Tackling networks, skills of terrorists

Wibawanto Nugroho and Didik Novi
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There are 109 definitions of terrorism in the policy and academic world, including 22 key elements to describe terrorism. At the very least, terrorism can be defined as a criminal and armed violent tactic used to send messages and achieve political goals by targeting civilians.

In a nutshell, terrorism is also the threat and use of both psychological and physical force in violation of international law, by state and sub-state agencies for strategic and political goals.

Thus terrorism can be categorized into non-state actor terrorism, state actor terrorism (e.g., terror from above/governments against citizens in the communist and fascist era), and state-sponsored terrorism (e.g., the use of terror tactics perpetrated by one's government in foreign nations to achieve certain political and national security goals).

The non-state actor with global energy currently confronting Indonesia is widely known as Salafi jihadism, which promotes the use of lesser/physical jihad to achieve their ideological and political goals, to establish sharia law and the Indonesian Islamist Salafi state.

However, a distinction must be made between the religion of Islam and a set of often-conflicting political ideologies known as Islamism, including some forms that are non-radical, reformist or gradualist.

That is why Islamist extremists who advocate acts of terrorism may be properly termed Islamist terrorists, who seek to justify and clothe their acts in the trappings of the Islam.

They are radical in terms of their perseverance to make very fundamental socio-political changes in society through non-gradual means. They are extreme in their interpretation of selective Islamic texts to justify their own violent ideology and behavior.

They are called jihadists because within their bounded rationality they believe that physical jihad at the personal level is mandatory to achieve their ideological and political goals of restoring the global Islamist caliphate following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century.

The salafi jihadists, including those in Iraq and Syria, indeed implement "the system collapse strategy" — the complete dismantlement of public order, governing political and economic institutions and state security forces.

In the Indonesian context, the ideology-related variables followed by the social network-related ones are proven to be the two most significant factors in the pattern of salafi jihad terrorism.

The set of economic, social and political grievances will not cause violent salafi jihadist terrorism in Indonesia if there are no intervening variables: the social network and radical ideology being involved in the equation. Subsequently, the other two moderating variables also play their own role, namely state repression and government incentive.

The strongest ideological variable for Indonesian salafi jihadists is their aspiration to physical jihad activities at the global level. Correspondingly, there have been around 700-1,000 Indonesians involved as Islamic State (IS) foreign fighters in 2014-2017.

From 2002 until the fourth quarter of 2016, at least 1,100 individuals in Indonesia were convicted in radicalism and terrorism cases, while around 4,000-5,000 individuals were detected as radicals but not convicted, according to National Police chief Gen. Tito Karnavian. They were exposed to radical ideology through social network activities such as religion-based fellowships promoting the ideology of extreme and often-violent transnational Islamist movements.

Once they are already within such a network, their bond is formed by personal relationships and other common experiences (common schools, training, operational activities). That said, Indonesia still has the potential to produce salafi jihadists at the global level and become the battlefield of the global violent movements known as salafism, jihadism or takfirism.

Consequently, the government's efforts in dealing with social networks could not be more important since the salafi-jihadists use both the physical and cyber realms in social networks.

This is indeed an intelligence-heavy, military-sustained and law enforcing engagement, where the government must conduct counter operations both in the physical and the cyber realm, fully backed up by whole elements of society, instruments of national power (e.g., TNI, police, intelligence agency, foreign ministry) and traditionalist Islam organizations (e.g., Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah etc).

In a more open society such engagement means only influencing as opposed to controlling society.

Terrorists' use of the internet is common although cyber terrorism is rare. The internet provides an almost perfect means for enabling the goals of many terrorist organizations. Cyber terrorism is different but still related to "hacktivism," cybercrime, cyber espionage and information war in terms of their motivation, target and method. The motivation of cyber terrorism is socio-political change by targeting innocent victims through computer-based violence or destruction.

That is why, in the Indonesian context, violent extremist movements are not yet categorized as cyber terrorism.

The cyber engagement of Indonesian violent extremists is still in the stage of intelligence-gathering, influence operations, some level of cybercrime, operational effectiveness (e.g., recruitment, training, and wider spectrum of mobilization and coordination), and simple computer attacks for harassment.

However, while cyber terrorism threats by violent extremists do not pose a serious risk to today's national security, other cyber threats are still worrisome.

Identical to their global counterparts, they are using the cyber realm to plan and conduct physical attacks, recruit and train new terrorists, raise funds, gather information on potential targets and control operations.

They can be more effectively and robustly operating on a global front by using the networked nature of cyberspace, according to the scholar Irving Lachow.

