How Do the Terrorists Influence Young People?

By
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In this presentation, I will address five questions:
1. Who is the terrorist?
2. What criteria used to determine terrorism?
3. How terrorist influences the youth?
4. What are the motives, push and pull factors, drivers to terrorism?
5. How to disengage youth or people from terrorism or violent extremism?

1. *Who is the terrorist?.* Individual or groups advocate violence and justified by certain belief or ideology in order to cause fear and achieve certain political goals. The group is determined by the state according to the legal provision. Each state has its own laws, and national security consideration to determine whether or not certain individual or group belong to terrorist category.

2. *What criteria used to determine terrorism?* In Malaysia's context, three basis are used:

   First, the legal perspective, the determination of terrorism, or what constitutes terrorist act, or terrorist are predicated upon legal provisions such as Penal Code 130 (Terrorism), Security Offences (Special Measure) Act (SOSMA) 2012, Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) 2015, and etc.

   Second, religious-ideological perspectives, given some the fact that some individuals and groups used religious and ideological basis to justify the act of violence. This means any individuals or group advocates and promotes certain ideology (political or religious) that deviated from the mainstream ideology and potentially cause threats to human security and national security are considered terrorism threats or "violent extremism."

   Third, universal norms and values such as justice, respect for life, human rights, and etc.

3. *How terrorists influence the youth?* We have to consider the following aspects: 1. Who is the target?; why they target certain people?; how did they that?, what platform they are using?

   3.1 Who is the target? Terrorist organisation prefers to recruit youth and person with specific expertise. Those who are more malleable, can be easily influenced and convinced, with lot of energy, and strength. Admittedly, in some cases other age category also subjected to terrorist recruitment, as well as the gender. I call this the "vulnerable individuals". A study by the Institute for Youth Research Malaysia (IYRES) 2017 revealed that 39 individuals they interviewed shared nine commonalities: high level of aggressiveness, impulse sensation seeking, cognitive distortion,

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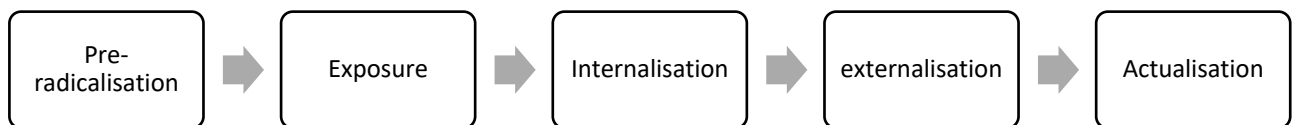
narcissism, misconception of religion, drive for change, low self-worth, lack of strong bonding with families and community, emotionally sensitive (refer to *Belia Ekstrimis*, Institut Penyelidikan Pembangunan Belia Malaysia (IYRES), Putrajaya, 2019).

3.2 How did they recruit or influence the youth? We have to understand the concept of radicalisation.

What is radicalisation? Radicalisation is a process occurs in a person, in which he or she gradually become receptive to "extremist or radical ideas" such as violence, or using rational, emotive, and ideological justification to accepting violence.

There are five stages of radicalisation:
1. Pre-radicalicalisation – before exposure to radical ideas.
2. Exposure – first contact with radical ideas, person, experience.
3. Internalisation – getting more interested, learning more, slowly embracing the ideas.
4. Externalization – start to share the ideas, recruiting others, promoting to others.
5. Actualisation – involved in the act of terror, violence.

Pre-radicalisation → Exposure → Internalisation → externalisation → Actualisation

(Refer to Ahmad El-Muhammady, *Radicalisation Model Learning from Malaysian Militant-Extremist* in Rohan Gunaratna and Sabariah Hussin, Terrorist Deradicalisation in a Global Context: Success, Failure and Continuity. London: Routledge, 2020).

3.3. What are the platforms used for recruitment?

Basically, two methodologies employed for recruitment

1. Offline, direct, face-to-face.
2. Online, social media platform, OTT Messaging (over the top).

4. What are the motives, push and pull factors, drivers to terrorism? People joined terrorism, or support terrorism due to variety of motives, push and pull factors, and drivers. It depends on the individuals. There is no one-fit-for-all theories or explanation. We need to assess the person case-by-case basis in order to understand the exact motive and drivers. In rehabilitation work, assessment is made individually to produce more effective outcome.

However, as a guide, five categories of imperatives (factors) can be considered:

1. *Systemic factors*: external events occurred outside national borders affecting evoking local sentiments, sympathy, camaraderie, humanitarian.

2. *Domestic factors*; discontent with political system, government, policies, economic conditions, frustration with the state discrimination, oppression. This socio-political-economic conditions creates good "ecosystem" for the growth and "prosperity" of radicalisation.

3. *Ideological factors*: belief system is used to "make sense" or justify participation in terrorist group. Ideology could be political, religious, and secular basis. No terrorist organisation exists without some sense of belief system.

4. *Individual factors*: refers to the state of psychology of a person attracting to the struggle promoted by the terrorist organisation. Person who experiences discontent, grievances, and some sort of personal grievances are more prone to be influenced.

5. *Group and charismatic leaders or influencers*. The existence of group and charismatic leaders, influencers accelerate the process of radicalisation.

5.How to prevent and counter youth or people from the influence of terrorism or violent extremism?. It depends on the case, nature of problem. Basically, two ways to deal with it:

1. Preventive approach; to prevent the youth from engaging terrorism, rejecting terrorism. The preventive method is suitable for public, unaffected youth. It involves awareness campaign program, and building resilience.

2. Rehabilitative approach: it is meant for individuals detained for terrorism charges, carried out in prison facilities.

I hope the sharing is useful and I wish to thank you for your participation.