

CRAFTING HIZBIYYIN IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA *Da'wah* and Recruitment of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia in South Sulawesi

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Abstract: This article aims at analysing the growing membership of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) by looking at its local development in Makassar, South Sulawesi. While many scholars have emphasized external factors in explaining the rise of Islamist movements, including HTI, this study emphasizes internal explanation from the movement itself. It discusses the strong relationship between HTI *da'wah* doctrines, recruitment strategy and the joining process. The various recruitment methods and strategies of HTI are in line with its doctrinal stages of *da'wah*, namely the stage of culturing (*tathqiq*), the stage of interaction with the *ummah*, and the stage of taking over the government. This article suggests that individual persuasion through pre-existing interpersonal networks is crucial in attracting young Muslims to participate in HTI. Borrowing theories of conversion by Lofland-Stark and Wiktorowicz, the article demonstrates three processes of joining in HTI: cognitive opening, religious seeking, and socialization.

Keywords: HTI, *hizbiyyin*, recruitment, interpersonal networks, *halaqah*, socialization.

Introduction

While numerous studies of Islamic radical movements in post-New Order Indonesia have been written, only a few have dealt with the question of recruitment. Most studies are preoccupied with the resurgence of such movements by relating them to changes in the

immediate socio-political context or wider global factors.¹ However, socio-political and global factors alone cannot provide an explanation of why people join one particular movement and not others. In fact, each transnational Islamist movement has its own ideology and recruitment strategies which influence its appeal and the extent of its acceptance by Indonesian society. It is, therefore, important to undertake this case study on the particular Islamic movement, of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) in order to grasp the internal dynamics of recruitment and expansion.

So in general, political, economic and socio-psychological analyses have been employed in order to comprehend the participation of Muslims in radical Islamic groups. These analyses were used to explain the rising phenomenon of Islamic revivalism in Muslim countries, especially in the Middle East in the 1970s and 1980s. The failure of Muslim states in implementing modernization and development resulted in uneven development, rapid urbanization and spreading social alienation.² As development was concentrated in the urban areas, many people from rural areas migrated to the cities seeking work and a better life. Facing hard lives in the cities and being shocked by “modern urban life and its Westernized culture” which diminished their traditional values and family ties, the newly urbanized experienced individual alienation and a crisis of identity.³ This situation led them to reassert their Islamic identity, in part by joining Islamic movements. Although analysis in this vein is important, it is limited to the interaction between the state, prevailing social conditions and the community and thus underplays the active role of Islamic movements in undertaking propagation and recruitment.

¹ See for example, Giora Eliraz, *Islam in Indonesia: Modernism, Radicalism and the Middle East Dimension* (Brighton and Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2004); Jamhari and Jajang Jahroni (eds), *Gerakan Salafi Radikal di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Rajawali Pers, 2004).

² Valerie J. Hoffman, “Muslim Fundamentalists: Psychological Profiles,” in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds), *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, Vol. 5 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 199-230.

³ See John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 16. For a good account of the social-psychological bases of Islamic Revivalism in the Middle East see R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1985), pp. 25-36.

Having researched HTI in Makassar, South Sulawesi, through participant observation and interviews with the rank-and-file members, I will argue in this article that to explain people's participation in HTI, we need to consider the active recruitment undertaken by the movement which is crucial in increasing its membership. It is important to do so for two reasons. Firstly, HTI is a part of global Islamic movement which places major emphasis on *da'wah* as its rationale in recruiting members. Secondly, the individual's decision to join HTI is in part determined by the performance of the movement and its presentation of itself to the public.

This article discusses the nature of HT as a global *da'wah* movement which calls upon young Muslims to join the organization. Drawing on the body of theory about new religious movements, it analyses the processes of conversion which draw recruits into becoming dedicated members. I will argue that individual persuasion through pre-existing interpersonal networks is essential in attracting people to join HTI. Moreover, socialization processes within new social networks established among HTI members serves to maintain their commitment. Based on the experiences of several *hizbiyyin*, the nickname for HTI members, in Makassar, this article underlines several processes by which people are inducted into participation in HTI.

The first part of this article discusses HTI's views on *da'wah* and its methods of preaching, which emulate the experience of the Prophet Muhammad as the doctrinal basis of recruitment. The second part examines HTI recruitment strategies as undertaken in Makassar, South Sulawesi, while the final section analyses three processes which are employed to draw individuals into participating in HTI.

HTI as a Radical *Da'wah* Movement: Methods and Recruitment

The rapid expansion of Hizbut Tahrir (HT) in a number of parts of the world is due in no small part to its missionary activity. In this regard, HT, like other Islamist transnational movements, focuses not on converting non-Muslims to Islam but rather propagating its messages to Muslims all over the world and calling on them to support and participate in its agenda. Indeed, HT views itself as the representative of the *ummah* and strives to shape Muslim mentality in order to revive the past glory of Islam. The recruitment strategy of HT is closely related to its ideology and its view of *da'wah*. Therefore, in

order to understand the recruitment activities of HTI in Indonesia, one needs to comprehend HT's founding ideology and its views of *da'wah*.

