

# The "Soft Approach" Strategy In Coping With Islamist Terrorism In Indonesia

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## Abstrak

Indonesia is posited as the centre of gravity for Islamic terrorism in Southeast Asia. The presence of several radical groups, such as Al Jamaah al Islamiyyah (JI), with their vast networks in Indonesia and beyond, as well as possible supportive elements in the Muslim-majority population, seems to vindicate the above image. Indeed, a series of brutal attacks terrorism have taken place since 2000—with the 2002 Bali bombing as the apex. Government moved forward by tasking law enforcement apparatus to reveal the case, bring the perpetrators to justice, and unveil their network. This signifies the adoption of a "Law Enforcement-focused" strategy with the police in the fore front. This strategy however does not mean other counter-terrorism tools are put aside, such as intelligence and military force. These tools were also used, but law enforcement, in which an act of terrorism is perceived as a crime, became the focus of the strategy.

The law enforcement strategy has several shortcomings and therefore it should be complemented by the soft approach strategy to counter radicalization. The existing efforts for countering radicalization and rehabilitation of detainees should be continued and intensified by the police. Meanwhile, other measures of countering radicalization could be coordinated by the Office of the Coordinating Desk for Anti Terrorism. Of the many impediments that inhibit Indonesia from gaining a more promising outcome, the financial problem is the most immediate one to be resolved. The police should continue their persuasive efforts to deal with radical individuals and expand their targets to include potential, influential leaders and senior members in the radical network with the help of a team consisting of selected Islamic scholars and psychologists.

## Keyword

Terrorism, strategy, law enforcement, countering, radicalization, rehabilitation, police

## I. Introduction

The international security environment has been recently marked by the emergence of a new phenomenon called the “New Terrorism”, which is chiefly motivated by religious causes<sup>1</sup>. In this respect, compared to other religious-based terrorism, Islamist terrorism has been the most prevalent. Furthermore, this new Islamist militancy is characterized by the fact that they are now more lethal, more global, and more difficult to penetrate. They also possess a different world view—specifically, they perceive the West and their supporters as enemies<sup>3</sup>. The 9/11 attacks have clearly proven these characteristics<sup>4</sup>.

Meanwhile, Indonesia is posited as the centre of gravity for Islamic terrorism in Southeast Asia<sup>5</sup>. The presence of several radical groups, such as Al Jamaah al Islamiyyah (JI), with their vast networks in Indonesia and beyond, as well as possible supportive elements in the Muslim-majority population, seems to vindicate the above image<sup>6</sup>. Indeed, a series of brutal attacks have taken place since 2000—with the 2002 Bali bombing as the apex.

In responding to this rise in radical violence, Indonesia has been reported to be largely successful in coping with the problem. Most of the attacks have been revealed, many of the perpetrators have been arrested and prosecuted, and the radical networks have been uncovered<sup>7</sup>. This achievement has also been signified by the absence of any single major terrorist incident since 2006.

This success has been attributed to Indonesia’s two-pronged approach. Apart from the kinetic approach that is law-enforcement-focused, Indonesia has also employed a soft approach by persuading radical Islamist individuals. This paper attempts to explain how the “soft-approach” strategy has helped Indonesia’s counter-terrorism efforts and further analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the approach. For a better understanding of such strategy, it is indispensable to begin with a brief account of the emergence of such strategy. This would include a broad description of Indonesia’s counter-terrorism strategy in general and the need for the soft approach to complement the existing strategy.

## II. Strategy of Countering Terrorism in Indonesia

- 1 Ramakhrisna, Kumar, and Andrew Tan, *The New Terrorism: Diagnosis and Prescriptions*, in Andrew Tan and Kumar Ramakhrisna (eds), *The New Terrorism: Anatomy, Trends and Counter-Strategies*, Singapore, Times Media Private Limited, 2002, p. 4.
- 2 Ranstop, Magnus, *Terrorism in the Name of Religion*, in in Russel D. Howard and Reid L. Sawyer, eds., *Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Understanding The New Security Environment*, Dubuque, Iowa: McGraw Hill, 2nd ed., 2006, p. 126.
- 3 Ellis, Brent, *Countering Complexity: An Analytical Framework to Guide Counter-Terrorism Policy-Making*, in in Russel D. Howard and Reid L. Sawyer, eds., *Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Understanding The New Security Environment*, Dubuque, Iowa: McGraw Hill, 2nd ed., 2006, p. 112.
- 4 Arquilla, John, David Ronfeldt, and Michele Zanini, *Networks, Netwar, and Information-Age Terrorism*, in Russel D. Howard and Reid L. Sawyer, eds., *Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Understanding The New Security Environment*, Dubuque, Iowa: McGraw Hill, 2nd ed., 2006, p. 87.
- 5 Sidel, John. T., *The Islamist Threat in Southeast Asia: A Reassessment*, Washington, East-West Center Washington, 2007, *Policy Studies* 37, p. 19.
- 6 *Ibid*, p. 19-20
- 7 International Crisis Group. *Indonesia: Jemaah Islamiyah's Current Status*, Asia Briefing No. 63, 3 May 2007, p. 6-10.

