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# Taxonomy of Radicalism-Terrorism Networks and Prevention Efforts in Aceh, Indonesia

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**Abstract**

This research is motivated by the fact that a series of terrorism-related incidents continues to occur in Indonesia, particularly in Aceh. The study aims to unravel the taxonomy of radicalism-terrorism networks and the efforts to counter them in Aceh. A qualitative method was employed, with data analyzed using Moghaddam's "Staircase to Terrorism" theory and Tajfel's social identity theory. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and a literature review. The research results show that the taxonomy of the radicalism-terrorism network in Aceh, it consists of three streams; (1) Salafi Wahabi who are not involved in terrorism; (2) Salafi Wahabi who adhere to jihadist ideology which is in the form of Jamaah Islamiah and is affiliated with the Al Qaeda network; (3) Salafi Wahabi who adhere to takfiri ideology which is in the form of JAD and is oriented towards ISIS. These last two groups are now nesting and spreading their networks in Aceh such as in Aceh Besar, Bireuen, North Aceh, East Aceh, Singkil and Aceh Tamiang. In mitigation and prevention efforts, three roles of the government can be carried out, namely; the role of regulator, dynamicator, facilitator and catalyst. Then, in overcoming the radicalism-terrorism movement, the Aceh government put forward collaborative governance through program approaches; preparedness, counter-radicalization, and deradicalization. Regarding efforts to counter radicalism and terrorism, the Aceh government prioritizes collaborative governance through a programmatic approach encompassing preparedness, counter-radicalization, and deradicalization. While the situation has not yet reached the sixth stage of Moghaddam's theoretical framework, vigilance remains crucial to prevent acts of terrorism; meanwhile, the group's social identity has failed to garner public sympathy due to the strong influence of moderate Islam in Aceh.

**Keywords**: Radicalism-Terrorism Networks, integrated governance strategy, mitigate, staircase to terrorism theory, social identity theory

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***Abstrak***

*Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh rangkaian peristiwa terorisme di wilayah Indonesia, khususnya Aceh, yang masih berulang terjadi. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah mengurai taksonomi jaringan radikalisme-terorisme dan upaya penanggulangannya di Aceh. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dianalisis dengan teori staircase to terrorism oleh Moghaddam dan teori identitas sosial Tajfel. Data diperoleh dari hasil wawancara mendalam, FGD, dan studi literatur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa taksonomi jaringan radikalisme-terorisme di Aceh terdiri dari tiga aliran: (1) Salafi Wahabi yang tidak terlibat dalam terorisme; (2) Salafi Wahabi berpaham jihadis yang berwujud Jamaah Islamiyah dan terafiliasi dengan jaringan Al-Qaeda; (3) Salafi Wahabi berpaham takfiri yang berwujud JAD dan berkiblat ke ISIS. Dua kelompok terakhir inilah yang kini sudah bersarang dan menyebarkan jejaringnya di Aceh seperti di Aceh Besar, Bireuen, Aceh Utara, Aceh Timur, Singkil dan Aceh Tamiang. Dalam upaya mitigasi pencegahan, tiga peran pemerintah dapat dilakukan yakni; peran regulator, dinamisator, fasilitator dan katalisator. Sedangkan upaya penanggulangan gerakan radikalisme-terorisme, pemerintah Aceh mengedepankan collaborative governance melalui pendekatan program; kesiapsiagaan, kontra radikalisasi dan deradikalisasi. Kemudian dalam perspektif teori Moghaddam memang belum sampai pada level keenam namun sangat penting untuk diwaspadai agar aksi terorisme tidak terjadi, sedangkan identitas sosial kelompok tersebut tidak berhasil mendapat simpati masyarakat karena kuatnya pengaruh Islam moderat yang berkembang di Aceh.*
***Kata Kunci**: Jaringan radikalisme-terorisme, collaborative governance, mitigasi, teori staircase to terrorism dan teori identitas sosial*

## Introduction

The disclosure of terrorism networks in the Aceh region is shocking and annoying because Aceh has been known to be immune and resilient to all radicalism and terrorism movements, especially in the name of religion. It is very annoying because when Aceh tries as hard as possible to maintain peace after the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), it becomes one of the new rounds of the Islamic Fundamentalism Return Movement on the Aceh Public Stage. The Network of Islamic Jamaah (*Jamaah Islamiah*/JI) with Salafi Wahabi Jihadi and the Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) with Salafi Wahabi Takfiri.[1] Although they have different

[1]Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Salafi Movement in Indonesia: Transnational Dynamics and Local Development," *Comparative Studies of South Asia Africa and the Middle East* 27, No. 1 (2007), p. 83-94. Zahratul Idami, et.al., "Prevention of Higher Education Radicalism in Aceh: Perspectives of Constitutional Law and Islamic Law," *Samarah* 7, No. 3 (2023). Robi Sugara, et al. *A Cross-Country Report on Trends of Extremism in South and South-East Asia.* Jakarta: International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development (INFID), 2018. Fakhri, et.al., "Model for

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affiliate lines, where JI is ffiliated with Al Qaeda and JAD with ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria),[2] both are in one region, Aceh.

These groups have made Aceh one of the bases of their movements. However, they also recruited Achenese to become an actor in radicalism-terrorism.[3] From several events, such as in August 2022, the Special Denasmen (Detachment) 88 Anti-Terror arrested 15 terrorist coordinators in the Aceh Tamiang region. 13 of them were from the JI network, and 2 other people were from the terrorist network of the Jamaah Anshorut Daulah (JAD). The most viral occurred in 2010 when the territory was in the mountains of Jantho, Aceh Besar, which was once used as the headquarters of the military training center for the terrorism network group. Also, it occurred again in 2018, precisely in the Mount Salak area, North Aceh. The location was also once used as a military training location for the Terrorism Network of Abu Hamzah.[4]

Even in the range of 2016-2020, the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) of the Republic of Indonesia also said that Aceh is one of the 12 regions in Indonesia in the red zone of terrorism. Yudi Zulfahri (former Aceh terrorist) confirmed that Aceh would always be glimpsed by the radicalism group as a place for movement. The pattern is almost the same if it is associated with the problem of the constellation of global politics, about poverty, heresy, and apostasy, to the clash of thought and imagination of an Islamic state "*Khilafah*" formation.[5] These five things will always be the gunpowder of the growth of the radicalism-terrorism movement in society. It means that there are conditions that allow ideological penetration into the joints of the life of the Acehnese people, which is the empirical reality. The above problems indicate that Aceh is now in a state of contradictio-in-terminis; Peace but full of terror, shooting everywhere,

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Former Terrorism Convicts: A Legal Perspective on Deradicalisation Law in Indonesia, *Petita*, 10, No. 2 (2025).

[2] Aly Ashghor, "Redefine the Concept of Lone Wolf in The Context of Global Jihad," *Journal of Terrorism Studies* 4, No. 1 (2022). Judith Tinnes, *Bibliography: Islamic State (IS, ISIS, ISIL, Daesh)* Part 7. *Perspectives on Terrorism* 17, No. 1 (2023), p. 170–233. Abdul Majid, et.al., "Salafi, Hadith, and Islamic Law: Identity Politics and Wahabi Movement in East Kalimantan," *Ahkam* 23, No. 1 (2023).

[3] Herdi Sahrasad, "A Reflection on the Role of Ulama and Community Leaders in Raising Socio-Cultural Capital to Deal with Terrorist Groups in Bukit Jalin, Aceh Besar," *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies*, 19, No. 2 (2023), p. 231–245. Mukhlisuddin Ilyas, et.al., "Youth Existence and Radicalism in Aceh, Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 8, No. 2 (2020).

[4] Zamzami, F. (2019). Kelompok radikal di kalteng merupakan perakit bom pernah latihan militer di Gunung Salak Aceh. Available in https://aceh.tribunnews.com/2019/06/14/kelompok-radikal-di-kalteng-merupakan-perakit-bom-pernah-latihan-militer-di-gunung-salak-aceh-utara?page=all.

[5] G. LaFree and A. Schwarzenbach, "Micro and macro-level risk factors for extremism and terrorism: Toward a criminology of extremist violence," *Monatsschrift für Kriminologie und Strafrechtsreform* 104, no. 3, (2021), p. 184–202.

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living in harmony but is undermined by groups of radicalism and terrorism. This fact must be a serious concern of all social layers.[6] Terrorism is a clear threat that harms society, nation, and state.[7] It is an organized crime or not, cross-country that has an extensive network and threatens national and international security and security.[8] Therefore, the government, as a leading sector in policymakers, must have an effective strategy and commitment to prevent and overcome it.[9]

This study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The theories used for analysis are Moghaddam's "Staircase to Terrorism" and Tajfel's social identity theory.[10] According to Moghaddam's "Staircase to Terrorism" theory, the process involves ascending six steps, with a terrorist act serving as the final step on a progressively narrowing staircase. While most people who feel marginalized or unfairly treated remain at the ground level, some individuals ascend the staircase and are ultimately recruited into terrorist organizations. These individuals believe they lack an effective voice in society; they are encouraged by leaders to vent their aggression against out-groups and undergo a socialization process that frames the terrorist organization as legitimate while casting out-group members as evil. Current policies focusing on individuals who have already reached the top of the staircase yield only short-term results. The most effective long-term strategy for addressing terrorism is prevention, which can be achieved by fostering context-specific democracy at the grassroots level. [11]

The second theory is Henri Tajfel's social identity theory, which offers a social-psychological explanation for prejudice, discrimination, and intergroup conflict. This theory played a pivotal role in the development of the social-psychological approach that emerged in Europe. Broadly speaking, this approach focuses on the relationship between the individual self and society. For Tajfel, the key to understanding prejudice, discrimination, and intergroup conflict lies in an individual's social identity as defined by group membership.

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[6] Gary LaFree and Anina Schwarzenbach, "Micro and macro-level risk factors for extremism and terrorism: Toward a criminology of extremist violence" *Monatsschrift für Kriminologie und Strafrechtsreform* 104, no. 3, (2021), p. 184-202.

[7] J. M. Berger, "Extremism," in The MIT Press Essential Knowledge Series, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2018.

[8] E. Carter, "Right-Wing Extremism/Radicalism: Reconstructing the Concept. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 23, No. 2, (2018), p. p. 157–182.

[9] Anastasia Filippidou, *Deterring Violent Extremism and Terrorism. In: Filippidou, A. (eds) Deterrence. Advanced Sciences and Technologies for Security Applications.* Springer, Cham. (2020).

[10] Norman K Denzin, and Yvonna, S Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2009.

[11] Fathali M. Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism: A psychological Exploration." *American Psychologist* 60, No. 2 (2005), p. 161–169. Fathali M. Moghaddam, *From the Terrorists' Point of View*, Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006.

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Social identity theory rejects explanations based on individual deficiencies regarding physiology, personality, or attitudes. In this respect, the theory challenges more traditional psychological theories and has sparked interest among sociologists. [12] These two theories are used to analyze the taxonomy of radicalism and terrorism, as well as prevention efforts, in Aceh.

For this reason, it is necessary to use the principle of research triangulation,[13] namely various methods, data, data sources, and others related to terrorists since the reform period or after the 2005 Helsinki MoU. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with religious scholars (ulama), academics, and representatives from FKPT Aceh, while focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with stakeholders such as the BNPT (National Counter-Terrorism Agency), FKPT Aceh (Counter-Terrorism Coordination Forum), civil society, and former convicts. The stages of this research are the process of data reduction, analysis, presentation of data, and conclusions.[14] Meanwhile, to measure the trustworthiness criteria, this study is characterized by credibility, transferability, dispensability, and confirmability.[15]

## The Construction of Radicalism and Terrorism: A Theoretical Framework

Radicalism refers to basic things, fundamental, and essential principles of various symptoms. The term Radicalism was first used by Charles James Fox, who declared a "radical reform" in British Britain, England (Britannica Encyclopedia).[16] It is a movement that supports the parliamentary revolution by drastically expanding the right to vote to the universal voting right in the government system. Then, the radical term began to be used as a general term and even political doctrine by certain parties to support the movement for individual and collective freedom. So, this thinking is related to efforts to change overall social and political dynamics.

According to the “Staircase to Terrorism” theory proposed by Moghaddam, the path to terrorism involves six steps:

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[12] Henri Tajfel, “Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour.” *Social Science Information* 13, (1974), p. 65-93. Peter Callero, *Social Identity Theory*, In book: The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology, February 2007.

[13]Richard C. Rich, et.al., *Empirical Political Analysis: International Edition* (9th ed.). New York: Routledge, 2018.

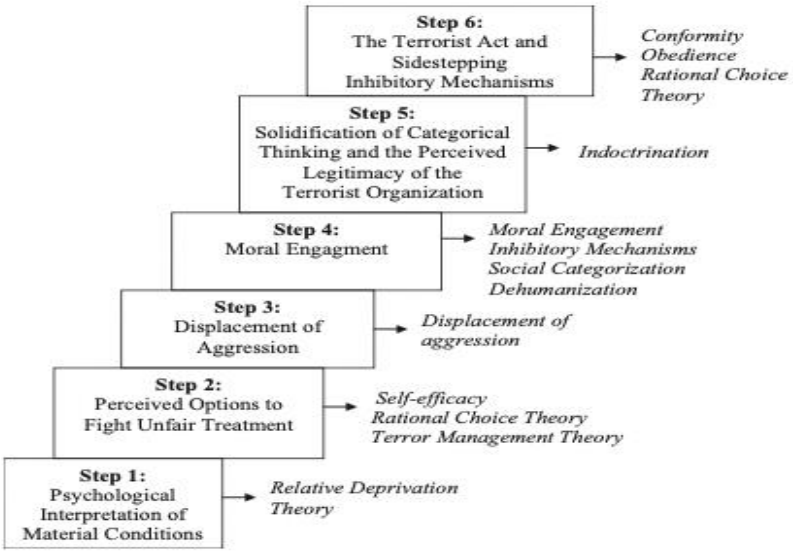
[14] Matthew B. Miles, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook.* Third edition. SAGE Publication, 2014.

[15]Neuman, W. Lawrence. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches.* (7 edition). Pearson Education Limited, 2014.

[16] J.R. Dinwiddy, Charles James Fox and The People. *History*, 55, No. 185 (1970), p. 342–359.

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**Figure 1: Staircase to Terrorism theory**




Source: Moghaddam, (2005; 2006)

According to Moghaddam, there are six steps leading to terrorism. The first step involves the psychological interpretation of material conditions and growing dissatisfaction with the social world; if an individual's psychological interpretation of their material circumstances results in a sense of injustice, they proceed to the next stage. The second step concerns the individual's perception of opportunities for personal mobility to improve their standard of living, as well as their experience regarding perceived procedural justice; this stage highlights the inadequacy of the individual's identity and the threats posed to it. The third step is the displacement of aggression a concept widely recognized in the context of terrorism whereby individuals direct their anger and frustration toward an external enemy perceived as responsible for their plight, even if that perception is not necessarily accurate. [17]

In the fourth step, the individual joins a terrorist group and gradually adopts the organization's moral reasoning and rationale, while distancing themselves from the moral guidelines of the state. This transition occurs within the group through isolation, emotional bonding (attachment), secrecy, and fear. Moghaddam also notes that individuals are drawn to terrorist organizations for the same reasons they are attracted to religious groups or sports teams: the sense of belonging and identity these groups offer. The fifth step involves a further sharpening of the rigid distinction between "us" and "them," alongside the view

[17] Fathali M. Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism. Fathali M. Moghaddam, *From the Terrorists' Point of View*.

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that the terrorist organization is a legitimate entity. At this stage, individuals are also trained to perform specific roles within the organization based on their motivations, talents, and availability, as well as the organization's needs. The sixth step—the final stage of the "Staircase to Terrorism" model sees the individual trained to kill through methods designed to overcome natural inhibitions. Two primary mechanisms contribute to bypassing these inhibitions: social categorization and psychological distance. These processes enable terrorists to maintain psychological distance from the people they intend to harm; obedience and conformity play a crucial role at this stage. [18]

Social identity theory, proposed by Henri Tajfel, addresses the relationship between the individual self and society within the context of social psychology. The theory has been developed and expanded to encompass issues such as group leadership, organizational psychology, deviant behavior, and political action. Today, it stands as one of the most influential theoretical perspectives in the field of social psychology.[19] Social identity theory has proven relevant across various academic disciplines beyond social psychology; its contributions to the broader field of social studies are increasingly recognized, influencing the evolution of dominant social psychology approaches and their current advancements. Social scientists investigating intergroup relations utilize social identity theory to foster critical and creative thinking regarding social science research in general,[20] extending beyond social psychology to fields such as political psychology, the study of social movements, and the psychology of individuals involved in radicalism and terrorism, as explored in this article.