Hizbut Tahrir views itself as a political party based on Islamic ideology and its major goal is to re-establish the caliphate and implement the shari'ah. Although the establishment of HT was Al-Nabhani's response to the situation in the Middle East in the 1950s, many official HT books state that it was established as a response to one Qur'anic verse, Al-Imran: 104. "Be a community that calls for what is good, urges what is right, and forbids what is wrong: those who do this are the successful ones".⁴ HT interprets this verse as commanding Muslims to establish a community, or *jama'ah* in the form of a political party to undertake *da'wah*, or the calling others to Islam. The rationale for this, in HT's view, is that *da'wah* activities are substantially concerned with politics, since an important element of *da'wah* is calling on the government to do what is right (*amar ma'ruf*) and to forbid what is wrong (*nahy munkar*) according to the shari'ah.⁵ HT aims to "revive Muslims from the existing decline, liberate them from *kufur*, (in term of un-Islamic ideas and laws), as well as liberate them from the domination of *kufur* states".⁶

In an attempt to revive the *ummah* from its lamentable position, HT begins by analysing the factors which have led to its decline. It views the *ummah*'s weakness as deriving from its failure to understand and implement Islam comprehensively. According to Al-Nabhani, Islamic movements have failed to revive the *ummah* for three reasons: first, there has been a lack of understanding of *fikrah Islamiyah* (Islamic ideas) among Muslims; second, there has been no clear description of a *hurriyah Islamiyah* (Islamic method) for carrying out the *fikrah*; and third, no effort has been undertaken to combine *fikrah* and *hurriyah* as a solid and inseparable combination.⁷ In HT sources, *fikrah* refers to ideas solely derived from Islamic sources while *hurriyah* refers to methods to create Islamic ideals by referring to the Prophet's experience. In order

⁴ Abdel Haleem, *A New Translation of the Qur'an* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 42.

⁵ Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, *Mengenal Hizbut Tahrir: Partai Politik Islam Ideologis* (Jakarta: Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, 2004), pp. 2-4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷ Taqiuddin An-Nabhani, *Mafahim Hizbut Tahrir* (Jakarta: Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, 2007), p. 6.

to revive the *ummah*, HT seeks to change the ideas and perceptions prevalent within the *ummah* and to propagate what they see as the true understanding of Islam, which has clear *fikrah* and *hurriyah*. In this way, HT activists are directed to carry out Islamic *da'wah* by transforming what they see as a 'broken' society into an Islamic one, so that Islam becomes the basis of public thinking.⁸

According to Al-Nabhani, HT's *da'wah* methods are based on the historical example of the Prophet Muhammad when he was propagating Islam among the unbelievers of Mecca and Medina, that is, from secretive to open *da'wah*. HT points out that the current condition of Muslims is comparable to the condition of people in Mecca when the Prophet first began his *da'wah* among them. This is because, for HT, Muslims today are living in *Dar al-Kufr*, or the Domain of Infidel, which does not implement Islamic law. HT classifies the *da'wah* experiences of the Prophet into three stages: (1) The stage of culturing: "Finding and cultivating individuals who are swayed by the thought and method of the party. This stage is necessary in order to formulate and establish a group capable of carrying the party's ideas."; (2) The stage of interaction with the *ummah*: "in order to encourage the *ummah* to embrace Islam, so that it works to establish Islam in life, state, and society."; (3) The stage of taking over the government: "Establishing an Islamic state, implementing Islam comprehensively, and carrying its message to the world."⁹

The last stage constitutes the final goal of HT, culminating in the establishment of an Islamic state. HT argues that this cannot be achieved without first passing through the previous stages: culturing and interaction. HT activists believe that *da'wah* is both an obligation and a major responsibility in life and that it should be balanced with other activities.¹⁰ This doctrine motivates HT members to carry out active recruitment. New recruits will be indoctrinated to adopt strictly (*tabanni*) and carry out fully the HT teachings. The indoctrination methods used in HT are quite different from those of the Muslim Brotherhood, the other best known rapidly expanding transnational movement. HT names its indoctrinating method *tathqiq* (culturing) to

⁸ Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, *Mengenal Hizbut Tahrir*, p. 23.

⁹ Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The Methodology of Hizbut Tahrir for Change* (London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 1999), p. 32.

¹⁰ This is based on HTI members' opinions.

indicate that it is not only a matter of a transfer of knowledge (*tarbiyah*) but also a practical matter, in so far as HT indoctrinates its members to put into practice what they have learned in *hijrah* in their everyday lives.¹¹

HT proceeds to the second stage only if it has recruited a significant number of members who have internalized HT ideology and can begin the struggle of the party. In Indonesian case, HTI began recruiting and culturing process in the early 1980s on state owned university campuses, moving into the second stage by appearing in full public view in 2000, when political conditions were relaxed after the fall of Soeharto in 1998. For HT, interaction with the *ummah* does not mean to mobilise Muslims around them, but rather to educate and implant in them the ideology of the party so that, once properly disseminated, it becomes the ideology of the *ummah*.¹² In undertaking education and *da'wah* within society, HT outlines several programs for different purpose and methods:¹³

First, *Thaqafah Murakkabah* (Intensive Culturing). This is achieved through *hijrah* for individuals who will in time become full HT members. By this intensive education, HT can build the character of its cadres, shape their understanding of Islam based on HT ideology and prepare them to carry out *da'wah*.

