent political figures and Muslim organization leaders, it succeeded in occupying a solid position in some government offices, corporate sectors, and semi-government institutions. Religious activities at these institutions, particularly Friday sermons and Friday Newsletters, were monopolized by HTI activists. In addition, its ideology even penetrated rural areas.<sup>31</sup>

Since its presence in Indonesia, HTI has created many controversies. First, although it is a political party, it was registered as a socio-religious organization, which the state legally recognized. Here, it is clear that HTI deceives Indonesian society and the state. With the legal status HTI could freely spread its ideology, recruit cadres, run activities, influence members of Muslim society, gain sympathy, and prepare structural opportunities to establish the Islamic state. Second, based on the

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<sup>30</sup> Osman, *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia and Political Islam: Identity, Ideology, and Political Mobilization*.

<sup>31</sup> Greg Fealy, "Hizbut Tahrir in Indonesia: Seeking a 'Total' Islamic Identity," in *Islam and Political Violence: Muslim Diaspora and Radicalism in the West*, Edited by Shahram Akbarzadeh and Fethi Mansouri (London & New York: IB Tauris, 2007), 151–64.

three stages of establishing the Islamic caliphate, the HTI attempted to influence and construct the Muslim mind and emotion through its style of Islamic thought and practice in order to gain political power. It prepares structural opportunities and seeks the momentum of taking over political power from the existing state authority. Third, since it still carried the first and second stages of creating an Islamic state, it gives the impression of using a peaceful and nonviolent approach and strategy. At the same time, the fundamental characteristics of extremist and radical ideology were covered. HT's ideology is genuinely extreme and radical because to establish the Islamic state, it intends to carry out *a coup d'etat* whenever possible. This is called *Talab al-Nusra* (seeking assistance from power holders): "HT's political activities of infiltrating, recruiting, cultivating, and directing military generals to take over the power of the head of state which will be handed over to the HT leader."<sup>32</sup> It is a small secret agent of not more than five reliable, skillful persons, so members of HT themselves have not acknowledged it except for limited HT elites. Not only is information on who are agents but also the detailed explanation of the doctrine of *talab al-nusra* prohibited by the central board of HTI except for the claim to justify that the doctrine is the standard method of the Prophet Muhammad to establish the Islamic caliphate.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, despite HTI's official adoption of a nonviolent approach, it stands in political conflict with the state authorities because all governments, including Indonesia, follow the political, economic, and government systems of Western colonialism contrary to Islam.<sup>34</sup> HTI is a radical organization because it is anti-democratic, intolerant, and teaches its members a total commitment and fanaticism.<sup>35</sup> This religiously justified ideology is extremely dangerous to the Indonesian state and society, which is based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. In the framework of

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<sup>32</sup> Ayik Heriansyah, *Mengenal HTI Melalui Rasa Hati* (Jakarta: Pustaka Harakatuna, 2020), 200.

<sup>33</sup> Heriansyah, *Mengenal HTI Melalui Rasa Hati*, 200-201.

<sup>34</sup> Hanif, "Hizb Ut Tahrir", 205.

<sup>35</sup> Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest: Hib al-Tahrir and the Search for the Islamic Caliphate*.

protecting the unity of Indonesia, on July 19, 2017, Joko Widodo's presidential decree disbanded HTI based on the premise that its activities were contrary to Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. It was taken after the increasing sectarian tension in Indonesia following the punishment of Jakarta's governor Ahok for blasphemous acts against Islam.<sup>36</sup>

### **Mobilization Strategies of HTI of Bangka Belitung**

Among the 33 provincial chapters, the Bangka Belitung HTI branch has exerted following at least since the early reformation era, mainly through university graduates of universities in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and other cities in Java returning home. Among the prominent figures were Ayik Heriansyah and Sofyan Rudiyanto. As a socio-religious organization, the HTI regional leadership council of Bangka Belitung was founded in 2003. Other younger activists, such as Firman Saladin and Fakhrudin, joined the organization and accomplished their strength to exert broader participation, recruit followers, and mobilize their resources.<sup>37</sup> A note should be made that Ayik Heriansyah was initiated into the HTI organization during his undergraduate study at the Faculty of Arts, Universitas Indonesia, became its activist for ten years (2000-2010), chaired the HTI chapter of Bangka Belitung from 2004 until 2010 when left the organization. Leaving HTI, he is now active in the NU of West Java, promoting the invalidity of HIT ideology through speaking, writing, and preaching. His leadership was then succeeded by Sofyan Rudiyanto and Firman Saladin, respectively.

District branches, the Muslim woman section of HTI, and its student organization, Gerakan Mahasiswa (GEMA) Pergerakan, were established in Bangka Belitung. Systematic, intensive, and massive strategies were implemented to spread its doctrines and ideology among members of Muslim society. As Wiktorowicz

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<sup>36</sup> Osman, *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia and Political Islam: Identity, Ideology, and Political Mobilization*, 98.

