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The Increased Role of Pesantrens in Indonesia's Modern-Day Approach to Deradicalization

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THE INCREASED ROLE OF *PESANTRENS* IN
INDONESIA'S MODERN-DAY APPROACH TO
DERADICALIZATION

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Introduction:

Indonesia has had a unique relationship with Islamic radicalism since the war for Indonesian independence in 1945. While the formation of an Islamic State in Indonesia has been at the forefront of radical movements since independence, the approaches to achieving this goal have changed drastically over time. This goal has also had multiple adversaries, from Dutch and Japanese colonialism, to the left-wing Sukarno regime, to the authoritarian Suharto regime, and finally the War on Terror. Across all of these different time periods, Islamic radicals in Indonesia have also had to contend with the different Muslim communities across the archipelago, many of whom are not keen on the creation of an Islamic State, as well as the non-Muslim minority who hold considerable political power despite their small numbers. The struggle for an Islamic State is a battle fought on many fronts, most of which domestic terrorists are losing due to a bilevel counterterrorism effort spearheaded by the Indonesian government and supported by the United States and Australia.

Although Indonesian domestic terrorism and counterterrorism alone is a rich and well studied field, I wanted to use my experiences at *pesantrens* (Islamic boardings schools) in Java to inspire a new approach to the study of this topic. I decided I wanted to better understand the role of *pesantrens* as both proponents and opponents of Islamic radicalism in Indonesia. It did not take long to recognize that for every *pesantren* with links to radical groups in Indonesia, there are countless others working tirelessly to confront radicalism in the classroom, as well as having to face growing stigma surrounding the reputation of Islamic education due to its links with domestic terrorism.

As a result of the link between *pesantrens* and radicalism in Indonesia, *pesantrens* have the potential to become the strongest weapon in the Indonesian government's arsenal for deradicalization in the country. Unfortunately, the government approach to deradicalization has been lackluster at best, as the American-backed War on Terror has made it easier to fight terrorism with an enhanced military and police state rather than diffusing radicalism in the classroom and the Mosque.

There was quite a bit of scholarship to work through as I began the process of defining my topic for the purpose of this project. I decided that first and foremost I needed to have a strong understanding of the historical context of Indonesian domestic terrorism, and be able to recognize the defining moments in Indonesia's history that lead to the creation and growth of radical movements within the archipelago. Secondly, I needed to focus my research of *pesantrens* into a few categories, which would give me a broad understanding of the topic without being inundated with too much information. In order to do this I created research questions that would be best answered through secondary source material research with an enhanced historical context. My research questions became: How have *pesantrens* been used to support radical movements within Indonesia? Have *pesantrens* often been at the forefront of counterterrorism and deradicalization efforts, both historically and in the modern day? Finally, how can *pesantrens* aid in deradicalization efforts while simultaneously countering the stereotype that Islamic boarding schools are "hotbeds" of domestic terrorism in Indonesia?

As my research method had to be completely secondary source based due to being off-site and working from home, there is little to discuss about the changing of my approach or revising my methods over time. However, my use of secondary sources did affect the structure of my paper, which I will now describe. Through my research I discovered that the history of

Islamic radicalism and domestic terrorism in Indonesia is incredibly rich and well-researched, and abridging a description of these historical processes would lead to an ill-informed project. As a result I had to devote quite a large number of pages to describing these historical processes in as much detail as I could spare without burdening the paper. At the beginning of my research process I assumed that domestic terrorism was a direct result of Dutch colonialism, which is true to a degree, but my historical research lead me to better understand how the complex relationships between the colonial powers, the new Indonesian state, the religious differences between Muslims and non-Muslims, and the complex ethnoreligious demographics of Indonesia all strongly affected the formation of radical groups as well as how those groups decided to carry out their call to *jihad*. This was the first section I wrote and is separated into four subsections by time period, and the researching and completion of this portion of the paper prepared me well for researching and better understanding the role of *pesantrens* within this broader historical context.

Rather than explaining every instance of *pesantrens* supporting radical movements in Indonesia, I decided to focus exclusively on Pondok Ngruki, known as the “home base” of the Ngruki Network, a syndicate that was instrumental to the growth of Jema’ah Islamiyah. Although Pondok Ngruki carries an extremely negative reputation due to its history, I argue that Ngruki has modernized in a way that is necessary to fight the stigma which surrounds it. Although there has not been a formal adoption of peace education or deradicalization at Pondok Ngruki, I argue that the atmosphere is well suited for taking the next steps in deradicalizing a once extreme environment.

Finally, I dedicate the last sections of the paper to what, in my opinion, would be the ideal series of steps needed in order to implement a widespread, community-backed, and successful deradicalization program across Indonesia. These include a twofold approach upheld

by both the Indonesian government in conjunction with smaller, grassroots organizations which would be able to provide “boots on the ground” support to each community, starting with the areas highlighted as “at risk” of radicalizing. Deradicalization efforts would also benefit from being modeled off of the same structure that radical groups take, including strong and inspiring leadership whose ideologies are both comforting and unifying. There needs to be a solid set of new ideologies formulated by the government with the direct support of Muslim scholars that is based on comprehensive Quranic thought, that focuses on tolerance and reconciliation. Most importantly, peace education needs to be a mandated part of the curriculum of every school, *pesantren* and secular, starting at a young age, in order to prepare young people to combat radical ideologies as they begin to be exposed to them as they grow older. Many of these approaches are being implemented across Indonesia, however I believe that there needs to be a strong and well-funded government approach in order to bring the puzzle pieces together and enact lasting change. Deradicalization will be a long and arduous process, however I believe that Indonesia already has the groundwork laid for a strong and effective counter-approach to Islamic extremism across the archipelago. The puzzle pieces have been flipped right-side-up, and now it is time to put each of them together. Excellent introduction!

