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Of Social Imaginary and Violence: Responding to Islamist Militancy in Indonesia

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Abstract

In the early 2000s, Indonesia witnessed a proliferation of Islamist paramilitary groups and terror activity in the wake of Suharto's downfall. Having said this, over the years since Suharto's downfall, the dire threat predictions have largely failed to materialize at least strategically. This outcome raises some interesting questions about the ways in which Indonesian policy-makers responded to the security threat posed by Islamist militancy. Drawing on Temby's thesis about *Darul Islam* and *negara Islam Indonesia* and combining this with Colombijn and Lindblad's concept of 'reservoirs of violence', the following paper establishes that persistent and excessive punitive action by the state is potentially counter-productive in the long run. On its own, punitive action fails to address effectively the conditioning factors underlying militancy and its different social imaginary. If over-utilized, it runs too high a risk of antagonizing and further polarizing oppositional segments of the population by perpetuating a 'ghettoized' sense of enmity and alienation amongst them towards the state and wider society. This paper argues that a more nuanced approach that both supports and utilizes various preventative measures is also critical for addressing complex and deeply rooted types of insecurity. By situating localized responses to the problem in historical context, this paper underscores the importance of charting a course between strategic and human security concerns to counter the specific imaginary of extreme thinking and limit the conditions under which Islamist militancy reproduces in Indonesia.

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Of Social Imaginary and Violence:
Responding to Islamist Militancy in Indonesia

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INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian Government may not officially differentiate between any particular militant groups in Indonesia but over the last decade and more, its Counter Terrorism Policy (CTP) has focused predominantly on the threat posed by militant Islamist groups operating within the jihadist orbit. In fact, Indonesia's contemporary anti-terrorism laws are largely a by-product of the 2002 Bali Bombings.[1] To elaborate, in the early 2000s, Indonesia witnessed a proliferation of Islamist paramilitary groups and terror activity in the wake of Suharto's downfall. Having said this, over the years since Suharto's downfall, the dire threat predictions have largely failed to materialize at least strategically. This outcome raises some interesting questions about the ways in which Indonesian policy responds to the security threat posed by militant Islamist extremism.

Despite the qualified success of Indonesian state agencies in degrading the strategic threat of violent extremism, taking persistent punitive action to deal with the issue of militant extremism is potentially counter-productive in the long run. It risks antagonizing or polarizing oppositional segments of the populace in such a way as to perpetuate 'ghettoized' senses of enmity and

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[1] On 12th October 2002 in the aftermath of the Bali Bombings, then President Megawati Soekarnoputri issued two PERPU (Government Regulation In-Lieu of Law -- *peraturan pemerintah pengganti undang-undang*) No. 1/2002 on the eradication of Criminal Acts of Terrorism and No.2/2002 on Eradication of Criminal Acts of Terrorism in relation to the bombing in Bali. In April 2003, Indonesia introduced new anti-terrorism legislation (Law No 15/2003) with a set of wide-ranging measures designed to combat terrorist threats. These included incarceration provisions ranging from a minimum of three years to life sentences. It also allowed for the death penalty in extreme cases. It gave government agencies the authority to detain and investigate suspected terrorists for three days based on initial intelligence information; a maximum of seven days based on sufficient evidence; freeze suspected bank accounts; open and examine mail and intercept telephone and other communications of suspects for a period of sixty days at a time.

alienation towards the state and wider society. Especially amongst targeted kinship groups and associated communities. On the other hand, reticence on the part of authorities to tackle effectively the 'grey area' between extreme radicalism and outright violent militancy or intervene for whatever political reasons could blowback in unexpected ways. Strategic threats can potentially re-emerge without financially coordinated and genuine efforts to de-radicalize extreme groupings and promote tolerance. Extreme thinking has the potential to foment and metastasize and eventually spill over into 'new' forms of home-grown violent militancy if the attitudes and conditions that incubate intolerance and extreme thinking are left unchecked. In fact, the Jakarta based SETARA (2012) reported 264 attacks on religious minorities in 2012, up from 244 in 2011 and 216 and 2010 respectively with local Ahmadiyya, Baha'i, Christian or Shi'a minorities the main targets.

Given the range of punitive powers at the authorities' disposal, it is also important to consider the ways in which localized understandings of the problem have also shaped responses in Indonesia. The following paper examines the extent to which Indonesia has managed to chart a course between strategic and human security concerns in countering extreme thinking and degrading militant threats. By drawing on Temby's thesis about *Darul Islam* and *negara Islam Indonesia* and combining this with Colombijn and Lindblad's concept of 'reservoirs of violence', the paper maps the contingent contours of contemporary Islamist militancy in Indonesia and the legacy of different 'imagined de-colonizations'. It underscores that preventative persuasion measures are also critical in addressing the complex and deeply rooted types of social imaginary, violence and insecurity that condition Islamist militancy in Indonesia.

