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# DE-RADICALIZATION PROGRAM IN INDONESIAN PRISONS: REFORMATION ON THE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION

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## Abstract

*De-radicalization program has long been the subject of investigation. There is a steadily growing interest in examining the positive results on how Islamist terrorists agree to abandon violence and leave radicalism. Despite their attractiveness, it is widely accepted that de-radicalization program on terrorism in many countries is still questionable for its effectiveness. This article presents an overview of the de-radicalization program run by Indonesian prisons and investigates critical issues surrounding the analysis of their effectiveness and outcomes. This paper argues that Indonesian prisons and especially its correctional system need to be reformed in order to achieve a successful result of de-radicalization program in the fight against terrorism.*

## Keywords

De-radicalization, correctional institution, terrorist prisoners, Indonesia prison

## INTRODUCTION

In the immediate aftermath of Bali Bombing in 2002, Indonesian citizens discovered to their fear that their country was perceived as a part of global terrorist network with links to Al-Qaeda. Over the past ten years, the scale of fear would only get worse as radical Islamist groups are resilient in their fight and continue to strike some strategic places successively in the past few years. The discovery of terrorist training camp in a remote region of Aceh and recent suicide bombing in Solo reveal that terrorist networks are reassessing their strategy to create resilient and lethal tactics for future attack (Allard, 2010).

The radical Islamist movements are not a recent phenomenon in Indonesia. For more than two hundred years, they have prepared to use violence as a means to express their faith (Fealy & Borgu, 2005). As far as Jama'ah Islamiyah (JI) -a leading Islamist terrorist organization in Indonesia- is concerned, it is unlikely to remain as the only terrorist threat, since wider radical Islamist groups in this country are considered to have ties with terrorist network and continue to grow and provoke threats, terrors and violence (Padden, 2011).

Building upon an earlier work by Zachary Abusa (Abusa, nd), recent discussion in examining the results of deradicalization program has shown some evidence of positive outcomes regarding terrorists abandoning violence. The decline in terrorism underlines the importance of making a key analysis between the concept of disengagement and deradicalization. The term disengagement is used by Bjorgo and Horgan (Horgan, 2009) to refer to a process in which an individual or a group no longer engages in violence or participates in the violent activities of the group, while deradicalization occurs when a group or an individual no longer believes in a violent ideology (Ibid). Deradicalization programs aimed at imprisoned Islamist radical individuals would attempt to change their ideologies and eventually allow for their release from prison and return back into normal society (Johnston, 2009).

In dealing with radicalism, the deradicalization program initiated by the Indonesian National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) has been included in Indonesia's counterterrorism strategy, particularly after the Bali Bombing incident of 2002. At least 700 suspects (Hadi, 2011) of JI members have been arrested and some of them are involved within the program. However, the success of a deradicalization program is unlikely due to several implemental hindrances such as rejection of such programs by some Muslim communities. The Muslim communities argue that such programs are targeted to suppress Muslims and eradicate the principles of Shari'a Law (Muslim Daily, 2011). Another implemental challenge comes from the contemporarily existing correctional system in Indonesia. As the final institution in the criminal justice system, Indonesian prisons are not ready to improve its Treatment of Offenders Method (better known by the term correction) into a specific

treatment and rehabilitation method that aims to reduce the level of extremism of terrorist prisoners. The overcrowding, corruption, the limitation of facilities and limited human resources either in quantity and quality in correctional institution make it more difficult to achieve its goal to deradicalize terrorist prisoners (ICG 2007). More disturbing is the fact that certain prisons are deemed as some sort of recruiting venue to recruit novice terrorist members (Ungerer, 2011).

This paper examines de-radicalization programs in Indonesian prisons specifically related to the Indonesian correctional system whether or not they have been an effective strategy to counter terrorism in Indonesia. First, it will discuss a pilot study of the Indonesian counterterrorism de-radicalization program in Indonesian prisons. The study is based on two crowded prisons located in East Java, namely the Surabaya prison and the Malang prison. These prisons are chosen since there are at least 20 terrorist prisoners serving imprisonment for terrorism in both prisons (ICG, 2007). Although information and data collected from the interviews are limited, previous researches on de-radicalization strategy can be used as valuable secondary resources to support the arguments in this paper. The last section will analyse the implementation of de-radicalization process in Indonesian prisons and discuss the magnitude of success of this program in reducing radicalism.