A Brief Historical Overview of the Islamic Extremist Movements in Post-WWII Indonesia

The focus of this paper is on the post WWII era, and the events that have shaped the greater radical movement as it is seen today in Indonesia. In order to better understand the historical context of Indonesian Islamic radicalism, the following section will provide a historical overview of the two major radical groups in Indonesia, Darul Islam (DI) and its successor Jema'ah Islamiyah (JI), as the movements transcended the three major eras of Indonesian politics, the era of Indonesian independence and Sukarno, Suharto, and post-Suharto eras. Each political era had distinct interactions with both Darul Islam as well as Jema'ah Islamiyah (from now on referenced as DI and JI), with each leader utilizing and combatting the two groups as needed depending on potential political gain. The close relationship between the Suharto administration and DI is especially significant as will be elaborated further on in the section.

Indonesian Independence and the Sukarno Era

It is generally agreed upon by scholars that Darul Islam was founded in 1947 by AS in West Java. Kartosuwirjo had been very active in the movement towards an Indonesian Islamic state since the 1920's and was a member of the *Partai Syarikat Islam* (Islamic Union Party, from now on referred as the PSI), but became a proponent of *jihad* between 1945 and 1949 during the Indonesian struggle for independence from the Dutch. In Islam, *jihad* is defined in two ways, first, as the internal struggle of a Muslim against one's own sin, and secondly, as the external struggle of all Muslims against enemies of the Islamic community and the religion at large. To Kartosuwirjo, the enemy of Islam in Indonesia was the Japanese and Dutch occupations.

However, once the struggle for Independence was over, Kartosuwirjo and his allies focused their jihad on the newly founded Indonesian State.

Their discontent with the Indonesian State was twofold. The PSI and its allies had pushed for the formation of an Islamic state with some success, by encouraging and ultimately succeeding in having a section of the constitution require all Muslims to follow Islamic law in what is now known as the Jakarta Charter of 1945. However, the day after the Jakarta Charter was passed, Indonesian Christians threatened to form their own state throughout the eastern Indonesian islands should Islamic law be written into the new constitution. Rather than risk dividing the state at a time when the risk of another Dutch invasion was especially high, Islamic community representatives agreed to remove the clause from the constitution.¹

Although the Indonesian State declared independence in 1945, the Dutch launched a four-year struggle before fully acknowledging Indonesian independence in 1949. During that time came the second affront to the Islamic movement, the Renville agreement of 1948. Ratified by the United Nations, the Renville agreement ceded West Java to the Dutch along the “Van Mook Line,” a line connecting the furthest advanced Dutch-held positions. It was with the signing of the Renville Agreement that Kartosuwirjo launched his full-scale revolt against both Dutch occupation as well as the Indonesian State:

In May 1948, Kartosuwirjo proclaimed himself the Imam (leader) of a new state, which he called Darul Islam – which also became the name of his movement – in the first regional rebellion to follow Indonesia’s declaration of independence. 32 He followed this on 7 August 1949 with a proclamation of Negara Islam Indonesia (NII), the Islamic State of Indonesia, in Cisampak, West Java.²

¹ Solahudin. (2013). *Roots of Terrorism in Indonesia : From Darul Islam to Jema'ah Islamiyah*, University of New South Wales Press, 27.

² *Ibid*, Solahudin. (2013), 35.

It was in effect the Renville Agreement that caused the creation of DI and kickstarted the jihad movement in Indonesia. The Renville Agreement also represents the crux of the two Indonesian Islamic struggles, that against Dutch colonialism as well as the formation of a modernist Islamic State in Indonesia. The Indonesian state ceding West Java to the Dutch solidified Kartosuwirjo's belief in the state's corruption and unviability, and he believed that an Islamic state was the best way to combat these problems.

As the new leader of DI, Kartosuwirjo implemented Islamic law and military service for boys aged sixteen to twenty-four. He divided Indonesia into three zones, Area I, Area II, and Area III. Area I applied to anywhere in Indonesia where Islamic law was in full effect, whereas Area II was where Islamic law was partially in control, and Area III where there was little to no Islamic law, such as the predominantly Christian regions of Flores and West Papua. The goal of cadres living in each area was to revolt and transform them into Area I.

Kartosuwirjo encountered difficulties in the struggle to transform Areas II and III into Area I due to an unforeseen reason: the majority of Indonesia is already Muslim. However, this did not imply that all Indonesian Muslims were supportive of an Islamic state or the introduction of Sharia law. Kartosuwirjo's draconian criminal penalties, along with the frequent raiding, looting, and taxing of Area I and II residents were a tough sell for most Indonesians. In order to address the reluctance of the community to follow his newly implemented criminal code:

Kartosuwirjo drew upon the idea of *takfir* – the declaration of a Muslim as apostate. This takfiri stance is evident in the NII Criminal Code, where an apostate is defined as anyone who rejects the laws of the Islamic state, even if they were born a Muslim from Muslim parents. 36 Consciously or otherwise, Kartosuwirjo's philosophy appears to have reflected the war-like conditions he faced, which demanded a black and white stance so that one could differentiate between friend and foe.³

³ *Ibid*, Solahudin. (2013), 37.

The enforcement of *takfir* only heightened the differences between Kartosuwirjo's followers and the rest of the Muslim community, a distinction that can also be traced to the traditionalist/modernist divide in Indonesia. *Takfir* is only one example of the radical policies adopted by Kartosuwirjo during his quest to form his Islamic state. His policies especially angered his longtime friend and religious teacher, Yusuf Taudjiri, who owned the Cipari Islamic boarding school, a *pesantren* in West Java. It was here that Kartosuwirjo's radicalism and revolutionary tendencies transformed to what would now be described as terrorism, as DI fighters attacked the boarding school forty-seven times between 1949 to 1958, with the most serious attack killing eleven at the boarding school and ten DI insurgents.⁴ These attacks are one of the first indicators of the relationship between *pesantren* and radical groups, where *pesantren* across Indonesia can be observed as both resisting and also supporting radical movements.