<sup>37</sup> Rusydi Sulaiman et al., *Varian Dan Organisasi Keagamaan: Kajian Teoretis Dan Fakta Empiris Di Bangka Belitung* (Bangka: Madania Press, 2021), 131.

suggests, radical activists respond to the existing political structures by "mobilizing through informal social networks and institutions ... [or] through a loose web of personal relationships, study circles, and informal meetings."<sup>38</sup> In the mobilization strategies, HTI of Bangka Belitung has implemented at least four strategic methods. First is the teaching and preaching method, including *majlis taqiyah* (council of civilization), namely the learning forum discussing such topics as political Islam, Islamic governmental system, Islamic economics, and prophetic history; sermons like Friday sermons and sermons in the two Islamic holiday festivals; and other forms of Islamic learning forum like Quranic exegesis and Islamic jurisprudence. Here, we see that HTI utilized the mosque as its informal network base to propagate its ideology and recruit following. Religious study groups were organized in the mosque, and new members were recruited.<sup>39</sup> Osman suggests that "mosques are among the most important communication channels used by HTI to propagate its ideas and expand its membership base."<sup>40</sup>

This method includes public seminars and talks to engage with a broader public audience. A panel of HTI leaders and other speakers from various backgrounds, such as other Muslim organizations, academics, the military, and politicians, organized it. Before being banned by the government, HTI activists took advantage of the public space with various strategies to spread its ideology among laymen and public figures. Besides receiving permission from local officials, its activities were attended by local figures and government officials as resource persons or participants. This can become direct or indirect support for the movement's ideology. The activists seem successful in framing the process and mobilizing resources to attract followers and sympathizers from community members.

The second is the publication method to disseminate HTI doctrines and ideology through bulletins (*al-Islam*), magazines (*Al-*

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<sup>38</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Introduction: Islamic Activism and Social Movements," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, Edited by Quintan Wiktorowicz. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 13.

<sup>39</sup> Karagiannis, "Political Islam and Social Movement Theory", 142.

<sup>40</sup> Mohamed Osman, "Reviving the Caliphate in the Nusantara", 609.

*Wa'ie*), newspapers, tabloids, and translated works of al-Nabhani and other influential figures.<sup>41</sup> Free copies of the *Al-Islam* bulletin were circulated every Friday at the mosque entrance to spread its ideas to Friday congregations. This is meant to introduce its ideas to achieve a large audience within Muslim society. Osman has emphasized that publication is the most crucial method for HTI to disseminate its ideas to the public.<sup>42</sup>

Third is building networks and good relations with local political figures, military leaders, police, Muslim scholars, and government officials. They were called to attend HTI events or to speak at HTI activities. HTI activists also approached the local leaders by visiting their offices. For instance, HTI figures led by Firman Saladin visited Danrem 45/Garuda Jaya on February 24, 2016, and the military authority called all segments of society to protect the provincial stability together.<sup>43</sup> As Heriansyah, Rofii, and Imdadun have suggested, for HTI, establishing good relations with the military is necessary because the military is the actual owner of power, without which the caliphate cannot be established.<sup>44</sup> Many HTI activities were attended by the local police, military figures, academics, and government apparatus as resource persons or participants. Here, we see the political opportunity structure that allowed HTI activists to carry out their activism and exert influence.

Fourth is public demonstration. To attract sympathy from large members of Muslim society as well as to create awareness of its ideology, HTI of Bangka Belitung has been involved in demonstrations and protests. Several demonstrations and rallies were organized to protest emerging international issues such as

<sup>41</sup> Sulaiman et al., *Varian Dan Organisasi Keagamaan: Kajian Teoretis Dan Fakta Empiris Di Bangka Belitung*, 132.

<sup>42</sup> Mohamed Osman, "Reviving the Caliphate in the Nusantara," 609.

<sup>43</sup> PUSPEN TNI, Puspen Mabes TNI, "Danrem 045/Gaya Ajak Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia Jaga Stabilitas Wilayah Babel | WEBSITE TENTARA NASIONAL INDONESIA," February 25, 2016, <https://tni.mil.id/view-92308-danrem-045gaya-ajak-hizbut-tahrir-indonesia-jaga-stabilitas-wilayah-babel.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Heriansyah Heriansyah, Muhammad Syaroni Rofii, and Muhammad Imdadun, "Relasi Sosial Hizbut Tahrir dan Militer di Indonesia," *Jurnal Pemikiran Sosiologi* 9, no. 1 (October 6, 2022): 56–83, <https://doi.org/10.22146/jps.v9i1.74246>.

