

# The Fear-Generating Effect of Terrorism Act and Social Media Responses in the Case of Sarinah Bombing, Jakarta, Indonesia

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**Abstract:** *The issue of terrorism began to evolve into one of the world's concern after the 911 attacks in the United States. With the increasing number of cases of terrorist attacks occurred, many countries began to look for a variety of measures, both to prevent and to cope with the impacts that may occur after the attacks. Factors that distinguish an act of terror with an ordinary crime is the intention of the perpetrators to inflict a psychological impact on the public after the attack.. These impacts could develop into problems that are more dangerous than the direct impact caused by the attack itself, because it may cause a disruption on sectors that can affect public directly.*

*The perpetrator intentions to create a psychological effect will be realized when people really feel insecure and fear after the terror attacks, which will have an impact on many sectors of public life. The growing opinion after the attack will further develop the feeling of insecurity which can be translated as a personal threat to the individual and also as a perceived risk to the economic sector that will affect the pattern of behaviors and decisions taken. With the development of the media nowadays, which is no longer confined to the industrialized media with high production value, the public can also play a role in the construction of counter-opinions that will reduce the impact of the fear generated by the terror attacks by their use of social media. The use of social media, which is becoming an intermediary to construct the public opinions, will greatly contribute to the efforts of counter-opinion construction to prevent the effects of fear generated by the attack. The use of #kamitidaktakut, or #wearenotafraid in English, in the aftermath of Sarinah Bombing shows us the conscious effort of public to construct an alternate opinion and to cope with the growth of fear and insecurity that may arise from an act of terror.*

**Keywords:** *Terrorism, Opinion Construction, Social Media*

## 1. Introduction

In the aftermath of 9/11 attack in the United States, the issue of terrorism started to evolve into one of the world's concerns nowadays. Along with attacks that appeared in various regions, the countries affected by the attack began to develop a variety of measures as the responses to the act. AP Schmid describe terrorism as as two interrelated definitions,. First, as the doctrine about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence, and second as conspiratorial practice of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restraints, targeting mainly civilians and noncombatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties [1]. These two interrelated definition emphasizes that the perpetrators of terror attacks believed that the attack could have a propagandistic and psychological impact, which is in line with Anthony Richards argument, stressing that what distinguishes terrorism with an ordinary crime is its nature that is designed for inflicting psychological effects even for people that do not become a direct victim of the attack [2]. From these two definitions, we can illustrate that direct victims never become the main targets in an act of terror but rather play a role as an intermediary message for people who identify themselves as part of the direct victim, with a direct intention to create a sense

of fear and insecurity in society. This sense of fear and insecurity are the intentions of the perpetrators that they want to achieve from their attacks.

In an act of terrorism, fear and insecurity generated by the attack have the potential to create a more severe impact on society than the harm caused by the attack itself. The response arising from the public after the attacks can thrive and generate an adverse impact on many sectors, because there are many sectors that will interpret these terror attacks as a threat that would change their behavior and their decisions. Therefore prevention measures should be taken to avoid a worse impact from the effects of fear and insecurity arising from an act of terror. With the current development, mainly in terms of media with the growth of social media, various measures should be taken to overcome this impact. In addition to prevention efforts undertaken by the government or the authorities to maintain stability, public, in general, can also contribute to the efforts on reducing the impact of the fear generated after the attack. This paper will further discuss how public's responses on social media can contribute to the effort of overcoming the effect of fear and insecurity generated by an act of terror. As the case study, we will discuss further the case of Sarinah bombing incident that occurred on January 14, 2016, in the Sarinah shopping center, Jl. MH Thamrin, Jakarta, Indonesia. Sarinah Bombing accident becomes an interesting case when compared to some similar accident that occurred in Indonesia because it generates different response patterns in the use of social media. As a notes, National Counter Terrorism Agency (BNPT) Indonesia recorded in the period between 1999 to 2016 Indonesia has suffered 69 terrorist attacks that occurred in various places [3], And Sarinah bombing accident noted as one of the latest case of terrorist attacks in Indonesia.

## **2. Discussion**

### **2.1. Effects of the Generated Fear and Its Correlation with Social Media**

First thing we have to conceive before delving deeper into this issue is to what extent does the impact of the terrorist attack can be felt immediately by the society. In the individual level, the act of terror that occurred can alter people's behavior patterns in their daily lives. The feel of fear and insecurity generated after the accident can be translated into a personal threat by each individual and then will influence their behavior. This presumption of personal threat will make every individual take a measures to minimize their exposure to risk and motivate them to take action to reduce the risk [4]. This change on personal behavior of each individual, will make a great change on how the society behave.

In more severe way, the effect of fear generated after an attack of terror can also create a bigger problem in a broader scope. Indonesia has experienced a very bad impact of terrorist attacks on tourism. After the accident of Bali bombing 1, Bali's economy which is heavily dependent on the tourism sector feels a very big blow. Right after the accident, Bali suffered mass exodus of tourists, and followed by a decline in the number of foreign tourists, mainly from America and Asia Pacific by 21.8% and 20.60%. [5]. This led to an increase in the unemployment rate in Bali, which is becoming a more complex problem for society. Just as the tourism sector, foreign direct investment can also be affected badly by an act of terror. Terrorism affect the decisions taken by international investors, where the terrorist threat depresses net foreign investment position [6]. The risk of terrorist attacks will make the business cost increases due to more expensive security measures should be used to protect the business, and the higher the threat investors will tend to shift their investments into safer countries [7]. FDI is not always damaged badly by the terrorist attack, but relationship between FDI and terrorists, even not homogeneous, significantly showed a negative correlation [8].

Generally, these two sectors, tourism and foreign direct investment are facing an enhanced terrorism risk and will be deeply affected by terrorism [9]. The freedom to consider the decision made it possible for an attack to have a more severe impact in both of these sector. Tourist has the element of choice, allowing them to have the freedom to choose which country they want to visit and avoided [10]. The same thing happened in the FDI sector, when the investors also have a choice in their investment. Therefore an attack of terror and the

probability of another attack will be perceived as a reason to not visiting nor investing in a country, and influence the decisions taken in these two sectors.

The growing effect of fear created by terrorism act that is mentioned above shows us that the effect of fear generated after the attack may have a greater impact than the attack itself. The opinion emerged after the terror attack was very influential in many ways. Mainly it will affect the people who are not directly affected by the attacks and construct their opinions related to this attack. Opinion and a person's choice will be significantly influenced by the ideas of others [11]. This is because people will develop their opinion based on the construction of knowledge formed of their daily interactions [12]. Onuf described this knowledge construction as a two-way process, where people construct the society, and then the society construct the people [13], where the opinion of others will shapes our opinion, and simultaneously our opinion will also shapes others opinion. Social constructionism describes that human being is developing their perception, thought, and their ways of thinking through social relations, either directly or indirectly. Specifically, when this description applied in the term of tourism, Iwashita illustrates that travel destination was a choice that is socially and culturally constructed. [13] Tourists have the element of choice in their decision, that makes a perceived risk will greatly influence their choice. This concept will be very helpful to understand why an act of terror can generate a great impact on some sectors mentioned above..

In its correlation with the feel of fear and insecurity arising after the attacks, we can see that the fear is a result of opinion developed after the attacks. The fear will arise, both in directly and indirectly affected society, hence the use of the media will play a significant role here. Dissemination of opinion through the media coverage will greatly affect in people who do not have direct experience in the issues [15]. In bad terms, it will help perpetrator to achieve their intention of fear-generating. But it also gives people a chance to reconstruct the opinion of fear generated by the attack. And with the current development, The term of media is no longer confined to industrialized media with high production value, but it has grown in the presence of social media, with a hger and faster level of accessibility and immediacy than conventional media [16]. Nowadays, social media has an important role in shaping society. Social media can be seen as an online facilitator or enhancers of human networks, where thought and values of each individual are widely distributed, but were in turn also influence the thinking and actions of each individual [17]. This role make social media an appropriate means to re-establish the growing opinion in public.

## **2.2. Sarinah Bombing and Social Media Responses**

Sarinah bombing that occurred on January 14, 2016, in Sarinah shopping center is the latest incident occurred after a series of bomb exploded at the Ritz-Carlton and J.W. Marriot in 2009. This incident takes seven victims, where five of them were perpetrators and the other two were civilians [18]. Several things distinguish the Sarinah bombing incident with previous events, including a shootout that occurred after the explosion, as well as ISIS claim that they are responsible for these events [19]. These two things made the accident potentially creating greater effect of fear compared to the previous accident.

In the aftermath, a wide variety of responses began to appear. Through social media such as Twitter, the public began to issue the hashtags related to this incident. The most virally used hashtag by the public was #kamitidaktakut which can be translated into #wearenotafraid in English. Local media, Kompas noted that there have been 86 700 tweets that use this hashtag until 06.30 P.M., making it an international trending topic on the same day as the incident [20]. The use of this hashtag became an integrative means for social media users in Jakarta to defend themselves and escape from the effects of fear generated after the attacks [21]. Furthermore, pushing a tag into trending topic on Twitter will makes some idea goes viral, gives it a chances to affect more people, and spill over into social platform and mainstream media [22].

The effect of hashtag usage can be seen affecting directly public's opinion right after the idea goes viral. Public attention began to turn to things that are associated with hashtag #kamitidaktakut. Media coverage, both local and international began to proclaim development related to the terror and the hashtag. In this case,

Indonesia has an advantage with the high number of active users of social media. Data released by Tech in Asia in January 2016 showed that 30 percent of the total population of Indonesia is an active user of social media, or approximately 79.0 million people [23]. This high number of active social media users accelerate the spill-over effects which initiate the upswing phase where more and more media are going to cover the issue [24]. Furthermore, in the event of terror such as Sarinah bombing, the clarity of information circulating in public would suppress the fear and terror that emerged as a result of the attack [25]. The use of the hashtag becomes an important part because it will minimize the spread of information that can make things worse.

This effort of opinion construction through social media can play a role in minimizing the effects of fear that arise in an individual scale. But on a broader scale, the response of the government also has an important role to cope with the possible impact of terror. In the case of Sarinah Bombing the immediate response of government plays a significant role on suppressing the negative impact of terror in economy [26]. Right after the bomb explode, The Jakarta Composite Index (IHSG) closed down by 1.72 percent to 4.459 on the first session, but later regained some strength at the opening of the second session after [27]. The immediate response in handling the issue will restore public confidence in the security condition. Both responses by the people and the government will give greater impact in an effort to cope with the possible impact of the fear generated by terror.

### 3. Conclusion

The effect of fear generated by an act of terror could have a more dangerous impact than its direct physical losses. When this fear is perceived as a threat by people, it will encourage an alteration in the pattern of public behavior, that would make them more vulnerable to a conflict. In a broader scope, the fear generated can also affect certain economic sectors such as tourism and foreign direct investment that would perceive the threat as a risk for their visit and their investments. These adverse impacts can especially happen if the opinion arises in the public supports the growth of fear, particularly for people that are not directly affected by the terror. On the other hand, the development of social media today makes every individual can easily convey their opinion, that can be used to overcome the sense of insecurity and fear growing in the public, or otherwise, generate the opinions that can exacerbate the sense fear and insecurity felt by the community.

Sarinah Bombing accident gives us an example of how people can contribute actively to the effort of overcoming the possible adverse impact from the fear generated after an attack of terror through social media they owned. An opinion that is consciously developed to suppress the growing negative opinion after the attack, will have a great influence on the opinions developed widely in public when it goes viral. In this case, #kamitidaktakut used by social media users after the attack are used as a tool to convey a message to people who are not directly affected by the attack and also to assure the clarity of information about the accident, to prevent the growth of fear and insecurity sense in the public. In a broader scope, a direct response from the government still plays an important role to ensure the stability and minimize the impact of the attack. Furthermore, public participation, especially if it has been well-organized will greatly contribute to the effort of overcoming the growth of feelings of fear and insecurity of the scope of the smallest.

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