State, Imagined Communities and Militancy

Militancy in Indonesia is not new if we take that to mean combative and aggressive action in support of a cause (Hartman 2013; van Dijk 1980). This is of no great surprise given the archipelago's size, diversity and history (Carnegie 2012, 72-73). From the Tuanku Imam Bonjol's Padri rebellion in the 19th century through to the rise of *Darul Islam* (DI - Abode of Islam) and *Tentara Islam Indonesia* (TII - Indonesian Islamic Army) during the long struggle against Dutch colonial rule, Indonesia has a complex history of radicalism, separatism and rebellion. Before

going further, introducing some historical context and specific analytic perspectives are useful for giving us a better sense of the reproductive capacity and 'imaginings' shaping militant group dynamics in Indonesia. This framing makes the seemingly sporadic, periodic and episodic qualities of contemporary Islamist militancy in Indonesia slightly more intelligible. In fact, the contemporary terrain of Indonesian militancy displays a number of significant conditioning developments. Historically speaking, overlapping strands of national, religious, and cultural identity have created some uneasy tensions in Indonesia (Carnegie 2013a, 60). While there little doubt of the significance of Islam as a religion in Indonesia, during both the colonial and postcolonial periods some contentious and ambiguous relationships and interactions formed between the state, international contexts and the polity's cultural-religious identification especially in terms of Islam as a mobilizing force (Santoso 1996). In fact, there have been numerous attempts simultaneously to harness and curtail Islam's state-level ambitions (Carnegie 2010, 83).

In a broad schematic sense, we can trace a three-way split in Indonesia as a variety of 'identity politics' evolved in response to tensions created by the emergence of the modern nation-state, namely traditionalist, modernist and radical (van Bruinessen 2002, 125). In terms of political Islam, the traditionalist response gave rise to the massive Sunni Islamic socio-religious organization, *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU - Awakening of Ulama) with members numbering in the tens of million. In the immediate post-independence era, the modernist Islamic party *Masyumi* (the Council of Muslim Organizations) was the major Islamic political party in the fledgling republic. *Muhammadiyah,* Indonesia's other main socio-religious organization still views itself as the custodian of *Masyumi's* modernist Islamic legacy. In counterpoint to the political representative ambitions and social mission of traditionalist and modernist responses, a much more radical and militant divergence manifested itself. A divergence that is traceable to the large networks of revolutionary Islamic militias that formed around *Darul Islam* (DI - Abode of Islam) and *Tentara Islam Indonesia* (TII -Indonesian Islamic Army) in the context of the Indonesian National Revolution and the fight against Dutch colonial rule. As Quinton Temby (2010) notes, this latter split is in many ways a seedbed of contemporary militant offshoots in Indonesia especially groups like JI.

For the following paper, this specific social imaginary and contingent historical experience is important for explanatory purposes because often a recourse to violent militancy rests on questions of identity. Something that Colombijn and Lindblad's (2002) key historical concept of 'reservoirs of violence' underscore in explaining conflict in Indonesia. In the struggle against the Dutch, groups had built up 'reservoirs of violence' (arms, training, repertoires, loyalties, supply routes and networks) at the same time as developing different 'imagined decolonizations'. If we think about the violence after World War Two across Indonesia, it was often conflict over how to define postcolonial identities and in response to exclusionary injustices. That is to say certain group identities often forged and crystallized in opposition to emergence of the modern nation-state and its coercive/exclusionary practices. This fuelled certain demands for autonomy and sometimes precipitated violent action. Significantly, 'reservoirs of violence' can persist across time and, whilst not a direct causal catalyst of violence, they can pattern action when it arises. In fact, certain contemporary militant groups in Indonesia in some ways trace an insurgency connection and their 'repertoires of violence' back to the formation, structures and imaginary of particular anti-colonial militias.

To elaborate, the rise of Sukarno's secular nationalism signaled major restrictions on radical Islamic movements in Indonesia and precipitated a host of unintended consequences. Sukarno banned DI and TII in the aftermath of independence but under the leadership of S.M. Kartosuwiryo (*pak* Imam), the *Darul Islam* secessionist rebellion and violent insurgency for the establishment of *negara Islam Indonesia* (NII - Indonesian Islamic State) continued in places such as West Java, South Sulawesi, Aceh and South Kalimantan from 1949 to 1962 (Formichi 2010). For NII, "Islam was the foundation and legal basis of the Islamic State of Indonesia, the Koran and tradition constituting the highest authorities." (van Dijk 1980, 93) After a bloody campaign by the Indonesian military, Kartosuwiryo was eventually captured and executed in September 1962 (Dengel 1995). Nonetheless, Kartosuwiryo proclaiming himself imam of *negara Islam Indonesia* (NII - Indonesian Islamic State) on 7th August 1949 created a powerful alternative 'imagined decolonization'; an alternate 'myth of nationhood'. To use Benedict Anderson's (1991) terminology, it constituted a different 'imagined community' in opposition to the *Pancasila* state envisioned by the secular nationalists. It should also be noted that many ulama especially from *Nahdlatul Ulama* opposed Kartosuwiryo's vision and insurgency efforts.