Palestinian and Rohingya, social problems such as pornography and prostitution, as well as national issues such as corruption and religious blasphemy. With its legal recognition as a socio-religious organization, it not only gained legal permission from the police but also received support from the provincial and district governments and members of Muslim society. The public demonstrations are essential for HTI to propel HTI as "an organization that champions issues close to the hearts of Muslims in Indonesia ... [and] to create an aura of strength and power."<sup>45</sup> To take an example, on October 17, 2016, HTI of Bangka Belitung staged simultaneous demonstrations in all districts and cities in the province condemning the blasphemous act by the then Governor of Jakarta Capital Special Territory, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (popularly known as Ahok), who came from Belitung and was a former Regent of East Belitung. In this action, a few HTI activists distributed press releases to mosque congregants and unfurled banners stating to arrest Ahok and to execute the legal process on him. HTI leader even stated that the death penalty must execute Ahok.<sup>46</sup>

HTI activists were also engaged in responding to intolerant and sectarian issues. The influence of HTI and other radical ideologies on the minds of local government officials seems strong in dealing with interreligious relations, particularly on sectarian issues. For instance, the former provincial HTI chairman played an essential role in the issue of Ahmadiyya's expulsion in Bangka by the then regent Tarmizi Saat in 2016. It is reported that in his public sermon after Friday prayer in a mosque on February 5, 2016, the chairman of HTI of Bangka Belitung declared the rejection of the existence of Ahmadiyya in Bangka.<sup>47</sup> As Osman

<sup>45</sup> Mohamed Osman, "Reviving the Caliphate in the Nusantara," 609.

<sup>46</sup> Bangka News, "HTI Babel Desak Ahok untuk Ditangkap," News, Bangka News, October 17, 2016, <https://www.bangkanews.id/detail-news.php?n=16169&kategori=serumpunsebalai&berita=HTI-Babel-Desak-Ahok-untuk-Ditangkap>.

<sup>47</sup> Anton Septian, "Ini Kronologi Pengusiran Jemaat Ahmadiyah di Bangka," News, Nasional Tempo.co, February 9, 2016, <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/743223/ini-kronologi-pengusiran-jemaat-ahmadiyah-di-bangka>.

has observed, HTI was guilty of raising the Ahmadiyya issue and spreading it to the lay people in Indonesia.<sup>48</sup> Ex-HTI activists also played an essential role in rejecting the establishment plan of the State College for Confucian Studies in Bangka Belitung. As a conservative movement, HTI actively mobilized people to participate in demonstrations or protests regarding social, economic, religious, and political issues.

During the democratic atmosphere, HTI activists also intensively used social media and information technology to reach extensive effects, as well as local radio and television.<sup>49</sup> As suggested by many authors, HTI is the only Islamist organization with a very high consideration of spreading its influence and ideology through varied means of communication technologies and publication.<sup>50</sup>

HT's ideology is disseminated and distributed more effectively through various means of global communication ... [because it] considers internet technology an essential medium for organizing its activities, recruiting new members, and disseminating its influences and ideology. Proponents of Islamic caliphate adopt cyberspace and adapt it to the maximum benefit for their needs and interests."<sup>51</sup>

To reach many participants, HTI frequently invited famous national figures such as the late Harry Moekti and Felix Siauw to deliver religious preaching at public religious gatherings. For example, as reported in *Republika*, on June 19, 2011, the late HTI activist Harry Moekti delivered a sermon in Pangkalpinang, urging Muslims in the Bangka Belitung province to implement Islamic law to overcome the divisions of the Muslim community. He claimed that implementing Islamic law under the auspices of the Islamic caliphate has been proven in Islamic history and able to create prosperity for humanity, both Muslims and non-Muslims. It is reported that the event at Novotel Bangka Hotel was

<sup>48</sup> Mohamed Osman, "Reviving the Caliphate in the Nusantara."

<sup>49</sup> Heriansyah, *Mengenai HTI Melalui Rasa Hati*.

<sup>50</sup> Fahleza Munabari, *Mendamaikan Syariah Dan NKRI: Strategi Mobilisasi Dan Retorika Gerakan Islam Revivalis Forum Umat Islam (FUI)* (Depok: Rajawali Pers, 2019).

<sup>51</sup> Iqbal and Zulkifli, "Islamic Fundamentalism, Nation- State and Global Citizenship," 49-50.

attended by about 2,000 people from various regions of the province with different backgrounds who were committed to implementing the Sharia and caliphate to regulate all aspects of human life. "Shouts of *takbir* and chants of 'caliphate, caliphate, caliphate' echoed in the large and luxurious room when the speakers and orators delivered their speeches, which had been able to burn the enthusiasm of the participants who were present to struggle to carry out da'wah in upholding the Sharia under the auspices of the Islamic caliphate."<sup>52</sup>

In addition to target following from members of the Muslim society, HTI of Bangka Belitung focused on two main segments of society: the university campus and government apparatus. Students of public and private universities in the province were targeted groups to spread its ideology and attract a following. "The campus has become a battlefield between transnational Islamic movements. Not only at the student level but also at the lecturer and educational staff level. Each transnational group has a specific person who is the supervisor of their movement on campus."<sup>53</sup> About the second group, it seems that HTI penetrated the regional government officials who, for years, tended to tolerate its activities. HTI ideology might have influenced the minds of regional government officials, or even some became influential activists. It is even suggested that among the various radical groups, HTI members are the most significant number who become civil servants, especially lecturers and educational staff at universities and teachers in government schools.<sup>54</sup> The previously mentioned provincial educational office circular indicates the influence of HTI on the government apparatus in Bangka Belitung.

