Literature Study on The Importance of Psychological Profile of Terror Actors in Indonesia

Arlita Permanasari[1] and Tagar Pujasambada[2]

[1,2]Himpunan Psikologi Indonesia (HIMPSI)

Email: [1]*arlita.permanasari@gmail.com*

Abstract— Terrorism is still a significant issue for many countries. Nevertheless, understanding of terrorism is not comprehensive enough, due to limited approaches to the interaction of psychological, social and political aspects. In some countries, the form of terrorism was changing over time. Starting from the acts of terror based on the conformity of anarchist groups, to the acts of terror that associated with religion. This is different from what generally happens in Indonesia, where philosophy and religious concepts are often associated with acts of terror. This typical condition is an interesting matter to explore, because in Indonesia the roots of terrorism come from a strong faith related to the ideology and spiritual beliefs of the perpetrators. Many experts say that terror perpetrators cannot be categorized as a group with a particular psychological profile. Terrorism is considered as a very broad concept so that it cannot use certain qualifications as a prevention instrument. Notwithstanding, if the pattern of crimes is viewed as acts that against humanity, there will be a potential to be related to a certain psychological profile. Psychological profile description can be used to aim an in-depth understanding, provide a portrayal of appropriate treatment steps, one of which is through the deradicalization program.

Keywords— Psychological Profile, Terror Actors, Terrorism, Indonesia, Deradicalization.

I. INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is a discussion that we always encounter in the context of national defense and security. The depiction of terrorism as a threat to humanity has even become a global issue, where the perpetrators have received criticism not only from the country where the terror attack occurred but also from the entire world community. Furthermore, terrorism is not only a worldwide, but also a trans-border phenomenon, not only individual countries but also international organizations have initiated strong measures in reaction to terrorist attacks (Noordegraaf et al., 2017). With the magnitude of the impact of each act of terror, the issue that becomes focus is that until now there has not been a program for the prevention and handling of terrorism that is comprehensive and can be claimed to be able to show perfect accuracy.

II. PROBLEM IN UNDERSTANDING TERRORISM

Terrorism is a highly complex, highly subjective and politically sensitive topic (Bakker, 2012). This is one of the reasons why terrorism is yet to have a definition that can be generally agreed upon at the international level (Schuurman, 2019; Schmid et al., 2021; Bruce, 2023; Hase, 2023; Bruce Hoffman, 2006; Schuurman, 2019; Schmid et al, 2021; Bruce, 2021; Hase, 2023; Sinai, 2008). In the absence of a consensus on the definition of terrorism, the handling at the world level cannot be done optimally. Likewise, in the context of science. The absence of a standard elaboration tends to make the focus of research blurry, because what is seen as an act of terrorism by the state is often seen as a heroic act by a certain group that fights for its ideals (Schmid et al., 2021).

If the limits of terrorism are still shown from political tendencies and the magnitude of their impact is still measured on the life of the nation, then it will be very difficult to do an in-depth study of the characteristics of the group, the personality profile, and the preparation of programs for preventing and handling terrorism.

The difficulty of defining terrorism objectively becomes a constraint on the development of knowledge related to terrorist groups.

Nonetheless, regardless of the definition one uses, unfortunately there has not been a single day in recent history in which 'extremist' or 'terrorist' have not killed or wounded civilians, military personnel, police, or others. In the past decade, terrorism has left almost a quarter of a million deceased in many parts of the world (Bakker, 2007).

Furthermore, 106,301 acts of terrorism were recorded between 2010 and 2019. These are a painful fact which confirm a picture that the vacillation regarding the lack of definition does not stop the actions of terrorists.

Despite these obstacles, science must continue to develop and answer fundamental questions about the existence of terrorist groups.

III. THE EVOLUTION OF TERRORISM

Rapoport (2002) published his conceptual construction about four waves of terrorism, and each lasts about a few decades. Afterwards they might still be there, but they attract a lot less sympathizers and supporters, and gradually fade out. The first wave is the anarchist wave that started in the 1890s. This wave is known for using a text as their propaganda to convince people to rise up against their leaders and overthrow them. New technologies in this era were used for spreading their propaganda, such as communication tools like telegraph and newspapers. Several of its victims were Elizabeth the empress of Austria, Umberto the first king of Italy, the French president Carnot and the president of the US McKinley.