Second, *Thaqafah Jama'iyah* (Collective Culturing). This sort of education is addressed to Muslims collectively by propagating the ideas and Islamic laws adopted by HT. It is held through public religious studies (*pengajian umum*) and seminars in mosques and public places as well as through mass media, books and pamphlets in order to arouse the consciousness of the *ummah* on certain issues.

Third, *Sira' al-Fiker* (War of Ideas). This refers to activities for countering and challenging 'un-Islamic' ideologies, laws and thoughts perceived as '*kufur*' or deviant. By means of this activity, HT seeks to oppose other ideas by undermining their arguments and exposing their weaknesses.

Fourth, *Kifah Siyasi* (Political Struggle). The struggle takes two forms. First, by fighting against imperialist states which control and

¹¹ An-Nabhani, *At-Takattul al-Hizbiy* (1953), translated into Indonesian: *Pembentukan Partai Politik Islam* (Jakarta: HTI-Press, 2007), pp. 52-53.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-37.

dictate Muslim countries. HT maintains its position against any form of colonialism-by military, ideological, political or economic means. Second, by challenging rulers in the Arab and other Muslim countries, in the form of advice and criticism, when they ignore the aspirations of Muslims and deviate from the laws of Islam. Within this framework, HT also organizes activities to abrogate un-Islamic regulation and to replace them with a system based on Islamic law.

Fifth, Adopting the benefit (*maslahah*) for the *ummah* based on Islamic law. Within this program HT guides people to gain *maslahah* in three ways: first, by correcting erroneous policies of the government; second, by offering Islamic solutions to the people; and third, by returning the people's rights. In the Indonesian case, HTI has criticized against the government's policy of increasing the price of fuel, of accepting foreign intervention in domestic affairs and of maintaining an expensive education system.¹⁴

These programs underlie HT activities in every sphere, ranging from the intensive indoctrination of recruits to organising public rallies. The impetus for conducting *da'wah* and recruitment is regarded as an obligation upon members. Those who have undergone intensive *hijrah* and show loyalty to HT will in turn become new agents of recruitment. The HT activities in every country seem to share these patterns.

HTI Recruitment in Makassar

The HT concept of *da'wah* presented above forms the religious rationale for programs of recruitment and mobilisation. Based on my observations and interviews, the recruitment strategies of HTI in Makassar strictly follow the HT ideology and methods and, to this extent, they show no significant difference from HT activities elsewhere in Indonesia or in other countries. Furthermore, HTI in the region focuses more on creating awareness and interest among Muslims on the national and global issues that concern Muslims rather than local ones. Analysing the HT view of *da'wah* and its activities in the field, it is apparent that all activities conducted by HT should be put in the frame of calling people to join, or at least to give support, to their agenda. However, despite these various activities of HTI,

¹⁴ This program is not much elaborated in HT official literature. However, I found an explanation of it in the *Al-Wa'ie Magazine*. See MR Kurnia, "Tabanni Mashalih al-Ummah," *Al-Wa'ie Magazine* 54, V (February 2005), pp. 43-46.

individual persuasion through existing social networks is still the most effective way of attracting individuals to join HTI.

HTI Trainings and Seminars as a Medium for Recruitment

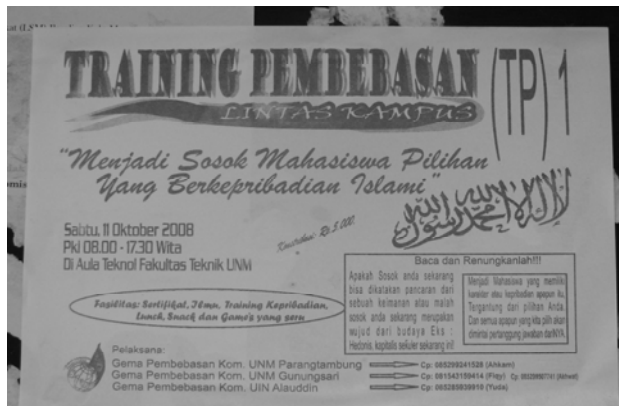
In Indonesia, most of HTI's recruitment takes place in the university campuses. The most important means of recruitment is by organizing training programs and seminars. The HTI campus activists do not usually directly identify their activities as 'Hizbut Tahrir' but instead arrange events under the banner of LDK (*Lembaga Dakwah Kampus*, The Student Preaching Movement), Student Liberation Movement (*Gerakan Mahasiswa Pembebasan*) and disguised study clubs. This is in contrast with the formal committees of HTI such as of DPP, DPD I, DPD II, DPC and the HTI Chapter which openly use the HT name in organizing their activities. Some members refer to their undercover study clubs as '*organisasi mantel*' or 'mantle organisations'. This means that HTI activists deliberately disguise their recruitment wings on the campuses and HTI can be said to be using deception in its recruitment. This is a part of HTI's strategy of 'soft recruitment' through religious and intellectual means, so that students do not directly recognize it as a radical Islamic movement recruiting members.¹⁵ In this respect, whatever the medium, what is important for the HTI activists is how to deliver their message to students effectively and how to make them engage in HTI activities as the way of guiding them to becoming *hizbiyyin*.