Despite its legal entity being revoked, HTI activists persist in continuing their struggle with all the limitations, pressures, obstacles, and threats. The revocation of legal status does not impact them because they can still carry out recruitment activities

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<sup>52</sup> Republika Online, "Harry Moekti ajak umat Islam Babel jalankan syariat Islam," Republika Online, June 19, 2011, [https://republika.co.id/berita/19/ln1frh-harry-moekti-ajak-umat-islam-babel-](https://republika.co.id/berita/19/ln1frh-harry-moekti-ajak-umat-islam-babel-jalankan-syariat-islam/ln1frh/harry-moekti-ajak-umat-islam-babel-).

<sup>53</sup> Heriansyah, *Mengenal HTI Melalui Rasa Hati*, 43.

<sup>54</sup> Heriansyah, *Mengenal HTI Melalui Rasa Hati*, 24.

and disseminate their ideology until they can execute the *coup de tat*.<sup>55</sup> At least three types of activities continued to be carried out in Bangka Belitung: cadre mentoring and establishment, distributing the *Kaffah* bulletin to mosque congregations, and the religious learning forum, both offline and online, through social media.<sup>56</sup> HTI activists continue to become religious teachers or mentors at schools in Rohis (Rohaniawan Islam). "After being banned by the government, HTI returned to its original form, namely an underground thought and political movement (clandestine) using various pseudonyms when it surfaced. However, its thinking and understanding remained completely unchanged."<sup>57</sup> Although the government officially banned HTI, its caliphate ideology remains circulating among the organization's activists, and its activities have become clandestine. It will revive again when there is a political opportunity structure.<sup>58</sup>

### The Context of Changing Society

The development of Islamist movements in Bangka Belitung is inseparable from the historical context and national political developments. In movement studies, this is called political opportunity structures, which "encompass cultural, social, and economic factors as well."<sup>59</sup> As is known, the New Order's policy of depoliticizing Islam gave rise to the growth and development of Islamic studies clubs in campus mosques and public universities, especially in big cities in Indonesia. The Islamic studies clubs carried transnational ideologies such as the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimin) and HT. The Ikhwan, HTI, and other Islamic groups not only controlled mosques but also dominated

<sup>55</sup> Heriansyah.

<sup>56</sup> Sulaiman et al., *Varian Dan Organisasi Keagamaan: Kajian Teoretis Dan Fakta Empiris Di Bangka Belitung*, 135.

<sup>57</sup> Heriansyah, *Mengenal HTI Melalui Rasa Hati*, vii.

<sup>58</sup> Masdar Hilmy, "The Rise and Fall of 'Transnational' Islam in Indonesia: The Future of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI)," in *Rising Islamic Conservatism in Indonesia: Islamic Groups and Identity Politics*, Edited by Leonard C. Sebastian, Syafiq Hasyim, and AR. Arifianto (London & New York: Routledge, 2021), 133–44.

<sup>59</sup> Wiktorowicz, "Introduction: Islamic Activism and Social Movements, 14"

student movements and organizations in universities. Students from Bangka Belitung also participated in this process. Some even became student leaders who, after graduating, returned to their area of origin and spread the ideology they adhered to. The fall of the New Order and the emergence of reform opened a space for democratization where movements based on religious, ethnic, and regional identities emerged and attempted to take a role in national social, political, and economic development.

In addition to the national context of the reform era with its democratic atmosphere in which ethnic and religious identity politics increased significantly, the spread of HTI ideology and radicalism benefitted from the formation of the Bangka Belitung Archipelagic Province on November 21, 2000, as an implementation of Indonesia's regional autonomy policy. This was followed by expanding autonomous regencies into six districts and one city in the new province. Many government bodies and centers at the provincial and district levels were founded to fulfill development needs in varied fields. Several universities, public and private, were established. By merging three tertiary educational institutions, namely Tin Manufacture Polytechnics, College of Agricultural Science, Pahlawan 12 College of Technology, and Universitas Bangka Belitung (UBB), were officially founded on April 12 2006 and then transformed into a state-owned university in 2010.<sup>60</sup> This required many government officials, teachers, educational staff, lecturers, and other human resources. People from outside the island province fulfilled the need for many human resources, enhancing the plurality of Bangka Belitung society. HTI activists returning home after finishing their studies at public universities in Java also took this golden opportunity to propagate and disseminate their radical ideology along with the formation of new districts, which number six and one cities throughout Bangka Belitung, accompanied by the need for a large number of new government officials, HTI members and sympathizers with graduate certificates, knowledge,

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<sup>60</sup> Universitas Bangka Belitung, "Sejarah\_UBB 2024 - Universitas Bangka Belitung," *Sejarah\_UBB : - Universitas Bangka Belitung (UBB)*, accessed November 14, 2023, [https://ubb.ac.id?page=Sejarah\\_UBB](https://ubb.ac.id?page=Sejarah_UBB).

and skills took the opportunity to become civil servants. Some were successful in their career and occupied certain positions or may be able to influence policy decisions. With the euphoria of reformation and regional autonomy, the issue of Pancasila's state ideology might have needed to be addressed.