As Temby contends *Darul Islam* is not so much a 'movement' as a community that perpetuates and reconstitutes itself by looking-back to Kartosuwiryo and who 'imagine' themselves as members of *negara Islam Indonesia*. That is they view themselves as a 'nation' contiguous with the state proclaimed by Kartosuwiryo in 1949. From the work of Anderson, this is the idea that people who perceive themselves as part of a 'community' ultimately imagine it. As such, in the Indonesia context, the 'nation' of *Darul Islam* is largely mobilized around a socio-political construct that rests upon a process of invention and reinvention of Kartosuwiryo's legacy. Adopting this social imaginary framing sheds some interesting light on the the reproductive dynamics of contemporary militancy in Indonesia. If we view Indonesia's contemporary Islamist militancy in significant respects as part of a wider reiterative process and pattern of violence associated with attempts to (re)constitute *negara Islam Indonesia* across space and time, it makes seemingly sporadic, periodic and episodic fluctuations in Islamist militancy more intelligible. Moreover, social movement theory brings some clarity to the enduring symbolic power and mobilizing potential of Kartosuwiryo's legacy and the force of his alternative 'imagined decolonization'. According to della Porta and Diani (1999, 62), "the more intense one's socialization into a particular vison of the world, the stronger the impetus to act."

In the Indonesian context, although the militias and communities supporting the establishment of *negara Islam Indonesia* fell into disarray after Sukarno's concerted military campaign, Kartosuwiryo's idea, his legacy, the memories, 'reservoirs of violence' and loyalties of those times did not fade completely. In fact, they continue to provide powerful contextual narratives and ideational resources. As such, this constitutes the substance of perception for a temporally and spatially dislocated 'imagined community' of sporadic groupings to re-coalesce in militancy and action around a resiliently 'powerful myth' and 'imagined' objective.

In other words, the formation and structures of militia's that emerged in the context of the anti-colonial struggle and mobilized to action by the idea of *negara Islam Indonesia* provide a touchstone and connection, no matter how tenuous, for several contemporary militant Islamist offshoot in Indonesia. The roots of *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI - Islamic Community), *Ring Banten*, *Abu Bakar Battalion, Abu Umar Network,* and *Angkatan Mujahidin Islam Nusantara* (AMIN - Nusantara Islamic Jihad Forces) all trace a link and in some sense a nebulous feeling of loyalty,

kinship and belonging to the 'imagined community' of *Darul Islam* and *negara Islam Indonesia*. A bit like gravity, you can't see it but it exerts a decisive pull nonetheless.

Interacting Conditioning Factors

Moving our analysis of conditioning factors forward, we can also see by the early 1970s a wider international context interacting with localized developments. The rising influence of Saudi Arabian and Gulf petro-dollars start to play a more significant role and strengthens ties through substantial aid and support for Muslim groups in Indonesia (Thayer 2008, 260-4). Alongside scholarships for *dakwah* activities promoting Wahhabist teachings, this largesse helps nurture and underpin the growth of a neo-fundamentalist Salafi movement both directly or indirectly. Moreover, the dissemination of radical teachings was facilitated in many instances by *hadhrami* (Indonesians of Middle Eastern descent) of which Abdullah Sungkar is a notable example (Abushouk and Ibrahim 2009, 1-15).

In fact, even under the repressive grip of Suharto, subterranean allegiances to the idea of *negara Islam Indonesia* continued and the latent threat of militancy would occasionally flare. For instance, the activities of the relatively short-lived Komando Jihad (another offshoot of DI) in the 1970s and early 1980s posed a threat to Suharto's New Order. As did the Imron Group who took inspiration from the 1979 Iranian revolution and were involved in the Bandung police post incident and the high-jacking of a Garuda DC-9 in 1981. Other flare ups included the Tanjung Priok massacre in 1984, the bombing of Borobudur in 1985 and the Lampung incident in 1987 (McGlynn et al 2005).