In Makassar there are various HTI study clubs on the campuses, such as LDK FOSDIK *al-Umdah* (*Forum Studi Islam Kontemporer 'al-Umdah'*), Contemporary Islamic Study Forum of 'al-Umdah' at UNM (State University of Makassar), FOSIDI (*Forum Studi Islam Ideologis*, Ideological Islamic Study Forum) at UMI (University of Indonesian Muslims) and Humaniora at UNHAS (University of Hasanuddin), to name a few. Targeting students, the study clubs actively organize discussions and distribute *da'wah* bulletins and pamphlets. In several

¹⁵ The strategy of disguising the movement has been used by HTI activists in Britain. According to the testimony of the former member of HTI, Ed Husain, *hizbiyyin* in Britain disguise HTI under the name of 'the Muslim Unity Organization' when undertaking local demonstrations in order to avoid media interest in exposing its homophobic and anti-Jewish statements. See Ed Husain, *The Islamist: Why I joined radical Islam in Britain, what I saw inside and why I left* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), p. 113.

campuses, pamphlets of the study clubs are hung on student bulletin boards which contained information on HTI activities and messages calling on Muslims to denounce capitalism and return to the caliphate. With regard to training activities, there were several pamphlets advertising 'Liberation Training 1' (*Training Pembebasan 1*) held on the UNM campus by the Student Liberation Movement of UNM, under the title of 'Creating Alternative Students with Islamic Personality'. In other campuses such as UMI, the training is organized by LDK and aimed at targeting new students. The training usually consists of a group of ten to twenty people and lasts for two days, from morning to afternoon. On the surface, this looks like general Islamic training, but the materials discussed are those of Hizbut Tahrir. They include an introduction to the Islamic faith (*‘aqidah*), a basic understanding of shari'ah and *da'wah* (*mafahim al-shari'ah* and *mafahim al-da'wah*), comparative ideologies and an introduction to Hizbut Tahrir.¹⁶ Some informants acknowledged that they did not know that the training was held by HTI until they received material introducing HT. Students who show an interest in HT ideas will be invited to join intensive *hijrah*. However, their initial participation in the *hijrah* does not of itself give them full membership.

Figure 1: A pamphlet at UIN Alauddin Makassar advertising HTI training organized by the Student Liberation Movement of UNM



¹⁶ Interview with Hadijah, Makassar, 11 January 2008.

It is interesting to note that some activists have already acquainted with HT through a study of its texts in informal Islamic study clubs as early as senior high school. These activists come from several districts outside of Makassar, such as Soppeng (South Sulawesi) and Ternate (Molucca), indicating that HTI has expanded its recruitment through its study clubs in senior high school not only in the capital cities but also in several rural districts in the province and in Eastern Indonesia. One informant, Ishak, recalled that in his school he had regularly attended HT Islamic study sessions (*pengajian*) four times a week and had read some of Al-Nabhani's works. Therefore, when going to Makassar to pursue his studies he was already clear about which Islamic organization he wanted to join on campus. When taking part in the new *hikmah* in Makassar he could begin at a more advanced level, studying further works of Al-Nabhani with senior HTI members.¹⁷

The HTI of South Sulawesi (DPD I) utilizes public discussions as a medium of disseminating HT ideas to society at large. Within HT terminology, this program is called 'public culturing' (*tathqif jama'ah*). In contrast to the training held on the campuses, these public discussions do not aim to introduce the basic teachings of the movement. The public seminars usually deal with concrete, everyday issues, mostly contemporary politics, and HTI uses them as an opportunity to promote ideas based on HT ideology to the people and to gain sympathy and support from them. In order to attract audiences, HTI often raises issues aimed at connecting with common aspirations. One of HTI activists explained the strategy of attracting people through public discussions:

What we do is to unveil the facts of the damaging impact of capitalism by relating it to people's lives. When there are many housewives worried about finding oil and gas (*elbiji*), we tell them the fact that the scarcity of oil and gas is due to actors who control the government. They are the capitalists. We explain to the people the problems which lie at the root of the existing system. In the student context, for instance, we raise the current question of expensive education. We tell them why education becomes so expensive and who is to blame. Again, we explain the roots of the problem. In this way, we show them the facts that

¹⁷ Interview with Ishak, Makassar, 10 January 2009.

are close to them. When they become aware we invite them to join, and if they don't, it is no problem for us.¹⁸

The issues raised in the public seminars sometimes give the impression that HTI is concerned with the public good and supportive of the unity of the nation. For example, in a national seminar entitled “Save the wealth of Eastern Indonesia, avoid disintegration and build a great nation with the *kebilafab*”, there was performance of traditional dances of Makassar at the beginning of the seminar. This is an evidence that HTI uses local culture to advance its cause. Using power point presentations, the speakers explored the facts of the wealth of natural resources in Eastern Indonesia, such as in Sulawesi and Papua, and examined the causes of their massive exploitation which have led to unequal wealth distribution among the people of Indonesia. The root of the problem, the speakers concluded, is the capitalist system, imposed by the West, which gives the opportunity to ‘foreigners’ (*bangsa asing*) to exploit the resources and impoverish the Indonesian people. The solution to this unfortunate situation, they proposed, is the restoration of the caliphate system. Such issues related to the public good are attractive to local people and many attend the HTI seminars. The local HTI often invite representatives of local government and various Islamic organizations to the seminars, either as speakers or as participants. This is a part of HTI strategy to gain support and sympathy from local government and the people in South Sulawesi.

Figure 2: HTI's National Muslimah Seminar on 16 December 2008 in Makassar



¹⁸ Interview with Hernawati, Makassar, 29 December 2008.

The role of media is also important in HTI's *da'wah* and recruitment. HTI has utilized media ranging from books, booklets, magazines, bulletins, radios and pamphlets, and website. Yet, during activities such as seminars and rallies, the media that they use in public audiences is *Buletin Al-Islam*. In a rally of HTI Muslimah in Makassar and *Buletin Al-Islam* and stickers were handed out to people they met in the street. This bulletin is regularly distributed at many mosques in Makassar during congregational prayers on Fridays. For adolescents, the local HTI of Makassar also produces special bulletins for distribution in senior high schools. Aside from spreading the HTI messages in society, the bulletins also contain information of HTI's public activities in the city, providing opportunities for people to attend. In this regard, it enables people to be exposed to HTI messages and to come and participate in its activities.

Recruitment through Interpersonal Bonds

A major part of the process of recruitment to HTI takes place through interpersonal relations between *hikbiyyin* and prospective members. Some insights into this process can be gained from studies of new religious movements in America in the 1960s. Several studies reveal that recruitment to religious cults and sects indeed occurs mainly through "pre-existing social networks and interpersonal bonds".¹⁹ To borrow Lorne L. Dawson's words, "friends recruit friends, family members recruit each other and neighbors recruit neighbors."²⁰ A study conducted on the followers of Sun Myung Moon (the 'Moonies') by John Lofland and Rodney Stark, for instance, have suggested that conversion is largely determined by the role of affective ties between the group's members with potential recruits.²¹ Lofland and Stark found

¹⁹ John Lofland and Rodney Stark, "Becoming a World-Saver: a Theory of Conversion to a Deviant Perspective, in *American Sociological Review* 30:6 (December 1965), pp. 871-872; Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, "Networks of Faith: Interpersonal Bonds and Recruitment to Cults and Sects," *The American Journal of Sociology* 85: 6 (May, 1980), pp. 1376-1395; Lawrence R. Iannacone, "Why Strict Churches Are Strong," *American Journal of Sociology* 99:5 (March 1994), pp. 1200-1201; Lorne L. Dawson, "Who Joins New Religious Movements and Why: Twenty Years of Research and What have We Learned?", in Lorne L. Dawson (ed.), *Cults and New Religious Movements: A Reader* (USA, UK and Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), p. 119.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Lofland and Stark, "Becoming a World-Saver", pp. 871-872.

that the conversion of people to a religious cult was not due so much to its ideological appeal as because they saw their friends and families in the group. Although some recruits may find a group problematic, their attachment with new friends and members can lead them to accept the ideas of the group.²² The similar finding on the importance of social networks in recruitment was confirmed by Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge who carried out quantitative research on three other sects, namely Doomsday, the Ananda Commune and the Mormons.²³

Like other religious cults and sects, most of HTI's recruitment takes place through individual persuasion and using pre-existing social networks. In fact, the invitation to people or students to attend HTI activities is very effective through personal contact. Most of the informants in this research said that their initial participation in HTI training, public seminars and *hikmah* was on their friends', families' or seniors' invitation. However, many did not know that the activities were run by Hizbut Tahrir. At this stage, the recruiters call on their friends and families to join the HTI trainings and discussions under the guise of learning about Islam (*mengaji* or *belajar agama*), or simply to improve their knowledge of Islamic teachings.

Hikmah are active in finding new recruits, following the HT doctrine which states that carrying out *da'wah* is a life-time obligation for every Muslim. They view *da'wah* as a pivotal activity in their lives (*poros hidup*). Some members said that every week, their supervisor asks about their *da'wah* activity, meaning the question is about how many people they had approached that week. As most HTI members are students, they have to balance their time between studying, attending the *hikmah* meetings, disseminating HT ideas, and finding new recruits. Every HTI member is required to form a cell consisting of about five new members under tutelage of a supervisor called the *mushrif* (male) or the *mushrifah* (female). In *hikmah*, recruits and members make an intensive study of key texts of Taqiyuddin Al-Nabhani under the guidance of this supervisor. If a recruit has become a full member and fulfilled certain requirements, he or she will be asked to become a supervisor in turn. The formation of cells in HT is quite similar to that of Multi Level Marketing (MLM) or 'pyramid-selling' systems. Each

²² Ibid.

²³ Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, "Networks of Faith", pp. 1376-1395.

member in a cell is required to find five new members and later he or she will instruct them or find a senior member to be their supervisor. When these new recruits are inducted as formal members, again each of them will be assigned to find other new five members, and so on.