Indonesia has employed three strategies in coping with terrorism since the New Order government. Each strategy was appropriated into specific period with its specific political environment. The first period was before the Reformation era of 1998. During this period the strategy was military-focused. The dominant role of the military in this political regime has allowed the military, especially the Army, to lead counter-terrorism efforts. In fact, Army generals chaired an extraordinary institution named Kopkamtib (*Komando Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban* or Command for Restoring Security and Order) that was subsequently superseded by Bakorstanas (*Badan Koordinasi Stabilitas Nasional* or Coordinating Agency of National Stability). In the name of national stability, this agency, that had policing powers, could investigate anything or anyone perceived to be posing a threat to national stability, including terrorism and political dissidents<sup>8</sup>. This position was further enforced by the draconian 1963 Anti Subversion Act. This strategy was quite effective in suppressing radical militants since some of its leaders, such as Abu Bakar Baasyir and Abdullah Sungkar, fled to Malaysia for sanctuary<sup>9</sup>. Despite the presence of several terrorist incidents, attacks rarely occurred and most of them were successfully revealed. The drawback of this strategy however was the allegations about human rights abuse<sup>10</sup>, and the failure to address the underlying causes of radical movements—making it possible for the movement to revive itself in the future.

The second period was a transitional one between 1998 and the 2002 Bali bombing incident. During this period there was a sort of disorientation in counter-terrorism strategy. In other words, the strategy was ambiguous. The military's political role had been scaled back and practically did not take any significant role in counter-terrorism. However, the Indonesian National Police which had been expected to take over the role was not prepared to meet this expectation. The incomplete intelligence data base and the relatively weak capacity to deal with terrorism were the main factors behind this failure. Moreover, the powerful 1963 Anti Subversion Act was revoked due to the overwhelming political pressure from human rights and democratic movements. In reality, the police only relied upon the existing, yet less powerful, Criminal Code to investigate the increasing number of terrorist attacks in this period. As a result, many major attacks were not resolved, such as the Philippines ambassador bombing in 2000 and the 2000 Christmas Eve bombings. Although some foreign intelligence counterparts had given tip-offs on the presence of Islamic terrorist networks in the country, Indonesia was not successful in revealing them, let alone prosecuting their leaders.<sup>11</sup>

8 Espionage Information, Indonesia, Intelligence and Security, at <http://www.espionageinfo.com/Gu-In/Indonesia-Intelligence-and-Security.html>. Also see Global Security, Bakorstanas:Coordinating Agency for National Stability, at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/indonesia/bakorstanas.htm>

9 Sidel, John T., Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia, Singapore, NUS Press, 2007, p. 208.

10 Espionage Information, op.cit.

11 Smith, Anthony L., Terrorism and the Political Landscape in Indonesia: The Fragile Post-Bali Consensus, in Paul J. Smith (ed), Terrorism and Violence in Southeast Asia: Transnational Challenges to State and Regional Stability, New York, ME Sharpe, 2005,

The 2002 Bali bombing had clearly galvanized the Indonesian government to take stern actions against Islamic terrorism. It moved forward by tasking law enforcement apparatus to reveal the case, bring the perpetrators to justice, and unveil their network. This signifies the adoption of a "Law Enforcement-focused" strategy with the police in the fore front. This strategy however does not mean other counter-terrorism tools are put aside, such as intelligence and military force. These tools were also used, but law enforcement, in which an act of terrorism is perceived as a crime, became the focus of the strategy<sup>12</sup>.

As a result of the intensive hard work by the police, supported by the new 2003 Anti Terrorism Act and as well as the assistance from fellow foreign security agencies, the task of revealing the 2002 Bali Bombing was completed successfully.

Since then, the Indonesian National Police has been recognized as the leading agency in countering terrorism. It went further with many successful investigative operations around the country. More than 400 individuals have been arrested and convicted and the full mosaic of terrorist and radical networks has been assembled. It is no longer a *tanzim siri* or secret organization. In fact, most Indonesians have recognized the group as the most dangerous Islamist terrorist organization in Southeast Asia. This negative image has undermined JI's movement as they lost their legitimacy and public support.

### III. The Weaknesses of Law-Enforcement Strategy and The Need of Soft Approach

Despite of its admirable successes however, the law-enforcement-focused counter-terrorism strategy has, as a matter of fact, several strengths and weaknesses. The former includes its effectiveness in gaining public legitimacy and support—which are critical elements in countering terrorism. Legal arrests and detainments as well as the provision of evidence in a fair trial could satisfy all elements in the population demanding democratic flavor in any tune. More importantly, this strategy could win the hearts and minds of Indonesia's Muslim-majority population that would otherwise extend their sympathy to the radicals. The use of minimum force by law enforcement agencies could prevent the government from exercising excessive use of force that, as argued by Lindsay Clutterbuck, could be counterproductive<sup>13</sup>.

However, this strategy is not without weaknesses. The immediate problem is due to its reactive style<sup>14</sup>. It could address problems that had surfaced, such as attacks or plot of attacks or other illegal deeds. It does little to address the underlying causes that gave rise to the illegal incidents. Many literatures have shown that terrorism is just a tactic being employed by the weak against the stronger enemy for political purposes<sup>15</sup>.

12 Clutterbuck, Lindsay, Law Enforcement, in in Audrey Kurth et al (eds), *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of A Grand Strategy*, Washington, Georgetown University Press, 2004, p. 140.

13 Clutterbuck, Lindsay, *ibid*, p. 151

14 *Ibid*, p. 142-149.