The interaction with a wider international context also plays a significant role when a coterie of combat hardened new arrivals and returnees who had fought with the *mujahidin* in Afghanistan in the late 1980s go on to provide influential tutelage to aspiring local militants and jihadists (Hartman 2013; Abbas 2011). For instance, Fathur Rahman al-Ghozi and Nasir Abbis trained alongside Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) members from the Philippines at Afghanistan Mujahidin Military Academy at Camp Saddah. This camp on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border was operated by *Tanzim Ittihad-e-Islamy Afghanistan* under the command of one Abu Sayyaf. On their return, the ties the likes of Fathur Rahman al-Ghozi and Nasir Abbas had made with MILF leaders and the Abu Sayyaf network in Mindanao, Philippines would be an important precursor to militant activities in Indonesia. Many aspiring local militants and jihadists also drew succor from their links

back to *Pesantren Al-Mukmin* (aka *Pondok Ngruki*) founded by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Abdullah Sungkar in 1972. It is well-documented that Hambali, al-Ghozi, Ali Imron, Amrozi, Huda bin Abdul Haq (Ali Gufron/Mukhlas) Joni Hedrawan (Idris) and Dulmatin all had connections to *Pondok Ngruki.*

Given these manifold conditioning factors and the destabilizing events of the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, it is of little surprise that conducive conditions existed for Islamist extremism and paramilitary groups to prosper in the economic instability and political uncertainty of the immediate post-Suharto period (Bandoro 2001, 333-7; Gershman 2002, 60-74). The practice of turning of a blind eye or not following up investigations by sympathetic hardline 'green' factions in the National Police Force (POLRI) and Armed Forces (TNI) alongside endemic corruption also facilitated developments (Atkins 2004, 174; Bandoro, 2002, 234-6; Carnegie 2010, 90-1; Roosa 2003, 10-11).

Factions and Splinters

Many militant Islamist groups in Indonesia are typically factional in character and retain some sort of direct or indirect link to larger hardline organizations (Carnegie 2009, 5). It is estimated 15 to 20 percent of all Saudi charity dollars sent to Indonesia end up one way other in the hands of 'suspect' groups (Bond 2005). Little or no accountability and the lack of discernible paper trails make tracing and then preventing the diversion of donations away from relief operations in to the hands of militants a hard ask. For instance, allegations abound about links between *komite aksi penanggulangan akibat krisis* (KOMPAK – Action Committee for Crisis Response) set up in Central Sulawesi in 1988 to help victims of flood, disaster and conflict and the indirect channeling of funds to militant groups (ICG 2004, 1-42).

The following is in no way an exhaustive list but gives us some indication of the most visible groupings. For example, although nominally disbanded since 2002 after its involvement in inter-communal violence in the Maluku and Papua, *Laskar Jihad* (LJ - Militia of the Holy War) was largely viewed as a militant offshoot emerging from links to *Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah wal-Jama'ah* (FKAWJ - Forum for Followers of the Sunna and the Community of the Prophet). Despite denials, suspicion persists that the erstwhile LJ also enjoyed indirect links with orthodox Islamic organizations, namely, *Dewan dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* (DDII – Islamic Propagation

Council of Indonesia) and *Komite Indonesia untuk Solidaritas dengan dunia Islam* (KISDI –
Indonesian Committee for Solidarity of the Islamic World). DDII and KISDI are both major
promoters of 'Islamization from below' in Indonesia and active in propagating translated Muslim
Brotherhood texts and Salafist ideas through *pesantren*, mosques and on university campuses.
They receive substantial funding from the Middle East. And in the case of its militant activities in
the Maluku, support and training from sympathetic "green" factions in the armed forces in
particular Kopassus (Hasan 2002, 4-18). LJ always publicly denied any links with *al-Qaeda* and
focused firmly on domestic concerns making a reemergence of its 'repertoires violence' not
beyond the realms of possibility if the right set of domestic circumstances arose. Similar to a
certain extent, *Laskar Pembela Islam* (LPI - Defenders of Islam Army) operates as the paramilitary
wing of the hard-line vigilante organization *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI - Islamic Defenders Front)
with very much a domestic issues focus and tacit support from certain sections of the military and
police forces (ICG 2010, 17). Top ranking officials have all appeared at FPI events in Jakarta,
something that sends a mixed message about official attitudes to FPI methods for maintaining so-
called 'law and order'. Somewhat differently, *Laskar Mujahidin Indonesia* (Indonesian Mujahidin
Militia) acts as an umbrella term for largely anti-statist mujahidin groups not associated with
Laskar Jihad. These include *Mujahidin* KOMPAK, *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI -
Indonesian Mujahidin Assembly) and the now disbanded Sulawesi based *Laskar Jundullah* (Army
of God or God's Soldiers). Interestingly, when MMI, FPI and AMIN led renewed recruitment
attempts in Aceh after the 2004 tsunami under the guise of providing humanitarian aid and *dakwah,*
they met with little community support (ICG 2010a, 1-27). Other organizations with links to
militant vigilante groups include *Forum Umat Islam* (FUI - the Islamic People's Forum), *Forum
Komunikasi Muslim Indonesia* (Forkami - the Indonesian Muslim Communication Forum), *Hizb
ut-Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI - Party of Liberation - Indonesia) and *Gerakan Islam Reformis* (Garis -
the Islamic Reformist Movement).