The HTI activists are similar to evangelists in Christianity in seeking converts by building new social relationships.²⁴ They are encouraged to be open and active in making acquaintances for recruitment. Once they find a new friend, they will keep in close contact and guide the person towards HTI activities. In building and maintaining social relationships, communication through mobile phones is useful to spread information on HTI, *da'wah* messages and invitations to members and prospective members. For instance, a *hikmahiyin* recalled her experience of being contacted by phone by her senior at UNM inviting her to attend a religious study club, which she later realized to be a *hikmah* of HTI.²⁵ Text messages is an efficient one in this effort. Once a person makes personal contact with HTI activists in Makassar, HTI will send him or her short messages from anonymous *hikmahiyin* containing information of the coming HTI activities, the critical response of HTI to national and global political events and *da'wah* messages such as the call to leave capitalism and democracy and the need to return to the shari'ah and the caliphate. This happens to any outsider who makes contact to *hikmahiyin*. If someone expresses an interest in HTI ideas to a HTI activist, the activist will cultivate a closer relationship with the person in a bid to recruit them to higher level activities. An informant said that the first time after attending a HTI discussion she was not so sure about joining HTI, but she was impressed by the fact that HTI activists seemed attentive and caring and continued to approach her until she joined.²⁶ In persuading prospective members to join, the HTI activists, however, do not try to engage them on spiritual matters but try to focus on intellectual and emotional topics, especially by emphasising utopian promises. For instance, they present information on the 'Muslim decline' and the 'Indonesian crisis', blaming Western

²⁴ For a good account of various methods of recruitment of 'the New Evangelists', see Peter Clarke (ed.), *The New Evangelists: Recruitment Methods and Aims of New Religious Movements* (London: Ethnographica, 1987).

²⁵ Interview with Khairunnisa, Makassar, 29 December 2008.

²⁶ Interview with Farah, Makassar, 23 December 2008.

capitalism and arguing that Islam, through the shari'ah and the caliphate, is the only solution for both regaining the glory of Islam and creating a better world. Those who are convinced by such HTI arguments are likely to join the movement. They use current political and economic events, whether local, national or international, to drive home their arguments about the predatory Western capitalist system. Each member is urged to follow current developments carefully in order to back up or illustrate the broader ideological persuasion.

The Membership Process in HTI

Having discussed the recruitment strategy of HTI in Makassar, this section deals with the processes through which new recruits must pass. While recruitment involves all the approaches made by HTI in persuading people to engage in activities such as training and seminars, the joining process in this section is concerned with a socio-psychological interpretation of the conversion, from initial interaction with HTI ideas to induction as full members. Participation in HTI activities does not automatically lead to recruits becoming members. Those who want membership have to follow a formal process. This will be analyzed from the sociological model of conversion advanced by John Lofland and Rodney Stark²⁷, as well as the writings of Quintan Wiktorowicz on joining radical Islamic movements.²⁸ The former model was the result of an influential study of early American followers of Sun Myung Moon. Lofland and Stark summarize that for conversion to a cult a person must:

“1) experience enduring, acutely felt *tensions*, 2) within a *religious problem-solving perspective*, 3) which leads him to define himself as a *religious seeker*, 4) encountering the D.P. (cult) at a *turning point* in his life, 5) wherein an *affective bond* is formed (or pre-exists) with one or more converts, 6) where *extra-cult attachments* are absent or neutralized, 7) and where, if he is to become a deployable agent, he is exposed to *intensive interaction*.”²⁹

²⁷ Lofland and Stark, “Becoming a World-Saver”, pp. 862-875.

²⁸ Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Joining the Cause: Al-Muhajiroun and Radical Islam”, available at <<http://www.yale.edu/polisci/info/conferences/Islamic%20Radicalism/papers/wiktorowicz-paper.pdf>> accessed on 7 February 2009.

²⁹ Lofland and Stark, “Becoming a World-Saver”, p. 874.

Wiktorowicz studied the radical Islamic group Al-Muhajiroun in Britain, while also drawing on some aspects of Lofland and Stark's work. He identifies four key processes which draw people to a radical Islamic group: 1) cognitive opening, 2) religious seeking, 3) frame alignment and 4) socialization.³⁰ This research on HTI in Makassar confirms these findings that 'socialization' or what Lofland and Stark call an 'affective bond' and 'intensive interaction' is essential in drawing people in to join and become committed to HTI. Considering the different characteristics of religious movements, there are, however, stages which do not apply to HTI. Borrowing from both models, three processes which lead people to become HTI members should be underlined: cognitive opening, religious seeking, and socialization.

Cognitive Opening

Cognitive opening refers to situations which lead an individual to be "receptive to the possibility of alternative views and perspectives".³¹ According to Wiktorowicz cognitive opening could result from a crisis which weakens the individual's certainty in the old beliefs.³² 'Crisis' in this regard is associated with tension, strain, frustration, deprivation and grievance generated by political, social or economic situations. Young Muslim immigrants in Britain, for instance, are prone to join global Islamic movements as an outlet for their frustration over the racial discrimination they have experienced. Lofland and Stark emphasize the 'stage of tension' as the first process in their conversion model and it serves as the facilitating factor.