The growth and development of radicalism in Bangka Belitung went hand in hand with forming the new province and districts in which HTI members entered or became part of the local bureaucracy. During the euphoric atmosphere of reformation, the democratization process, and regional autonomy, when there was freedom of expression, HTI members took the golden opportunity. The symptoms of radical tendency in Bangka Belitung's government bureaucracy were seen because the local government frequently invited radical activists to participate in official events while ignoring the moderate Ulama and scholars in the province.<sup>61</sup> In addition, HTI activists may play a role in social and religious activities in local government offices, such as organizing and controlling religious gatherings and Friday sermons, celebrating Islamic holidays, and religious alms.

In the democratization processes and regional autonomy, there was a rising tendency in the expression of Malay identity among the people of Bangka Belitung. As a new province resulted from a long history of struggle to gain 'independence' since 1956 from a part of South Sumatera,<sup>62</sup> Malay identity has been debated and reconstructed. An indication of the increasing awareness of Malay identity is reinventing the *Jawi* (Malay-Arabic) script in Bangka Belitung. However, this script has been used in religious books in traditional Islamic educational institutions; during the regional autonomy, it is utilized in street name signs in cities in Bangka Belitung. Searching for Malay origin, history, hero, custom, and others has also been undertaken since the formation

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<sup>61</sup> Ayik Heriansyah, "HUT Ke-20: Radikalisme Dan Terorisme Mengintai Provinsi Timah," Harakatuna.com, December 18, 2020, <https://www.harakatuna.com/hut-ke-20-radikalisme-dan-terorisme-mengintai-provinsi-timah.html>.

<sup>62</sup> Nuraini, *Sejarah Terbentuknya Provinsi Kepulauan Bangka Belitung* (Tanjungpinang: Departemen Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata, Balai Pelestarian Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional Tanjungpinang, 2007).

of the new province. Material sources can be obtained from Malay communities in Riau or from Malaysia. Some local leaders went to Leiden University to seek written sources about their Malay origin, history, and local heroes.

In the context of the new province and the euphoria of regional autonomy, local leaders also attempted to find strategic solutions to their backwardness in educational, economic, social, and cultural life. Bangka Belitung's people think their underdevelopment was due to Palembang's long domination of varied local resources for years. With the issuance of regulation on tin as free goods by the Ministry of Industry and Trade on April 22, 1999, and local regulation on tin mining management by the Bangka Belitung Islands province, people began to earn their lives in tin mining, which was monopolized only by two big companies, namely PT. Timah Tbk. and PT. Koba Tin. This unconventional mining has changed the structure of the local society's social and economic sectors, besides the severe ecological destruction. Here, in their mobilization strategies, HTI activists provided alternative views and solutions in their strategic framing by the implementation of Sharia and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate as the war of ideas with the anti-western solid rhetoric that frames Western economic, social, and political systems as enemies to fight against and the systems were considered failed.<sup>63</sup> As a consequence, similar to leaders in Uzbekistan,<sup>64</sup> Some local leaders and politicians with limited knowledge of Islamic teachings and classical Islamic scholarship were easily influenced by the HTI ideology. This is due to Bush's observation that conservative figures, including HTI, have succeeded in consolidating their power to influence the executive government due to institutional factors, at least during Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's presidency (2004-2014).<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Orofino, *Hizb Ut-Tahrir and the Caliphate: Why the Group Is Still Appealing to Muslims in the West*.

<sup>64</sup> Yilmaz, "The Varied Performance of Hizb Ut-Tahrir."

<sup>65</sup> Robin Bush, "Religious Politics and Minority Rights during the Yudhoyono Presidency," in *The Yudhoyono Presidency: Indonesia's Decade of Stability and Stagnation*, Edited by Edward Aspinall, Marcus Mietzner, and Dick Tompa (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 2015), 239–57.

Like in the Malay world, the essential attributes of Malay include the Malay language, Malay customs (*adat*), and Islam. Most inhabitants of Bangka Belitung are Muslim, speak the Malay language, and practice Malay customs. Islam has become an essential attribute of Malay identity in Bangka Belitung, and it has become a marker that distinguishes Malay from the Chinese, which forms a large portion of this province. For the people of Bangka Belitung, a person who converts to Islam is considered to become Malay, sometimes called 'menjadi urang' (to become human). The person concerned has become part of the Malay community and has the same rights and obligations as other members of the Malay community in general. However, Islam has been integrated with Malay customs and traditions, commonly called *adat*. *Adat* can be defined as a form of thought and practice that has existed and been practiced so that it is considered a tradition or custom. The Bangka Belitung Malays are required to practice and maintain *adat*, which is compatible with Islamic teachings.<sup>66</sup> The integration of *adat* and Islam is by the philosophy of '*Adat bersendi Syarak; dan Syarak bersendikan Kitabullah*' or Custom is based on Sharia, and Sharia is based on the Qur'an. It means "the customs prevailing in the Bangka Belitung society are indigenous Malay customs and traditions that are harmonious and not contradictory with the teachings of Islam."<sup>67</sup> Even though there are differences between *Adat* and Islam, these differences are often difficult to identify. The two complement each other to define the boundary between reasonable and appropriate and ugly and inappropriate. "There is a general tendency throughout the Malayo-Islamic area to see the term *adat* and Islam (law) as representing complementary versions of a unitary concept of the

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<sup>66</sup> Zulkifli, *Kontinuitas Islam Tradisional Di Bangka* (Sungailiat: Shiddiq Press, 2007); Zulkifli, "Al-Islām al-Mu'tadil Wa Thaqāfat Bangka Belitung: Al-Manzūrat al-Antrūbūlūjīyyah," *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 17, no. 3 (2010): 537–63, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v17i3.458>.