Counter-Terrorism Policy and (Re)-coalescence

As we can see militant Islamist groups across Indonesia are numerous and a pretty mixed bag.
Given the myriad different groupings operating in Indonesia an overall assessment of the
effectiveness of Indonesia's Counter Terrorism Policy (CTP) remains difficult. Nonetheless, by

examining the effectiveness of Indonesia's CTP in response to a key militant Islamist threat sheds light on the ways Indonesia has sought to balance punitive action with preventive persuasion.

As mentioned, networks like *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI) are not new in Indonesia. JI, *Ring Banten*, *Abu Bakar Battalion; Abu Umar Network,* and *Angkatan Mujahidin Islam Nusantara* all trace links back to the *Darul Islam* movement. Yet, the threat posed by networks like JI only really entered public consciousness in the early 2000s on a rising tide of concern about new globally networked terrorism (Abuza 2005, 31-61). Established militant groupings like JI could feed into narrative discourses that allowed them to represent themselves as a regional franchise of al-Qaeda with links across Southeast Asia. JI was always much more than a mere propaganda vehicle for al-Qaeda. On a discursive level, by allying with a new set of pan-regional partners who envisioned *darul Islam nusantara* (an archipelagic Islamic state) JI was able to adopt a convenient piece of fear-inducing propaganda in the pursuit of its long held objective of *negara Islam Indonesia.* JI's deeper roots and objectives in Indonesia facilitated its ability to conduct *jihadist* operations and meant it posed a very real security threat to the Indonesian authorities. For instance, the Christmas Eve bombings in 2000 in Medan, Northern Sumatra and Batam Island; the 2002 bombings in Bali and Sulawesi; the 2003 Jakarta JW Marriott Hotel bombing; the 2004 suicide bombings at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta and the 2005 Bali restaurant bombings all bore a substantial JI stamp. The Marriot and Ritz Carlton bombings in Jakarta in 2009 were also linked to the work of a JI splinter group, probably *Tanzim Qaedat al-Jihad* formerly led by the now deceased Noordin M. Top (Carnegie 2013, 15).

A major goal of Indonesia's CTP has been diminishing and fragmenting this threat strategically. The success of which is closely aligned to the inroads made by Indonesia's US/Australian backed elite counter-terrorism squad, *Detasemen Khusus 88* (Special Detachment 88 -- more commonly known as *Densus 88*). *Densus 88* formed in 2003 in the aftermath of the 2002 Bali bombings with economic aid incentives and logistical assistance from the US Department of State's Anti-Terrorist Assistance program and from the Australian government. Along with the TNI and POLRI, they received large amounts of equipment, technical support and training to enhance the country's threat reduction capacity. This even included the construction of multimillion-dollar training facility partly funded by Australia. In fact, the last decade has brought Indonesia and Australia (an important regional partner of the US) closer together in making inroads against a perceived

extremist threat. The Australian government also committed AUD$36.8million over 5 years in cooperation with the Indonesian government to establish the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC) in 2004. Based at Indonesian National Police Academy (AKPOL) in Semarang, this bilateral initiative provides a joint police training program for combatting terrorism.

The upshot being that *Densus 88* has managed to cut a swathe through JI's operational capacity over the last decade (Fealy 2004). It is responsible for the incarceration or death of many of JI's leading figures and other Islamist militants (McDonald 2008). An estimated 700 militant suspects have been arrested and around another 60 killed by the squad. In fact, over the last decade, all the major suspects in the 2002 Bali bombing have either been imprisoned, executed or killed (Paramudatama 2012). For example, former terror mastermind Riduan Isamuddin (Hambali), a key link between JI and al-Qaeda is now languishing in Guantanmo Bay. In 2005, *Densus 88* killed the Malaysian, Dr. Azahari bin Husin, one of the alleged technical masterminds behind the 2002 Bali bombings. In 2008, the two brothers Huda bin Abdul Haq (Ali Gufron/Mukhlas), Ali Amrozi bin Haji Nurhasyim (Amrozi) along with Imam Samudra were executed by firing squad on the prison island of Nusa Kambangan for their role in the 2002 Bali Bombings. The same year saw the South Jakarta District Court rule that JI was an illegal organization. This public judicial unmasking of its activities brought JI out of the shadows. It severely dented JI's ability to infiltrate communities and thrive as a *tanzim siri* (secret organization). In 2009 *Densus 88* also killed Azahari's close partner and 'money man' Noordin M. Top. Dulmatin (a leading member of JI) was shot in 2010. Furthermore the radical cleric and JI *emir* (spiritual head) Abu Bakar Ba'asyir received a 15 year sentence in 2011 for his attempts to set up and support jihadi training camps in Aceh. In the same year, Abu Umar and six alleged members of his group were arrested on suspicion of planning to bomb the Singapore embassy in Jakarta. In 2012, Umar 'the demolition man' Patek was also sentenced to 20 years in jail after his capture and extradition from Pakistan.

