

The Application of the Soft Approach Method in the Prevention of Radicalism

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ABSTRACT

The development of information technology, including social media, is believed to have become a fertile medium for the spread of radicalism, intolerance, and terrorism. Digital and social media are considered capable of changing a person's character in a short time through the content they share. This study aims to determine the application of the soft approach method implemented by the Bekasi City Metro Police in an effort to prevent radicalism. The research employs a qualitative method by applying data collection techniques through interviews, observations, and documentation. The results of this study indicate that the soft approach method implemented by the Bekasi City Metro Police in preventing radicalism is still not optimal. Therefore, concrete steps are needed to improve it through the enhancement of soft approach methods in the prevention of radicalism, including strengthening counter-radical and deradicalization programs, improving the performance of Bhabinkamtibmas, increasing the internalization of Pancasila values, and strengthening the state defense program. Furthermore, to enhance cooperation in the implementation of soft approaches to preventing radicalism, efforts can be made through the empowerment of work units dealing with radicalism or terrorism, increasing the exchange of intelligence information between units, establishing MoUs with local governments for radicalism prevention, and developing integrated programs to strengthen government institutions against the spread of radicalism.

INTRODUCTION

The development of radical movements in Indonesia has reached a worrying condition (Salihin, 2017; Zainiyati, 2016). Along with the advancement of the internet, the dissemination of such ideologies has become even more massive, targeting millennials who are eager for information and active in cyberspace (McHaney, 2023). In fact, radicalism has now given rise to social conflicts based on religion and cases of intolerance that have culminated in terrorist attacks (Ruggiero, 2017). Therefore, the existence of radicalism is highly dangerous for the sustainability of national development and the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia (Muhammad & Hiariej, 2021).

In responding to the growth of radicalism and terrorism, the National Police generally apply two methods of approach, namely a hard approach and a soft approach (Pradnyana, 2022). The hard approach strategy is implemented through law enforcement efforts under the principle of due process of law (Koni et al., 2021). From a strategic point of view, this law enforcement effort is considered quite appropriate because it offers a strong possibility of gaining both national and international public support, which is a key factor in the success of countering radicalism. However, the hard approach also presents weaknesses, including its

inability to address the root causes related to mindset and ideology, as well as the potential to generate resentment among the perpetrators' families or colleagues, which may, in turn, lead to the emergence of new terrorist actors.

Given the various limitations of the hard approach, the National Police must further optimize the soft approach strategy in combating radicalism (Montasari, 2024). As a sub-system of the government, the National Police urgently requires the establishment of superior institutional policies that not only interpret macro-level government directives but also ensure the police's continued role as a leading sector in maintaining domestic security (Adar, 2018; Usmani, 2019).

Therefore, systematic, comprehensive, and conceptual measures are needed to enhance the implementation of the soft approach by the Bekasi City Metro Police in preventing radicalism (Sudrajat et al., 2024). This is crucial because radicalism serves as a strong foundation for the emergence of terrorism. For example, a recent incident in early September 2024 involved the arrest of two suspected terrorists in East Bekasi (Sholehuddin et al., 2024). Consequently, the Bekasi City Metro Police must intensify comprehensive efforts through the soft approach method in the prevention of radicalism to ensure a safe and conducive public order environment (Bintarsari, 2022).

Previous research has examined efforts to prevent radicalism through various strategies; however, many studies have focused primarily on macro-level or theoretical dimensions, leaving a practical gap at the local institutional level (Peci, 2025). Azca (2020) emphasized that deradicalization programs in Indonesia often rely heavily on repressive or legalistic mechanisms, which tend to address the symptoms rather than the root causes of radicalism. Such approaches, while effective in the short term, fail to promote ideological transformation or social reintegration (Kuschminder, 2017). Meanwhile, Wibisono et al. (2021) found that the success of radicalism prevention relies significantly on local-based initiatives and interpersonal communication strategies conducted by community and security actors. Nevertheless, their study did not specifically examine how police institutions—especially at city or regional levels—implement a soft approach as part of community policing in the prevention of radicalism (Mazerolle et al., 2020).