## Aceh is the Target of Terrorism Regeneration

This chapter outlines some of the results, including; study findings, explanations, and interpretations of the data obtained regarding the role of the Aceh government in handling terrorism, as well as making generalizations. The emergence of acts of terrorism is increasingly becoming a scourge of modern civilization, including in Indonesia. Acts of terrorism continue to incarnate without knowing the end of the base. In addition to the different forms and motives, the victims of acts of terrorism are also quite a lot. Treatment efforts continue. However, acts of terror continue to occur and are repeated to this day. The data above confirms that terrorists have never been extinguished and remain

[18] Fathali M. Moghaddam, "The Staircase to Terrorism. Fathali M. Moghaddam, *From the Terrorists' Point of View.*

[19] Henri Tajfel, "Social Identity and Intergroup Behaviour." *Social Science Information* 13, (1974), p. 65-93. Peter Callero, Social Identity Theory, In book: The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology, February 2007.

[20]Maria Zafar, 'Henri Tajfel: Explorer of Identity and Difference': Rupert Brown," *CASTE/A Global Journal on Social Exclusion* 5, No. 2 (2024), p. 335-341.

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active until now. Even in terms of trends, data from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), there were 638 terrorist incidents in Indonesia from 2000 to 2020. The number of terrorist incidents that have occurred shows that Indonesia is ranked 24th on the list of countries most affected by terrorism and Afghanistan is the country that is ranked first as the country most affected by terrorism.[21]

Similarly, the arrests of terrorist network groups in Aceh in July and August 2022 became a loud alarm for the Government of Aceh. Within those months, the Special Detachment (Densus) 88 Anti-terror Police managed to arrest 15 coordinators of the terrorist network. 13 of them are members of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terrorist network, and 2 of them are part of the Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) terrorist network. The arrest locations were spread across the Regencies of Aceh Tamiang, North Aceh, Langsa, Bireuen, and Banda Aceh. Most of those arrested were Acehnese. This incident is not the first time. Detachment 88 has uncovered a terrorist network in the "*Serambi Mekkah*" land. Also, in January 2021, five suspected terrorists were arrested in Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar, and Langsa. Even if we go far back, between February and March 2010, Detachment 88 managed to find the headquarters of the military training center of the combined terrorist network group located in Blang Raya, Bukit Jalin, Jantho, Aceh Besar. This incident is one of the disclosures of the location of the highest terrorism nodes in Aceh and was an arena for consolidating terrorist movements in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. Many terrorist factions or groups joined Jalin's training, and among them was the terrorist network led by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Oman Rochman alias Aman Abdurrahman. From the disclosure process, dozens of terrorist members were killed in the crossfire, and 15 were arrested. Even from the police, nine police officers were shot, and three of them died. Based on the identity of the arrested terrorists, they have diverse backgrounds or professions, from traders, fishermen, students, and Quran teachers to government officials. This condition, at the same time, confirms that terrorists continue to infiltrate various layers of the Acehnese community.

Even though Aceh is not the target of terrorist attacks, at least terrorist groups consider Aceh a suitable place to be a home of the movement. Another assumption is that Acehnese is an easy target for recruiting potential terrorists. Culturally, Aceh is considered to have the potential to sow the seeds of radicalism. Aceh is known to have a rigorous character of "*Politik Pungo*/crazy politics,[22] *Politik Hana Titek*/pointless politics, and *Atjeh Moorden*, in defending

[21] Annur, C, Mutia (2022). Jumlah Insiden Terorisme di Indonesia (2000-2020). Databoks.katadata.co.id. [Online]. Available: https://www.databoks.katadata.co.id

[22] Taufik Al Mubarak, *Aceh Pungo*. Banda Aceh: Bandar Publishing, 2009.

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principles.[23] Aceh is the birthplace of many heroes who dared to fight against colonialism. The Warriors are not only militant but also moral. This situation makes terrorist groups think that the Acehnese are ready to fight and dare to die (*syahid*). The interest of terrorist groups in recruiting the Acehnese is inseparable from the history of the Aceh conflict, which is so very deep. Aceh is one of the longest conflict areas in Southeast Asia since Indonesia was processing to gain complete independence from Dutch colonialism. The proof is that Aceh was one of the last areas to surrender to the colonial government, and even then, after the Aceh war, which was brutal and lasted for three decades (1873-1913). Even after independence, from 1945 to 1950, the Dutch did not succeed in their colonial actions in this *Rencong* land.[24]

In addition to cultural dynamics, Aceh is geographically very strategic as a base for terrorist network development, from gathering logistics and training to cadre formation. Apart from being far from the center of the capital city of Jakarta, Aceh has vast mountainous and forest areas that are difficult to reach. So, it indicates that the terrorist network group that conducted the training in Aceh was to avoid detection by the state security forces. Aceh is also the westernmost region, flanked by the Indian Ocean and the Malacca Strait. This condition makes access abroad very easy. Also, the path of smuggling weapons from Thailand, Myanmar, or the Philippines was through the Malacca Strait during the conflict between GAM and the Government of Indonesia.[25] So, it means that Aceh is a space where thousands of weapons widely circulated at that time. Under these conditions, Aceh is the potential to be a center for terrorist network movements in Indonesia.

In fact, from 2016 to 2020, the BNPT RI confirmed that Aceh was one of 12 regions in Indonesia in the red zone category for acts of terrorism. Also, in an interview (2022) with Yudi Zulfahri (former terrorist of Jalin, Aceh) claimed that Tanah Rencong will always be glimpsed by radical-terrorist groups as their movement base. They are looking for a place outside Java, such as Aceh, because of too little room for movement in Java. In addition, there is a possibility that terrorist groups think they can befriend former GAM members to receive protection. The pattern is almost the same, especially related to religion, poverty, politics, and global issues to the clash of thoughts and imaginations for

[23] Azwad and Dally, *Aksi Poh Kaphe di Aceh (Atjeh Moorden).* Banda Aceh: Pusat Dokumentasi dan Informasi Aceh, 2002. p. 2. Anthony Reid, *An Indonesian Frontier: Acehnese & Other Histories of Sumatra.* Singapore: Singapore University, 2005.

[24] Edward Aspinall, *Islam and Nation: Separatist Rebellion in Aceh*, *Indonesia*. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2009. Hasan Muhammad Tiro, *Indonesia Nationalism: a western Invention to Subvert Islam and Toprevent Decolonization of the Dutch East Indies*. London: National Liberation Front Acheh Sumatera, 1987.

[25] Santosa, I. (2019). Jalur Penyelundupan Senjata Thailand-Indonesia. accessed on https://www.kompas.id/artikel/jalur-penyelundupan-senjata-thailand-indonesia

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an Islamic caliphate formation (*Khilafah*).[26] These five things have always been gunpowder in the doctrinal process of terrorism recruitment in Aceh. Without good screening, the penetration of cadre understanding of terrorism will be widespread. It is the empirical reality.

**Traces of Terrorism Network in Aceh**

If traced, many terrorist networks in Indonesia have historical affiliations with the Indonesian Islamic State (NII) group. In fact, from 1999 to 2013, most NII activists from various factions were involved in acts of terrorism. Those who are best known are Imam Samudera and Mukhlas groups (the perpetrators of the 2002 Bali bombing) and Iwan Darmawan (the perpetrators of the Australian Embassy bombing). Besides, the terrorists who have NII DNA are Abi Umar, Pepi Fernando, Santoso Daeng Koro, Heri Gulun, and Dulmatin. Meanwhile, from the aspect of group networks, some of those considered the most dangerous and responsible for various terrorist attacks (perpetrator groups) in Indonesia include the East Indonesia Mujahidin, Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), and JAD.[27] However, there are also many terrorist incidents where the perpetrators have connections and networks of global terrorist groups (ISIS) such as JI.[28]

Meanwhile, traces of terrorist networks caught in Aceh since 2010 are not new groups but a combination of various terrorist networks in Indonesia. The combined terrorist group is from well-known elements, such as JAT, JI, JAD, Darul Islam, and Ring Banten, and some are from groups affiliated with Wahda Islamiyah in Makassar. Although Wahda Islamiya is not a terrorist group, they are considered the "parents" of Laskar Jundullah during the conflict in Poso, Central Sulawesi. These terrorist groups do not cooperate. Both contest and fight each other. For example, JI and JAD have strong Wahhabism ideologies but are different. JI adheres to the Wahhabi Jihadi ideology, while JAD adheres to the Wahhabi Takfiri ideology. The lines of affiliation are also different, where JI is affiliated with Al Qaeda, and JAD is with ISIS. The JI (Al Qaeda) and JAD (ISIS) groups clashed and confronted each other.[29] However, the two networks are in the same area, Aceh.

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[26] Tomi Setiawan, "The Caliphate as the Global Islamic Politics: Theological, Historical, and Contemporary Discourse Perspectives." *Jurnal Review Politik* 15, No. 1 (2025), p. 64–84.