The second wave is the anti-colonial that started in the 1920s. This wave can be described as a struggle to liberate certain parts of the world. Most groups were active in colonies, who wanted to gain independence. Methods like guerrilla tactics, hit-and-run attacks are used in this era. The most interesting part is, these perpetrators stopped calling themselves terrorists. The terms like freedom fighters and liberators who were fighting against state terror were commonly used to refer to this terror group. Among the most well-known organizations of that wave is the IRA, the Irish Republican Army.

The third wave is called the new left wave that started in the 1960s. A major political event that stimulated this wave was the Vietnam war, and many groups in the so-called developed world saw themselves as vanguards for the third world masses that need to be helped. In Europe, the most well-known groups were the Red Brigades in Italy and the Red Army faction in Germany. The fourth wave is called the religious wave and started in 1979. Massive attacks against military and government installations were seen in this era. There were many different groups linked to many different kinds of religions, that have been engaged in terrorism in this fourth wave. The best-known terrorist act from this wave is in New York and Washington DC on September 9th, 2001. Al-Qaeda is associated with this most deadly terrorist attacks ever.

We can see that out of these four waves of terrorism, most of them exhibit distinctive characteristics and are dominated by the role of western culture. The results of research that were conducted on acts of terror also show the dominant color of researchers who have a western cultural background. This has the potential to lead to erroneous views to matters that are closely related to culture and psychosocial which underlie the foundation of terrorist behavior. This continued up until terror of 9/11 happened.

After 9/11 the conceptualization of terrorism began to shift. This is no longer only seen from a political and military approach, but there is also a strong focus on the role of the psychological aspect. Therefore, even though the largest terrorist incident and the most fatalities occurred in America, the 9/11 incident began to open the door for research, especially in political and psychological studies all around the world. Asia is one area/continent in which the terrorism research has been developed quite rapidly.

9/11 incident led the fourth wave to develop into new terrorism. Crenshaw (2000) stated the rise of this idea of a new terrorism which is motivated by religious belief and is more fanatical, deadly, and pervasive than the older and more instrumental forms of terrorism that the world has grown accustomed to. If we observe in Indonesia, the condition of new terrorism is still very strongly rooted in the packaging of religion's doctrine. Differences in religious views are often cited as a factor that drive terrorism acts in Indonesia.

IV. TERRORISM IN INDONESIA

If we want to understand the terrorism in Indonesia, then we have to revert to the early years of independence. The factor of religion as a driving force for the emergence of rebellion had been seen from the beginning, even before the world entered the fourth wave of terrorism. Awwas, (2007) in his book stated that Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosuwiryo is an Islamic figure in Indonesia who founded Darul Islam movement which wanted to establish the indonesian islamic state Negara Islam Indonesia (NII) based on sharia law on August 7th, 1949. Darul Islam was considered to be opposing the constitution in Indonesia and to become a separatist movement. In response to that, the government at that time carried out an operation to arrest its central figure, SM. Kartosuwiryo.

At the beginning, the terror movement in Indonesia act locally as a struggle for idealism. In general, at first these terror groups had no connection with terror organizations outside Indonesia. This condition began to change after Indonesian citizens received military training and fought in Afghanistan (CNN Indonesia, 2021). These combatants from Indonesia then formed communications with other parties outside the country who later contributed to the bombing terror in Indonesia.

One of the major terror networks in Indonesia is Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), which is affiliated with al-Qaeda

(Djelantik, 2010). This group first carried out a terrorist bombing in 2000, in front of the official residence of the Philippine ambassador, Leonides Caday, in Menteng, Central Jakarta. This bomb was intended as a warning to the Philippine Government because it was considered to be disturbing the JI military training camp in the Philippines (Djelantik, 2010).