15 Hoyt, Timothy, D., *Military Force*, in Audrey Kurth et al (eds), *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of A Grand Strategy*, Washington, Georgetown University Press, 2004, p. 170.

Thus, the problem of terrorism is not just terrorist attacks *per se*. It involves a process, and more frequently a long time process, that causes people to commit bloody and brutal violence. This process includes disaffected persons, an enabling group and a legitimizing ideology<sup>16</sup>. People who have grievances are inducted by radicals group that indoctrinate them with certain ideologies that allows them to commit violence to advance their causes. This suggests that if we can stop this process from happening then we could address the problem of terrorism, and automatically could prevent future attacks. Hence, there should be something done to identify and address the grievances that could differ from person to person or group to group, paralyze the enabling groups and neutralize the radical ideology. The Law-enforcement strategy has been able to paralyze the enabling group, but it could not deal effectively with the elements of disaffected persons and the legitimizing ideology—two factors claimed by Richardson as critical for the nurture of terrorism.<sup>17</sup>

The other prominent shortcoming of the law-enforcement strategy resides at its dependence upon the existing legal system. Since some of the activities associated with or even enabled acts of, terrorism have not been criminalized by the current legal regime, law enforcement agencies have not been able to ensnare potential individuals from radical networks. For instance, when they do not commit any crime stipulated by the legal regime. This has allowed radical and violent movements to survive.

#### IV. The Implementation of the Soft Approach.

Given the fact that merely arresting and prosecuting perpetrators would not address the problem of terrorism, the Indonesian National Police have pushed ahead to employ a soft approach strategy to complement the kinetic, law-enforcement strategy. In essence, a group of officers led by Brigadier General Suryadharma, Head of Detachment 88, persuaded selected terrorist detainees. The main aim of this approach was to make them more cooperative with the police and subsequently provide information for further investigation. In addition, detainees were also expected to change their hostile attitude towards their defined "enemies". In order to achieve these goals, a handful of selected officers were designated to do this job. They had a wide experience in dealing and investigating Islamist terrorists, and thus, had already understood the exclusive culture of radical networks. They also met specific psychological qualities: patient, good listener, preferably a good Muslim, and have persuasive skills.

During previous investigations where an intense interaction took place between investigators and more than 400 terrorist suspects, their families and networks, some interesting findings were uncovered. First, in the case of JI as the most threatening group, although the network was a secret organization, it actually

<sup>16</sup> Richardson, Louise, *What Terrorists Want*, London, John Murray, 2006, p. 93.

<sup>17</sup> Richardson, Louise, *ibid*, p. 93.

constituted a hierarchical organizational structure with functional divisions and descriptions, territorial divisions, working relationship procedures, and some other features of Weberian organization with an Emir at the top of the structure<sup>18</sup>. Thus, it could be distinguished by the layering system in a circle with regard to the role of individuals in the network. They involved hard cores, operatives, supporters, and sympathizers. The level of radicalism between these groups was also different. The deeper an individual goes into the circle the more radical he would be. In addition, most radical Islamist groups in Indonesia were attributed to former group of Darul Islam. They were simply splinters or offshoots of this rebel group.<sup>19</sup>

Second, it was a commune with an exclusive culture. Aside from JI, other groups, such as NII, Laskar Jundullah, or Mujahidin Kompak, seem to share a similar outlook. In this sense, they had their own norms and culture. This culture is perhaps akin to that of Hofstedian terms as *collectivism*, *weak uncertainty-avoidance* and *high power-distance*<sup>20</sup>.

Some of these traits include: only trust insiders, respect seniority (based on the width of Islamic teachings and military experience and skills), did not ask others' background, had a distinctive appearance such as growing beard and shorter trousers for men and wearing *burkha* for women.<sup>21</sup> Further, they embraced a similar ideology that was the characteristic of that of Qaedaist-wahabbis.<sup>22</sup>

That said, they perceived outsiders as infidels or apostates, the government as a "thaghut" or "evil" government and, in practice, security officers as "troops of evil". They legalized the concept of violent jihad and "hijrah" or "emigrating". The latter was an imitation of *hijrah* of Prophet Muhammad and his entourage from Mekkah to Madinah to evade "infidels" oppression and to rebuild up the strength to fight back.<sup>23</sup>

As a consequence of this, they left everything behind in Mekkah. In implementing this concept, radical individuals who had committed to engage in jihad operations would leave everything behind and submit himself to God. They moved from the real world to the "better", jihad world.

Third, the motivation of joining the jihad movement varied. The drivers could basically be categorized into three motives that have been pointed out by Jessica Stern in her study: spiritual, emotional, or material profits.<sup>24</sup>

18 Abas, Nasir, *Membongkar Jamaah Islamiyah* (translation: Unmasking Jamaah Islamiyah), Jakarta, Grafindo Khazanah Ilmu, 2006, p. 114-115.

19 Ramakhrisna, Kumar, *Radical Pathways: Understanding Muslim Radicalization in Indonesia*, Santa Barbara, Praeger Security International, 2009. See also Sidel, John T., *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia*, Singapore, NUS Press, 2007, p. 201-217.

20 Smith, Peter B., Michael Harris Bond, and Cigdem Kaqitcibasi, *Understanding Social Psychology Across Cultures: Living and Working in A Changing World*, Los Angeles, Sage Publication, 2006, p. 33-36.