[27] M. Hasan Ansori, et al. *Memberantas Terorisme di Indonesia: Praktik, Kebijakan dan Tantangan.* Jakarta: The Habibie Center, 2019.

[28] Nkululeko Majozi, Theorising the Islamic State: A Decolonial Perspective. ReOrient, 3, No. 2 (2018), p. 163–184.

[29] Bella Widya, "Pemahaman Takfiri Terhadap Kelompok Teror Di Indonesia Studi Komparasi Jamaah Islamiyah Dan Jamaah Ansharut Daulah." *Jurnal Studi Diplomasi dan Keamanan,* 12. No. 2, (2020).

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Aceh is a "hot" region where all schools of thought and ideology have ever grown and developed. In addition, republicans and the ideology of moderate Islamism with the Syafi'ie school are the majority in Aceh. Movements of ethnonationalism, separatism, *tamkin* terrorists (organic and territorial terrorists), conservatism, liberalism, communism, Shia, and even Jewish Zionists have existed in Aceh.[30] Now, it adds up more. The radical ideology of Salafi Wahabi Takfirism and Salafi Wahabi Jihadi also grows and exists in Aceh. The entry of the ideology of the Wahhabi radical movement began in 1913 after the definitive defeat of Aceh against the Dutch colonialists. This group infiltrated and always provoked the people of Aceh to carry out terror attacks against the "infidel civilian" group and their accomplices. Then this understanding dimmed in 1989-1998 when the Military Operations Area (DOM) was imposed on Aceh by the new order regime of Indonesia. Repeating history, the Wahhabis returned to Aceh with the face of a "*Kafilah Khawarij*" during the peace period or after the GAM and RI wars were over and peace. Also, in this condition, the Wahhabi Jihadi and Takfiri terrorist networks moved their operation areas from Solo to Lampung and Aceh.

If we break down the current taxonomy of Wahhabism in Aceh, we will find that this group has three streams that consist of (1) Salafi Wahhabis without involvement with terrorism, (2) Salafi Wahhabism with Jihadist views in the form of JI and affiliated with the Al Qaeda network, and (3) Salafi Wahhabism with Takfiri views in the form of JAD and oriented to ISIS. Nowadays, the last two groups have been networking and spreading their networks in Aceh, such as in Aceh Besar, Bireuen, North Aceh, East Aceh, Singkil, and Aceh Tamiang.

The emergence of terrorist groups in Aceh was not born from an empty space. They grow and develop in a context and momentum, especially after the reform. The emergence of terrorist network groups in Aceh surprises enough many people. But non a few also see this incident as natural because Aceh has qualified preconditions for the growth of seeds of terrorism. The penetration of terrorist groups began to smell when the Aceh tsunami disaster occurred in 2004 and the political shifts after the 2005 MoU Helsinki agreement. This situation was used as a new momentum to make Aceh a terrorist group base region. Because after that big event, Aceh became more open to the entry of new groups and organizations, which previously received quite serious resistance in Aceh.

Initially, the penetration of outsiders (terrorist affiliates) was previously met with rejection and cynicism in Aceh and could not get an established burial place. However, slowly, the terrorist network group has been able to anchor it. It indicates that the aftermath of the Aceh Tsunami disaster has opened space for Islamic organizations with strong (radical) views, such as the Islamic Defenders

[30] Sudirman, "Kompleks Makam Kerkof Di Banda Aceh, Cermin Kedahsyatan Perang Aceh (Suatu Tinjauan Sejarah)." *Purbawidya: Jurnal Penelitian. dan Pengembangan Arkeologi* 6, no. 2 (2017), p. 91–104.

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Front (FPI), Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) to the Salafi Wahhabi movement to stretch themselves on this *Serambi Mekkah*. Through this organization, the network of terrorist groups secures itself and takes a movement break in Aceh. Based on the data, initially, the network of terrorist groups in Aceh was not residents. But migrants and "old players" affiliated with the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) terrorist networks. This group considers Aceh a potential area as a base for its movements.

This terrorist group continued to liaise with old Indonesian terrorist actors and networks. Traces of connectedness can be traced clearly. The entry of terrorists, both individually and in groups, at first appeared as disaster volunteers. Among them, five former Mer-C volunteers who at that time served as journalists, for example, were later identified as being involved in a terrorist network in Aceh. The volunteers are known to have gone to Mindanao, Philippines, and Pattani, Thailand, to carry out Jihad. Also, FKPM (Mosque Activist Communication Forum). This group, one of the largest radical groups in Solo, gives birth to many terrorist actors in Aceh. FKAM is active as a disaster volunteer group, including distributing aid to Aceh. Even FKAM was the first duty bearer as First Lady Ani Yudhoyono's Humanitarian Team during the Aceh Tsunami. Although, it has not been revealed directly connected with terrorist actors in Aceh. FKAM is suspected of having a role in funding the JI group. JI is one of the biggest suppliers of terrorist actors living in Aceh. The police suspect that JI obtained funding from charity boxes scattered in various places bearing the names of the Abdurrahman Bin Auf Foundation (ABA) and FKAM.

Next, FPI (Islamic Defenders Front). It was the first mass organization to set foot in Aceh when the tsunami occurred. Even though previously, the FPI received strong resistance in Aceh. Aceh has its resistance to religious movements that are familiar with violence. However, the tsunami that devastated Aceh made the situation different. His presence gradually softened the negative perception of FPI. This organization slowly established its anchor in Aceh. It is a fact that FPI's concern for the Aceh disaster and the sacrifice of its members as disaster volunteers was a valuable service for the people of Aceh. However, this organization significantly contributed to the emergence and growth of radical movements and terrorism in Aceh. FPI's initiative in recruiting volunteers to go to Gaza is a gateway for radical and terrorist groups to gather in Aceh.

The spread of radical-terrorist ideology in Aceh has entered various domains in various layers of society regardless of age, educational background, socioeconomic strata, and gender. Terrorist networks also continue to experience a metamorphosis of targets, strategies, forms, and media used. The target of the terrorist movement at first was the existence of the West and its allies, or on an international scale, it has changed to a national and domestic government scale. The attacks on houses of worship and police stations are

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evidence of a shift in the patterns that have been developed. Forms of the movement carried out in groups, systematically, and organized experienced a change in individual actors. Based on the media used besides conventional media such as *Halaqah, Daulah*, and Sermon lectures, dissemination of ideology also focuses on using print and online media for recruitment, propaganda, indoctrination, fundraising, and training purposes.[31] Whereas, based on the institutional perspective, this network infiltrates social institutions such as houses of worship, educational institutions (*Dayah*, Campus), mass organizations, and moderate religious institutions such as the Muhammadiyah organization.[32,33] Based on 2022 observational data, the Densus 88 team arrested a terrorist coordinator for the Aceh region named Isa (37). He was affiliated with the Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) group and served as the chairman of the Islamic Boarding School Leadership Forum (FKPP) for the Northern Sumatra (Sumbagut) region, specifically in Aceh Tamiang.[34] Ponirun, the "*Datok Penghulu*" (village head) of Sidodadi, Aceh Tamiang, stated that three of his residents identified as J (45), S (53), and DN (43) were arrested at an Islamic boarding school. Regarding their professions, Ustaz DN, served as the Head of the "*Dakwah*" (Religious Outreach) Division, while Ustaz J, worked as a teacher and Head of Public Relations at the Al-Hidayah Islamic Boarding School in Sidodadi.[35] Additionally, in Tanjung Karang Village, Karang Baru District, authorities detained an individual identified as Ustaz RSS (35), who worked as a high school-level educator at a local Islamic boarding school.[36] So, many moderate Islamic movements are affected by the effect of this terrorist ideology.[37] Finally, there was offense, and even many Muhammadiyah mosques were burned down by traditional Islamic boarding school. Perhaps there are still many traces of other unidentified radical groups. However, the groups mentioned above have found their way to work in Aceh, and the Aceh tsunami disaster is the momentum.

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[31] Sajid Amit, et.al., "Countering Violent Extremism Using Social Media and Preventing Implementable Strategies for Bangladesh," *Heliyon* 7, no. 5, (2021), p. 1–16,

[32] https://aceh.antaranews.com/berita/297389/cegah-radikalisme-penerimaan-guru-dayah-di-aceh-tamiang-diseleksi-dan-dipantau

[33] Khairil Miswar, "Wahhábi dalam Perspektif HUDA dan Implikasinya terhadap Kehidupan Sosial Keagamaan di Aceh." *Tadabbur: Jurnal Peradaban Islam,* 2 No. 1 (2020), p. 1-27.