Mass media wrote about the terror bombings in Indonesia that have occurred since 2000. There was attack in the Christmas Bombing incident, in which more than 20 churches in Batam, Pekanbaru, Jakarta, Pangandaran, Bandung, Mojokerto, and Mataram became victims of the bombs that exploded simultaneously on December 24th, 2000. This bomb was intended to warn the Indonesian people, because JI saw Muslims being attacked in Ambon and Poso. After that there was the Bali Bombing I attack on October 12th, 2002 aimed at American tourists. This was an act of revenge for JI sympathizers against America who invaded Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks on the WTC.

The next attack was the Mariott bombing on August 5th, 2003. The choice of this location was due to negative sentiment towards foreign citizens. After that, there were still recorded bombings at the Australian embassy on September 9th ,2004; the Bali bombing II on October 1st ,2005; and the Marriott-Ritz Carlton bombing on July 17th 2009. The whole series of bombs was motivated by doctrine from a religious point of view and sentiment towards foreigners. Some of the terror bombings in Indonesia were also masterminded by ISIS sympathizers in Indonesia who also acted on the basis of the religious understanding of the perpetrators (Djelantik, 2010).

Terrorists in Indonesia generally have similar conditions. First, they have a perspective that the government forms state law that rivals God's law. They interpret this condition as an attempt by non-believers to take away God's authority. The terrorists could not accept the concept that state law and religious law are two different things and regulate two different aspects of life (Awwas, 2007). Second, structural factors. Terrorists in Indonesia generally think that the state, in this case represented by the government, has not succeeded in bringing prosperity to its citizens (Djelantik, 2010). Policies from the government cannot be well received and caused disappointment, because generally those were considered to collide with the factor of religious law.

Then the third condition is the imbalance between general knowledge and religious knowledge (Mufid, 2013). It should be understood that Indonesia has very strong religious values that are attached to most of its people. This has prompted some people to seek a balance between secular life and religiosity. What becomes a vulnerability is a lack of understanding about religion, so that groups of people who are trying to deepen their balance in spiritual life have the potential to get lost in radical groups and terrorism.

V. FACTORS THAT BUILD THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE OF TERROR ACTORS IN INDONESIA

Seeing the unique characteristics of terrorists in Indonesia, it is necessary to carry out more in-depth research related to their psychological profile. This is important as a basis for determining a counterterrorism strategy as well as for deradicalization programs. Nevertheless, describing the psychological profile of terrorists is not easy. When we discuss the psychological context, we need to explore the social factors that also influence the personality development and formation of the moral values of terrorists. The obscure boundaries regarding acts of terror make the determination of psychological indicators become a complex work.

Terrorist behavior is often considered as a manifestation of an unstable psychological condition and leads to a psychotic condition (Bakker & Zuijdewijn, 2022). However, several studies show different data. Post (2007) argued that terrorists generally have a normal psychological condition, in the context of not being in a clinical psychotic condition, not depressed, not emotionally disturbed. This is in accordance with the understanding that the perpetrators of terrorism have a political basis and clear motivations that make their actions rational. This rationality shows that their psychological function is within a range of normal conditions so that they can make a structured plan in achieving what they are targeting.

Terrorists who act alone or often referred to as lone actor terrorists are said to have psychological problems. The term "Lone Actor Terrorists" emphasizes the notion that these individuals are thought to act out of political motivations using terrorist tactics (Liem et al., 2018). (Gruenewald et al., 2013) conducted research showing that lone actor terrorists have a range of mental health issues. Gill et al. (2014) stated that 31.9% of the terrorists studied had a history of mental illness. Furthermore, alternative model states that fatigue and low mood interact with and cause each other. Gill et al. (2020) argue that extremist risk can be conceptualized in the same way; where there is no underlying root

cause, but rather risk emerges as the outcome of mutually reinforcing causal interaction.