21 Abas, Nasir, *op.cit.*, p. 94-95.

22 Ramakhrisna, Kumar, *Radical Pathways: Understanding Muslim Radicalization in Indonesia*, Santa Barbara, Praeger Security International, 2009.

23 Phares, Walid, *Future Jihad: Terrorist Strategies against America*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 22-23.

24 Stern, Jessica, *Terror In The Name Of God*, New York, HarperCollins, 2003, p. 3. In this book, Stern notes three kinds of profit that could be the motives of joining terrorist networks: spiritual, emotional and material.

Some of them were due to the social environment where they were born into or lived close to a former Darul Islam family. They were inducted and introduced to this specific culture and ideology. Thus, they were more spiritually driven. But some young recruits joined the movement because they saw it as challenging and could enable them to venture into other countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, or Southern Philippines for free. The money circulated in the network constituted another appeal to join the network. The networks' main financial sources were members' income (2.5%) and small scale businesses.<sup>25</sup>

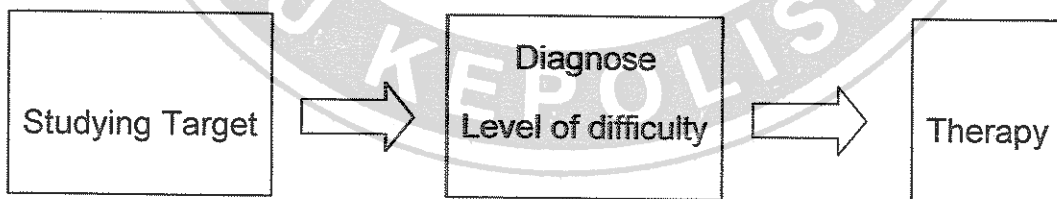
There were also, allegedly, financial support from legitimate social or charity Islamic organizations based in the Middle East.<sup>26</sup>

The other finding relates to recruitment methods. The most important method was through blood ties (or kinship). The recruits were recruited by parents or immediate members of their family or relatives. Other ways were through friendship and discipleship between *ustadz* (Islamic teacher) and his students.

The fourth important finding relates to the outcome of a close, personal interaction between an officer and a very senior JI member, Nasir Abas. This individual, who had once served as the Head of Mantiqi 3–JI's territorial division of Southern Philippines, Kalimantan and Sulawesi,<sup>27</sup> was persuaded by a senior police officer. Perhaps because of the personalities of this officer who was helpful and could show empathy, they gradually developed an intimate friendship during the investigation. Abas provided much critical information on the JI network, including that of leading to other arrests and the seizures of illegal firearms, ammunitions, and explosives. He was even willing to testify against his former "boss", Abu Bakar Baasyir in a 2004 trial.<sup>28</sup> This stunning development, where a very senior JI member turned against his former network as well as his changed his mindset—moving closer towards moderate Islam—has attested to the possibility of changing the radical mindset.

Considering these findings, the police team developed a model to deal with radicalized individuals. It adopted an analogy from the medical field, especially the procedure a doctor usually would take for treating a patient.

Figure 1: Model of Dealing – Analogy from the Medical Field



25 Abas, Nasir, op.cit., p. 125.

26 Abuza, Zachary, Al Qaeda Comes to Southeast Asia, in Paul J. Smith (ed), Terrorism and Violence in Southeast Asia: Transnational Challenges to State and Regional Stability, New York, ME Sharpe, 2005, p. 47.

27 Abas, Nasir, ibid, p. 303.

28 Abuza, Zachary, The Trial of Abu Bakar Baasyir: A Test for Indonesia, The Jamestown Foundation, 9 May 2005, at [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=345](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=345).

Firstly, it was perceived to be critical to study a target. An individual's role in the network should be figured out, as well as his dominant motivation in joining such network, and his level of radicalism. The role in the network, as has been mentioned previously, could be distinguished into four categories: hardcore, operative, supporter and sympathizer. Whereas, although a target would not necessarily be driven by a single motive in joining radical network, it would be important to find out the most dominant motive, that could be either spiritual, emotional or material.

The next stage was to determine the level of difficulty in persuading him. It was assumed that the more radical a target was the more difficult he could be approached, and vice versa. A hardcore with spiritual dominant motive, like Abu Bakar Baasyir, would be the most difficult one. Meanwhile, an operative with emotional or material motive would be more easily persuaded. A supporter or sympathizer with material motive would be the least difficult to persuade. The outcome of this observation would lead to the selection of tactics and appropriate officers to persuade the target.

Figure 2: Diagnose Level of Radicalism

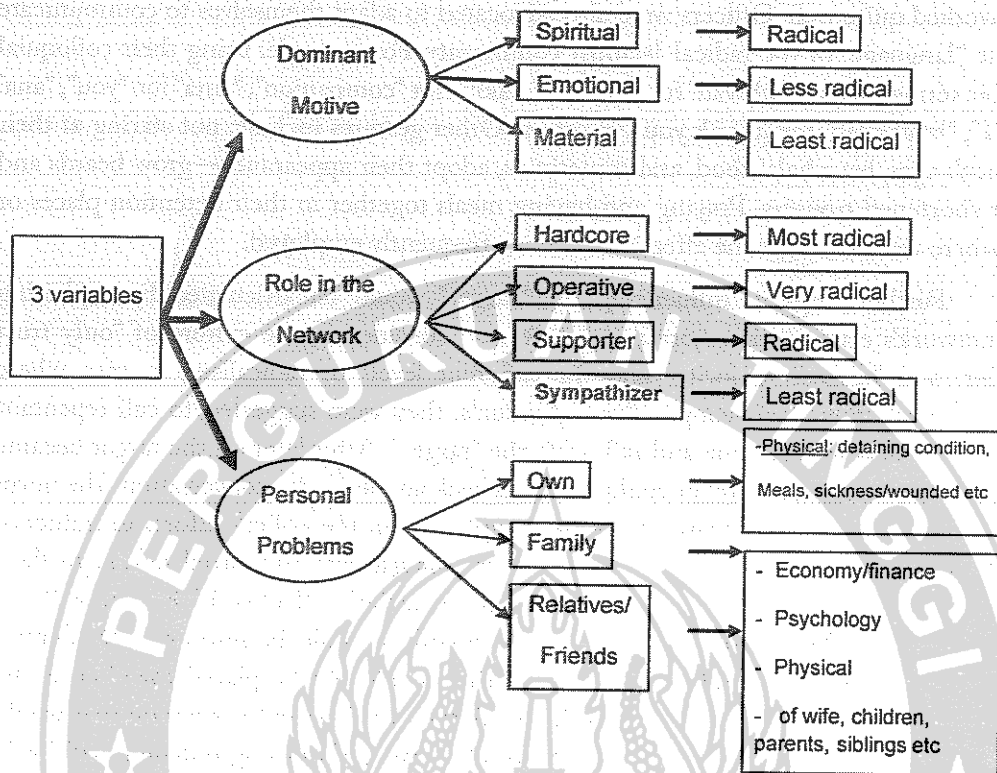
Level of radicalism	Motive			Role in network			
	S	E	M	HC	O	SUP	S SYM
1. Very radical/ difficult	X			X	X		
2. Radical/ moderate		X			X	X	
3. Less radical/ easy			X			X	X

Notes: S: Spiritual, E: Emotional, M: Material, HC: Hardcore, O: Operative, Sup: Supporter, Sym: Sympathizer

The final stage was to implement the persuasive method of a "therapy" to make the target cooperative or even change his radical mindset. The initial step of this stage would be to designate appropriate officers for the target. Thus, each target would be handled by a designated small team of 2 or 3 officers. This designation is important to ensure a consistent persuasion. Building a personal relationship is not be an easy task as it would go through a long process. Therefore, an intervention by other police officers could ruin the blocks that had been built by the initial handlers.



Figure 3: Model for Studying "Target"



The next step would be the most crucial one: building the trust. The idea behind this effort was that if a target had trusted the designated officer then he would be willing to talk more frankly. So the trust serves as the entry gate to get more information. A straightforward attempt to change his mindset or to blame the target's erroneous mindset would just be like breaking the gate that could backfire as the target could feel humiliated. In order to achieve a successful outcome, several tactics were formulated and officers were encouraged to innovate since the target's motivation, role in the network, and level of radicalism were not necessarily similar from one to another.

They could start the interaction by conducting an informal dialogue, rather than a religious debate in which most officers would likely lose. Most of the first dialogues would be tough and difficult; the sense of distrust would prevail. However, it could gradually, if the officer was patient enough, become easier from time to time. Once a smoother communication had been developed, the officers could proceed to observe the "target's" personal problems. They could include family-related, friend-related, or even personal-related hurdles such as stress or the need to have a specific diet during imprisonment.

The trust could be gained by giving a helping hand to solve the identified problems without giving the appearance that they want something in return. This positive gesture has worked quite well. Officers were also advocated to adapt themselves to communicate in the "language" of the radical Islamist community. For example: using their colloquial Arabic terms such as "ikhwan" for "brother", "akhi" for "companion", "anta" for "you", "ana" for "I", "jazakallah" for "thank you", et cetera. Other gestures include: not staring at their women's eyes, have halal food, and sometimes, adopt their appearance—grow beards and wear shortened trousers. Praying and having meals together in their detention places or elsewhere were amongst the effective methods frequently employed.

Further steps in influencing the "target" would be articulated by exploiting the network's own specific norms and cultures. Considering the culture of "only trust insider" and "respect seniority" and the different levels of radicalism, in case where officers encountered non-cooperative individuals, they were suggested to call repentant senior members to intervene and talk with the "target". After later on the target became cooperative, the senior member could be called back and leave the conversation. The norm of "respect seniority" was proven to be very applicable in the police's efforts to influence the network. The repentant seniors could be encouraged and supported to talk to their junior companions to be cooperative. This was particularly effective if the seniors were asked to talk to their former recruits. In this regard, it would be important to identify the recruiters and the recruits. In detention, they would not be placed together as the recruiters could have an opportunity to intensify the in-prison indoctrination that would otherwise be conducted discreetly out of jail. However, a promising outcome will likely take place if a radical detainee was put together with his already-repentant former recruiter since the latter could encourage his junior to change his violent mindset. This norm has also enabled the police to prioritize senior members as the targets to be dealt with as they were more influential in shaping the network.