<sup>67</sup> Hikmat Ishak, *Kepulauan Bangka Belitung: Semangat Dan Pesona Provinsi Timah Dan Lada* (Sungailiat: Kantor Pemerintah Daerah Kabupaten Bangka, 2002).

right and proper.”<sup>68</sup> The two are integrated, so all life becomes true, good, proper, and beautiful.

The interrelation between Islam and *adat* has been reconstructed in the context of the rising awareness of Malay identity. For some people, Islam has been specified as Sharia, and *adat* should be compatible with Sharia. For reformist groups like HTI, *adat*, which is considered incompatible with Sharia, must be abolished. That HTI promotes the implementation of Sharia in society was readily accepted by some segments of the Muslim community, starting to reject the practice of local customs. The development of sharia regulation implementation in several cities and regencies throughout Indonesia, such as Nangroe Aceh Darussalam, Padang, Bulukumba (South Sulawesi), Tasikmalaya, and Cianjur (West Java), has also influenced the minds of local political leaders and government officials to take similar policies. The local political elites, including the former governor Erzaldi Rosman Johan (2017-2022), have been active in promoting the application of Sharia in every aspect of human life. Similarly, the Ulama of Bangka Belitung agrees on the obligation to implement Sharia in all aspects of human life. However, they perceive an Islamic caliphate as not yet established in Indonesia.<sup>69</sup> This has led to the success of HTI development in Bangka Belitung.

### **The Dysfunction of Sosio-Religious Organizations**

In addition to the changing condition of Bangka Belitung society, the spread of HTI ideology was due to the failure of the moderate Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah in Bangka Belitung, another aspect of political opportunity structures. Compared with the active strategic mobilization of ex-HTI figures through online media such as YouTube and Facebook Muslimah Serumpun Sebalai and religious

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<sup>68</sup> Roy F. Ellen, “Social Theory, Ethnography, and the Understanding of Practical Islam in Southeast Asia,” in *Islam in Southeast Asia*, Edited by M.B. Hooker (Leiden: EJ. Brill, 1983), 50–91.

<sup>69</sup> Suparta Suparta, “Persepsi Ulama Bangka Belitung tentang Teori Khilafah dan Implikasinya terhadap Ukuwah Islamiyah dan Ukuwah Basyariyah dalam Keutuhan NKRI di Bangka Belitung,” *AKADEMIKA: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 23, no. 2 (November 23, 2018): 357–86, <https://doi.org/10.32332/akademika.v23i2.1237>.

gatherings, there are no specific programs of NU and Muhammadiyah to fight against the caliphate ideology.<sup>70</sup> While both organizations tended to focus only on formal activities, not less than 250 religious learning forums were conducted by radical groups in Bangka Belitung in a year.<sup>71</sup> It seems that they did not function well in protecting members of the Muslim community from being influenced by HTI ideology. Strategic attempts should have been devoted to fighting against the spread of its ideology among members of their communities. Conversely, specific figures affiliated with the two organizations sometimes attended the activities conducted by HTI so that they were framed in mass media to have supported or at least facilitated the radical activities.<sup>72</sup> During the religious gathering of HTI in which the late Harry Moekti attended and delivered his sermons on June 19, 2011, for instance, as reported in *Republika*, the chairman of the consultative council of NU of Central Bangka Regency was said to support the struggle of HTI of Bangka Belitung to uphold Islamic Sharia and caliphate. The Ulama himself rejects the implementation of the caliphate in Indonesia because "Indonesia, apart from having diverse ethnicities, languages, and religions, also has its foundations or the ideology itself, namely Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution."<sup>73</sup>

The NU of Bangka Belitung frequently rejected its involvement with HTI activities in the province, but sometimes, it seems to have an indecisive attitude towards the activities. Thus, it was framed to have supported them. In the case of Masirah Panji Rasulullah (Mapara) conducted by HTI of Bangka Belitung in Pangkalpinang on Sunday, April 16, 2017, for instance, KH Agus

<sup>70</sup> Subardi, Personal Communication with Subardi, Secretary of FKPT Bangka Belitung, June 16, 2024.

<sup>71</sup> Subardi, Personal Communication with Subardi, Secretary of FKPT Bangka Belitung, June 17, 2024.

<sup>72</sup> Zulkifli, "Prolog: Memahami Gerakan Keagamaan, Memperkuat Moderasi Beragama," in *Varian Gerakan Dan Organisasi Keagamaan: Kajian Teoretis Dan Fakta Empiris Di Bangka Belitung*, ed. Rusydi Sulaiman et. al. (Kace: Madania Center, 2022), xxi–xxxvi.