## INDONESIA'S DERADICALIZATION PROGRAM

After the extensive terrorist cells of Jamaah Islamiyah were revealed, the Indonesian government launched a wide-ranging counterterrorism campaign. The "hard" and "soft" approaches have been used as umbrellas of counterterrorism measures in the fight against the spread of the Jihadi ideology for violent radicalism. Based on Presidential Decree number 46 year 2010, BNPT functions as a central agency that carries out several tasks including: (1) formulating policies, strategies, and national programs on counter-terrorism; (2) monitoring, analysis, and evaluation on counter-terrorism; (3) coordination on the implementation of prevention and fighting the propaganda of radical ideology on counter-terrorism; and (4) coordination on the implementation of de-radicalization (NCA, 2010). BNPT and the police start to use 'soft' strategy and put more concern on how to stop the spread of the group's radical ideology. The 'soft' approach is based on trust between the terrorist prisoners and the converted JI terrorists who have renounced radical ideology to influence other members to abandon violence and leave their radicalism. Most famous successful story is Nasir Abbas, a former Afghan militant who trained the Bali bombers. After his 2004 release from prison, he has been involved in the police's de-radicalization program and helped to track down and arrested several of his former companions. Nasir Abbas has travelled to several Indonesian prisons to visit his former colleagues serving imprisonment for terrorist offences and convinced them to stop violence (Harding, 2010). It is important to note that this program does not involve *ulama* or religious scholar to influence detainees as *ulama* are seen as part of *taghout* (anti-islam) and outside their own circle that cannot be trusted (ICG, 2007).

Through this process, the police officers try to get trust and moral involvement of the detainees. Providing incentives and getting in touch with the detainee's family are part of their main strategy. In the case of Abdullah Sunata, who was convicted on terrorism-related charges in 2006, within the umbrella of de-radicalization program, he received furloughs to attend lawn parties and incentives from the police who paid hospital bills when his wife gave birth (McDowell, 2010). But immediately after his 2009 release on good behaviour, Sunata allegedly returned to his fellow terrorist and involved in to launch Mumbai-style terror strikes to kill President Yudhoyono and other high-profile targets (Ibid).

At the bottom line, the main features of Indonesia's program are not based on religious re-education. The use of "interlocutors" such as Nasir Abbas aims to separate their radical ideology and provide them with financial assistance during the period of their detention as well as to build their vocational skills which would later allow them to integrate into their community upon their return (ICSR, 2010). More surprisingly, the police provide special facilities to some terrorist detainees such as allowing their family to visit them, arranging their airfare, providing better housing facilities, meals, prioritized medical treatment and even arranging the finance of detainee's wedding, if any, in the custody (Ibid). Critical comments are bound to surround this aspect of this program, as it is seen as if the police are providing favours to the detainees (Personal Interview, Prison Officer, Surabaya Prison, 2011). Within the program, the police try to keep the prisoners under their control in detention centers because once they are transferred to prison; the chances to control terrorist prisoners will be difficult. But, it is hard to keep terrorist detainee in the police headquarters since new detainee would replace the place.

Looking at all counterterrorism agencies, every agency has its own role. Indeed, the BNPT is the central agency among the counterterrorism agencies, however it seems that there is no synchronization between these agencies

to implement de-radicalization program. Prisons, with all of the problems underlying in prison practice, have a limited capacity in running this program. They do not receive any support or specific direction on how to handle terrorist prisoners to be in accordance with the de-radicalization program (Personal Interview, Prison Officer, Surabaya Prison, 2011). Lack of coordination and over-division are among the main limitations of Indonesia's counterterrorism programs.

## **DE-RADICALIZATION PROGRAMS IN INDONESIAN PRISONS**

The prison (*Pemasyarakatan* / correctional institution) under the Directorate Correction of Ministry of Law and Human Rights includes of 400 (Roth, 2006) prison and detention centres of which only 20 prisons hold terrorist prisoners (ICG, 2007). Without any preparation in developing its human resources, *pemasyarakatan* institution has commenced to be involved in the de-radicalization program. The "*Pemasyarakatan or Correctional Process*" for terrorist prisoners comprises four procedural stages Personal Interview, Prison Officer, Surabaya and Malang Prison, 2011:

1. The first stage is the observation process. In this process, as soon as new terrorist prisoners are placed in prison, they are placed in a special maximum security block for terrorists and during this placement, interviews are conducted by the prison officials in charge to address prisoner's background regarding their education, religious and family background as well as addressing the root causes of why they committed their crime.
2. The second stage is provided for terrorist prisoners who have served one-third of their sentence and have shown good behaviour. This stage provides more privileges and freedom to prisoners than before, and if they have earned a credit of good behavior during this process, they are moved onto the medium security block. At the new place, prisoners are given responsibility and encouraged to be independent and confident person so that after they release, they could be able to integrate and assimilate within the society.
3. The third stage is provided for terrorist prisoners who have served one-half of the sentence and shown good behaviour in accordance with the recommendations from the 'Board of *Pemasyarakatan*.' At this stage prisoners may work in the community near the prison, but of course they are still supervised by officers.
4. The fourth stage is the last stage that is available to prisoners who have already served two-thirds of the sentence and shown good behavior. In this process, prisoners are granted parole and permitted to serve the rest of the sentence in the community. However, the prisoners need would need to make a routine report about their activities and if prisoners commit a crime or violate the prison regulation, they will be forced to return to prison and serve the rest of the sentence.

Based on field research on both prisons, it is clear that deradicalization program run by two prisons is just the same as the general correctional system written in Law Number 12 Year 1995 on Correctional Institution. The system would achieve its main goals: (1) to improve and develop prisoners as fully integrated person who will renounce from violating the law and (2) to encourage prisoners to become active, productive and useful for the society (Personal Interview, Prison Officer, Surabaya Prison, 2011). However, with limited knowledge and understanding on how to deradicalise terrorist prisoners, both prisons have tried to determine their own standard of operation on how to reduce the level of radicalism among terrorist prisoners. Having reviewed the different characteristics of terrorist prisoners; such as refusing to obey the officer, rebellious and introvert, taking no notice and disregarding them altogether, thinking the officers have less religious knowledge, it was observed on field that the *Pemasyarakatan* officers have to create their own working policies that would obviously differ from other inmates.

Some efforts have been implemented by both prisons in reducing the level of radicalism in prison consist of:

### **a. Building trust through personal approach**

The first effort underpinning the deradicalization program run by Indonesian prisons is to build an emotional relationship through personal approach with each prisoner so that they will feel comfortable while they are in prison. For terrorist prisoners, they receive special attention from the officers who interact directly with them giving them guidance on law and spiritual order (Ibid). The vision of this effort is to restore the relationship of harmony between prisoners and officers. As aforementioned, most of terrorist prisoners are rebellious and tend

to disobey and disregard prison rules, officers are expected to adapt their system from the prescribed general correctional system into feasible deradicalization methods that aim to produce law-abiding citizens from former terrorist through realization of their mistake. Indeed, there are difficulties in the process for officers to create such a system; however, some evidence shows that trust and an emotional approach are likely to soften terrorist prisoners with the result that they agree to cooperate with the officers. For those who have cooperated with the officers, they are chosen as informants and willing to report what activities are carried out by their fellow prisoners, or in other words, some of these terrorist prisoners may become 'interlocutor' between officer and prisoners. Recently, based on information obtained by such prisoners, the officers were successful in preventing recruitment of new terrorist members in prison (Personal Interview, Prison Officer, Surabaya Prison 2011). CH, a close friend of Dr. Azhari who was convicted 12 years of imprisonment in Surabaya prison, was successful in convincing some inmates to follow his ideology, to join their network and even to behave and dress up like him (Kaminini, 2011). Through meetings conducted for reciting Koran every week in Surabaya Prison, he successfully proposed other inmates to follow his ideology (Personal Interview, Prison Officer, Surabaya Prison, 2011).

#### **b. Providing Counseling program**

The treatment and rehabilitation programs in Indonesian correctional system for terrorist prisoners are based on an interactive process supported by an appropriate program. Correctional institution as social reintegration institution have a responsibility to provide counselling program within their rehabilitation program. For both prisons, officers have prepared religious debates and psychological counselling for terrorist prisoners that aim to deradicalize terrorists to renounce their ideologies. However, these programs are still far from achieving desired success since some terrorist prisoners refuse to attend the program as they claim that Indonesian government along with other structural officer including prison officer, religious scholar and psychologist are *taghout*.