The government must be more outward-looking, aggressive and make full use of the four pillars of its counterterrorism efforts: Prevention, deradicalization, law enforcement and international cooperation.

Correspondingly, the government needs a more clear-cut differentiation between what it means by active and passive measures of counterterrorism efforts that offensive and defensive, both in the physical and cyber realm.

This is why any policy and legal changes in national counterterrorism — such as the ongoing deliberation of the counterterrorism law revision -- should be well-designed to accommodate all the strategic concerns.

Wibawanto Nugroho is a Fulbright scholar and former international counterterrorism fellow at the US National Defense University and pursuing a PhD at National Security and Strategy at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter, United Kingdom under the LPDP government scholarship. Didik Novi is head of Indonesian foreign fighters task force at the National Police's Densus 88 antiterror squad.

In defense of the 1.5°C climate change threshold

Loren Legarda
PROJECT SYNDICATE/MANILA

The Earth today is more than 1°C hotter than it was in pre-industrial times, and the terrible symptoms of its fever are already showing. This year alone, back-to-back hurricanes have devastated Caribbean islands, monsoon flooding has displaced tens of millions in South Asia, and fires have raged on nearly every continent. Pulling the planet back from the brink could not be more urgent.

Those of us who live on the front lines of climate change — on archipelagos, small islands, coastal lowlands, and rapidly desertifying plains — can't afford to wait and see what another degree of warming will bring. Already, far too many lives and livelihoods are being lost. People are being uprooted, and vital resources are becoming increasingly scarce, while those suffering the most severe consequences of climate change are also among those who have done the least to cause it.

That is why the Philippines used its chairmanship of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) — an alliance of the 48 countries that stand to bear the brunt of climate change — to fight to ensure that the 2015 Paris climate agreement aimed explicitly to cap global warming at 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. For us, 1.5°C isn't merely a symbolic or "aspirational" number to be plugged into international agreements; it is an existential limit. If global temperatures rise above that level, the places we call home — and many other homes on this planet — will become uninhabitable or even disappear completely.

When we first introduced the 1.5°C target back in 2009, we met substantial resistance. Climate-change deniers continue to dismiss any such effort to stem the rise in the planet's temperature as futile and unnecessary. But even climate advocates and policymakers often opposed the 1.5°C target, arguing that humans had emitted enough greenhouse gases to make meeting that goal impossible.

Ye here the science is not as clear-cut as it might have seemed. According to a recent paper published in *Nature*, the world's remaining "carbon budget" — the amount of carbon-dioxide equivalents we can emit before breaching the 1.5°C threshold — is somewhat larger than was previously thought. This does not mean that previous climate models were excessively alarmist. Instead, the paper should inspire — and, indeed, calls for — more immediate, deliberate, and aggressive action to ensure that greenhouse-gas emissions peak within a few years and net-zero emissions are achieved by mid-century.

Global emissions would need to be reduced by 4-6 percent every year, until they reached zero. Meanwhile, forest and agricultural lands would have to be restored, so that they could capture and sequester greater amounts of carbon dioxide. Fully decarbonizing our energy and transportation systems in four decades will require a herculean effort, but it is not impossible.

Beyond their environmental consequences, such efforts would generate major economic gains, boosting the middle class in developed countries and pulling hundreds of millions out of poverty in the developing world, including by fueling job creation. The energy transition will lead to massive efficiency savings, while improving the resilience of infrastructure, supply chains, and urban services in developing countries, particularly those in vulnerable regions.

According to a report published last year by the United Nations Development Programme, maintaining the 1.5°C threshold and creating a low-carbon economy would add as much as $12 trillion to global GDP, compared to a scenario in which the world sticks to current policies and emissions-reduction pledges.

The paper asserting that the 1.5°C target is achievable was written by well-respected climate experts and published in a top-ranking journal after extensive peer review. But it is just one paper; there is still a lot more to learn about our capacity to limit global warming. That is why top scientists are already discussing and debating its findings; their responses will also be published in top journals. That is how scientific research works, and it is why we can trust climate science — and its urgent warnings.

Next year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change will publish its own meta-analysis of all of the science related to the 1.5°C target, in what promises to be the most comprehensive summary of such research. But we cannot afford to wait for that analysis before taking action.

The members of the CVF have already committed to doing our part, pledging at last year's UN Climate Change Conference in Marrakech to complete the transition to 100 percent renewable energy as soon as possible. Our emissions are already among the world's smallest, but our climate targets are the world's most ambitious.