Such situations are not actually apparent in HTI members in Makassar. There is an impression that many of them did not experience a crisis before joining HTI. Rather, it was the movement which propounded a sense of crisis in them. In this regard, the religious movement fosters cognitive opening through 'outreach activism', which means that activists "use current social networks or make new acquaintances to germinate a sense of crisis among contacts through discussions and subtle interactions".³³ This appears to be precisely the case for the most part with HTI members in Makassar.

³⁰ Wiktorowicz, "Joining the Cause".

³¹ Ibid., p. 7.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., p. 8.

As part of the recruitment strategy, HTI activists actively amplify a sense of crisis among their acquaintances in existing social networks, new contacts and audiences, then emphasize that a return to religion is the best response.

HTI activists usually undertake ‘framing’ or construction, by developing “a new diagnosis and remedy for existing forms of suffering” in order to generate a sense of grievance toward injustice.³⁴ For instance, HTI stresses the ‘multi-dimensional crisis’ and problems in Indonesia and the Muslim world and attributes these problems to the dominance of the secular capitalist system and the absence of a protecting caliphate. Whatever the issue raised, at the end of the discussion, Islam will be cast as the all-encompassing solution. At a monthly HTI seminar in Makassar, called ‘*Halqah Peradaban*’ (*Halqah of Civilization*) the spokesperson of HTI DPD I, Hasanuddin Rasyid, read an HTI official statement on ‘reflections on the end of 2008’ which outlined the crises faced by Indonesia during 2008 in the spheres of economy, politics, society and religion. He concluded:

Examining the problems which have emerged in 2008, it can be concluded that there are two main causes, i.e. the system and human factors. The crises of global finance, dismissals (PHK), unemployment, poverty, criminality and other social problems, foreign intervention, Islamo-phobia and all other forms of tyranny (*kezaliman*) have been happening due to human choice in managing aspects of life. The leader with no integrity (*amanah*), a bad system (i.e. capitalism and secularism) and the decline of morality have become the root causes of the aforementioned problems. Therefore, if we really want to be freed from the problems above, we have to choose a better system and an integrated leadership. The better system comes only from God, namely shari’ah, and the integrated leader is one who submits to the better system.³⁵

³⁴ Barrington More, *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt* (N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1978), p. 88. Quoted in Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 122-123.

³⁵ Kantor Juru Bicara HTI, *Refleksi Akhir Tahun 2008 Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia; Selamatkan Indonesia dengan Syariah – Menuju Indonesia Lebih Baik*, Leaflet No. 147/PU/E/12/08, Jakarta, 18 December 2008.

Recruits new to HTI recorded various impressions of their initial interaction with HTI ideas. Some members recalled that when attending HTI seminars they were fascinated by the HTI speakers who presented deep, assertive and logical explanations of politics and Islam, using contemporary facts to support their arguments. Some other members, who had previously joined the Tarbiyah Movement expressed their interest in converting to HTI because of its ideological component (Islam as ideology) after attending HTI training sessions. They also felt that HTI's religious teaching was more comprehensive than that of the Tarbiyah Movement. The HTI frames are not only appealing to prospective members but also make good sense to them. This in turn leads people to want to know more about religious ideas of the organisation and finally guides them to join it in a full capacity.

Religious Seeking

The self-presentation of HTI as an alternative movement which promises Islamic remedies for current problems provides the explanation for prospective recruits, especially university students, that religion not only relates to ritual and spiritual things but can solve socio-political problems as well. In various ways, HTI activists try to convince their recruits through discussion and debate that Muslims can regain their greatness and dominate the world as long as they return to the 'true' understanding of Islam, namely Islam which has genuine *fikrah* and *hikmah*. Given this new insight, the recruits have it confirmed in their minds that religion is of a practical importance to their lives. Therefore, those who are persuaded will regard HTI as a true representative among Islamic movements and tend to see local religious organisations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, as well as the Muslim student organizations such as HMI and PMII, as inadequate in overcoming the problems of the *ummah*. In this process, as Lofland and Stark noted, the recruits come to define themselves as religious seekers, namely persons "searching for some satisfactory system of religious meanings to interpret and resolve their discontent".³⁶ In HTI, this process will then lead on naturally into the process of socialization through intensive education and interaction with the members.

³⁶ Lofland and Stark, "Becoming a World-Saver", p. 868.

The tendency towards religious seeking among prospective members is not always linked with previously strong religious backgrounds, as noted by Lofland and Stark. In fact, most HTI members in this research come from non-*santri* families and secular educational backgrounds; only a few have come through *pesantren*, or Islamic senior high schools. Most are university students from the fields of natural science and engineering or young professionals. HTI DPD I leaders such as Hasanuddin Rasyid, the Spokesperson and Asriani, the Chair of Muslimah get degrees in engineering from UMI. It seems that the recruits from non-arts and non-social science backgrounds are the most active in seeking meaning through radical Islamic movements. These potential members were persuaded and guided by HTI to 'shop around' for their religious ideas. Some of them did in fact make comparisons and experimentation by participating in various movements before finally deciding on their commitment to HTI.