When we make comparison with the calculations of the data from other bigger sources, the enticing picture will be seen. World Health Organization (2022) stated that 1 in every 8 people in the world live with a mental disorder that involve significant disturbances in thinking, emotional regulation, or behavior, around 20% of the world's children and adolescents have a mental health condition, with suicide the second leading cause of death among 15-29-year-olds. Duszynski-Goodman (2023) wrote in Forbes Health, stated that 21% of US adults experienced a mental health condition in 2020. Referring to this comparison, we can conclude that the data from those previous researchers regarding the mental health status of lone actor terrorists has not shown adequate significance in the bigger population.

This analysis is strengthened by the statement from Ellis & Pantucci (2016), that the data shows no correlation between indication of mental-health issues in terror perpetrators and a propensity to exhibit intention of extreme views to act to a third party. Sarwono (2012) also published his analysis, stated that based on his research which conducted on some lone terrorist actors, there's no schizophrenic syndrome, they are not a psychopath, and there's no neurotics symptom. What make them different is how they construct values is their mind.

Even though various studies have not been able to sufficiently provide a sharp description of the psychological condition of terrorists, the development of understanding regarding this matter is still being performed. In a psychological context, the ability of terrorists to commit violence is considered much higher than other people in the average normal curve group. A common suggestion is that there must be something wrong with the terrorists. There must be an abnormality such as suicidal, psychopathological, or disturbance in moral feelings to be the cause of capability of committing the cold-blooded killing.

Bloom (2013) stated that profiling a terrorist group is not a new phenomenon. We can learn from Profiles of Perpetrators of Terrorism in the United States (PPT-US) database that contains information on internal and external events related to organizations identified as having engaged in terrorism. These events include professed and assumed ideology and goals; history of relevant behaviors including how financial resources are secured, maintained, and used; and structural features of organizations and networks. The profiling data obtained

from a terrorist can be developed into an in-depth study from a psychological perspective.

A psychological point of view is needed in understanding the dynamics of terrorist groups, bearing in mind that the psychological phenomenon of terror itself is often given a very salient status concerning the political phenomenon of terrorism. International Bulletin of Political Psychology (2000) published that terror is a psychologically motivating force in the terrorist. The rationale is as follows. One byproduct of human consciousness is the awareness of death which is inevitable and of living in a basically meaningless universe. Dozens of experiments have shown that thinking about death—especially their own—leads people to embrace the values of their culture more strongly (Greenberg et al., 1997).

As a response to that, humans create culture to acquire a sense that the universe has meaning and that humans have a meaningful role in it. Because one's specific culture serves these functions, the mere existence of alternatives to their values is threatening because it risks undermining the beliefs which support one's own psychological stability and sense of worth. Therefore, those who espouse alternatives to our culture are perceived as rigorously needing to be discounted, verbally attacked, assimilated, or killed.

Piazza (2009) wrote that in addition to cultural influences, economic influences are also elements that need to be understood in relation to terrorism. The indicators that have a direct or indirect relationship to terrorism are income per capita, illiteracy levels, life expectancy, employment opportunities. The economic strength of a community, education level, political violence, that combines with the psychological, social and interactional needs of a person has a relationship with the level of vulnerability to radicalism (Iheonu & Ichoku, 2021; Krueger & Maleckova, 2002). This is a broad picture that psychological and psychosocial factors are essential in understanding the behavior of terrorism (De La Corte, 2006).

Currently, specifically in Indonesia, the development of understanding the psychological aspects of terrorists is still very limited. Nonetheless, Milla (2009) in her dissertation managed to explore the psychological dynamics of terrorist behavior in convicts of the Bali bombing case in Indonesia. This research provides a very wide range of data and opens the door for further research. In this study it was found that terrorists do not always have a psychological predisposition that leads to terrorist behavior. In addition, it was found that they are

individuals who sub-ordinate personal identity into group identity based on religious groups. Strengthening of identity occurs when perceived threats are directed against their group.

Milla (2009) also found that there are a number of biases in decisions about jihad outside the conflict areas that are common in Indonesia. Reflecting on the qualitative data from the Bali bombing perpetrators, it was stated that this was caused by excessive self-confidence based on belief (my faith-side bias), conformity pressure which tends to choose the best solution immediately (decisiveness), and stereotypes against groups (outgroup) that are seen as a competitive and adversarial group.