<sup>73</sup> Suparta, "Persepsi Ulama Bangka Belitung tentang Teori Khilafah dan Implikasinya terhadap Ukhuhah Islamiyah dan Ukhuhah Basyariyah dalam Keutuhan NKRI di Bangka Belitung," 372–373.

Erwin and KH Usman Fatan (then chairpersons of NU of Bangka Belitung) were said to support Mapara of HTI. They were prepared to collide with those who would thwart the activity. KH Agus Erwin emphasized: "I consider the claims spread to mass media and social media to be lies... The NU branch executive in Bangka Belitung is being messed around to issue the letter of support for the activity. However, institutionally, NU does not support it."<sup>74</sup>

In response to the above-mentioned provincial education authority's circular on Felix Siauw's book, the NU of Bangka Belitung, I protested the authority because it and its author aim to promote the HTI version of caliphate ideology. The chairman of NU of Bangka Belitung, KH. Ja'far Siddiq sent a letter of protest to the governor of Bangka Belitung regarding the circular. Muhammad Nur Fauzan of Al-Maarif educational institution of NU of Bangka Belitung stated: "The actions taken by the Bangka Belitung Islands provincial education office illustrate a systematic, structured, and massive effort to foster the HTI version of caliphate ideology through educational institutions."<sup>75</sup>

Muhammadiyah tends to be uncertain about the banning of HTI even though it has a solid commitment to the Indonesian nation-state and rejects the utopic vision of the Islamic caliphate promoted by HTI.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, the Bangka Belitung local branch appears to remain silent in response to the development of HTI ideology. We do not find any efforts from the local branch of Muhammadiyah to fight against HTI ideology. Some leaders have good connections with HTI activists in Bangka Belitung. I was

<sup>74</sup> Dian Andryanto, "NU Bangka Belitung: Ada Kebohongan Dibalik Kegiatan Mapara HTI," News, Tempo, April 15, 2017, <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/866390/nu-bangka-belitung-ada-kebohongan-dibalik-kegiatan-mapara-hti>.

<sup>75</sup> Redaksi Lensa, "PWNU Babel Menduga Ada Upaya Terstruktur untuk Menumbuhkan Ideologi HTI | Lensa Bangka Belitung," News, October 2, 2020, <https://lensabangkabelitung.com/2020/10/pwnu-babel-menduga-ada-upaya-terstruktur-untuk-menumbuhkan-ideologi-hti/>.

<sup>76</sup> Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Resisting Conservatism: Muhammadiyah's Experience through Its Social Activities," in *Rising Islamic Conservatism in Indonesia: Islamic Groups and Identity Politics*, Edited by Leonard C. Sebastian, Syafiq Hasyim, and AR. Arifianto (London & New York: Routledge, 2021), 80–94.

informed that one or more executives of Muhammadiyah branches were ex-HTI members or sympathizers.<sup>77</sup> In other regions, in contrast to Banser's (a paramilitary section of Pemuda Ansor) negative attitude towards HTI and Felix Siauw, Kokam, a paramilitary group under Pemuda Muhammadiyah, protected Felix Siauw in his religious sermon in Sukoharjo on July 17 2017 and even invited him to deliver a religious lecture in Muhammadiyah's mosque in Yogyakarta on December 31 2017.<sup>78</sup>

Similarly, the Council of Indonesian Ulama of Bangka Belitung has not played a sufficient role in fighting against the influence of HTI ideology on the Muslim community. The HTI doctrine of the caliphate has influenced the Ulama of Bangka Belitung. Sparta uncovers that they agree on the existence of caliphate practice by the Prophet Muhammad in Medina even though they reject its application in Indonesia because Indonesia has its state ideology of Pancasila and the 1945 constitution and because the caliphate can create division and conflict in society. From them, "the caliphate is indeed good, but it is not suitable if it has to be forced to be established in Indonesia."<sup>79</sup>

Most Bangka Belitung Ulama have the same perception regarding establishing a caliphate. "The caliphate in Indonesia cannot yet be established."<sup>80</sup> Several arguments were presented for this:

*First*, the caliphate is not suitable to be imposed in Indonesia, which does not mean that the concept of the caliphate is not good, but because there is no agreement or consensus between the Ulama and an agreement with the government. *Second*, for the benefit of the nation and state, it would not be suitable for Indonesia to force its state system to be replaced with the caliphate system because it already has its philosophy, namely Pancasila and

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<sup>77</sup> Subardi, "Personal Communication with Subardi, Secretary of FKPT Bangka Belitung," June 16, 2024.

<sup>78</sup> Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Pluralism, Liberalism, and Islamism: Religious Outlook of Muhammadiyah," *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 25, no. 3 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v25i3.7765>.

<sup>79</sup> Suparta, "Persepsi Ulama Bangka Belitung tentang Teori Khilafah dan Implikasinya terhadap Ukhwah Islamiyah dan Ukhwah Basyariyah dalam Keutuhan NKRI di Bangka Belitung," 377.