But whether the world manages to curb climate change ultimately will depend on the willingness of the largest current and historical emitters of greenhouse gases to fulfill their moral and ethical responsibility to take strong action. Keeping global temperatures below 1.5°C may not yet be a geophysical impossibility. But, to meet the target, we must ensure that it is not treated as a political and economic impossibility, either.

The writer, chair of the Finance and Climate Change committees, is a member of the Senate of the Philippines.

After final farewell: Building on legacy of King Bhumibol

Thitinan Pongsudhirak
THE STRAITS TIMES/ANN/SINGAPORE

It may defy international understanding for a modern nation of 69 million to mourn the passing of a man for over a year.

But Thailand has done just that. King Bhumibol Adulyadej, their late monarch, will be cremated today after a year of mourning and funeral preparations. To understand where Thailand stands as it tries to arrive in the 21st century, it is necessary to grasp the late king's extraordinary role under exceptional circumstances over his 70-year reign.

When it comes to saying a final goodbye to King Bhumibol, the vast majority of Thais in the country and in the diaspora are overcome with emotion and longing for an epoch they grew up in.

This is partly because kingship was not meant for King Bhumibol. He was thrust upon the throne in June 1946 practically without choice after his older brother,

King Ananda Mahidol, died under inconclusive circumstances. So in the Thai collective imagination, this was a monarch who did not want to be king in the first place.

Yet, after ascending the throne, King Bhumibol threw himself into the job of nation building. It was during the Cold War in the 1950s to 1980s that he made his mark while Thailand had to make its way in a treacherous neighborhood, challenged by the threat of communist expansionism and poor economic standing at home.

Understanding the Cold War context is imperative to appreciate how and why Thais have a deep affection for and bonding with their late King.

At the time, the pillars of the Thai state — nation, religion and monarchy — struck a collective chord.

The resulting unity and stability enabled economic development and kept communism at bay.

The way forward will have to be the adjustment of traditional institutions ...

Initially, military rulers deployed young King Bhumibol around the country and later abroad to garner domestic legitimacy and mobilize international support as the Cold War gathered pace.

The late monarch worked up and down the country tirelessly, travelling to places from rugged hills and remote rivers to malaria-infested jungles, promoting myriad public works projects, earning popularity and moral authority that surpassed the military's.

He also became the patron and sponsor of numerous charities, and endorsed and handed out many state-related papers from official documents to university diplomas.

Thai people have seen in him a selfless man who made sacrifices to get Thailand through the hard and precarious years of the Cold War, a monogamist monarch who lived a monastic life of devotion and duty, devoid of private jets, yachts and other trappings.

Over his reign, the tide of economic development lifted the Thais' collective boat. True, some gained more than others but all were better off throughout his reign.

Thais saw how the late King, with his various talents and accomplishments in music, engineering, sailing, the arts and development work, never travelled abroad again after a worldwide tour from the 1950s to 1967, except to commemorate the opening of the first Thai-Lao bridge in 1994.

So to the Thais, King Bhumibol was the consummate leader and anchor of their land. No matter what happened, they knew that things would have a way of working out, as he was a front for stability and final arbiter of conflict.

The late King is known to not smile a lot, and the Thais felt that he smiled less so that they could smile more. When he advanced in years, their sympathy and respect intensified because they saw how his work had taken a toll, how he suffered into old age for the country that they had.

In many ways, he defined the way Thais were. Saying goodbye to who they were and the way they have been because of a king who did so much for so little has been hard to do over the past year.

There will be views and arguments in the coming months and years that Thailand's traditional political order set up around the late monarch on the back of the military-monarchy-bureaucracy axis has impeded democratic development and stunted democratic institutions, that economic development over King Bhumibol's long reign was unfairly distributed, that Thailand is left with a military dictatorship and a strong monarchy without the monarch who rebuilt it. These points are not invalid and will be the grist for historians for many years to come.

Leaving behind a country that successfully weathered the Cold War and achieved a critical mass of development will be King Bhumibol's chief legacy. But success can breed its own challenges.

The Thai people today are ever so exposed to the outside world, connected to media technologies, in need of a voice and elected representation.

Current dictatorships like Thailand's have a harder time without communists to fight against.

The way forward will have to be the adjustment of traditional institutions to fit with new demands and expectations that can derive from the strengthening of democratic institutions such as political parties and elected representatives.

It is a daunting tall order for Thailand to have both a traditional monarchy and a modern democracy in a new balance.

Yet, there is no other way than compromise and accommodation to regain the country's footing again after so much turmoil and conflict so far in the 21st century.

The writer teaches international political economy and is director of the Institute of Security and International Studies at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok.