



Bonding, Bridging and Linking: Involvement of Former Convicts in the Management of Terrorism Countermeasures Strategies

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Abstract: This research aims to analyze how former convicts can contribute to the strategic management of countering criminal acts of terrorism. This research uses the concepts of bonding, bridging, and linking as dimensions of social capital offered by Robert Putnam (2020). Data processing was carried out using in-depth interviews supported by observations of the convict development program. This research shows that former convicts can create a sense of togetherness and group identity, understand alternative narratives in religion and society, and build positive relations with the state as an organization among other convicts. From this research, it is concluded that the involvement of former convicts in the deradicalization program has a positive impact, so its implementation needs to be mainstreamed in implementing the deradicalization program.

Keywords: Convicts; Deradicalization; Management; Organization; Social Capital; Terrorism.

INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is not the same as other types of crime. Terrorism is an extraordinary crime that has the potential to damage not only physical buildings but also the mental and mindset of the subject radically (Alius, 2019). The status of an extraordinary crime is attached to acts of terrorism considering the impact resulting from ideologically charged violence, in massively and destructively disrupting the social structure of society. This macro-scale conflict certainly has the potential to disrupt economic activities, state political mechanisms, division of social groups, and even disintegration of the nation.

Currently, the Government emphasizes protecting and embracing its citizens from radical terrorism. This strategy is pursued with a soft-power program called counter-radicalization and deradicalization. These programs are key concepts in the discourse on countering terrorism in Indonesia which resonate with universal narratives regarding human rights. This system provides space for constructive relations between the Government and its citizens where there is a radical change in perspective in handling conflict and crime. The transformation of the approach from prison punishment to community-based prevention and correctional punishment requires a series of disciplinary techniques and practices in its realization.

As for the Regulation of the Head of the National Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT) and other laws and regulations, it is stated that the BNPT's mission is to make efforts to prevent acts of terrorism, increase vigilance, and provide protection for vital objects that have the potential to become targets of terrorist attacks. Apart from that, a series of concepts such as national preparedness, counter-radicalization, and deradicalization are government-formulated strategies to prevent acts of terrorism in society.

BNPT itself has adopted a multi-actor approach to prevent terrorism through the Pentahelix model (BNPT, 2021). This strategy was taken to make the counter-radicalization program a success through collaboration with business groups, media, non-governmental organizations, and academics. This model is considered successful enough that its implementation can be found in other fields such as tourism (Vani, 2020),

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natural disasters (Haksama, 2022), and health issues in response to the Covid-19 pandemic (Humaedi, 2021).

In the context of non-governmental organizations, Syafi'i (2019) and Maulana (2023) then analyzed the potential of former perpetrators as partners in implementing counter-terrorism programs, where they saw that former terrorist convicts were strategic partners for the sustainability of the program and needed to be institutionalized through foundations that specifically provide space for former terrorists to participate in terrorist convicts's development, such as the Yayasan Prasasti Perdamaian and Dekat Bintang dan Langit (DeBintal).

The involvement of former convicts themselves is considered important because the subjects are assumed to have a set of valuable knowledge and experiences, specifically in deconstructing old identities and social networks. Furthermore, former terrorist convicts can contribute to the deradicalization program because the subjects have experienced positive interactions with moderate parties, received opportunities for education and decent work, or several benefits from incentives provided by the government (Altier, 2021).

This research then argues that the involvement of former convicts as stakeholders in the management of deradicalization strategies is based on the dimensions of social capital coined by Robert Putnam, namely bonding, bridging, and linking. Putnam (2020) explains that social bonding is defined as capital that emphasizes a sense of togetherness and homogeneous identity, social bridging is defined as capital that encourages individuals to interact with other individuals outside the group, while social linking is defined as capital that connects individuals with institutions or organization that has greater power such as the government and/or state as a whole.

In the dimension of bonding social capital, researchers assume that former convicts have the same fate in undergoing the criminal justice process as subjects who are still serving sentences in correctional institutions. This similarity is obtained because former convicts have undergone the process that convicts are currently experiencing, especially at the arrest and development stages. In the dimension of bridging social capital, researchers assume that former convicts can provide an overview of what's life like post-release, especially in terms of adaptation and reintegration into the surrounding community. As for the linking social capital dimension, researchers assume that former convicts can encourage subjects to have positive relationships with the state as an organization and its various instruments.