VI. THE IMPORTANCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE OD TERROR ACTORS IN INDONESIA

With the development of research on terrorism in Indonesia, especially from a psychological point of view, it will be a very significant progress if the solid construction of psychological aspects of the terrorists could be structured as a psychological profile. This data can be utilized as a foundation in building the understanding about psychological characteristics, profile, and personality of each terrorist, and how those aspects are interacting with the psychosocial factors. All those elements can act as a basis configuration in counterterrorism and deradicalization programs. This condition in general shows that in handling terrorism using counterterrorism or deradicalization, we need more systematic approaches grounded in theory and methodology, to enable us to understand, assess, model, forecast, and respond to the future terrorist threat (Bakker, 2012; Davey et al., 2019; Horgan, 2008; Lum et al., 2006).

REFERENCES

[1] Awwas, I. S. (2007). Jejak jihad S.M. Kartosuwiryo: mengungkap fakta yang didustakan. Uswah, 2007.

[2] Bakker, E. (2007). Exclusion: who decides-and on what grounds? Hizb ut-Tahrir and the HDIM. Helsinki Monitor: Security and Human Rights , 4, 278–288. http://www.hizb.org.uk/hizb/press-centre/press-release/osce-bows-to-pressure-from-central-

[3] Bakker, E. (2012). Forecasting Terrorism: The Need for a More Systematic Approach. Journal of Strategic Security, 5(4), 69–84. https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.5.4.5

[4] Bakker, E., & Zuijdewijn, J. de R. van. (2022). Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Studies (Vol. 2).

[5] Bloom, R. (2013). Terrorism, Espionage, and Deception Psychological Profiling.

[6] Bruce, G. (2023). Definition of Terrorism-Social and Political Effects. Journal of Military and Veterans' Health (JMVH)., 21(2). https://jmvh.org

[7] Bruce Hoffman. (2006). Inside Terrorism (REV-Revi). Columbia University Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/hoff12698

[8] CNN Indonesia. (2021). Relasi Jamaah Islamiyah, Taliban dan Al Qaeda. CNN Indonesia. https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/2021121 5234907-20-734635/relasi-jamaah-islamiyah-taliban-dan-al-qaeda

[9] Crenshaw, M. (2000). The Psychology of Terrorism: An Agenda for the 21st Century. Political Psychology, Vol. 21, N, 405-420 (16 pages). https://www.jstor.org/stable/3791798

[10] Davey, J., Tuck, H., & Amarasingam, A. (2019). An imprecise science: Assessing interventions for the prevention, disengagement and de-radicalisation of left and right-wing extremists About authors. Institute for Strategic Dialogue.

[11] De La Corte, L. (2006). Explaining Terrorism: A Psychosocial Approach.

[12] Djelantik, S. (2010). TERORISME: Tinjauan Psiko-Politis, Peran Media, Kemiskinan, Dan Keamanan Nasional. Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.

[13] Duszynski-Goodman, L. (2023). Mental Health Statistics. https://www.forbes.com/health/mind/mental-health-statistics/

[14] Ellis, C., & Pantucci, R. (2016). Lone-Actor Terrorism Policy Paper 4: 'Leakage' and Interaction with Authorities. Countering Lone-Actor Terrorism Series, 8.

[15] Gill, P., Clemmow, C., Hetzel, F., Rottweiler, B., Salman, N., Van Der Vegt, I., Marchment, Z., Schumann, S., Zolghadriha, S., Schulten, N., Taylor, H., & Corner, E. (2020). Systematic Review of Mental Health Problems and Violent Extremism. Journal of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology, 32(1), 51–78. https://doi.org/10.1080/14789949.2020.1820067

[16] Gill, P., Horgan, J., & Deckert, P. (2014). Bombing Alone: Tracing the Motivations and

Antecedent Behaviors of Lone-Actor Terrorists. Journal of Forensic Sciences, 59(2), 425–435. https://doi.org/10.1111/1556-4029.12312