Towards the end of the Sukarno administration, the views towards DI changed drastically. When DI first emerged, the Indonesian government had very nonchalant views towards it, still considering DI "as the 'bulwark of the Republic' struggled against the 'Pasundan State' sponsored by the Dutch in the West Java."⁵ As DI had been seen as a result of the people's struggle against Dutch incursions, the state had little desire to squash the rebellion until DI had already grown considerably in size, following, and influence. The growth of DI was largely due to growing disdain for the government's acts towards specific regions, such as Sukarno's revoking Aceh's status of autonomy, making it part of the province of North Sumatra.⁶ By 1952, the Nationalist Cabinet recognized DI as an enemy of the state, as DI's policies now did not align

⁴ *Ibid*, Solahudin. (2013), 38.

⁵ Dengel, H. H. (1995). *Darul Islam dan Kartosuwiryo: Langkah Perwujudan Angan-Angan yang Gagal. Pustaka Sinar Harapan.*

⁶ *Op cit*, Solahudin. (2013), 40.

with the politics of the administration.⁷ Although DI had become newly recognized as an enemy, it was not until 1960 that the Sukarno administration took a strong military stance against DI incursions.

In 1959 Sukarno announced the “Guided Democracy,” signifying the official switch towards a left-leaning authoritarian regime. Shortly after, in 1960, he commenced the “*Pagar Betis Operation*,” a fairly simple military tactic of employing civilians to isolate and out DI insurgents while simultaneously cutting supply lines. The *Pagar Betis Operation* was a huge success and led to the capture and arrest of Kartosuwiryo in 1962.⁸ Although DI was defeated by militarily in 1962, a new opportunity for resurgence emerged in 1965 with the overthrow of the Sukarno government and the establishment of the Suharto regime.

Darul Islam (DI) During the Suharto Era

The rise of Suharto is defined by the mass killings that began in an effort to “cleanse” Indonesia of its previous administration. Suharto and his compatriots targeted members of the PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*) but quickly extended their reach to all “suspected” members of the party as well as well-known humanitarian, women’s rights, and pro-democracy activists. In order to accomplish this task, the brand new regime employed thousands of DI and ex-DI insurgents to hunt down, arrest, and murder these new “enemies of the state.” As DI had been a staunch opponent to the left-leaning Sukarno government, this new allyship between Suharto’s administration and DI proved mutually beneficial. DI was able to use their newfound military influence to target not only their political but also their religious adversaries, breathing life back

⁷ Arrobi, M. (2018). The Making of Islamist-inspired Terrorism and It’s Counter-terrorism in Indonesia. *Politik Indonesia: Indonesian Political Science Review*, 3(2), 224.

⁸ Formichi, C. (2012). *Islam and the Making of Nation: Kartowuswiryo and Political Islam in twentieth -century Indonesia*. Leiden: KITLV Press.

into a once floundering radical movement. Suharto also bestowed high ranking political, military, and economic positions on DI cadre in order to strengthen the relationship between the two groups.⁹ The influence that these positions created only strengthened DI. Throughout the 1970's DI members were able to organize and form cells in every major city in Indonesia. Multiple terrorist attacks were carried out during this period, especially in Sumatra, including bombing a Church, a Christian school, a Quran recitation event, and a series of armed robberies in 1976.¹⁰ However, these events eventually led to a major government pushback, where the Suharto administration labeled DI as a network of “*Komando Jihad*” and conducted a long series of raids and arrests leading up to the national election in 1977.¹¹ In addition, Suharto's decision to use DI insurgents as a counter-communism military force caused DI to lose much of its grassroots support, as DI's reputation changed from a locally supported Islamist movement to merely a more extreme branch of the Suharto government.

With much of the military power stripped from DI once again, Suharto began his attack on the political power of DI as well as other, non-violent Islamic political groups. He did this by forcing the consolidation of all the Islamic political parties into one, the United Development Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*), and enforcing rules on large gatherings and requiring parties affirm *Pancasila* as their guiding principle.¹² Suharto's decision to requiring *Pancasila* be the guiding political principle angered many Muslim political groups and also coincided with a global Islamist movement in the wake of the Iranian revolution of 1979. As Abdullah Sungkar, a well-known DI member and founder of Pondok Ngruki, said in his defense plea, the Suharto

⁹ *Op cit*, Arrobi, M. (2018), 225.

¹⁰ Temby, Q. (2010). Imagining an Islamic State in Indonesia: From Darul Islam to Jemaah Islamiyah. *Indonesia*, 1–36.

¹¹ *Op cit*, Arrobi, M. (2018), 226.

¹² Effendi, B. (2004). Islam and the State in Indonesia. *Ohio University Press*.

administration had hijacked another Muslim party, was manipulating political parties in general, controlled parliament and manipulated elections, and turned the Indonesian flag and the *Pancasila* into sacred symbols, affectively turning Indonesia into a totalitarian state, among many other abuses of power.¹³ These factors, within the context of a greater, global Islamist movement, all coincided to form Indonesia's second major radical group, Jema'ah Islamiyah (JI), at the turn of the 1980's.

Jema'ah Islamiyah (JI) and the Suharto Era

During the 1980's DI was led in a new direction, namely away from "local jihadism" with Sufi mystical underpinnings to a larger network more focused on global Islamism.¹⁴ It was under the leadership of two Indonesian political exiles operating in Malaysia, Abdullah Sungkar (as previously mentioned) and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, that nearly 200 JI operatives traveled to Afghanistan to receive Al-Qaeda military training. Sungkar and Baasyir had both visited the Middle East with some frequency and met with Osama Bin Laden in order to strengthen ties in the region.¹⁵ They also built their recruiting network largely off of the *pesantren* that they helped to found, Pondok Ngruki in Solo, Central Java. During this period, the men sent to Afghanistan were still considered a part of DI. However, after receiving religious instruction along with their military training, the members started to abandon their old views ascribed to them by DI, and brought these new ideas back to Indonesia. This change in doctrine is what caused the official split from DI to (JI) Jema'ah Islamiyah, officially forming a new group in 1993.¹⁶ From 1993 to

¹³ Jones, S. (2010). New Order Repression and the Birth of Jemaah Islamiyah. In E. Aspinall & G. Fealy (Eds.), Soeharto's New Order and its Legacy: Essays in honour of Harold Crouch. *Canberra: ANU Publisher*.

¹⁴ *Op cit*, Arrobi, M. (2018), 228.

¹⁵ Abuza, Z. (2007). Political Islam and Violence in Indonesia. *Routledge, London and New York*.

¹⁶ *Op cit*, Solahudin. (2013), 7.

1998 JI's main focus was on the Indonesian government, however this changed when Osama bin Laden released his infamous declaration for all jihadis to focus their efforts on the war against America and its allies.¹⁷ Although there was considerable debate among JI about whether to focus fully on this new war, it was bin Laden's declaration that eventually led to the first Bali bombing in 2002.

Terrorism in Post-Suharto Indonesia and the Legacy of the Bali Bombings

After 32 years as president, Suharto resigned in May of 1998. He was succeeded by Bacharuddin Jusuf (BJ) Habibie, the third president of Indonesia. JI as an organization decided to endorse Habibie, viewing him as a step in the right direction for the Muslim community. During the presidential transition, JI continued to send cadres to Afghanistan for military training. Although JI recognized the long-term process needed to turn Indonesia into the Islamic State that they had been working towards for so many years, many of the organization's goals were yet unfulfilled. They began to survey buildings in Jakarta, taking note of layout, occupancy, location, and security in order to choose the best targets. Sungkar and Baasyir met with bin Laden again in August 1998 and sent a letter to upper-echelon members of DI and JI, urging them to take up the war against the United States.¹⁸ DI largely rejected the idea, and there was a split within JI concerning whether to join or not. These debates were largely put to rest when a conflict broke out between Muslim and Christian youth in Ketapang, leading to high tensions and violence across the archipelago where both Muslim and Christian communities were particularly strong.¹⁹ As it became clear to the extremist groups that Muslims in Indonesia were at heightened risk

¹⁷ *Ibid*, Solahudin. (2013), 8.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, Solahudin. (2013), 171.

¹⁹ Braithwaite, J. Dunn, L. (2010). 3. *Maluku and North Maluku* (PDF). Anomie and Violence: Non-truth and reconciliation in Indonesian peacebuilding. *The Australian National University*. 147.

from Christian violence, the debate over fighting domestic versus international enemies was put to rest for the time being. JI began to raise funds to begin a jihad in Ambon in 1999, the largest city in the Maluku islands, where tensions were the highest. These new funds and organization breathed life back into a faltering JI, especially in Maluku.²⁰

At the height of JI's successes in 1999, Abdullah Sungkar died. His death left a vacuum in JI leadership, causing many leaders to break off and start their own offensives, including scattered bombings and targeted attacks across Indonesia. These culminated on Christmas Eve, 2000 with attacks in 11 Indonesia cities targeting religious sites, killing 20 and injuring 120. The hope was that these attacks would cause a retaliation from the targeted Christians, but this proved not to be the case.²¹ From 1999-2001 the attacks in Indonesia were focused on religious differences, mainly towards Christians and Muslim communities considered to be opposed to an Islamic State. However, everything changed on September 11, 2001.

Just days after the attacks on 9/11, operatives in Indonesia began planning their own domestic attacks. The new targets were to be places occupied by foreigners, rather than sites targeting Christian Indonesians. Many of the original plots were thwarted by a wave of arrests in Singapore and Malaysia. However, once the operatives decided on a date, September 11, 2002, and a location, Bali, there was no stopping them. The original date was set to commemorate the attacks on 9/11, but they there was not enough time and pushed back the attacks. Due to the declaration of jihad on America and its allies, they chose two popular entertainment venues frequented by tourists, the Sari Club and Padi's Bar, as well as the American consulate. Finally, on the night of Saturday, October 12th 2002, bombs exploded in both venues, killing 202 people,

²⁰ *Op cit*, Solahudin. (2013), 178.

²¹ *Ibid*, Solahudin. (2013), 182.

mostly Australians. Less than a month later the arrests ensued, with the orchestrator of the attacks arrested in Lamongan, East Java on November 5th.²²

The Bali Bombings of 2002 are largely considered a turning point in the Indonesian government's response to Islamism and domestic terrorism. As more arrests were made, Indonesian counter terrorism forces were better equipped to disrupt the greater organizations, causing organized large-scale attacks to grind to a halt. As Mohammad Zaki Arrobi notes, the rise in the number of attacks in Indonesia following Bali is a mark of the decline of the movement, not a mark of triumph. JI members acknowledged, in interviews and court depositions, how Bali had damaged their cause. Following the Bali bombings the War on Terror was effectively brought to Indonesia, with the United States and Australia both committing funds and personnel to aid in the Indonesian terrorism crackdown of the early 2000's. The string of arrests also changed the manner of domestic terrorism in Indonesia, from organized and large scale attacks on religious centers and sites frequented by foreigners to small, single-person attacks focused on targeting police and military targets. These include the attack on Hamparan Police station in 2010, the bombing of a police mosque in Cirebon in 2011, the suicide bombing of the Solo police station in 2016, and the Sarinah-Jakarta attack, the first ISIS-claimed attack in Southeast Asia, which targeted a police station at the beginning of 2016.²³

Indonesia's approach to counterterrorism is twofold; with a "hard" approach as well as a "soft" approach. Unsurprisingly, the United States backed the "hard" approach, providing funds and personnel training to for "Special Detachment 88," (Densus 88) a counterterrorism task force that has been under intense scrutiny in recent years for possible human rights violations, unlawful arrests, torture, and mysterious deaths. In comparison, Australia poured money into the

²² (2012) The 12 October 2002 Bali Bombing Plot. *BBC News*, BBC. www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-19881138.

²³ Singh, J. (2016). Operation Tinombala: Indonesia's New Counter-Terrorism Strategy. *Singapore*.

National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT), a government bureau that focuses on deradicalization and deconstructing radical ideology. BNPT hosts interfaith dialogues, cultural exchanges, and campaigns for a more liberal version of Islam as the solution for religious hostility in Indonesia.²⁴

Military Counterterrorism: The “Hard Approach”

The United States launched the War on Terror in the aftermath of the attacks on 9/11. In order to disseminate the U.S. counterterrorism approach to the rest of the world, President George W. Bush Jr adopted what is called the “stick and carrot” approach which involves rewarding countries that adopt U.S. policy and punishing those who do not. Rewards came in the form of monetary, military, and humanitarian aid, while punishments were usually in the form of trade, military, and government sanctions.²⁵ Indonesia’s sweeping counterterrorism law is modeled after the U.S. Patriot Act. It is called Act No. 15 Year 2003 on the Eradication of Terrorism Crimes, and describes the punitive action allowed by the government in the aftermath of a terrorist attack, such as the Bali Bombings of the previous year. The law outlined in depth the measures to be taken by the government following an attack, but it left out any detail of measures to prevent future attacks, and does not limit the spread of radicalism across the country. Since the law’s enactment in 2003, there has been stiff protest by Indonesians and international Human Groups alike, most recently in 2017 when revisions were proposed to the law that would strip Indonesians of their national citizenship for:

...traveling abroad to “join wars overseas in order to commit terrorism crimes,” and permit criminal penalties for any “speech, though, behavior, or writings” that could lead to “actions which adversely impact other people/communities.” The open-ended language

²⁴ *Op cit.* Arrobi, M. (2018), 232.

²⁵ Hilmy, M. (2013). The Politics of Retaliation: the Backlash of Radical Islamists to the Deradicalization Project in Indonesia. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 140.

of the proposed revisions to the counterterrorism law will facilitate violations of the rights to free expression and nationality.”²⁶

Since the law’s enactment in 2003 the circle of radical Islamists in Indonesia have used human rights as a unifying force under which to oppose the law, making the situation especially tenuous. On the one hand, the Bali Bombings necessitated a stronger government response to domestic terrorism in Indonesia, however the ultimately unsuccessful War on Terror and the myriad human rights abuses which it caused have been a sticking point in successful deradicalization efforts across the globe.

In addition to new legislative counterterrorism approaches the United States has supported Indonesia militarily. Special Taskforce 88 is a military and police effort to put Act No. 15 into full effect, and has been funded by the US through the Ministry of External Affairs (Menlu) of the US and under direct training of the instructors of the CIA, FBI, and the US Secret Service.²⁷ Act No. 15 in conjunction with the Special Taskforce 88 have been largely successful, responsible for the arrest of some 700 suspected extremists with 500 serving jail time. However the vast majority of military action taken by Special Taskforce 88 have been through “shoot-to-kill” fatal raids, leaving many terrorism suspects dead on site before ever being brought to justice.

Deradicalization: The “Soft Approach”

In response to the growing backlash from Special Taskforce 88, the Indonesian government founded the National Body of Countermeasure of Terrorism/BNPT by presidential

²⁶ (2017). Indonesia: Counterterrorism Law Changes Threaten Rights, Reject Proposals to Restrict Speech, Revoke Citizenship. *Human Rights Watch*.

²⁷(2012). Propaganda Terorisme di Indonesia. *Eramuslim, Media Islam Rujukan*.

decree in 2010. Ansyaad Mbai, the head of BNPT, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with 8 Indonesian Muslim organizations who agreed to become involved in a series of projects “to curb, prevent and counteract the development of radical Islamist ideology.”²⁸ New programs have since been put in place to reach a wider audience and employ multiple government and nongovernment organizations, as well as educational and religious groups. One of the most promising approaches to deradicalization lies within the curriculum of the *pesantren*, where some scholars are beginning to acknowledge progress being made in even the most notorious extremist strongholds, like Pondok Ngruki in Solo. While deradicalization efforts are still met with some pushback from the more radical fringes of Indonesian Islamic society, we are beginning to see the groundwork being laid for a more comprehensive and sweeping approach from the Indonesian government to smooth the swell of extremism across the archipelago. Of course, any approach to deradicalization will require very strong financial, governmental, and community support, but it is possible given some of the small successes that these deradicalization organizations are beginning to achieve.

The risk of terrorist attacks in Indonesia is still very real, however the broader movement of utilizing terrorism to forge the way towards an Islamic State in Indonesia has largely been stopped. Fear is another factor to be contended with when carrying out counter-terrorism efforts, as many Islamic symbols are now perceived as symbols of extremism. These include the *niqab*, a traditional covering for women that covers everything except the eyes, and *pesantrens*, Islamic boardings schools, have faced more backlash recently for being perceived as the “hotbed” of domestic terrorism instruction in Indonesia. The next wave of deradicalization and counterterrorism in Indonesia will have to rely heavily on dismantling stigma surrounding the

²⁸ *Op Cit*, Hilmy, M. (2013), 142.

many forms of Islamic expression, and to encourage cross-cultural and religious understanding between different Muslim and non-Muslim groups. Overcoming prejudice is surely the next step in Indonesia's counterterrorism efforts.

Counterterrorism in Indonesia Post-Bali and the Heightened Role of *Pesantren* in Deradicalization

In order to fully explore the roles *pesantrens* have in current counterterrorism and deradicalization efforts, and how important these roles will be in the future, it is important to recognize the relationships held by *pesantrens* both in support of and in opposition to extremism in the past. Often the scholarship surrounding *pesantrens* focuses on the institutions that “produced” known extremists, however I believe that this broad-stroke approach to the field is counterproductive and does little in understanding the “creation” of extremists in general. To put it in perspective, every American criminal, mass shooter, and corrupt politician came from the American school system, yet nobody paints U.S. schools as hotbeds for criminality, despite the United States having one of the highest incarceration rates in the entire world.

Pondok Ngruki and the Reputation Problem

Most Indonesian *pesantrens* associated with extremism are a part of a syndicate called the Ngruki Network. The network is largely considered the main link between Al Qaeda and domestic terrorism in Indonesia, and operates out of a *pesantren* in Solo, central Java, called Pondok Ngruki.²⁹ Pondok Ngruki is arguably the most notorious radical *pesantren* in Indonesia, and has been the topic of a large volume of terrorism scholarship since its founding in the 1970’s. Pondok Ngruki was founded by Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba’asyir, two figures whose history I discussed in depth in the previous chapter. Ngruki was instrumental to the

²⁹ (2016). Al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia: The Case of the Ngruki Network in Indonesia. *Crisis Group*.

foundation, growth, organization, and education of new members to DI and later to JI as well. Although Sungkar has since died, Ba'asyir is still alive and walks free, having served almost two decades in exile and another fifteen years in prison for charges related to his involvement in JI and other terrorism-related charges. In May 2007, Farish A. Noor, a historian, scholar, and faculty member at the Nanyang Technical University in Singapore, had just completed field work at Pondok Ngruki and was even able to interview and photograph Ba'asyir. Noor's paper, *Ngruki Revisited: Modernity and Its Discontents at the Pondok Pesantren al-Mukmin of Ngruki, Surakarta*, offers new insight into the process of progress at Ngruki, and the challenges of studying such a polarizing topic and what many consider to be its source. He describes an especially important field work approach: "having to constantly distinguish between the institution (or in this case, as we shall show below, institutions) and the personalities linked to it, who have been blown up to be larger than life."³⁰ I find that this distinction is vital to effective terrorism scholarship, and have tried to keep Noor's strategy at the forefront of my research process.

In 1970 Sungkar was appointed as the leader of the DI branch based in Solo. Shortly after he received the financial support to buy land in the town of Ngruki and began the construction of the *pesantren*. It was here that Sungkar began lecturing on the importance of upholding Islamic law and rejecting man-made laws, going so far as to encourage the members of the Solo mosque to leave the 1977 presidential election ballot blank.³¹ It was the stronghold at Ngruki that allowed DI to flourish in Solo and subsequently in Yogyakarta. Starting in 1987, Ngruki students, teachers, and alumni started traveling abroad to receive military training.³² However,

³⁰ Noor, Farish A. (2007) *Ngruki Revisited: Modernity and Its Discontents at the Pondok Pesantren Al-Mukmin of Ngruki, Surakarta*. *ETH Zürich*.

³¹ *Op cit*, Solahudin. (2013), 84.

³² *Ibid*. Solahudin. (2013), 133.

most new recruits came from already-connected families, and recruitment was left out of the school curriculum or official school events.

Ngruki has often been cited as instrumental not only in the early development of the Islamist movement, but also as the educational background of multiple modern Indonesian domestic terrorists, such as Amrozi and Ali Imron of the first Bali Bombing as well as a man convicted of committing a police shooting, Bayu Setiono.³³ In addition, many Ngruki graduates have later gone on to start their own *pesantrens*, raising concerns about the proliferation of extremism across Java specifically and Indonesia more broadly. While there seems to be a clear link between Pondok Ngruki, Solo, and Indonesian extremism, it is near-sighted to assume that the region is beyond repair and incapable of entering and maintaining a period of deradicalization successfully. This myopic scholarship can be read in articles such as *The Nature of Radical Islamic Groups in Solo*, by Muhammad Wildan, a Yogyakarta-based scholar. He writes:

Undeniably, based on the all the above many people assumed that Pondok Ngruki is the centre for radical Islamism in sense of violence in Indonesia. Although some people are may objected to this accusation, the facts has proved on the other way around. In addition, the existence of several other Ngruki- like pesantrens co-founded by Ngruki graduates in the outer regions of Solo, as Dār al-Shahadah in Boyolali and Ma'had Aly Al-Nūr in Sukoharjo, convinced people to the accusation. Although the authorities could not prove the involvement of Ba'asyir in the JI, the existence of JI is undeniable. Moreover, that the region of Solo is quite central for JI underlined my suspicious that the region is prolific of such radical Islamism.³⁴

Many scholars like Wildan utilize an underlying tone of irreconcilability when discussing Pondok Ngruki and the people and *pesantrens* that have come about because of it. The fact that these movements have risen from the Solo area does not even necessarily conclude that everyday Muslims living in the region are particularly committed to Islamism, much less extremism. As

³³ *Op Cit*, Hilmy, M. (2013), 153.

³⁴ Wildan, M. (2013). The Nature of Radical Islamic Groups in Solo. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 7(1), 56.

discussed in the previous section, although radical groups do work to recruit new members from the regions in which they are based, it is much easier for radical groups to lose their grassroots support, such was the case with the decline in support for DI after they became involved in the mass killings against Suharto's political enemies in the 1960's. Wildan claims that weak political influence and globalization mixing with underlying socio-cultural problems that lead to Solo becoming an Islamist stronghold, and I believe that there is a clear method that needs to be taken by the Joko Widodo (Jokowi) administration to address these issues and subsequently institute a strong deradicalization effort in the area. What has been written can always be erased, and addressing inequality, increasing cross-cultural and cross-religious understanding are two important ways to start.

Noor's paper works to lift some of the fog away from Pondok Ngruki by highlighting its modernity despite its reputation. First and foremost, the curriculum of Pondok Ngruki has followed the standards set by the Department of Religious Affairs since the 1980's, meaning that it is up to the standards of state-run and other accredited religious institutions. This means students are enrolled in both religious and secular subjects, which are compulsory for graduation. As Abdul Matin bin Salman writes in his paper *Living Hadis of Tolerance in Multicultural Education: A leadership Study in Pesantren Al Mukmin Ngruki Sukoharjo Surakarta*, "this *pesantren* has the same understanding with most other Muslims that various violent forms in the name of religion is not part of Islamic teachings."³⁵ However, Noor acknowledges that "Teaching the principles of National Citizenship has always been a problem at Ngruki, given the steadfast opposition to the state's Pancasila ideology—implemented during the Suharto era—

³⁵ Salman, A. M. B. (2017), *Living Hadis of Tolerance in Multicultural Education: A Leadership Study in Pesantren Al Mukmin Ngruki Sukoharjo Surakarta. Leadership of Islamic Education, Jurnal Pendidikan Islam.*

from some of the teachers of the *pesantren*.”³⁶ In addition, Ba’asyir still acts as an advisor to the board of directors, but no longer holds any power to enact changes within the school’s structure or curriculum. Since 1972 the Indonesian has kept a close eye on Ngruki, including video and personal surveillance as well as going so far as to send a former graduate of Ngruki, Noor Huda Ismail, to gain access to the institution and to closely monitor Ba’asyir and Sungkar.³⁷ More than anything, it appears that in the modern day Ngruki faces a reputation problem than an actual threat of extremism. Although it does not appear that any large-scale deradicalization programs have yet taken place on the Ngruki campus, there are multiple similar *pesantrens* across Indonesia that have implemented such measures in order to combat both problems: extremism and stigma.

Current Deradicalization Programs Across Indonesia and Necessary Next Steps

There are many obstacles that need to be overcome for a successful deradicalization approach to be initiated across Indonesia. One of the largest in my opinion is what Masdar Hilmy describes as “tacit sympathy,” otherwise described as the phenomena of moderate Muslims feeling no strong disdain or disagreement with their more radical counterparts, especially when extremists use Muslim suffering or United States hegemony as a unifying force.³⁸ Hilmy argues that approaching this obstacle necessitates a twofold approach, with action from both the federal government as well as “boots on the ground” grassroots implementation. At the government level, moderate ideology needs to be first created and then inscribed in conjunction with deconstructing radical ideology. I interpret these actions as using the Quran and other related

³⁶ *Op cit.* Noor, Farish A. (2007), 13.

³⁷ *Ibid.* Noor, Farish A. (2007), 17.

³⁸ Hilmy, M. (2013), 131..

Islamic texts that highlight the necessity of cross-religious understanding, tolerance, and acceptance, while simultaneously rejecting any texts that either misinterpret the Quran or attempt to substantiate areas that later become extreme, such as Ba'asyir's belief in Islamic absolutism that places Islam above any other religion, pitting all others against Islam as enemies to the religion in the name of *jihad*. Then these new ideologies need to be disseminated across the archipelago, through the help of well-trained and well-educated members of each Muslim community. These members are ideally leaders in their community, ones that carry a moral and ideological weight which is accompanied by cultural and community credibility. Hilmy asserts in his research that ideologues, or the spearheads and disseminators of ideology, are more important to radical movements than the ideologies themselves. I choose to corroborate this notion and thus assert the necessity of an equally strong, widespread team of ideologues that operate within the deradicalization camp, in essence to use the radicalism model against itself.

Deradicalization in communities must also take place in spaces that are familiar and comforting to community members, such as mosques, the homes of community leaders, and educational institutions, most importantly *pesantrens*. To that effect, peace education has proved instrumental during these early stages of deradicalization. Addressing radicalism at a young age proves much more effective than waiting until later stages of life to introduce new ideologies, especially when educating already active members or aspiring recruits to extremism organizations. Ricardo L. Garcia in his book, *Teaching in Pluralistic Society*, states that in order to improve social relations and social facts that are relatively prejudicial, discriminatory and marginalized, it is necessary to consider a way in social education and religious education that

contains a reconciliatory, mediative, consensual, accommodative, and negotiative attitude.³⁹

Basing peace education in reconciliation would actively combat absolutism within Islamic educational practices as well as encourage students to recognize absolutism when it's being taught, and thus be able to combat it within their own educational praxis.

I believe that reconciliation can be applied specifically in Indonesia through the lens of the *Pancasila*, although given the tumultuous history between radicalism and opposing the *Pancasila* this may prove difficult. However, many *pesantrens* already attempt to uphold “the cultural slogan of ‘Togetherness in Diversity and Indonesianness’ which involves people of various religions... brotherhood is not confined to the five religions, but also extended to anyone who wishes to be good and worship God sincerely and honestly and put forward the peace of nation and state life,” which is a central tenet of the *Pancasila*.⁴⁰ Reconciliation is described in *Pesantren and Peace Education Development: Challenges, Strategies and Contribution to Deradicalization in Indonesia* by Muhammad Thoyib as eliminating “hatred in the plurality of people. This is in line with the view of Ursula Franklin that peace is not only a lack of war, but also the creation of justice and the loss of fear and hatred within individuals and society.”⁴¹

There are a few challenges to enacting peace education in *pesantrens* across Indonesia. For one, not all *pesantrens* are recognized by the Department of Religious Affairs, meaning that their curriculum is not government recognized and there is not a true form of government oversight concerning the school. This can be problematic for a few reasons, largely because there is no system of checks and balances in place to ensure all the unrecognized *pesantrens* aren't

³⁹ Ricardo L. Garcia, (2012). *Teaching in Pluralistic Society*, p.129. Cited in Thoyib, M. (2018). *Pesantren and Peace Education Development: Challenges, Strategies and Contribution to Deradicalization in Indonesia*. *Madania: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman*, 227.

⁴⁰ Thoyib, M. (2018). *Pesantren and Peace Education Development: Challenges, Strategies and Contribution to Deradicalization in Indonesia*. *Madania: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman*, 227.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* Thoyib, M. (2018). 230.

teaching radical ideology or using their platform for recruiting. In addition, with there being approximately 40 ~~17~~,000 *pesantrens* across Indonesia, without all of them being recognized by the Department of Religious Affairs there's no way the government could ensure a peace education process was put in place in every single school, much less that it is taught by an accredited teacher with peace education and deradicalization training. In addition, deconstructing already-held ideology, as well as teaching new ideologies (especially told older students) can be unconvincing and lackadaisical if carried out in the wrong way. It is essential that new ideologies be introduced in a way that is fresh as well as familiar, using the Quran and following the Prophet's teachings in order to reverse radical ideology.

Peace education can easily be linked to already-existing teaching practices within *pesantrens*. Namely, by teaching a broad array of Islamic and non-Islamic scholars, *pesantren* "provides students with knowledge of, and appreciation for, the complexities of Islamic thought."⁴² Woodward and Rohmaniyah argue that a well-rounded Islamic education is a stronger barrier against radicalization than a secular education, in that people with a rich understanding of the Quran are more likely to recognize when passages and texts are either used incorrectly, too literally, or out of context. In addition, students who graduate from *pesantrens* are able to read the Quran in its original Arabic, rather than relying on Indonesian translations that can easily become murky depending on the goals of the translator. Woodward and Rohmaniyah also write:

Young people who do not have solid Islamic educations can easily be misled by appeals to seemingly clear textual references to violence. Students who have been schooled in *Qur'an* and *Hadith* scholarship are not so easily fooled. They tend to view *jihadi* rhetoric as simplistic distortions of Islamic teachings because they have the theological tools

⁴² Woodward, M., Rohmaniyah, I., Amin, A., & Coleman, D. (2010). Muslim Education, Celebrating Islam and Having Fun As Counter-Radicalization Strategies in Indonesia. *Perspectives On Terrorism*, 42.

necessarily to deconstruct it. The more people know about Islam, the less likely they are to become radicals. *Pesantren* are among the most important sources of this knowledge.⁴³

There is evidence to suggest that over recent years, more students at secular schools and universities are turning to radicalism than those from *pesantrens*, linking Woodward and Rohmaniyah's statement. I believe that addressing radicalism at secular schools will require a different approach than it will at *pesantrens*. However, I believe that peace education will be a vital role in both instances, along with community outreach and instruction in Islam for students who attend secular institutions. More than anything, deradicalization will require strong government financial and ideological support. To combat resistance from radical groups, it will be important to ensure that deradicalization focuses heavily on the inclusivity and beauty of the Islamic faith, which must be closely tied with Quranic teachings and instruction in Islamic thinkers from across many time periods. As the world continues down a long path of globalization, it is crucial that Indonesia addresses radicalism swiftly, strongly, and effectively, in order to protect and serve all Indonesians in the future.

Conclusion

It is clear that the role of *pesantrens* in institutionalizing deradicalization cannot be overstated. Through my own experiences at *pesantrens* I can attest to the religious piety, dedication, and humility that each student must reflect in order to do well both academically and psychologically at a *pesantren*. I also believe that pursuing an Islamic education is a worthwhile and gratifying endeavor, and that Islamic education should not be considered an enemy as deradicalization takes a center stage in Indonesian domestic policy. While there are many more aspects to deradicalization that I was not able to address in this paper, such as the current

⁴³ Ibid. Woodward, M., Rohmaniyah, I., Amin, A., & Coleman, D. (2010), 42.

deradicalization procedures that take place within the walls of Indonesian prisons, secular institutions, and community outreach, I believe that deradicalization in each setting will have similar themes, and must be considered to be one cohesive unit with many parts, rather than a great number of small and disconnected efforts. By putting *pesantrens* at the forefront of the deradicalization effort, the government will be simultaneously working to deconstruct extremism as well as the stigma which has engulfed Islamic educational institutions since the 1970's, which has only become more prevalent in the age of the War on Terror. Every successful approach to deradicalization within a *pesantren* will instill more confidence in the Indonesian people in the importance of Islamic education when combating radicalism. History has lead both Indonesians and foreigners alike to consider *pesantrens* as "jihadi breeding grounds" and "hotbeds of extremism," so it is more important now than ever before that stigma be deconstructed at the same time that extremism is deconstructed across Indonesia. It is absolutely crucial that a strong, twofold approach to deradicalization, focusing on peace education be what prevents the next Bali Bombing, rather than another military raid.

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Recommendations for Further Study

Although conducting my research in a secondary-source format was not how I envisioned my ISP period, it was still a time of great academic and personal growth for me as a researcher and as a student. Although there is much more to cover than what I have chosen to discuss in this paper, I hope I was able to make it clear why my focus on *pesantrens* was worthwhile and worthy of study. Naturally, my research would have been greatly improved by participant observation and interviews, however with the time difference and language barriers, not to mention the difficulty finding subjects to interview would be, I was forced to focus on source material instead. Bu Ari was kind enough to send me the contact information of two subjects for remote interviews, but I was unable to coordinate remote interviews within the timeframe and the constraints of conducting an ISP from home. One is a contact at UNIDA Gontor by the name of Afrih, and the other is a professor at UGM called Agus Wahyudi. Both people would be excellent sources of information should a future student choose to study a similar topic to my own. Additionally, I would recommend researching areas of history where deradicalization was already attempted, as I was unable to find information on such phenomena. I hope my ISP provided the reader with sufficient understanding of the topic and leaves areas for further study in the future.