For this reason, this research aims to analyze the extent of the role of former convicts' involvement in the use of social capital to optimize deradicalization strategy management. Furthermore, it is hoped that this article can become material for formulating policies for ministries and/or institutions responsible for countering terrorism regarding the management of the roles and functions of former convicts.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach by conducting in-depth interviews and participatory observation. A qualitative approach is used to dig deeply and comprehensively to see social reality (Creswell, 2022). First, an in-depth interview technique was chosen to obtain data and information from informants who can represent certain groups and see certain phenomena that occur (Bryman, 2021) so that they can explain the predetermined topic. In-depth interviews were conducted with 19 convicts and former convicts who were directly involved in the development program implemented by the National Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT). Second, participatory observation was carried out during the convicts' development program to capture events that could not be obtained from interviews regarding convicts' daily lives while participating in said



activities. The informants in the research were selected using purposive sampling based on the actor's role, experience, and knowledge of their involvement in the deradicalization program as well as snowball sampling to obtain data and information with more depth and detail.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bonding: Blood is Thicker than Water

Discussion of the changes experienced by subjects in releasing pro-violence ideology is a crucial issue in the discourse on countering terrorism. Through the deradicalization program, the National Counter-Terrorism Agency also continues to involve elements of society to maximize the results obtained from related programs, starting from religious leaders and state figures to carry out counter-narratives, counter-ideologies as well as redefinitions and straightening out logical fallacies or misunderstandings of adherents of radical ideology; social psychology experts to build a new personal identity and separate it from the group identity previously held by adherents of radical ideology (detachment); to entrepreneurial practitioners to provide knowledge, experience and productive networks for convicts in preparation for their return to society.

However, the deradicalization strategy that is currently working does not provide sufficient space for former terrorist convicts who have successfully reintegrated into society to participate. Involving former terrorist convicts as key actors offers a competitive advantage in deradicalization program interventions when compared with other types of stakeholders. Data from Informant A who is a former convict with affiliation to the JAD group shows that there is a correlation between convicts' openness to shared experiences. He stated that:

"New terrorist convicts require ideological conditioning involving former convicts. If the speakers involved are those who are not former convicts, we will not bother listening to the material presented. They don't know our understanding (the brothers/lkhwan). They don't know its weak points. The shared experiences of fellow lkhwan can be a motivation for us to live a life in society. Interactions are more enjoyable and easier to absorb considering we are all starting from 'zero'. We also received various tips on how to best respond to the image given to us by society, families, and the environment. I was delighted when X (former terrorist convict) was brought in to develop national insight. He talked a lot about the history of the founding of Indonesia as well as stories about conflicts that had previously occurred and had passed. This is useful to straighten out our (the brothers'/lkhwan's) understanding." (Interview with A on January 2, 2024)

Furthermore, convicts' daily activities are strictly programmed, starting from waking up, exercise time, coaching and training schedules, breaks, prayer, and meal time, to a curfew for rest and sleep. Apart from that, there are also family visit activities, as well as self-strengthening through conditioning and training aimed at reconstructing the subject. This series of interventions is a manifestation of a strategic management strategy that helps form a new identity for terror perpetrators to support the continuation of peaceful living in society.

However, this series of programs cannot be said to be successful enough to help terrorism convicts release their thoughts of radicalism/extremism, because the nature of terrorist acts contains an ideological dimension. For this reason, further intervention is needed through alternative strategic management offered by other sources of authority. The results of interviews with Informant B who is currently serving a sentence show that



similarities in history and experience play an important role in the subject's acceptance. He further stated that:

"Let me tell you a little, even though I have the NKRI Pledge (oath of allegiance to the Republic of Indonesia) in Cikeas, it was a lie (taqiyya) after all, and I still have the understanding that this country is infidel. I only found out the point of error when discussing it with X (former terrorist convict). Deradicalization (conditioning) needs to involve former convicts because many of the messages from external sources didn't resonate with me. External speakers don't know what it's like to be a convict, they only know about it on paper but have never been convicted and imprisoned. So our thoughts will remain firm and unchanging, what's going in the right ear, going out the left. We are also hesitant to ask external speakers, we prefer to wait for the former convicts to come." (Interview with B on December 18, 2023)