This research aims to analyze how the Bekasi City Metro Police optimize the soft approach strategy in preventing radicalism through community engagement, education, and interfaith collaboration (Sutrisno & Syafrudin, 2024). By focusing on the operational level of police institutions, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how preventive counter-radicalization measures can be effectively integrated into local policing strategies (Wolfowicz et al., 2022). The findings are expected to provide theoretical insights into the application of soft power within security institutions and practical benefits for policymakers and law enforcement agencies in strengthening proactive, humane, and community-centered models of radicalism prevention in Indonesia.

METHOD

The research employed a qualitative descriptive method. This approach was used to manage and present data so that the findings could be clearly described and accurately represented. The study aimed to illustrate the conditions and facts related to the efforts of the Bekasi City Metro Police in handling radicalism. The focus of the research was determined

based on relevant prior studies and experiences. The collected data were then discussed and analyzed using appropriate concepts and theories, including the soft approach, communication theory, organizational resource management theory, and cooperation theory.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The development of radicalism in Indonesia is increasing rapidly. There are many things behind it, starting from the assumption of radicalism as a resistance to Western hegemony in the Middle East which is seen as a war between the West versus Muslims. Then, it assesses radicalism as a symbol of class struggle between the economically marginalized poor and the majority of the Muslim population, against the rich who benefit from the capitalist economic system, most of whom are non-Muslims. And third, Radicalism as a medium of Islamic political struggle that has long been marginalized and castrated by the Government, especially during the new order period.

Currently in Indonesia, these three factors appear simultaneously, including in the jurisdiction of the Bekasi City Metro Police. Its characteristics can be seen from the approval of acts of violence in the name of religion. Then, anti-pluralism and does not recognize the plurality of the Indonesian nation. And third, they want to replace the ideology of Pancasila with other ideologies. As a result, the radical Islamic movement in Indonesia is no longer a movement that is only domestic, but has begun to be linked to the Transnational radical Islamic movement. The latest case in the jurisdiction of the Bekasi City Metro Police is the arrest of two terrorists in East Bekasi by Densus 88 Antiterror Police on Wednesday, September 4, 2024. The genealogy of radical movements in Indonesia can be mapped as follows:

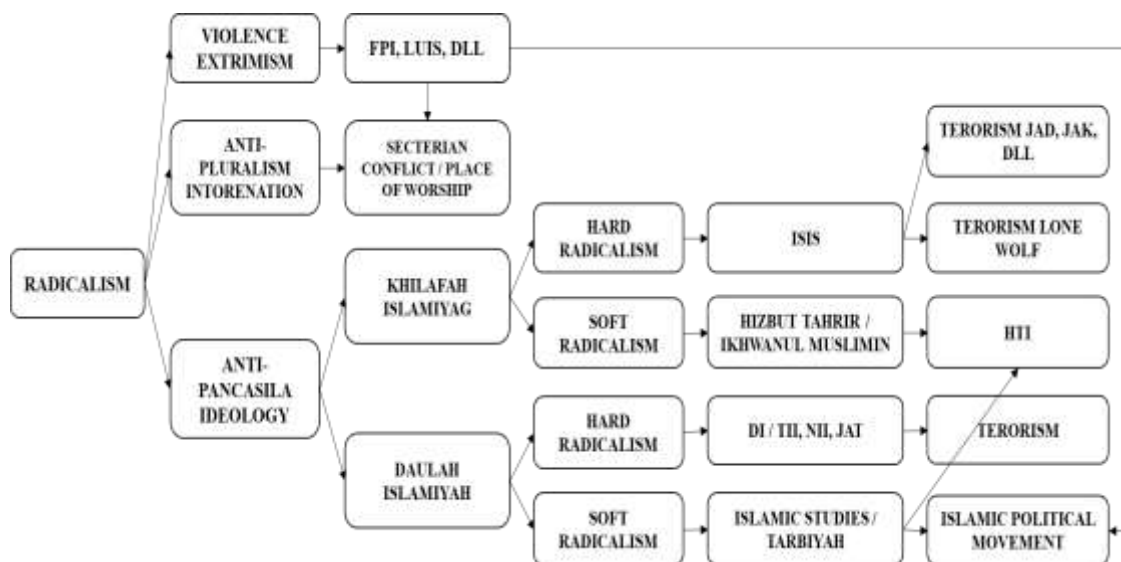


Figure 1. Mapping of Indonesian Radical Movements

In a paper “Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat Prepared” compiled by Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt, Senior Intelligence Analysts at the NYPD Intelligence Division, the radicalization process is divided into four stages. The four stages include the pre-radicalization phase, self-identification, indoctrination, and jihadization. The 4 stages of the radicalization process are all carried out by communication. Therefore, Communication theory can be used as an analysis knife, why radicalism can develop in Indonesia. Communication

Theory by Laswell states that there are 5 Communication Elements, namely Communicator, Media, Message, Communicator (audience) and Impact (effect). When associated with radicalization, it can be analyzed as follows:

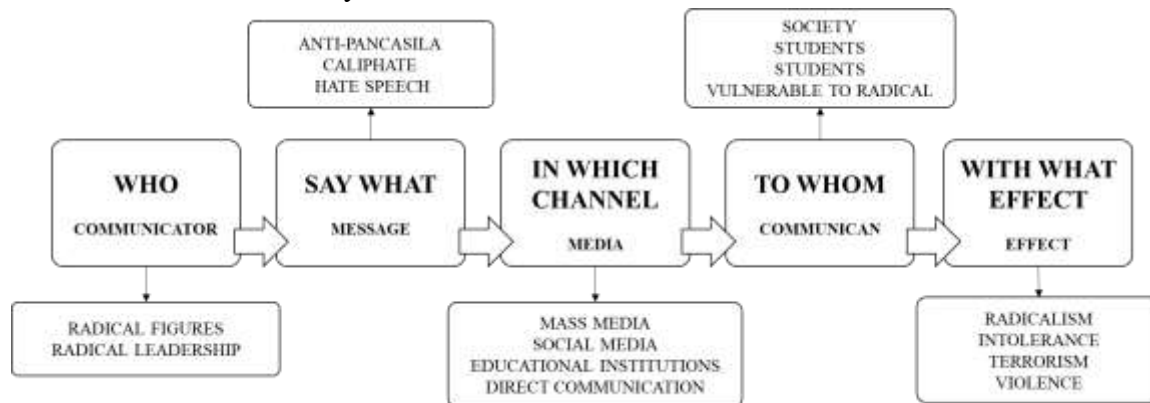


Figure 2. Analysis of Radicalization in Communication Theory

The impact of this communication process is what then makes a person become radical.

Application of soft approach methods in the prevention of radicalism

In the implementation of a soft approach to radicalism, the Bekasi City Metro Police implemented it in two activity programs, namely the counter-radicalism program and the deradicalism program. However, the implementation of the counter-radical program implemented by the Bekasi City Metro Police is still not optimal. From the communicator aspect, most of the members have a lack of understanding of psychology and religious science. The message conveyed only explains the dangers of radicalism, without reviewing preventive efforts to prevent it. It is less innovative and only relies on sambang and seminars and FGDs. There are still many things that are not on target because there are programs aimed at people who are not vulnerable to radicalism. The programs that are run are less than optimal because they do not succeed in counter-ideologies against those who are vulnerable to being exposed to radicalism.

Meanwhile, the implementation of the deradicalization program has also not been maximized. In addition to the lack of understanding of psychology and religious science, the large number of terrorist prisoners makes deradicalization difficult to achieve. In some cases, the pattern of deradicalization is similar to that of ordinary inmate development programs. In terms of media, it is less innovative, because it is only through face-to-face. Not all terrorist prisoners and former terrorist prisoners can be touched. Deradicalization is not optimal, because it does not succeed in cutting them off from radical thinking so that they are vulnerable to returning to terror perpetrators.

The soft approach method by the Bekasi City Metro Police in an effort to prevent radicalism has the potential to cause cases such as intolerance, social conflicts with religious backgrounds, terrorism, and the development of caliphate that is contrary to the ideology of Pancasila. As a result, public security and order can be disturbed due to the many cases of radicalism.

Based on the Regulation of the National Police Chief No. 1 of 2019 concerning the System, Management and Operational Success Standards of the National Police of the Republic

of Indonesia, it is stated that there are 5 types of Police Operations, namely intelligence detection, preemptive, preventive, law enforcement and recovery operations. In order to realize Pancasila as a "fortress of defense" against radicalism, the Bekasi City Metro Police must police the ideology of Pancasila by implementing counter-radicalization and deradicalization programs as a soft approach method in preventing radicalism as follows:

- a) Strengthening the soft approach program to be right on target in the prevention of radicalism, both at the early detection stage, pre-emptive efforts and preventive efforts.
- b) Improving the performance of Bhabinkamtibmas in carrying out sambang. Improving the ability of Bhabinkamtibmas through measurable training in psychology and religion related to efforts to prevent radicalism. Make measurable programs for Bhabinkamtibmas in the prevention of radicalism such as sambang, collaborating with toga tomas, supervision of ex-terror prisoners, and so on.
- c) Improving the development of Pancasila values to the community in a programmatic and sustainable manner. Strengthening the sense of unity and unity of the nation as a form of maintaining the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. Program Strengthening the values of harmony and tolerance between religious communities.
- d) Improvement of national defense programs. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to improve the implementation of the national defense program in an integrated and sustainable manner.
- e) Improve communication channels with the community such as complaint channels. This channel not only accommodates public complaints about the symptoms of radicalism in their environment, but also becomes a means of complaining about irregularities committed by officers.

Cooperation between stakeholders in the implementation of soft approaches in the prevention of radicalism

The cooperation built by the Bekasi City Metro Police with stakeholders related to the field of handling radicalism in the jurisdiction of the Bekasi City Metro Police has not yet met concrete results. Several indicators of the implementation of cooperation between relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the implementation of soft approaches to the prevention of radicalism are in accordance with the theory of cooperation Miftah Thoha (1986), as follows:

- a) Communication. Communication between stakeholders has not been effective because an integrated team has not been formed to handle radicalism. Some of the existing MoUs are still limited to hegemony, the details of their implementation have not even been planned.
- b) Coordination. There has been no joint commitment in the description of activities by stakeholders to prevent radicalism. The flow of information has also not been well developed between agencies in the field of radicalism prevention.
- c) Collaboration. There has not been a unity of action in the prevention of radicalism comprehensively, starting from the stages of field observation, application, analysis and evaluation. The Bekasi City Metro Police seems to work alone in preventing radicalism without the active participation of stakeholders.

Therefore, to increase cooperation between stakeholders in the implementation of soft approaches in the prevention of radicalism, efforts that can be made by the Bekasi City Metro Police include:

- a) Empowerment of work units in the field of radicalism and terrorism. Coordinate with BNPT to adopt a pattern of radicalism prevention through a soft approach.
- b) Increased exchange of intelligence information between work units. Carry out an integrated analysis and evaluation by inviting all levels of leadership for the sake of equalizing perceptions in the prevention of radicalism so that the flow of intelligence information runs well.
- c) Empowerment of government support. Make an MoU with local governments in the prevention of radicalism. Encourage the local government to provide support in the form of budget, facilities and infrastructure as well as supervision.
- d) Implementing an integrated program in an effort to strengthen the government apparatus from the spread of radicalism. Providing the inculcation of Pancasila values in all government offices.

The basis of the state and the Pancasila Ideology are solutions in countering radicalism. Pancasila as an ideology, philosophy, and view of the nation's life is the fruit of thought that is dug up from the original values of the pluralistic Indonesian nation. These values are the answer that Pancasila is a national unifier that can eradicate radicalism in Indonesia, because radical ideas are very contrary to the ideas and characteristics of Pancasila. The wave of converting Indonesian society to become radical can be countered if the values of Pancasila can be implemented appropriately. Radicalism must be considered as the common enemy, so that thus a state and nation life in accordance with Pancasila can be realized.

In order to realize Pancasila as a "fortress of defense" against radicalism, the Bekasi City Metro Police must conduct Pancasila Ideology Policing. The Policing of Pancasila Ideology is all police actions, both intelligence detection, Pre-emptive, Preventive, Repressive and recovery operations to ensure the existence of Pancasila values in the joints of the life of the nation and state in order to enforce the law, maintain public security and order, and protect, protect and serve the community.

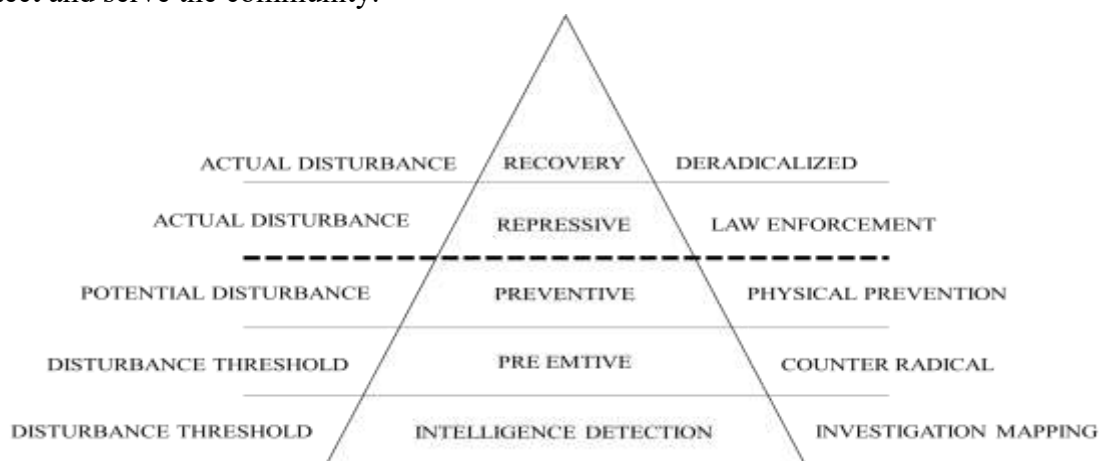


Figure 3. Pattern of Policing of Pancasila Ideology Against Radicalism

Likewise, the implementation of counter-radicalization and deradicalization, which is a preemptive state in countering radicalism, must be carried out as an effort to instill the ideology

of Pancasila, both for the general public, vulnerable groups and terror perpetrators who have been caught. The basis of the state and the Pancasila Ideology are solutions in countering radicalism. Pancasila as an ideology, philosophy, and view of the nation's life is the fruit of thought that is dug up from the original values of the pluralistic Indonesian nation. These values are the answer that Pancasila is a unifier of the nation that can eradicate radicalism in Indonesia, because radical ideas are very contrary to the ideas and characteristics of Pancasila

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the soft approach method implemented by the Bekasi City Metro Police in preventing radicalism remained suboptimal due to limited psychological and religious understanding among officers, a lack of innovation, and ineffective deradicalization and counter-ideology programs. Cooperation among related institutions was also weak, hindered by poor communication, unimplemented MoUs, limited coordination beyond leadership levels, and insufficient participation among stakeholders. To improve effectiveness, the study recommended strengthening counter-radical and deradicalization efforts, enhancing the performance of *Bhabinkamtibmas*, promoting Pancasila values, and fortifying national defense initiatives. Future research could explore models of integrated inter-agency collaboration and mechanisms for community-based participation to enhance the sustainability of the soft approach in radicalism prevention.

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