[34] https://kumparan.com/kumparannews/389-warga-di-aceh-yang-diduga-terpapar-radikalisme-ji-ikrar-setia-kepada-nkri-1ydmu5MDpdj/full

[35] https://aceh.antaranews.com/berita/302829/santri-dan-warga-deklarasi-kampung-tangguh-pancasila-di-aceh-tamiang

[36]https://aceh.antaranews.com/berita/297109/ini-profesi-delapan-warga-aceh-tamiang-yang-ditangkap-densus-88

[37] Results of Field Observations in Aceh Tamiang, Aceh, 2022.

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They (terrorist groups) in Aceh will be able to continue to grow as the political constellation becomes increasingly and the socio-economic conditions in Aceh become increasingly.[38] The escalation of mismanagement of peace in Aceh will increasingly affect the level of ordinary Acehnese citizens. Terrorist networks are now increasingly going public and followed by young people from various ethnic backgrounds and regions of origin. Even though JI and JAD are terrorist organizations, they have succeeded in recruiting and forming a base of administrators down to the local level, such as Regencies, subdistricts, and their branches in villages.[39] Terrorist networks have quietly infiltrated Acehnese communities. The future of Aceh will be so bad if it fails to manage counterterrorism.

## Government's Roles in Combating Terrorism

Terrorist crimes have recently been getting critical along with the strengthening of the phenomenon of radicalism. Terrorist networks are spreading more extensively, and even the perpetrators ignore their ages, genders, and professions. They cannot be predicted when they will appear and stop. A comprehensive and systematic prevention policy is needed compared to conventional crime prevention.[40] Law (UU) of the Republic of Indonesia Number 5 of 2018 concerning Amendments to Law Number 15 of 2003 concerning the Stipulation of Government Regulation in Lieu of Law (Perpu) Number 1 of 2002 concerning Eradication of Criminal Acts of Terrorism to become Law and Number 9 of 2013 concerning Prevention and Eradication of Terrorism Financing Crimes, is a legal umbrella to handle and eradicate terrorism in Indonesia. Also, the government (BNPT, BIN, and TNI-POLRI/Military-Police) is the leading sector in countering terrorism in Indonesia.

In efforts to deal with acts of terrorism, the government, educational institutions and civil society have significant roles before, during, and even after the incident[41]. The government has taken continuous anticipatory steps based on protecting human rights and the precautionary principles of due process of law. In addition, counter-terrorism promotes a soft power approach to address the root causes (push and pull factors) comprehensively, systematically, planned,

[38] Abadul Wahid, et.al., *Kejahatan Terorisme-Perspektif Agama, HAM dan Hukum*, Bandung: Refika Aditama, 2004.

[39] Safrina. Jemaah Islamiyah di Aceh Ikrar Setia Kembali ke NKRI dan Pancasila. acehprov.go.id. [Online]. Available: https://acehprov.go.id/berita/kategori/umum/530-jemaah-islamiyah-di-aceh-ikrar-setia-kembali-ke-nkri-dan-pancasila

[40] K. Lakbayev, et.al., Countering Terrorist and Extremist Criminal Offences: A Situational Approach, *Jurnal Media Hukum* 32, No. 1 (2025), p. 171-189.

[41] Gabriel O. Adebayo, "Counter-radicalization policies and policing in education: making a case for human security in Europe," *Heliyon* 7, No. 2 (2021), p. 1-17.

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and integrated, involving the active role of all stakeholders[42]. In this case, the government has a role as a regulator, dynamic actor, facilitator, and catalyst in efforts to deal with acts of terrorism:

**1. Government as Regulator**

The role of the government as a regulator is to set the direction for balancing the implementation of development and the handling of acts of terrorism through the issuance of regulations and policies to facilitate coordination and synergy with various stakeholders in implementing programs. In addition, ensuring that existing regulations can run effectively. The significant role played by the government is also related to efforts to protect ex-convicts so that they are well-received in society without discrimination.

**2. Government as a Dynamicator**

The role of a dynamist aims to mobilize every level of society to participate in handling terrorists. The government can play a role through technical, intensive, and systematic guidance to every element of society. Also, the government can conduct training in capacity building for the community. For ex-convicts, it can restore a sense of optimism and economic independence. The most necessary thing in deradicalization for ex-convicts is to revive a sense of nationalism towards the state. Several forms of coaching can be done by fostering personality and independence, which includes law, religion, and nationalism, and by developing economic independence through training and building skills for ex-convicts. It can be done through mentoring and capital funding for ex-convicts to make them continue to live well without any discrimination from society.

**3. Government as Facilitator**

The role of a facilitator means that the government provides facilities and infrastructures to support the program for dealing with acts of terrorism. However, not all facilitation is interpreted as providing physical infrastructure and facilities or direct subsidies. The government provides technical and non-technical guidance to the public, including ex-convicts.

**4. Government as a Catalyst**

The role of a catalyst is defined as the government's position as a leading sector and agent that can accelerate the implementation of the national action plan program for handling terrorist acts. The government can make efforts to deal with terrorism by coordinating policies and synergizing programs

[42] D. Wisnubroto, et.al., "Preventing and Countering Insider Threats and Radicalism In an Indonesian Research Reactor: Development of a Human Reliability Program (HRP). *Heliyon* 9, no. 5, (2023), p. 1–12.

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between regional and central institutions so that handling programs can be implemented more optimally and bring maximum benefits. Referring to the approach above, and as an effort to maximize the handling of acts of terrorism, the government has made several efforts that can be classified into three pillars is namely prevention, law enforcement, partnership, and international cooperation.

**Table 1: Pillars in Preventing and Combating Terrorism**

| No | Pillars | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Prevention: Preparedness and counter radicalism and deradicalism | • Strengthening and utilizing supporting data,<br>• Increasing awareness and capacity of stakeholders,<br>• Increasing the effectiveness of prevention campaigns among vulnerable groups<br>• Strengthening the resilience of vulnerable groups<br>• Increasing the effectiveness of securing vital objects<br>• Preventing radicalism and terrorism in children's groups<br>• Increasing deradicalization within prisons<br>• Increasing deradicalization programs outside prisons |
| 2 | Law enforcement: Protecting witnesses and victims and strengthening the national legislative framework | • Strengthening coordination and law enforcement on criminal acts and terrorism financing<br>• Increasing the capacity of law enforcement institutions for criminal acts and terrorism financing abroad<br>• Protecting witness and victim<br>• Aligning the national legal framework with the international legal framework<br>• Preparing regulations for the harmonization of the design and evaluation of laws and regulations |
| 3 | International Partnership and Cooperation | • Increasing the partnership capacity of stakeholders<br>• Increasing international cooperation. |

Source: analyzed from various sources, 2024.

Internal efforts are efforts to counter terrorism by the government without involving other countries, but external efforts are efforts to combat terrorism carried out in coordination with other countries, both regionally and internationally. These efforts are carried out bilaterally, regionally, and globally.

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The following are several international cooperation efforts made by the Government of Indonesia in countering terrorism.

**Table 2: International Cooperation of Indonesia in Countering Terrorism**

| No | Global | Regions | Bilateral |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | United Nations Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (UNCTED) | ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime | Jakarta Center for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC) |
| 2 | United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF | ASEAN Chiefs of National Police | Jordan |
| 3 | Terrorism Prevention Branch-United Nation Officer for Drugs and Crime (TP UNODC) | ASEAN Chiefs of Army Multilateral Meeting | Spain |
| 4 | Advisory Board Member of UN Counter Terrorism Center, 2015-2018 | Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG-ML) | Singapore |
| 5 | Co-sponsor of UN Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014) on Foreign Terrorist Fighters | | New Zealand |
| 6 | Global Counter-Terrorism Forum GCTF | | France |

Source: analyzed from various sources, 2024

As for institutionally countering terrorism, the government, through the BNPT as the coordinating agency for policies and strategies implementation for combating terrorism, also involves all relevant agencies/ministries under their respective duties and functions, such as the National Police, the Attorney General's Office, and the Courts that have a role in the prosecution. The Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK) handles victims of terrorism during medical emergencies, conducts assessments, provides compensation, and carries out rehabilitation. In addition, the Ditjenpas institution has a role in the deradicalization process in prisons, and the Bapas institution has a role in the post-release deradicalization process.

Meanwhile, the Regional Government has a role in preventing terrorism and the social reintegration of former terrorists. And the DPR institution has a role as the primary supervisor by involving Komnas HAM as a partner. BNPT also includes the active role of non-governmental organizations

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such as NGOs, mass organizations, media, educational institutions, corporations, and civil society in prevention, deradicalization, rehabilitation, and social reintegration.

