The Phenomenon of De-radicalization in Al Hidayah Boarding School, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia

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Abstract- The phenomenon of de-radicalization is a rare attempt in the study of terrorism. It is because institutions that specifically do so are still minimal, especially in educational institutions such as boarding school. In the case of Indonesia, Al Hidayah boarding school is the first in Indonesia to educate children from former terrorist families as well as for the poor. The questions related to the phenomenon are, what is the main background of the establishment of Al Hidayah Boarding School in Deli Serdang District? Why is this boarding school trying to educate the terrorists' children to anticipate the growing understanding of radicalism? This study attempts to answer the questions by using the qualitative method. Data collection methods applied are document studies, observation, and in-depth interviews. The findings of this study are the three backgrounds of the establishment of this boarding school. The first result shows the ideological change of the actors. The second outcome is the humanitarian reasons behind this, and the last one is as a de-radicalization role model. It is crucial to guide the terrorists' children because of five things. First, they are abandoned because their parents were imprisoned or died. Secondly, there is a negative stigma in society against children of terrorists. Third, they absorb the seed of radical ideology (spirited of terror) through their parents. Fourth, they tend to have the nature of hating the state and the security apparatus. The last one is because they have the potential to be recruited as terrorists. There are two theoretical implications of this study, namely, reinforcing Mia Bloom's theory that has explained the emergence of terrorists, and secondly, it rejects Mark Jurgensmeyer's theory which explains the strange relationship between religion and terrorism.

Keywords—terrorism; radicalism; ideological change; de-radicalization; Islamic school.

I. INTRODUCTION

In 2005, there was a polemic about the supervision of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in Indonesia. This controversy began with the assumption that boarding school was a place of radical development. It is based on the fact that some terrorists are the alumni of the Islamic boarding school. Gatra magazine had a sample record of terrorists who are alumni of boarding school. Among them are Al-Ghozi, Mukhlas, Mubarok and Amsar Latinsani.

"Al-Ghozi tewas ditembak tentara Filipina pada Oktober 2003. Mukhlas dan Mubarok terlibat kasus bom Bali I (12 Oktober 2002). Sedangkan Asmar Latinsani adalah pelaku bom bunuh diri di Hotel JW Marriott Jakarta (5 Agustus 2003)".[1]

Each was involved in the cases of terror in Indonesia and the Philippines. These acts of terror, which caused many victims, were done with religious teaching as its justification.

Eleven years later, in 2016, a boarding school was established in Deli Serdang district of North Sumatra, called Al-Hidayah. The Indonesia's Agency for Combating Terrorism or in Indonesia known as *Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme* (BNPT) supports the establishment of this school, as it runs the de-radicalization program for the family of former terrorists. BNPT was a non-ministerial state agency or known as the *Lembaga Pemerintah NonKementrian* (LPNK) that performs the task of government in the field of counter-terrorism [2].

Almost no one expects that boarding school will be used as an educational institution for de-radicalization, primarily if it is established to educate former terrorists' children. This condition rejects the idea that boarding school is identical with radicalization. Also, it raises new phenomenon and idea that boarding school can contribute positively to oppose the progress of radicalism. Another more interesting phenomenon is that the founder of Al-Hidayah boarding school, Khairul Ghazali, is a former terrorist, which the school's website states.

"Pendiri Pesantren ... Khairul Ghazali, adalah napi terorisme yang terlibat dalam perampokan CIMB Niaga pada Tahun 2010. Ghazali dijatuhi hukuman enam tahun penjara. Setelah menjalani hukuman 4 tahun 2 bulan, Ghazali mendapatkan pembebasan bersyarat".[3]

There are two questions regarding this phenomenon; that are: what is the main background the establishment of Al Hidayah boarding school in Deli Serdang District? Why is this boarding school trying to be an educational institution that teaches terrorists' children to anticipate the growing understanding of radicalism?

II. APPROACH AND METHOD

This study uses the qualitative method, in which it utilizes field study as the data collection method. Data collection techniques used are in-depth interviews, literature study, and observation. The original idea of this research is about the relevance of radicalization and de-radicalization with the process of understanding, which is formed through learning and vice versa. The establishment of Al Hidayah boarding school was an effort to build the knowledge of de-radicalization through a learning process.

III. BACKGROUND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AL HIDAYAH BOARDING SCHOOL

The establishment of Al Hidayah boarding school is inseparable from the role of Khairul Ghazali who is a former convicted terrorist. Khairul Ghazali considered that boarding school is a strategic institution in dealing with the radicalism and he believes it would get support from many parties, especially from BNPT.

The idea of establishing a boarding school for the de-radicalization had existed since Khairul Ghazali was in prison (2010) where he obtained the de-radicalization program from BNPT. He got knowledge about the de-radicalization concept from BNPT and thought it was an outstanding concept. However, he considered that the idea had not been successfully implemented. Therefore, he wanted to do something about de-radicalization after his release from the jail. It was coincidentally connected with the fact that his family has a boarding school built on the land that belongs to his family. The name of the boarding school was Darusy Syifa.

Besides, there were three main concerns regarding why this de-radicalization boarding school was built. The first reason is that Khairul Ghazali wanted to redeem his sin in the past. The changing ideology of Khairul Ghazali led to a change in his plans for the future. About his repentance, he wanted to fix past mistakes by doing useful activities and contributing to the fight against radicalism and terrorism developments.

The second intention is to keep providing education to innocent and neglected terrorists' children. According to him, many terrorists' children who quit school worried that they would not have a future.

> *"Mengapa mereka disebut sebagai korban, karena ketika orang tuanya yang tewas atau ditangkap polisi otomatis mereka menjadi korban juga karena mereka kehilangan tulang punggung di keluarga mereka".*[4]

Third, he wants to create a role model of de-radicalization boarding school for terrorists' children in other places. This idea is similar to what the chairman of BNPT Komjen Suhardi Alius said [3] -*"Pesantren ini* role model," this statement appears on the event of the development of BNPT mosque at the boarding school. It also cannot be separated from a large number of terrorist children in Indonesia that still do not have an education. If the government only focus on education in

one or two places, then it will be very tough because of the spread of terrorists' children in various regions in Indonesia.

IV. THE URGENCY OF EDUCATING TERRORIST CHILDREN

On June 11, 2016, Governor of North Sumatra, Ir. H. Tengku Erry Nuradi, M.Si inaugurated the Al Hidayah Boarding School. Furthermore, on February 24, 2017, along with the Chief of BNPT, Komjen Suhardi Alius, he also opened the Al-Hidayah Mosque in the boarding school [7]. There were even the Member of Parliament, North Sumatra Police chief, Commander I / BB, Vice Regent of Deli Serdang and Vice Mayor of Medan. The presence of such important officials attracted the public's attention, and it indicated that this boarding school gets special attention from many parties. It also can be interpreted as recognition from the government that Al-Hidayah boarding school even though run by a former terrorist, it is not a dangerous place, and it can be a boarding school that guides terrorists' children to anticipate the growing understanding of radicalism.

Khairul Ghazali admitted that he built this boarding school based on concerns with the outbreak of terrorism cases in Indonesia and those who are entangled with radicalism. Thus, it is expected that the presence of this boarding school can be a place of de-radicalization education.

> *"...kami membangun pesantren ini berangkat dari keprihatinan terhadap mereka yang dibelit paham radikalisme. Sehingga, diharapkan kehadiran pesantren ini bisa menjadi wadah edukasi deradikalisasi ...".*[8]

Due to the matter of humanity, the focus of this school is to provide education for the children of terrorists or former terrorists. This reason is interesting to examine following the assumption that their parents are abandoning the children.

> *"... sama sekali tidak ada, maksud dari anak-anak korban itu seperti yang saya jelaskan tadi, yaitu dari keluarga teroris, bukan anak-anak yang orang tuanya terkena bom yang dibuat oleh para teroris. Kalau mereka itu sudah ditangani oleh pemerintah".*[4]

Another question that appears is about children' condition before their parents were caught by the police. It is likely that they were not abbadoned by their family. This discussion needs to be supported by a more complete data analysis. However, despite the controversy the aim to provide the de-radicalization education will not be relevant if number of the terrorist keeps increasing.