From the interviews above, it can be seen that the common experiences of former convicts have their advantages when compared to external speakers with academic or expert backgrounds, however, the internal strengthening strategy carried out by former terrorist convicts who have been released is certainly not free from challenges and obstacles to its implementation. Former terrorist convicts who adopt a cultural-ideological approach have potential concerns in building interactions with prisoners who are still violent. Safety factors are taken into consideration in building further interactions. The lack of resources and the government's minimal attention to reaching a larger audience also need to be a separate concern in implementing this strategy.

Bridging: Conflict Resolution and Peace Building

Terrorists who have successfully undergone deradicalization and returned to society have leverage in building alternative narratives regarding an inclusive understanding of society. Delivery of ideologically charged messages that are inherent in violent extremism will be understood more easily by actors in the same terrorist network, such as JI (*Jemaah Islamiyah*) or JAD (*Jamaah Ansharut Daulah*). This is because not all terrorist convicts are willing to undergo a series of training. Terrorist convicts can pretend (*taqiyya*) or completely refuse to take part in the program because their understanding of takfiri (labeling other parties who do not share the same understanding as infidels) and the concept of *thought* (beliefs/rules/traditions that are not based on *shari'a* law and belief in Allah) which they have believed in and internalized are not in line with deradicalization program. Informant C, a convict who is undergoing probation through a parole scheme, shows the importance of interacting with former convicts who have successfully returned to society to prepare themselves for when they are released. He stated that:

"In my opinion, the most influential former convicts are those who have made changes in their lives, both in society and in their economy. The presence of former convicts can be proof for the lkhwans to become confident when they are free. This can also be a motivation for fellow convicts to participate and live their social lives after they are released. Because some convicts feel that after they are released, they will live a difficult life." (Interview with C on January 20, 2024)

Alternative narratives offered by charismatic figures also provide opportunities for convicts to reinterpret their understanding. Former terrorist convicts who have successfully put their lives back together are a representation of an authoritative figure who has the potential to dismantle the notion of exclusivism in convicts. Positive



interactions with moderate parties give these convicts hope in living their lives after release. Agreeing with this idea, informant D, who has successfully adapted to his home environment, stated that:

"This is necessary, considering the spirit of resistance from those who once had the desire to bring down the country. The method is so radical that it even causes us to forget about managing our economy, children, and families. What we think is important is jihad, then enter the heaven. This radical group's exclusive thinking needs to be counter-narrated so that these convicts don't look back at the past." (Interview with D on January 9, 2024)

This is why positive interactions with moderate parties for former terrorist convicts who are still on parole need to be increased, considering that when they return to their home environment, they will experience encounters with various types of actors, including the network of terrorist groups to which they were previously affiliated. These relational problems have the potential to give rise to further structural problems if exposure to the old group brings back the spirit of resistance through radicalization and recidivism of the subject.

Linking: Equitable Community Empowerment

Activation and promotion of alternative narratives as an instrument of counter-propaganda voiced by former terrorist convicts can become a 'vaccine' that targets several elements of society. Starting from the younger generation through various educational institutions (formal, informal, and non-formal), discussion forums in the regions involving National and Political Unity Agency-Regional Leadership Coordination Forum (Kesbangpol-Forkopimda), to terrorist convicts who are still serving their sentences through guidance in correctional institutions.

The involvement of former terrorist convicts in the continuity of deradicalization programs in correctional facilities is specifically needed to develop the potential of post-release convicts while encouraging behavioral change through religious and state moderation. For this reason, sources from former terrorist convicts who have the agency capacity to transform the subject's understanding are needed. Furthermore, the interview results of informant E show that former terrorist convicts can encourage subjects to build positive interactions with actors outside the network. He stated that:

We need to share with other people, we need success stories from these former convicts. Many of the Ikhwan think like I used to. So we need a framework and comparison of religious understandings to more easily accept the conditions we are currently living in. I remember what Ustad Sofyan (former convict) said regarding taking the right to parole. He said just take it. Don't torture yourself with the choices you make. Instead of rotting in prison, think about the family you left behind." (Interview with E on January 12, 2024)

Realizing the need for the involvement of all elements of society in efforts to overcome terrorism, the Government through the National Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT) has established the Coordination Forum for Prevention of Terrorism (FKPT), a forum based on community resilience spread across 34 provinces which functions as an extension of the BNPT in preventing acts of terrorism and radicalism at the regional level. This forum is activated as a community policing strategy through cooperation and collaboration between law enforcement officers and the community in preventing and dealing with criminal acts where the community is given authority and continues to be encouraged to get involved in protecting themselves and the surrounding environment. This was confirmed by informant F who stated:



“FKPT became a forum for us (former convicts) to fill in material about previous experiences and thought patterns when we were still exposed to it. There we can express our views about what the state apparatus is like. It's also a pleasure to be a speaker with a diverse audience such as NU (Nahdlatul Ulama), Muhammadiyah, and Persis (Persatuan Islam). Where I live, the majority of trainees are students, so I often give material to the Student Executive Board (BEM) and student activity units. I can tell them that when I was still the perpetrator, students were such easy targets.” (Interview with F on January 21, 2024)

This discussion room is an important forum for former convicts to convey their views and aspirations. Collaborative work involving actors with an interest in preventing terrorism needs to be mainstreamed in program implementation. Optimizing forums as public spaces that can be accessed together needs to be improved, considering that not all regions have optimal characteristics and strategies in practice. This is illustrated by what informant G said, where he stated that:

“In my area, FKPT is not running well. Corrections Center (Bapas) helped connect me if I needed help in terms of permits, consultations, and breakthroughs in entrepreneurship. There must be a solution so that after being released, these former convicts have a good platform for communication with the government through an aftercare program. At my place, Bapas is good for connecting. If we have completed our parole, we can take part in various programs offered, such as training on digital marketing.” (Interview with G on January 23, 2024)

Based on the evidence above, involving former terrorist convicts in inclusive counter-terrorism strategies will strengthen counter-radicalization and deradicalization programs and make them more successful. Furthermore, strategic management based on social capital and the stakeholders responsible for program implementation are illustrated (Table 1).

Table 1. Involvement of Former Terrorist Convicts in Deradicalization Program

| Social Capital Dimension | Actors Involved | Determining Factor | Obstacle | Strategy |
|---------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| 1. Bonding | Former Convicts, Religious Figures, State Figures, Entrepreneurship Practitioners and Convicts | Reconstructing the interpretation of verses regarding <i>jihad</i> and providing an understanding of social moderation | The subject has not been completely separated from the group and limited resources | Narratives from ex-convicts as encouragement to leave violence |
| 2. Bridging | Former Convicts and Community Organizations | Forming communicators and compiling peaceful messages | Negative societal stigma and recidivism | Counter-narratives and encouragement for engagement in community activities |
| 3. Linking | Former Convicts, Government, Academics, Business World | Communication, credibility, and forums | Uneven discussion space available | Forum or space for intensive dialogue regarding ideology and religion as well as personal issues |

Source: Data that has been processed by the author (2024)



CONCLUSION

The involvement of former terrorist convicts who have completed reintegration into society needs to be considered. Their participation in implementing counter-terrorism policies, which include counter-radicalization and deradicalization, can increase the success of the program by reaching a wider scope and audience. Further extension of the cultural approach based on social capital inherent in the subject is expected to improve the bargaining position of the affected community, which in this context is represented by the terror perpetrators themselves. This strategy can help convicts adapt more easily to their new life while reducing the recidivism rate considering the recognition given to the subject. Supporting facilities such as early detection systems and discussion forums in public spaces need to be expanded massively to increase the effectiveness of preventing potential criminal acts of terrorism in each region. Communication and information channels also need to be improved to facilitate coordination between all stakeholders. It is hoped that a good social safety net can be formed through this scheme and can contribute to accelerating social transformation towards a just, equal, and prosperous society.

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