#### **c. Providing a vocational training**

In a recent study by Boucek, through comprehensive deradicalization program including psychological counseling, art therapy, sports and lessons in Islam, the Saudi initiative seems to have successfully resulted in changing the radical ideology of jihadis (Boucek, 2011). Although the deradicalization program run in Indonesian prisons is not as well-funded and comprehensive as in Saudi rehabilitation centre, the establishment of vocational training for terrorist prisoners has a great influence in developing skills to encourage prisoners to become active, productive and useful to the community. FR, a life sentenced imprisonment prisoner who was involved in stockpile in Ambon that killed two Christians said that spending time in the workshop to learn about the handicraft makes him feel more relaxed and not too stressful to think about his life sentence (Personal Interview, Terrorist Prisoner, Surabaya Prison, 2011).

### **HOW SUCCESSFUL IS THE PROGRAM?**

In most Indonesian prisons, poor physical facilities underlie the implementation of the correctional system. Many prisoners complain of overcrowding cells, poor hygiene and sanitation, and inequality of food they get every day, therefore it is not surprising if every prisoner needs to pay a fixed price every month to the prison officer to get normal and appropriate life, and still they have to give some money to get longer visit time with their family, which leads to prison corruption (Personal Interview, Terrorist Prisoner, Surabaya Prison, September 2011).

The prison's approach to de-radicalizing terrorist convicts is dubious as this program does not constitute a comprehensive or complete program of de-radicalizing. Correctional system of terrorist convicts is basically the same as other inmates committing general crime like murder and theft which includes psychological counselling, vocational training, therapy, sports, and religious re-education (Personal Interview, Prison Officer, Surabaya and Malang Prison, 2011).

In the implementation of the program, the officers face few obstacles that hamper the counterterrorism efforts. The main obstacle is the gap between the terrorist inmates and their community including inmates from other cells and also with the correctional officers. The terrorist prisoners never trust anyone other than their own people outside their circle. In their daily activities, they always spend more time on praying, reading books in their own cells, and never interact with others. These people do not show any proactive and positive attitude in

the program, and do not want to join any activities run by the officers. They tend to be passive and disregard the ongoing process (Personal Interview, Prison Officer, Malang Prison, 2011).

More worrying, when they are asked about any possibility to join terrorist networks after their release, without any doubt they answer that if there is any chance they will join with their radical colleagues again. FR, terrorist convict clearly states that “If I was still outside now, it’s possible I would join the jihad in Ambon again. Hate against the police and military has grown deep in my heart. Should I forgive them? They did not do anything when the Christians kill the Moslems. If they think that deradicalization program can change our mind, then it is wrong. The root of problem is inequality between Muslim and Christian in Ambon, the government should do something in Ambon. If they think this is rehabilitation, they’re wrong! The longer they keep us here and away from our family the stronger the jihad spirit becomes!” (Personal Interview, Terrorist Prisoner, Surabaya Prison, 2011).

Another weakness is from the officers. The prison officers have not received information regarding on what is de-radicalization program and how to handle terrorist prisoners under the right track from BNPT. They have limited knowledge about this program and they just run the program in accordance with general correctional system written on Law number 12 Year 1995 on Correctional Institution. It also stands out the insufficient number of officers with technical qualification, especially psychological, who can notice and prevent the radicalization process among prisoners. At present, there is only one psychologist in Surabaya prison for more than a thousand convicts which in many cases psychologist officer reduce their counselling time to carry out a direct intervention on the prisoners.

The fact that the failure stories are much more than the successful one underlie the implementation of deradicalization program in Indonesian prison. As many of former terrorist prisoners, after his release return to their old ways, becoming the top of the country’s most wanted list. The Indonesian de-radicalization program defies characterization of the real “de-radicalization program.” Within the “*pemasyarakatan* system,” what prison has done to counter radical ideology is far from what is expected by the government. At present, the BNPT and other agencies are struggling in synchronizing and integrating the umbrellas of counterterrorism program between agencies especially the prisons. There is not sufficient coordination between the prison staff and counterterrorism agencies. The BNPT and the police focus on pre-trial process including gathering intelligence information in order to break the terrorist network, at the same time, the correctional system does not have a specific strategy to de-radicalize Jihadi ideology, and to prevent and avoid the process of radicalization and recruitment in prison.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, the solution to these problems requires a reformation on the correctional system as well as its administration to design a global strategy to counter jihadi ideology inside the prison. It would be essential for the prison officers to be involved in the grand strategy of counterterrorism programs including improving and developing the human resources so that well qualified and familiarized personnel will strengthen the Indonesia’s counterterrorism program.

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