[17] Greenberg, J., Solomon, S., & Pyszczynski, T. (1997). Terror Management Theory of Self-Esteem and Cultural Worldviews: Empirical Assessments and Conceptual Refinements. Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, Volume 29, Volume 29, 1997, Pages 61-139. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60016-7

[18] Gruenewald, J., Chermak, S., & Freilich, J. D. (2013). Far-Right Lone Wolf Homicides in the United States. Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 36(Issue 12), Pages 1005-1024. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2013.842123

[19] Hase, V. (2023). What is terrorism (according to the news)? How the German press selectively labels political violence as "terrorism." Journalism, 24(2), 398–417. https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849211017003

[20] Horgan, J. (2008). Deradicalization or Disengagement? A Process in Need of Clarity and a Counterterrorism Initiativein Need of Evaluation.

[21] Iheonu, C., & Ichoku, H. E. (2021). Poverty and terrorism in Africa: Understanding the nexus based on existing levels of terrorism. Poverty and Public Policy, 13(3), 254–272. https://doi.org/10.1002/pop4.318

[22] International Bulletin of Political Psychology. (2000). International Bulletin of Political Psychology Terror Management Theory, Terrorism, and Terror : Political Psychological Status. 9(11), 9–11.

[23] Krueger, A. B., & Maleckova, J. (2002). Nber Working Paper Series Education, Poverty, Political Violence And Terrorism: Is There A Causal Connection? Education, Poverty, Political Violence and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection? In NBER WORKING PAPER SERIES. http://www.nber.org/papers/w9074

[24] Liem, M., van Buuren, J., de Roy van Zuijdewijn, J., Schönberger, H., & Bakker, E. (2018). European Lone Actor Terrorists Versus "Common" Homicide Offenders: An Empirical Analysis. Homicide Studies, 22(1), 45–69. https://doi.org/10.1177/1088767917736797

[25] Lum, C., Kennedy, L. W., & Sherley, A. J. (2006). The Effectiveness of Counter-Terrorism Strategies. Campbell Systematic Reviews, 2(1), 1–50. https://doi.org/10.4073/csr.2006.2

[26] Milla, M. N. (2009). Dinamika psikologis perilaku terorisme :: Identitas dan pengambilan keputusan jihad di luar wilayah konflik pada terpidana kasus bom Bali di Indonesia. Disertasi. https://etd.repository.ugm.ac.id/penelitian/detail/49331

[27] Mufid, A. S. (2013). Radikalisme dan Terorisme Agama, Sebab dan Upaya Pencegahan. Jurnal Multikultural & Multireligius, 12(1), 7–17. jurnalharmoni.kemenag.go.id › index › harmoni

[28] Noordegraaf, M., Douglas, S., Bos, A., & Klem, W. (2017). How to evaluate the governance of transboundary problems? Assessing a national counterterrorism strategy. Evaluation, 23(4), 389–406. https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389017733340

[29] Piazza, J. A. (2009). Is Islamist terrorism more dangerous?: An empirical study of group ideology, organization, and goal structure. Terrorism and Political Violence, 21(1), 62–88. https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550802544698

[30] Post, J. M. (2007). The mind of the terrorist : The psychology of terrorism from the IRA to Al Qaeda. Palgrave Macmillan.

[31] Rapoport, D. C. (2002). The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11. Anthropoetics, VIII(1). http://anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0801/terror#n9

[32] Sarwono, S. W. (2012). Terorisme di Indonesia: Dalam Tinjauan Psikologi (Aisyah (ed.); 1st ed.). Pustaka Alvabet.

[33] Schmid, A. P., Forest, J. J. F., & Lowe, T. (2021). Terrorism Studies: A Glimpse at the Current State of Research (2020/2021).

[34] Schuurman, B. (2019). Topics in terrorism research: reviewing trends and gaps, 2007-2016. Critical Studies on Terrorism, 12(3), 463–480. https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2019.1579777

[35] Sinai, J. (2008). How to define terrorism. PERSPECTIVES ON TERRORISM, II(4), 9–11. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819100044260

[36] World Health Organization. (2022). Mental health. https://www.who.int/health-topics/mental-health