**Table 3: Roles of Non-Governmental Institutions in Combating Terrorism**

| No | Roles | Government and Non-Government Institutions |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Prevention | Ministry of Religious Affairs; Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, Ministry of Home Affairs; local government; NGOs/community organizations; Colleges |
| 2 | Prosecution | POLRI; Attorney; Court/MA; TNI; PPATK |
| 3 | Protection | POLRI; TNI; LPSK (Victims) |
| 4 | Deradicalization | Directorate General of Corrections; Ministry of Religion; Ministry of Manpower; Ministry of Social Affairs; Local Governments; NGOs/community organizations; Colleges. |
| 5 | National Preparedness | Security forces; Related Government Agencies; NGOs/Community Organizations. |
| 6 | Supervision | House of Representatives and involving NGOs, the National Commission on Human Rights. |

Source: BNPT, 2024

The synergy between government and non-government institutions commanded by the BNPT is very important because it will be able to build the capacity and capability of the government's performance in facing the threats and challenges of counter-terrorism. Countering terrorism is not only the responsibility of government institutions but also the responsibility of every non-governmental institution to continue to work together in all deradicalization and counter-terrorism efforts.[43]

## Collaborative Governance for Counter Terrorism in Aceh

Indonesia is very aware that the threat of radicalism-terrorism is still a problem. However, it is not easy to ward off its spread because the network has infiltrated various levels of society. Therefore, countermeasures against radicalism-terrorism threats are not only the domain of the central government but also in the regions because the threat of terrorism is a very complex issue, cross-sectoral and cross-scientific, and even across countries and continents. The approach must also be multi-disciplinary and across-institutional fields with an integrated and holistic understanding.

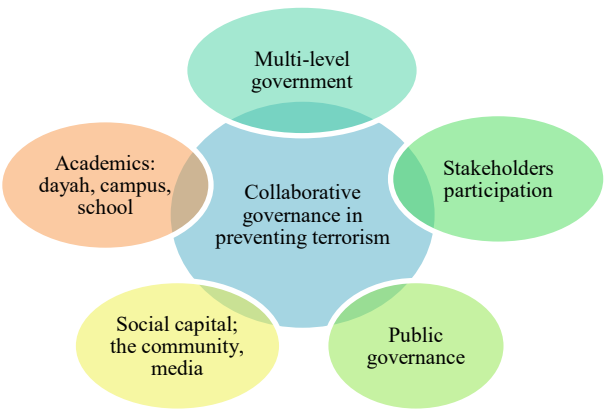
[43] Alaxander R. Arifianto, "Islamic Campus Preaching Organizations in Indonesia: Promoters of Moderation or Radicalism?" *Asian Security* 15, No. 3 (2019), p. 323–342.

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Every policy implemented by the government depends on the planned program, budget, availability of resources, technology and policy innovation. This situation shows that the government alone cannot solve all these needs, including the problem of terrorism. So, the government needs to work together with other competent parties to be involved in helping resolve this problem. Collaboration is an approach that can solve complex problems by bringing together each stakeholder with diverse attitudes, behavior and resources to achieve consensus and common goals.[44] So, in this situation, the Government has a full obligation to prevent and control radicalism-terrorism movements, which are carried out by related agencies, among others; Ministries/institutions, Regional Governments, private sectors and non-governmental organizations in accordance with their respective functions and authorities.

Particularly at the regional level, the Government of Aceh has no authority in the security sector. This authority is the main task and function of the Indonesian National Police (Polri) because the security issues are handled and included in the criminal justice system framework. Thus, in cases of terrorism, the central government and the National Police are the primary institutions that have full responsibility. However, the Government of Aceh is still responsible for maintaining security under its authority as stipulated in Law No. 23 of 2014 concerning the Regional Government and Law No. 11 of 2006 concerning the Aceh Government.

**Figure 2: The Collaborative Governance Framework for Preventing Terrorism in Aceh**




Source: Author's Analysis

In this case, the regional government only acts as a facilitator in implementing the national program acts of terrorism. The Aceh Government's

[44] K. Emerson and T. Nabatchi, *Collaborative Governance Regimes.* Georgetown University Press, 2016.

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commitment to preventing radicalism-terrorism movements exists in the Aceh government's policies, especially in the vision of the Government of Aceh is to create a peaceful and prosperous Aceh through a clean, just, and humble government. Although the Government of Aceh is de jure, not an institution that has the authority or full responsibility for security, the National Police Headquarters, through the Anti-Terror Task Force stationed throughout the Indonesian Police together with the regional government, can make every effort to maintain security within a non-litigation framework. As such support, the Government of Aceh has mobilized all its capabilities and resources to be used for the sake of security, even though it is limited, especially in seeking the safety and peace of the people of Aceh. This deployment certainly requires cross-agency collaboration and coordination so that it can become a long-term investment that is beneficial for the interests of Aceh in particular. For this reason, both the central and regional governments have a substantial role in dealing with radicalism and terrorism. Presidential Regulation Number 7 of 2021 concerning the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Violent Extremism That Leads to Terrorism (RAN PE) places Regional Governments as the primary stakeholder. Therefore, in the design of government affairs, it is necessary to consider the collaborative governance approach as an inclusive and effective instrument to place all elements in a significant and equal position at every policy stage. In addition, all of these elements are coordinated by the BNPT.

**Institutional Approach in Countering Terrorism in Aceh**

Aceh is one of the areas indicated to be vulnerable as a basis for movement, hiding, and cadre understanding of radicalism and terrorism that is appropriate to play an active role in efforts to overcome it. The Central and Regional Governments of Aceh have made their maximum efforts, but there have been repeated arrests of terrorist networks in Aceh. Efforts to tackle radicalism-terrorism are carried out simultaneously through three strategies:

**1) Preparedness Approach**

The preparedness program is a step to create readiness to infiltrate radicalism-terrorism notions through; (1) Community empowerment by increasing the institutional capacity of community groups through education, outreach, and strengthening family resilience and; (2) Increasing the ability of the apparatus (State Civil Apparatus (ASN), *Gampong* Apparatus, Kesbangpol, members of the police (Polri), Babinkamtibmas, TNI, Babinsa) coordinated by BNPT and related institutions in the form of integrated education and training,

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development of studies, and mapping of the vulnerable area to radicalism-terrorism.[45]

**2) Counter-Radicalization Approach**

The counter-radicalization action program is carried out by the Government of Aceh together with Ministries/Institutions coordinated by the BNPT. It involves elements of society such as religious leaders, traditional leaders, community leaders, community organizations (*Ormas*), religious organizations, youth organizations, political parties, and educational institutions. It focuses on vulnerable people or groups to exposure to radical-terrorist ideas. While the form of activity is carried out directly through outreach, dissemination, dialogue, and seminars; or indirectly through social media, books, magazines, pamphlets, and advertisements. Counter-radicalization is carried out with strategies consisting of counter-narrative, counter-propaganda, and counter-ideology.

According to Teungku Faisal Ali, the root of radicalism lies in ideology and fundamental beliefs specifically, those linked to *aqidah* (creed). Radical tendencies do not stem from differences in Islamic law; such differences do not drive a person toward radicalism, whereas differing theological understandings can. The moderate ideologies within Islam are the Ash'ari and Maturidi schools of thought; historically, Ash'arism is a creedal school attributed to Abu Hasan al-Ash'ari, while the Maturidi school originates from Abu Mansur al-Maturidi. Both the Ash'ari and Maturidi ideologies are characterized by *tawasuth* a middle path or balanced stance situated between two extremes: excessive rigidity (fundamentalism) and excessive permissiveness (liberalism). It is this balanced approach that allows Islam to be accepted across all strata of society. *Tawasuth* is also synonymous with moderation. Instilling Ash'ari and Maturidi beliefs within the community serves as a safeguard against the spread of radicalism in Aceh.[46]

In this regard, according to Yusni Sabi, the activities of the Terrorism Prevention Coordination Forum (FKPT) tend to focus on understanding radicalism rather than explicitly promoting the term "terrorism." Although the incident in Jalin was viewed as a security lapse on the part of the government, the infiltration of the terrorist group there was not without reason; such groups perceive Aceh as a region easily ignited due to its history of conflict viewing it as a place prone to, and easily manipulated into, conflict. However, it is crucial to remember that the prevailing issue in Aceh is generally radicalism rather than terrorism. This is what requires vigilance; the aforementioned conditions create

[45]Focus Group Discussion in Banda Aceh, 2022.

[46]Interview with Teungku Faizal Ali, Chairman of the Aceh Ulema Consultative Council (MPU), 2026.