Clearly, the shape, scope and character of Indonesia's militant Islamist '*terror-scape*' has been altered since the 2002 Bali Bombings. Shifts in leadership, the removal of key figures, ideological divisions, fragmentation and changing pathways to militancy have all played a part in re-orientating the scheme of things. Nonetheless, despite the 'hard tactic' effectiveness of *Densus 88*

in degrading JI's organizational and operational capacity investigation reveals that JI members have always been bound as much by kinship, marriage, schooling, training camps and mutual business relationships as by structured organizational fidelity.

Operational diminution, fragmentation and loss of leadership does not mean JI has simply disappeared. It may have lost much of its coordinating leadership and strategic threat but its strength never wholly resided in a coherent organizational structure. Indeed, flux, mutation and realignment are as much a part of JI's DNA matrix as fixed organisational structure and hierarchy. Differences in attitude and ideology also contribute to more centrifugal than centripetal tendencies. Something exacerbated by weak overall leadership (Hwang 2012, 1-12). Since the death of the charismatic Abdullah Sungkar in 1999, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir made for a relatively unconvincing figurehead having never really possessed the necessary strategic or coordination skills to be a major unifying force of Indonesia's militant Islamists. This lack of collective solidarity is also related to the fact that while there may be broad agreement on the idea of an Islamist state in Indonesia (*negara Islam Indonesia*), thinking on the method and approach of achieving that goal vary widely especially in relation to the extent of violent and non-violent means. For instance, when Dulmatin (now deceased) returned from training in Mindanao he questioned the effectiveness of suicide bombing as an operational tactic and became a strong advocate of a more coordinated coalition between the activities of organizations (*lintas tanzim*) and longer-term strategic goals. The thinking being that fostering community support for their aims would help to establish secure bases across different regions. Part of which involved enforcing *shari'a* through *jihad* and promoting the 'correct' form of Islam by means of *dakwah.* These bases would then in turn act as focal points to further consolidate the radical *Salafi* jihadist insurgent message and project. This has brought about a shift from indiscriminate terror to more persistent insurgency.

A renewed emphasis on study circles and *pengajian* (teaching in certain areas) led by clerics, some of whom promote non-violent *dakwah* (Islam propagation) others violent jihad has allowed JI and some of its more recent splinters like the Abu Bakar Ba'asyir inspired *Jama'ah Ansharut Tauhid* (JAT - Partisans of the oneness of God) to gain purchase in areas with long histories of insurgency and localized intra-communal conflict. Parts of Indonesia and certain 'imagined communities' offer up deeply embedded narrative structures of meaning upon which militant *Salafi* jihadist discourses can provisionally engraft. The situation is complicated further by the adjacent long

running separatist conflict led by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Mindanao in the Southern Philippines. For instance, in 1996 Abdullah Sungkar through his close links with then MILF leader Salamat Hasyim moved JI's main training to Mindanao and built Camp Hudaibiyah on land within MILF's larger Camp Abu Bakar complex (Hartman 2013, 164-5). Although a tentative peace deal has been brokered in Mindanao recently, it is still a staging post for training camps and trafficking routes; a surrogate 'reservoir of violence' so to speak. This means that ideas, arms and personnel can still channel up and down from Mindanao, often facilitated by the MILF and the likes of the previously mentioned Abu Sayyaf network, through a chain of islands across the Celebes Sea and into places like Sulawesi and the Muluku.

It would appear that the militant dynamics and reproductive fluctuations of the current period strongly reflect a combination of the *Darul Islam* thesis put forward by Temby and the work on the roots of violence in Indonesia by Colombijn and Linblad. In fact, it is probably more accurate to describe JI as a loose divergent network of groups. A composite 'imagined community' who draw on specific imaginings, structures of meaning and reservoirs of violence. These temporally and spatially dislocated sporadic militant groupings, each one made up of like-minded extremists, (re) coalesce around a resiliently 'powerful myth' and 'imagined' objective in opposition to the Indonesian Republic.