Second, there is a negative stigma in society against not only the children of terrorists but also the families. According to Khairul Ghazali, the children of terrorists were ridiculed and excluded by his friends even at school, which can lead to a psychological problem for the children. There are cases where the children of terrorists attack his friend because they feel offended. However, the stigma cannot be easily eliminated, in

fact, it becomes stronger. There are also fatal cases where children of terrorists decide to stop attending school.Third, there are cases where they get and absorb the seed of radical ideology (spirited of terror) through their parents. Khairul Ghazali mentioned that the reason comes from *Birrul Walidain*. Many fathers are inviting their children to do the same thing (terrorism) that they have done. If their sons refuse, they labeled them as a sinful son. This condition is possible because children usually imitate their parents and regard parents as their idols.

"... dengan alasan Birrul Walidain, banyak Ayah yang mengajak anaknya melakukan hal serupa (terorisme). Jika anaknya menolak, maka ia di cap sebagai anak yang berdosa".[7]

Fourth, there is a tendency to have the nature of hating the state, including the security apparatus. State apparatus is considered as *thagut*. Khairul Ghazali exemplifies where children of terrorists hate the police. There are cases where terrorists' children have a rebellious and violent attitude. There is an understanding of hatred gained through the process of doctrinaire, which later becomes the seed of dangerous ideologies. According to him, terrorists; children need to be guided so that the ideological seeds do not grow and become a strong ideology.

The last but not least is because they have the potential to be recruited as terrorists. According to Khairul Ghazali, the children of terrorists still hold a grudge, so they are easy to be recruited as terrorists. Even though this phenomenon is still rarely found, some similar cases existed.

"Ketika orang tuanya tewas atau ditangkap maka hidup mereka semakin sulit. Apalagi mereka adalah pihak yang juga terlibat langsung dalam proses indoktrinasi tindakan teror bersama-sama orang tuanya, jadi mereka ini juga memiliki potensi tinggi untuk kembali melakukan tindakan teror".[4]

This last worrying thing the high number of terrorists' children and the surveillance towards them cannot be done maximally, as they are not concentrated in one place yet scattered in various regions.

There are two theoretical implications of this research. First, the rise of terrorism is not always due to religious factors. Why does terrorism arise (female/women and in my opinion also children)? There are four other factors. Namely, revenge, redeeming family names, equalize the patriarchal society and indoctrination. Terrorism leaders have found a strategic value to exploit their services, which is, feelings of hurt as a victim. These reviews strengthen Mia Bloom's [5] research findings.

Secondly, in this case (although the results still require substantial evidence), the efforts of de-radicalization are made within the framework of religious education. These findings automatically reject the view of Mark Juergensmeyer [8] especially his view about the strange attraction between religion and terrorism. In this case, that opinion cannot be proven. On the contrary, the religious education has become a space for de-radicalization for terrorist children. This contact opens a broader discourse about the relationship between Islam and democracy. Is it possible that Islamic education will be the center of political education for democracy? The answer may be yes or no. Therefore a further research on this matter needs to be conducted.

V. CLOSING

In general, three things become the background in the establishment of Al-Hidayah boarding school. The first reason is that because Khairul Ghazali wants to redeem his sin in the past. Second, he wants to save the education of children of terrorists. The last one is to become the role model of de-radicalization boarding school. Al-Hidayah boarding school seeks to become a boarding school that guides terrorists' children to anticipate the growing understanding of radicalism. In details, there are five main reasons why its focus is toward the children of terrorist. First, they are abandoned because their parents were imprisoned or died. Second, there is a negative stigma in society against children of terrorists. Thirdly, they absorb the seed of radical ideology (spirited of terror) through their parents. Fourth, there is a tendency to have the nature of hating the state and the security apparatus. Fifth, they have the potential to be recruited as terrorists.

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