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fertile ground for radical tendencies to take root. Consequently, our communication approach in Aceh must be reformulated. We have become accustomed to confrontational formats; communication models characterized by mutual disparagement must be eliminated. Furthermore, sermons by religious figures often inject elements of radicalism fostering intolerance and leading to mutual accusations of heresy (*bid'ah*) and apostasy (*kufr*).[47]

In this context, it can be asserted that countering opposing discourses or ideologies is best achieved by promoting moderate Islam or Islam *Wasatiyah* as championed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. Only an understanding of moderate Islam can foster a peaceful and stable social, religious, and political environment in Indonesia, [48] ensuring that moderate religious understanding and practice become mainstream and influential within society, rather than radical or *takfiri* forms of Islam.

### 3) Deradicalization Approach

The deradicalization program focuses on terrorist suspects, defendants, convicts, and ex-convicts. The deradicalization program is carried out for (1) suspects, defendants, convicts, and convicts by involving related institutions such as the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, the Police Prosecutor's Office, and Correctional Officers. The strategy is implemented through identification and assessment, rehabilitation, re-education, and social reintegration. Also, apart from involving related institutions, this program involves academics, practitioners, and religious leaders, and (2) former terrorism convicts by the BNPT, the Government of Aceh, and community groups through national and religious insight development, entrepreneurship, and training.

The Aceh Government must still collaborate with community elements even with limited resources. This collaboration is a form of preventive strengthening in tackling ideological seeds that lead to terrorism to recovery efforts for former terrorists. To realize the effectiveness of the counterterrorism program, the Aceh Government and BNPT have formed the Aceh Terrorism Prevention Coordination Forum (FKPT), which involves various community elements. It was formed in 2012 to synergize terrorism prevention in the regions by involving all community elements based on local conditions. Therefore, the FKPT here also has a portion to embrace community elements in Aceh by providing education and understanding regarding the potential for radicalism,

[47]Interview with Yusni Sabi, Professor at UIN Ar-Raniry and former Chairman of the Terrorism Prevention Coordination Forum (FKPT), Banda Aceh, 2023.

[48] Miftakhul Huda, et.al., "The Politics of Religious Moderation from the Perspective of Siyāsah Sharʿiyyah: A Socio-Legal Study of Pesantren in Kediri, Indonesia," *Mazahibuna* 8, No. 2 (2026). Hamzah Hamzah, "The Reflection of Medina Charter as A Basis for Religious Moderation in Indonesia," *Jurnal al-Dustur* 5, No. 1 (2022).

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which ultimately gives rise to acts of terrorism. These FKPT activities are more dominant as technical implementers of the BNPT program derivative.[49]

The Government of Aceh and BNPT are also synergizing counter-terrorism programs with platforms that can be used to provide information, socialization, and education to detect early symptoms of terrorist network movements that consist of the Local Government Coordination Forum (FORKOPIMDA), Aceh Community Early Awareness Forum (FKDM), Aceh Religious Communication Forum (FKUB), Aceh National Assimilation Forum (FPK), Aceh Traditional Council (MAA), Ulema Consultative Council (MPU), Aceh Ministry of Religion, as well as related agencies such as Kesbangpol, Social Service, Education Office, and others.[50]

Also, the Aceh government and elements of society participate in anticipating the spread of radical ideology and terrorism. Not only in urban areas, but counter-terrorism cooperation also targets villagers (*gampong*) such as religious figures, Dayah Ulama (HUDA), Religious organizations (NU and Muhammadiyah, Dayah, Madrasahs, Universities, Aceh Shura Hall, AIDA, Jalin Foundation, AMAN, Peace Prasasti Foundation, Aceh NGO Forum, study groups, academics, practitioners (media), youth organizations, community organizations (Ormas), NGOs, and others). These elements are involved in various activities, such as outreach, educational discussions, and FGDs to research related to counter-terrorism in Aceh. Not only that, but the Government of Aceh also continues to empower former Acehnese terrorist convicts. They are also involved in anti-terrorism campaigns and education in the community.

**Table 4: The Role of the Government and Elements of Society in Deradicalization**

| Approach | Key Findings | Key Informants | Mitigation Efforts |
|---|---|---|---|
| Preparedness | Strengthening early detection, social resilience, and digital literacy | BNPT, MPU, Academics | Appointment of anti-terrorism ambassadors, religious edicts (fatwas) by clerics |
| Counter radicalization | Early prevention through education and internalization of the values of moderation | BNPT, HUDA, FKPT | Nationality programs in schools and colleges |

[49] Focus Group Discussion in Banda Aceh, 2022.
[50] Focus Group Discussion in Banda Aceh, 2022.

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Deradicalization | Rehabilitation, social reintegration, and ideological guidance for convicted terrorists | BNPT, MPU, Penitentiary | Humanist approach, correction of religious beliefs, business skills training |

Source: FGD in Banda Aceh, 2022.

Based on the aforementioned focus group discussion, it can be affirmed that efforts to prevent radicalism and terrorism in Aceh require a collaborative governance approach regarding the actors involved; meanwhile, in terms of counter-narratives, a deradicalization process is needed that prioritizes moderate Islam. Meanwhile, *dayah* scholars emphasize that these institutions play a strategic role in countering radicalism by instilling Islamic values characterized as *rahmatan li al-'alamin* (a mercy to all creation). In this regard, we consistently prioritize a moderate religious approach—one that is neither rigid nor fanatical toward any specific sect. Within the *dayah* environment, character education based on classical texts (*halaqah*) is regularly conducted to rectify extremist understandings. This is done so that students (*santri*) can grasp the relevance of religion and contribute to the welfare and peace of Aceh.[51]

Deradicalization refers to the process by which members of radical Islamic groups abandon their commitment to extremist ideologies and beliefs in favor of a moderate understanding; however, deradicalization should also be understood as a hegemonic project that seeks to shape and control the meaning of good (and normal) Indonesian citizenship. Ideological deradicalization efforts have been undertaken by Nahdlatul Ulama through the concepts of *Islam rahmatan li al-Alamin*" and religious moderation, and by Muhammadiyah through the concept of "*Islam Berkemajuan*" (Progressive Islam).[52]

**Integrated and Holistic Strengthening and Prevention Efforts**

Acts of terrorism occur not only due to theological factors alone based on observations from interviews with former Aceh terrorist convicts, such as Yudi Zulfahri, Taufik Marzuki, Andri Marlan, Teungku Mukhtar, one of whom revealed that it is related to global economic and political issues. Apart from the lack of a narrative of moderation in religion, they consider Western countries enemies of Islam and oppress Muslims. Also, the government does not or has

[51]Interview with Teungku H. Muhammad Yusuf A. Wahab (Tu Sop), Chairman of the Dayah Ulema Association (HUDA), Aceh, 2024.

[52]Ali Muhammad and Eric Hiariej, "Deradicalization Program in Indonesia Radicalizing the Radicals," *Cogent Social Sciences* 7, No. 1 (2021). Hasse Jubba, et.al., "The Contestation Between Conservative and Moderate Muslims in Promoting Islamic Moderatism in Indonesia," *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, No. 2 (2022).

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not run a government that gives prosperity to its people.[53] Disappointment with the prevailing system and wanting changes in the framework of "*ijtihad*" to improve the situation. So, the path they took eventually accumulated in acts of terror. This aligns with the staircase to terrorism and social identity theories, which subsequently drove the group toward radicalism and terrorism.

Preventing and countering radical and terrorist ideologies is no easy task, as it requires individuals who possess expertise in both religious and social sciences. Those with the necessary knowledge and strong analytical skills understand the operational methods of these groups; relying solely on a religious perspective often reveals little distinction between the ideologies. Consequently, prevention efforts should employ a dual approach. The first is the enforcement-led strategy—specifically arrests—that the police have consistently implemented. The second is a "soft approach," an area where the government has yet to succeed—particularly regarding counter-narratives. Such efforts require subject-matter experts; for instance, when these groups disparage Acehnese religious scholars, the counter-narrative should ideally come from within the scholarly community itself. This counter-discourse strategy has not yet been effectively executed, and its implementation requires the involvement of individuals with a sound understanding of religion. [54]

The BNPT also proactively collaborates with the community to build preparedness through various programs targeting all segments of society, one of which is the establishment of 'Peace Ambassadors' (*Duta Damai*). These Peace Ambassadors serve as agents of change selected to help raise public awareness and maintain security stability regarding the threats of radicalism and terrorism. These activities primarily target school-aged children and university students. [55] Meanwhile, Kamaruzzaman Bustamam highlights the need to strengthen data- and research-based digital literacy to anticipate and address potential radicalism in Aceh, given that the current challenge lies in the massive exposure to radical content on social media. Many Islamic studies and discussions incorporate radical ideologies. It can be said that digital media has become an ideological battleground where radical and extremist religious narratives can spread easily and without filtering. [56]

Officials from the Association of Aceh Dayah Ulama (HUDA) emphasize that the deradicalization process requires a comprehensive approach; it cannot be achieved through a single method alone such as lectures or the

[53]Interviews with Former Terrorists in Several Locations in Aceh, 2022.