The main goal of the influencing step was to make them more cooperative for investigation so that they were willing to provide accurate information on the network. In addition, it was also aimed to reorient specific Islamic concepts that had been borrowed by their ideology to legitimize violence. These include: "armed struggle jihad", "defined infidels", "thoghut or evil government", and "hijrah or shifting". Taking into account that these concepts had been interpreted differently from that of the Islamic mainstream, they were encouraged to re-think the concepts and adopt that of the mainstream. A dialog with Islamic scholars might be workable for the less radical supporters and sympathizers, but would be difficult for more radical operatives or hardcore. Therefore, instead of holding a tough religious debate, the more radical members were brought into more practical approach and measures, including dialogues with the have-nots, such as a group of garbage collectors and orphans. Such moves were meant to show that helping the less

unfortunate people was also a form of jihad. Another example was a deep dialogue with the families of the victims of their violence. Having understood how devastated the families were after being left by their beloved ones, most of these radicals showed their sense of remorse. Providing detainees with moderate books were also fruitful. The books which were otherwise avoided in their exclusive culture were read to kill their mundane time in detention. As a result, the ideas in the books could influence their mindset. Another effective method was to persuade respected family members, such as his mother and wife, to influence the target towards a more cooperative and moderate attitude. The persuasion by these family members would likely involve an easier effort. Facilitating a marriage of male detainees in detaining centers was another good attempt. So far, the police have arranged four weddings. This could be an effective way for bringing them back or "re-hijrah" from the "jihad world" to the "real world". After having a wife, the detainee would think about his responsibilities to his wife. The wedding procedure which was conducted in accordance with the Indonesian "secular" legal system was a good sign of their tolerance towards moderate Islam.<sup>29</sup>

Several repentant individuals had a gift for telling his story, or even writing skills. They would be encouraged to pen their story into a book. This was very effective to spread their message and had served as a religious reorientation for their former network and ordinary people. The story of their previous wrongdoings could affect other fellow radicals and, at the same time, delegitimize the causes being advanced by the radical groups.

As to the outcome of this strategy, some of the positive indicators include:

1. Two senior members have written books, which included their biography and previously mistaken religious mindset. Nasir Abas has even authored two books. His first book was a bestseller and the first insider's account of JI that made the nebulous JI more naked to the public. His second book has moved further forward and contains religious arguments challenging and blaming the violent Noordin M. Top's mindset. Another author is Ali Imron, one of the Bali bombers and brother of the executed Mukhlas and Amrozi, who also expressed his remorse due to his mistaken belief.<sup>30</sup> These publications signify a great success in dealing with radicalized terrorists since such publications were also risky for them as they could be regarded as traitors by the network.
2. Some individuals have provided information leading to further arrests and uncover the remaining cells of the networks. This attitude was also very risky and indicated their willingness to turn against the network.

<sup>29</sup> ---, Tersangka Poso dinikahkan: Setelah Nikah Saya Ingin Berubah (translation Poso suspect was married: After marriage I want to change myself), Suara Pembaruan Daily, 22 March 2007, <http://www.suarapembaruan.com/News/2007/03/22/index.html>

<sup>30</sup> Ismail, Noor Huda Ismail, Ali Imron's book, *Southeast Asia News*, 11 February 2006, at [http://southeastasianews.org/ali\\_imrons\\_book.html](http://southeastasianews.org/ali_imrons_book.html)

3. Out of some 200 detainees who have been approached, most of them turned to be cooperative or at least were willing to talk more frankly and openly about their network and activities.
4. Although most members of Islamic radical networks remain focused on envisioning the enforcement of Islamic syariah in Indonesia, many of them have discouraged the use of violence as the method. The absence of a major attack since 2006 was assumed to be an appropriate indicator of such division, amidst the relatively few arrests that have been made by Indonesian National Police since 2006 and the release of some senior leaders and operatives from various prisons.

## V. Strengths, Shortcomings and Possible Solutions

The above soft approach strategy implies a couple pluses and minuses. The strengths include its person-to-person persuasion, covert nature, and the adaptation to the networks' subculture. Person-to-person dialogue is particularly crucial to identify the motives for joining radical networks, their role in the network, and the level of radicalism that are not necessarily similar from person-to-person but tend to be generalized by many.<sup>31</sup> In addition, such method is fruitful in figuring out various personal problems of each individual. In this sense, Ramakhrisna points out the critical role of Individual Personality, that would be various, in shaping violent, radical behavior.<sup>32</sup> These understandings are critical to determine the tactics to make them more cooperative and eventually influence them to change their hostile mindset. Bringing radicals to see the impact of their violent operations, including how devastated the families of Muslim victims were, seem to be effective in changing their violent mindset. Many of them showed remorse. This is, in fact, has worked to retrieve their sense of responsibility that will otherwise, as argued by Bandura, cause them willing to kill others.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, the "covert" nature of the soft approach is effective in keeping the persuasion low profile. An overt practice could upset and alert the radicals as they are aware that they are being approached systematically to change their faith. Moreover, the public exposure could inhibit targeted-radical individuals from welcoming officers' personal approach as the former could be afraid of being blamed as traitors by their fellow radicals.<sup>34</sup> In the network, cooperating with troops of "evil" government is forbidden, let

31 Sageman, Marc, *Understanding Terror Network*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, p. 91.

32 Ramakhrisna, Kumar, *Radical Pathways: Understanding Muslim Radicalization in Indonesia*, Santa Barbara, Praeger Security International, 2009.

33 Ramakhrisna, Kumar, *The (Psychic) Roots of Religious Violence in South and Southeast Asia*, in Linell E. Cady and Sheldon W. Simon (eds), *Religion and Conflict in South and Southeast Asia*, London and New York, Routledge, 2007, p. 127-128. In this book Ramakhrisna explains Albert Bandura's moral disengagement. According to Bandura humans in all societies are socialized into accepting socially mandated "self-sanctions" that regulate moral behavior. There are four ways of moral disengagement that make them willing to kill people: 1) by cognitively restructuring the moral value of killing so that the killing can be done free from self-censuring restraints 2) euphemistic labeling: e.g jihad term. 3) displacement of responsibility (e.g fatwa) 4) dehumanization (pigs, infidel animal etc).

34 Abas, Nasir, *op.cit.*, p. 100-101.

alone receiving any assistance from them.

The adaptation to the radical networks' subculture is also crucial. Ramakhrisna claims that Darul Islamist culture, as he terms it, is defined by five core elements.<sup>35</sup> One of them is to have a narrow and absolutist definition of the boundaries of the Islamic community. So, by implementing tactics that are appropriate to this subculture, officers could build a good relationship with the 'targets'. Repentant senior members were even encouraged to talk and influence their juniors. This tactic appears to be somewhat similar to that of the Egyptian soft approach.<sup>36</sup>

The above soft approach does have a number of weaknesses however, including bureaucratic, legal and financial impediments. The bureaucratic problems are particularly caused by the lack of a robust inter-agency approach to crystallize the strategy into a more successful enterprise. So far, the Indonesian National Police with a small ad-hoc team has been the leading unit to deal with the Islamic radicals. It has handled more than 100 individuals including some senior leaders. Some of them are inmates and the remaining have been released or never been prosecuted. The Coordinating Desk for Anti Terrorism has worked on countering Islamist radicalism, particularly in the form of public gatherings or academic occasions for propagating moderate Islam. Perhaps, there have already been some organized some by other government agencies to counter Islamist radicalism and extremism, such as by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education and so on, but they are not really publicly recognized. After all, it is not clear if their attempts were under the umbrella of a government's grand strategy to counter terrorism or just simply an isolated short-term initiative.

Moreover, the soft approach in dealing with Islamic radicalism is not covered by Indonesia's legal system. Again, there have been rather isolated initiatives by the agencies that interact directly with the problems of terrorism: Indonesian National Police and the Coordinating Board for Anti Terrorism at the Office of Coordinating Ministry for Politics, Law and Security. The absence of any legal basis has drawn critics both from domestic or foreign elements. They even questioned the legality of this fruitful attempt. Consequently, the program had to be conducted discreetly. The subsequent implication of this circumstance has been the lack of a directed and simultaneous effort by related agencies to support this enterprise.

The financial hurdle is the most impending problem for the sustainability of this approach. The absence of a legal basis has resulted in a lack of specific designated and sufficient budget to finance the program by any agency. The police team has just relied on the tiny operational budget for the whole counter terrorism operation held by Special

35 Ramakhrisna, Kumar, *Radical Pathways: Understanding Muslim Radicalization in Indonesia*, Santa Barbara, Praeger Security International, 2009.

36 Gunaratna, Rohan, Muhammad bin Ali, 'De-radicalization Initiatives in Egypt: A Preliminary Insight', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 32:277-291, 2009, p. 289

Detachment 88 for Anti Terrorism. It appears that the inadequate financial provision has inhibited the police from gaining an optimum outcome. The police must prioritize "targets" and consequently many potential radical individuals were not persuaded. Moreover, there are many things that could not be done by the police simply because they are beyond the agency's capability. For example: to facilitate the schooling of the detainees' children since the detainees were the breadwinners, to support the radicals and their families after imprisonment, and many other problems facing the radicals. The negligence in assisting their problems would provide an opportunity for the radical network to step in.

Given the above impediments, there are several solutions for the continuity of the soft strategy and the development towards a more promising program. Firstly, the strategy could be articulated into a more transparent, inter-agency program. The comprehensive model of Saudi Arabia could be adopted.<sup>37</sup> But it needs a strong political will, legal basis and a huge budget. Having gained them, this soft approach strategy should be tailored into a grand strategy for countering terrorism that, as claimed by Crenshaw, should bring the state's full range of resources together for this purpose.<sup>38</sup> This option seems to be unlikely in Indonesia since the issuance of such legal basis and the provision of political support from Islamic politicians will also be unlikely. Any issue relating to Islamic radicalism is perceived to be too sensitive for a political discussion since the politicians, particularly Muslim ones, could lose constituents.<sup>39</sup>

The second option is to adopt Singapore's model of the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) that involves Islamic scholars and academics to rehabilitate and de-radicalize radical individuals.<sup>40</sup> The main approach of this program is religious enlightenment. As such, radicals are guided to change their mindset to the righteous one. This might not be applicable either because the main underlying cause of terrorism in Indonesia appears not merely to be the radical ideology.<sup>41</sup> The causes seem to be various and more complicated than that of Singaporean radicals who generally have better lives. The formation of a group of Islamic scholars is necessary to serve as religious consultants but the existing methods should not be displaced.