As things stand today in Indonesia, a splintered *jihadist* community may appear limited in its ability to elicit broad-based popular support for its violent tactics but it still retains the ability to spread its extremist message especially amongst disaffected and impressionable youth who fall into the jihadist orbit. There are also multiple recruitment paths into radicalization and Islamist militancy whether it be spiritual, intellectual or kinship based. For instance, the *dakwah* activities of jihadist groups and hardline clerics can often gain an initial surreptitious access to young Indonesians through former links with the wide and complex network of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) that traverse Indonesia. These secretive jihadist groups can then lure students into joining exclusive prayer groups or religious discussions outside campuses, an entry point for potential radicalization and militancy. Of course, stating this is not to implicate *pesantren* wholesale in the spread of a radical Islamist message as the vast majority of these institutions play vital socio-cultural, religious and educational roles in Indonesian society. In fact, given their

embeddedness in the social fabric of Indonesia, those *pesantren* with long established credentials are in many ways a bulwark against militancy.

Getting Smart: Between Punitive Action and Preventive Persuasion

Indonesia's CTP may have made inroads in reducing the country's militant and strategic terror threat but at the same time, the state agencies involved in its implementation have also been subject to some harsh criticism. This places increased pressure on an already friable rule of law. Accusations abound both domestically and internationally of human rights abuses. They usually concern the activities and operating procedures of *Densus 88* and range from extra-judicial killings, arbitrary detentions and torture allegations to a worrying lack of transparency and accountability. In fact, methods used to degrade the terror threat may 'blowback' especially as groups fragment and switch tactics to more localized retaliatory responses. Prisons can also act as incubators for extremism by way of radicalization, training and recruitment (ICG 2007, 3-5).

Countering militancy in Indonesia is far from straight forward. It is a divisive and complex issue. As mentioned, some worrying currents of religious intolerance are becoming evident in Indonesia (ICG 2010, 17, HRW 2013, 60-66). Radical organizations like *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI - Islamic Defenders Front) may be slowly realizing that politics and bombs do not mix but violent intimidation of so-called 'heretics' and 'deviants' by its associated 'thugs' or the local mobs they help incite continues largely unabated. There remains a reluctance on the part of authorities to curb their hate speech, incitement to violence, intimidation and training activities. Prosecutions do occur but they are all too infrequent and usually lenient. *Badan Koordinasi Pengawas Aliran Kepercayaan Masyarakat* (Bakor Pakem - Coordinating Board for Monitoring Mystical Beliefs in Society) further normalises and reinforces the acceptability of intolerant attitudes and practices through its influential role in recommending the banning of certain religious sects/groups to the Attorney General's Office and its active pursuing of prosecutions for blasphemy (HRW 2013: 60-66; 71-86). Top ranking officials have also appeared at FPI events in Jakarta. This seems to send a mixed message about official attitudes towards FPI methods for maintaining so-called 'law and order' (HRW 2013, 19, 54, 72, 75-76). Having said this, FPI's chairman and founder, Habib Muhammad Riziek Syihab did receive a 1.5 year jail term in 2008

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for inciting attacks against a gathering held by the National Alliance for Freedom of Religion and Belief in Jakarta that injured seventy demonstrators.

Clues to explaining the rationale and more 'hands off' dimensions of Indonesia's response to the 'grey area' between radicalism and outright terrorist activity lie in localized understandings of the issues. Indonesian authorities understand that resorting exclusively to a punitive 'hard approach' in dealing with radical militant Islamist groups may be counterproductive in the long run (Ramakrishna 2009). Culturally speaking, resorting to excessive callousness or coercion are not symbols of power in Indonesia; in fact, it is more likely to undermine one's legitimacy as it is seen as disharmonious. Rather, community support and harmony is better served through displays of benevolence and magnanimity. This also fuses with a particularly important part of Islamic teaching in Indonesia: the acknowledgement of repentance (*tobat*). In short, *tobat* places an emphasis on allowing a person the right to change themselves while at the same time as there being an obligation on society to accept those changes. When terrorists repent, society then reciprocates by accepting the changed behaviour.

Significantly, it is this notion of repentance that helps inform and shape many of the specifically localized approaches to dealing with the spectre of radicalism in Indonesia. In fact, the utility of military force diminishes disproportionately if its runs too high a risk of stoking community unrest. Harsh treatment and indefinite incarceration alone can simply fuel frustration, resentment and the anger of inmates and by extension their immediate and extended families against towards the Indonesian state and wider society. Given the networked ties that bind members of the extremist community, persistent punitive dealings run an associative risk of perpetuating a 'ghettoized' sub-culture of hate and alienation towards the state and wider society.

If we accept that group identities often forge and crystallize in opposition to the State and its coercive/exclusionary practices. And we understand that the periodic and episodic fluctuations of militancy in Indonesia are part of a wider reiterative process and pattern of violence associated with attempts to reconstitute *negara Islam Indonesia* across space and time. Then the more violent the State response, the more it risks merely perpetuating a 'ghettoised' sub-culture of hate and

alienation towards the State. And the more intense the socialization of that ghettoized vision of the world becomes, the stronger the impetus to act.

Putting issues of under-resourcing and ad-hoc institutionalisation aside for a moment, Indonesia's localised understanding of its own militant problem has brought about a 'smart' approach of disengagement and de-radicalisation rather than an exclusive reliance on a traditional 'hard' approach of tactical assaults, punishment and detention (Abuza 2009: 193-211; Oorjitham 2008; Teo 2007). Although not as successful as the one run in Singapore, the 'soft' approach angle involves breaking the nexus of radicalisation and militancy through persuasion and alternatives. Rather than polarizing imprisoned militants further from what is a moderate Islamic majority, the rationale goes that if you can get them to recognize the destructive consequences of their actions then there is the possibility of opening a path to a credible alternative or second chance. This allows an opportunity for them to rediscover a different Islamic meaning in their lives, a discursive one that does not include the destructive cycle of extreme thinking, mobilisation and violence (Carnegie 2013).

Although critics complained of former-President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's overly tentative handling of these issues, there has been some success albeit limited to balance 'hard' and 'soft' approaches in dealing with its radical militant threat. Putting this approach into practice has included the organisation of prayer sessions by members of *Densus 88* in conjunction with militant detainees as a sign of respect and opportunity to atone for past deeds. Former *Densus 88* chief, Brigadier General Surya Dharma was a prime mover in promoting the idea of treating someone fairly and give them a second chance if they genuinely seek to repent (*bertobat*) Getting militants to turn away from violence and terrorism and reclaiming them for society is crucial for lasting containment. The thinking is that it is more effective in the long-term if you can convince imprisoned militants to renounce violence and sever previous ties rather than incarcerating them indefinitely (Carnegie 2013).

There have also been efforts to encourage inmates to speak out about their experiences as a warning to others and using their influence over other inmates to cooperate with authorities. For instance, by publishing and taking about his experiences ex-JI commander Mohammed Nasir Bin Abbas (2011) provided counsel on how to 'de-program' extremist mind-sets especially amongst Indonesian youth. Ex-JI member Ali Imron (brother of Amrozi) also renounced his past mistakes

by publishing a book and tapes and publicly advocating against terrorism. He and others have worked closely with the authorities and different non-state actors (i.e. socio-religious organisations) in their de-radicalisation efforts with militant detainees. These initiatives have also run in conjunction with ad campaigns on the street and through the media promoting an anti-jihadist message. The real goal in all of this is to give these people a 'way-back'.

Moreover, the *Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme* (BNPT - National Counterterrorism Agency set up 5 years ago to coordinate Indonesia's CTP) has also taken steps to establish a multi-institutional de-radicalization program in co-operation with religious groups, clerics, NGOs, universities and schools. This co-operative initiative includes the two largest national Islamic organizations *Nahdlatul Ulama* and *Muhammadiyah* along with the likes of Al-Hikam College, the Islamic State University of Surakarta and the Indonesian Institute of Sciences. BNPT also runs the newly constructed $144.2 million Indonesian Peace and Security Centre (IPSC) in Sentul, West Java; a de-radicalization and rehabilitation facility for some of Indonesia's most hardened convicted terrorists. The ultimate goal is to get militants to turn away from violence and terrorism and reclaim them for society not just for the sake of security containment but also societal harmony (Carnegie 2013).

Conclusion

On balance, the indicators are of a diminished macro-threat environment and a more manageable strategic security situation in Indonesia but this risks sounding overly optimistic. It is probably fairer to say that far from being eradicated, the strategic threat has been contained and reduced to a significant degree. This is far from a wholesale endorsement of the ways Indonesia deals with violence and militant extremism. Transforming the attitudes and conditions that incubate intolerance and extreme thinking that can lead to a spill over into violent militancy may form a part of Indonesia's approach, but there remains a fine line between too little interference and actually dealing with the problem.

Tackling effectively the 'grey area' between radicalism and outright terrorist activity is an ongoing challenge especially if a growing atmosphere of intolerance is allowed to go largely unchecked. Given the complex and deeply rooted types of insecurity that endure in Indonesia and if we factor in lax money transfer regulations and porous, notoriously difficult to patrol borders, then conditions still exist that can incubate extreme thinking into more home-grown forms of violent militancy. Continued commitment to a nuanced response and management of security threats both strategic and human remains a priority in Indonesia if it is to yield meaningful containment.

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