[54]Interview with Fajri M. Kasim, Social Science Academic at Malikussaleh University, North Aceh, 2022.

[55]Interview with BNPT (National Counter-Terrorism Agency) Aceh Province, Banda Aceh, 2024.

[56]Interview with Kamaruzzaman Bustaman Ahmad, Academic and Professor at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, Banda Aceh, 2024.

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provision of business capital. This is because altering the ideology of former terrorism convicts involves not only a shift in mindset but also addressing the socio-economic issues they face. After undergoing rehabilitation, they require economic security and social support to avoid becoming marginalized again. In this regard, our role is to ensure they acquire a correct understanding of religion; we at the MPU [Aceh Ulema Consultative Council] are ready to remain involved in such guidance programs. Furthermore, *Dayah* in Aceh are open to serving as centers for ideological rehabilitation, helping the community strengthen itself against radical and extremist ideologies.[57]

When the aforementioned arguments are viewed through the lens of Moghaddam's "staircase to terrorism" theory, it becomes evident that while the sixth stage the actual execution of targeted killings has not yet occurred, the situation warrants serious vigilance. Since the 2010 Jalin incident, there have been no major attacks comparable to the Bali bombings or the JW Marriott Hotel bombing, nor other acts of terrorism in Aceh; however, field findings indicate a progression toward such a stage. In this context, it is essential to support deradicalization efforts that employ counter-narratives and foster understanding by reinforcing the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* tradition and the *Rahmatan lil-Alamin* (mercy to all worlds) principle both of which embody moderate (*wasatiyah*) Islamic values. [58]

Furthermore, applying Tajfel's social identity theory, attempts by groups espousing Salafi-Wahhabi identities to recruit former members of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) have proven unsuccessful. This failure stems from fundamental differences in ideological backgrounds and religious understanding, despite a shared sense of discrimination and unfair treatment grievances that often serve as justifications for radicalism and terrorism. Indeed, there is no evidence of former GAM members joining radical groups, let alone transnational terrorist organizations affiliated with Salafi-Wahhabism. This is largely due to the strong influence of moderate Islam in Aceh, which prioritizes a peaceful, tolerant, and accommodative approach toward those beliefs.

Therefore, the factors that led to these terrorist acts are indeed very diverse. It means that there is no determinant factor that becomes an aspect of driving and attracting the emergence of radicalism-terrorism. So, if the solution is only with a security approach, acts of radicalism-terrorism will potentially

[57]Interview with Tgk. Bulqainy Tanjongan (Tu Bulqaini), members of the Ulema Consultative Assembly, Banda Aceh, 2024.

[58]Ainol Yaqin, et.al., "Actualization of Moderation in Reasoning at Ma'had Aly Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Sukorejo Situbondo and Its Influence on Istinbâth of Islamic Law," *Al-Ihkam* 17, No. 2 (2022). Muhammad Abu Dzar, et.al., "Beyond the Radicalism Narrative: Reconstructing Islamic Political Moderation through Shafi'i Jurisprudence in Indonesia," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 20, No. 2 (2026), p. 211-230. Syarifuddin, et.al., "Integration of Religion and Culture in Hadrah Nurun Nabi in Aceh: Perspective of Symbolism and al-'Urf." *Ulumuna* 29, No. 2 (2025), p. 1135-1164.

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continue to grow. If not at its roots, terrorism will always give birth to its children again and appear with people with other names to replace actors who call themselves "jihadist" fighters. With the complexity of this problem, it is our task, especially for the government and related elements and society, to make coordinated efforts to counteract the resurgence of radicalism and terrorist movements.[59] However, empirical facts explain that it is common among practitioners and former terrorist convicts that various counter-terrorism activities carried out by the BNPT and the Government of Aceh lead to cynicism. Some experience deep disappointment because they are only the object "victims" of an abundance of projects. In other words, the program still does not touch the root of the problem. The BNPT and the Government of Aceh only act quickly when terror incidents occur but tend to be "off guard" in coaching vulnerable groups to terrorist networks. Preventive measures are no less necessary than enforcement efforts.

(1) Ceremonial Tendency Countermeasures Program. The BNPT and the Government of Aceh are very good at coordinating meetings, discussions, seminars, and campaigns on the dangers and threats of terrorism and the importance of involving various government agencies and elements of society. The problem is implementation or post-coordination follow-up. There is no legal umbrella, while various Aceh Government agencies fully support the counter-terrorism program.
(2) Weak Institutional Coordination. Problems are also with the coordination of the BNPT, Aceh Government, and related agencies. The Aceh government as an institution should be closer to grassroots circles and should be fully involved in prevention, deradicalization, and social reintegration efforts for ex-terrorist convicts. By cooperating with community elements, NGOs, and local mass organizations, the Government of Aceh can carry out programs and activities that are more budget efficient than if these activities are carried out by institutions located at the center.
(3) The Unequal Understanding Between the Parties Involved in The Collaboration. This research resulted in several interesting facts that caused collaboration in preventing terrorism in Indonesia was still not optimal. Among them is the unequal understanding between the parties involved in the collaboration. Another finding is that the understanding and capacity of government officials regarding the prevention of radicalism and terrorism from the parties involved in the collaboration is still lacking.
(4) Strengthening the Roles of FKPT Aceh. Since 2012, the BNPT has been aggressively building the capacity of various elements of government and non-government (civil society) in all provinces of Indonesia to counter-

[59] A. Malik, "New Variants of Ultra-Conservative Islamic Schools in Indonesia: A Study on Islamic School Endeavor with Islamic Group Movement." *Power and Education*, 16, No. 1 (2024), p. 14-28.

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terrorism. One of them is by uniting these elements in a forum called FKPT. The FKPT is expected to act as an accomplice to the BNPT in prevention and deradicalization efforts. However, practically, the FKPT is highly dependent on its internal management and the Aceh Government commitment, such as BNPT. In various practical activities, FKPT hardly gets a significant role. Moreover, the problems of community empowerment programs are minimally involved. The lack of moral and material support from the Government of Aceh for FKPT activities is also a problem. So that the FKPT program still encounters obstacles.

(5) Program Effectiveness. The counter-terrorism program refers to a preventive approach to implementing the resulting policies. During its implementation, the prevention program still experienced challenges and criticisms. In addition to the low quality of program results, problems such as weak coordination, lack of budget, follow-up of prevention and deradicalization programs, to the accuracy of program goals and targets are obstacles to the effectiveness of radicalism-terrorism countermeasures.

## Conclusion

A series of terrorism incidents in Indonesia, particularly in Aceh, continues to pose a threat. This indicates that terrorist networks remain ideologically and spiritedly active. A comprehensive strategy along with careful, targeted, and measurable planning is required to prevent future threats of radicalism and terrorism, given the issue's complexity and its cross-sector, cross-regional, and even transnational nature. Deradicalization targets individuals with diverse mindsets, emotions, and behaviors, shaped by their respective backgrounds, ideologies, motivations, education, experiences, and life goals. Consequently, prevention approaches must be multidisciplinary, evidence-based, and cross-sectoral. Acts of terrorism and radicalism persist in Indonesia due to several factors, including government programs perceived as lacking precision in addressing the issue, the involvement of external parties without adequate funding or competence, and differing understandings of terrorism and radicalism among various stakeholders both governmental and non-governmental. Collaborative governance offers a viable approach to addressing terrorism and radicalism in Indonesia. This approach facilitates a safe environment for initial dialogue aimed at collectively tackling terrorism; thus, the involvement and support of all parties are crucial. Participation is required not only from government institutions such as the BNPT (National Counter-Terrorism Agency), the National Police, various ministries/agencies, and local governments but also from societal elements, including scholars, academics, religious and youth organizations, NGOs, the media, and local communities. It is recommended that collaboration among key stakeholders in terrorism prevention specifically the BNPT and other parties be supported by adequate

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budgets, performance success indicators, and clear targets. This ensures that prevention and control programs can operate effectively and efficiently. Particular attention must be paid to indicators regarding the precision of program objectives and targets. From the perspective of Moghaddam's theory, the situation has not yet reached the sixth stage namely, the execution of terrorist acts such as bombings or assassinations against targets yet vigilance remains crucial to prevent such acts from occurring; meanwhile, the group's social identity has failed to garner public sympathy due to the strong influence of moderate Islamic circles in Aceh, specifically the *Dayah* and Nahdlatul Ulama.

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