<sup>80</sup> Suparta, "Persepsi Ulama Bangka Belitung tentang Teori Khilafah dan Implikasinya terhadap Ukhwah Islamiyah dan Ukhwah Basyariyah dalam Keutuhan NKRI di Bangka Belitung," 385.

the 1945 Constitution. *Third*, the state philosophy currently in use upholds the rules of Islam because Indonesian Ulama and national figures of the Indonesian Nation compiled the Pancasila philosophy. *Fourth*, it has been tested and proven that Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution can unite various ethnic groups, races, and religions in Indonesia. This is by its motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika."<sup>81</sup>

The above citation shows that the HTI doctrine of the caliphate has influenced the Ulama of Bangka Belitung. They believe that the Prophet Muhammad practiced the caliphate system in Medina as taught by HTI. "KH. Hasyim Sya'roni firmly admits that the caliphate did exist during the Messenger of God and the rightly guided caliphs. Even then, the only person who truly succeeded in establishing the caliphate was the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) when he led the city of Medina."<sup>82</sup> The perception of this Ulama is similar to the thought of other segments of Indonesian society. "Student responses to the term caliphate tend to be positive and good, but consider it a form of government that is not appropriate for application in Indonesia."<sup>83</sup> This is genuinely a misperception because the Prophet Muhammad did not practice the caliphate system and never instructed it. Thus, theologically and historically, the caliphate system has no sound basis in Islam. In addition, the Ulama seems to open the possibility of implementing a caliphate system in Indonesia, and this clearly contradicts the principle that Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia are final.

The moderate socio-religious organizations are not united in protecting *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamaah* teachings from caliphate ideology in Bangka Belitung. Fractions within the organizations deal with leadership struggles and differences in religious views

<sup>81</sup> Suparta, "Persepsi Ulama Bangka Belitung tentang Teori Khilafah dan Implikasinya terhadap Ukhuwah Islamiyah dan Ukhuwah Basyariyah dalam Keutuhan NKRI di Bangka Belitung," 385.

<sup>82</sup> Suparta, "Persepsi Ulama Bangka Belitung tentang Teori Khilafah dan Implikasinya terhadap Ukhuwah Islamiyah dan Ukhuwah Basyariyah dalam Keutuhan NKRI di Bangka Belitung," 372.

<sup>83</sup> Yusuf Hanafi et al., "Sentiment Prevalence on Jihad, Caliphate, and Bid'ah among Indonesian Students: Focusing on Moderate-Radical Muslim Group Tension," *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (December 31, 2022): 2054532, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2054532>.

between moderate and literalist groups. As Osman points out, disunity within the mainstream Muslim organizations in Indonesia becomes an essential factor contributing to the success of HTI development in Indonesia.<sup>84</sup> Even HTI's caliphate doctrine has penetrated among certain members of the organizations. Furthermore, there has been a lack of counternarratives from moderate socio-religious organizations on HTI's caliphate doctrine in order to strengthen the defense of Sunni ideology while protecting the Muslim community from the HTI influence. There seems to be, like in Uzbekistan, a theological vacuum within the Bangka Belitung society, which can become socio-religious opportunities for HTI activists. The moderate socio-religious organizations failed to oppose the influence of caliphate ideology in Bangka Belitung, unlike the failure of HT in Egypt and Turkey due to the solid opposition of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and "the richness and diversity of religious life, myriad number of religious groups, brotherhood and communities, several theology faculties, hundreds of Islamic publishers, journals and dailies in addition to legally operating Islamist parties... in Turkey."<sup>85</sup> Thus, if the moderate socio-religious organizations in Bangka Belitung had played an active role in protecting moderate religious teachings and countering the caliphate doctrine, the influence of HTI's caliphate ideology would have been reduced.

## Conclusion

The relatively successful penetration of HTI's Islamic caliphate ideology in Bangka Belitung is due to its mobilization strategies, including intensive organization of religious preaching and gathering, publication, public demonstration, networks and good relationship with prominent local leaders, and the skillful use of communication and information technology. The mobilization strategies were influential in the context of two aspects of political opportunity structures, namely the changing Malay society experiencing the euphoria of the success in the formation and

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<sup>84</sup> Osman, *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia and Political Islam: Identity, Ideology, and Political Mobilization*.

<sup>85</sup> Yilmaz, "The Varied Performance of Hizb Ut-Tahrir," 514.

development of the new province followed by six districts and one city in which a large number of human resources were demanded, Malay identity was reconstructed, rapid and strategic solutions to its underdevelopment were sought. HTI's framing to offer the changing of political, economic, and social systems was readily accepted by people experiencing changes.

Additionally, the dysfunction of the moderate socio-religious organizations to fight against the HTI ideology and protect members of the Muslim community has created a theological vacuum, which becomes socio-religious opportunities that accentuated the influence of HTI in the new province. The study highlights the importance of both internal and external factors in the success of social movements, as suggested by many previous social movement investigations, and the interrelation between movement strategies, the sustainability of majority ideology, and the context of social, economic, political, and cultural change in society at large in the study of transnational Islamist movements. Future research should consider the possibility of new movement strategies and more complex factors of politics, culture, and sociopsychology at micro and macro levels.

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