The third option is to continue the existing method. The program is conducted covertly and kept low profile. The Indonesian National Police is tasked to persuade prioritized radical individuals with the help of a group of selected Islamic scholars and psychologists. For more transparent measures to target ordinary people in society and to counter the

37 Hussain, Syed Rifaat, Responding to Terrorist Threat: Perspectives from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Vol. XXX, No. 3, Spring 2007p. 10-12.

38 Crenshaw, Martha, Terrorism, Strategies and Grand Strategies, in Audrey Kurth et al (eds), *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of A Grand Strategy*, Washington, Georgetown University Press, 2004, p. 75-76

39 Smith, Anthony L., The Politics of Negotiating the Terrorist Problem in Indonesia, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 28:33-44, 2005, p. 39-43.

40 Ali, Mohammed Bin, De-radicalisation Programmes: Changing Minds?, *RSIS Commentaries*, Singapore, RSIS, 23 September 2008, p. 2.

41 Karnavian, M. Tito, *Indonesian Top Secret: Membongkar Konflik Pesisir* (translation: Unmasking Pesisir Conflict), Jakarta, Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2008, p. 375-390.

growing propaganda of the radical network through religious sermons, public gatherings, internet and publications, the Office of the Coordinating Desk for Anti Terrorism could be the leading agency.<sup>42</sup> It should coordinate other related institutions, including the National Intelligence Board, the Office of the Attorney General, the Department of Communication and Information, et cetera. The target areas are mainly in Java, Lombok, South and Central Sulawesi, Maluku and East Kalimantan. These are the areas that have notoriously been the basis of or contaminated by radical networks. Borrowing Ramakhrisna's terms, the police is put at the forefront for the 'primary cognitive immunization efforts', and the Coordinating Desk for the 'secondary cognitive immunization measures'.<sup>43</sup>

For the short term, referring to the positive outcome of the previous methods, the persuasion of radical individuals is critical. The police should be supported and encouraged to continue and develop their program of dealing with radicals. The team should be enlarged in the number of officers involved with a clear list of potential targets. Similarly, the Office of the Coordinating Desk for Anti Terrorism should also be assisted. In doing so, financial support is the most crucial impediment to be solved first. The partnership between the Indonesian National Police and the Office of the Coordinating Desk for Anti Terrorism could result in a robust comprehensive strategy using the tools that are termed by Carnes Lord as psychological-political instruments in countering terrorism.<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

Despite Indonesia's extraordinary success in suppressing terrorism since the 2002 Bali Bombing, the problem is far from over.<sup>45</sup> The threat posed by Islamist radical networks remains as the networks still maintain their extreme ideology and have the capability to launch attacks.<sup>46</sup> The 2008 police operation in dismantling a JI-related group in Palembang proves this account.<sup>47</sup> For the time being, they seem to be "flying under the radar" and are focusing on regrouping and consolidating their network.<sup>48</sup> The method of non-violent has apparently been more employed, especially by propaganda using public speeches, internet<sup>49</sup> and printed publications,<sup>50</sup> and hence it has been promoting radicalism and extremism. But that does not mean the violent option has been obsolete as their ideology associates with violence.

42 ---, Indonesia Kedepankan Pendekatan Lunak Dalam Penanganan Terorisme (translation: Indonesia spearheads soft approach in coping with terrorism), Portal Nasional Republik Indonesia, at [http://www.indonesia.go.id/id/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&cid=9225&Itemid=683](http://www.indonesia.go.id/id/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&cid=9225&Itemid=683).

43 Ramakhrisna, Kumar, *Radical Pathways: Understanding Muslim Radicalization in Indonesia*, Santa Barbara, Praeger Security International, 2009.

44 Lord, Carnes, Psychological-Political Instruments, in Audrey Kurth et al (eds), *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of A Grand Strategy*, Washington, Georgetown University Press, 2004, p. 222.

45 International Crisis Group, *Indonesia: Jemaah Islamiyah's Current Status*, Asia Briefing No. 63, 3 May 2007.

46 Ibid.

47 Astuti Fatima, Lessons From the Foiled Terrorist Attack in Palembang, *RSIS Commentaries*, Singapore, RSIS, 24 July 2008.

48 International Crisis Group, op.cit., p. 12-15.

49 Bergin, Anthony, Sulastri Bte Osman, Carl Ungerer and Nur Azlin Mohamed Yasin, Countering Internet Radicalisation in Southeast Asia: An RSIS-ASPI Joint Report, *Special Report, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, March 2009, Issue 22*, p. 18.

50 International Crisis Group, *Indonesia: Jemaah Islamiyah's Publishing Industry*, Asia Briefing No. 147, 28 February 2008.

The law enforcement strategy has several shortcomings and therefore it should be complemented by the soft approach strategy to counter radicalization. The existing efforts for countering radicalization and rehabilitation of detainees should be continued and intensified by the police. Meanwhile, other measures of countering radicalization could be coordinated by the Office of the Coordinating Desk for Anti Terrorism.

Of the many impediments that inhibit Indonesia from gaining a more promising outcome, the financial problem is the most immediate one to be resolved. The police should continue their persuasive efforts to deal with radical individuals and expand their targets to include potential, influential leaders and senior members in the radical network with the help of a team consisting of selected Islamic scholars and psychologists. Meanwhile, the Office of the Coordinating Desk for Anti Terrorism should prioritize efforts to study the threat posed by radical groups that has used propaganda through internet and publications, and to hold public discussions to counter extremism and radicalism.

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