Socialization

'Socialization' is a critical process which determines the membership and commitment of individuals to a movement. It provides a conducive environment for them to experience a movement's ideology and tenets through intensive education, interaction among members and participation in the movement's activities. The socialization process, as Wiktorowicz noted, "is intended to alter the values of the individual so that self-interest is defined in accordance with the goals and beliefs of the movement's ideology".³⁷ Moreover, the movement constructs a new identity for recruits and tightens new social bonds among them so that they keep learning and continue to be loyal to the movement.³⁸ If the recruits pass this process in HTI, they will become full members and new agents of *da'wah*.

Once exposed to HTI's radical ideas and frames and becoming, in effect, 'religious seekers', individuals will be guided to join the *hijrah*. *Hijrah* is an intensive type of indoctrination, taking the form of a weekly study club comprising five members under a supervisor. It serves as the most important medium of indoctrination for the

³⁷ Wiktorowicz, "Joining the Cause", p. 3.

³⁸ Ibid.

recruits, in which they are taught to learn and internalize the ideology of HTI as presented in the works of Al-Nabhani. The venue for *hijrah* depends on the members' choice, but is usually in a mosque, a public space on campus or in one of the members' houses. Beside their participation in *hijrah*, the recruits are invited to engage in HTI activities such as demonstrations, rallies, seminars and so forth. However, it should be noted that their initial participation in such activities does not guarantee formal membership of the movement. Before being inducted as members, recruits have to complete the study of at least three books by Al-Nabhani and demonstrate unswerving loyalty to HTI. The three books include *Nizam al-Islam* (*Peraturan Hidup dalam Islam*, the System of Islam), *at-Takattul al-Hizbi* (*Pembentukan Partai Politik Islam*, the Party Structure), and *Mafahim Hizb al-Tahrir* (*Pemahaman Hizbut Tahrir*, the Concepts of Hizbut Tahrir). Although they deal with theological and political discussions and use many Arabic terms, they are not too sophisticated to understand. However, HTI requires its members to study them, paragraph by paragraph, under the guidance of a supervisor in order to avoid different understandings of HTI ideology arising. Recruits can take two to five years to become full members, depending on their zeal in attending *hijrah* and their capacities of comprehension. In this process, recruits who have completed studying the basic books of Al-Nabhani and show dedication and a willingness to sacrifice other aspects of their lives for HTI will be asked whether they want to 'continue studying'. Those who wish to continue will be sworn in through a special oath (*qasm*) while those who do not go on will become sympathizers of the movement.³⁹

Interaction with other members helps the recruits to develop social ties and strengthens their commitment to HTI. While *hijrah* serves as the main focus for maintaining ideological awareness and conformity among members, intensive interaction helps tighten their solidarity and deepen their understanding and commitment to HTI in the practical aspects of their lives. So *hijrah* serves as a control mechanism among the members, especially between a supervisor and his or her cell's members. The supervisor is responsible for making sure that his or her members, in both thought and behavior, are in accord with HTI ideology. In this way, self-discipline and self-awareness are implanted

³⁹ This information is based on interviews with several *hizbiyyin*.

among members. If a recruit is seen by others of having broken HTI rules, such as failing to perform the obligatory prayers or fraternizing with people of the opposite sex who are not relatives, then they will be warned and could possibly be dismissed from the organization. In spite of this mutual control, most members interviewed in this research felt under no pressure in so far as they believe it is the responsibility of every Muslim to advise and warn every other of the danger of possible sinful acts. Besides, they view this system of mutual support and control as something that is good for them as individuals. Strong solidarity among members then helps to keep them in HTI. The socialization process will in the end lead individuals to experience a transformation in their lives and become full converts, as well as new agents of HTI.

Conclusion

This article has highlighted the important role which recruitment plays in HTI. It has discussed the relationship between HTI *da'wah* doctrines, recruitment strategy and the joining process of HTI members in Makassar. It concludes that HTI's activities in recruitment are strongly related to its concept of *da'wah*, namely the progression from individual to public *da'wah*, emulating the experience of the Prophet Muhammad's *da'wah* in Mecca and Medina. Through *da'wah*, HTI intends to spread its perceived 'true' understanding of Islam, an Islam which has clear *fikerah* and *hujjah*, in order to restore its glory. HTI conducts various activities ranging from the intensive indoctrination in the name of the *hujjah* sessions to public activities such seminars, rallies and long marches. Although public activities and messages of HTI may have wide appeal to people at large, this article argues that interpersonal bonds through the pre-existing social networks—such as student groups on university campuses—are more essential. These new social networks established among HTI members lead on to further commitment to the movement.

Borrowing from analyses by Lofland and Stark and Wiktorowicz, the article has demonstrated three processes in conversion to HTI: cognitive opening, religious seeking and socialization. First, individuals are exposed to HTI messages which are appealing and make sense to them. HTI magnifies a sense of the crisis and decline which beset Indonesia and the wider Muslim world and calls Muslim people to return to true Islam through the shari'ah and the caliphate. Second, in response to these radical messages, individuals become attracted to

learn more about Islam. They move into a socialization process by joining *hikmah* and various activities of HTI as well as interacting with HTI members. Some prospective members might make their own comparisons and experimentation at this stage. Third, intensive indoctrination and interaction among members lead the recruits to accept, understand and internalize the HT ideology. Eventually, prospective members who have completed their study of basic books of Al-Nabhani, proved their dedication and made sacrifices of time and effort will be offered full membership of HTI. []

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