ARC Federation Fellowship
“Islam and Modernity: Syari’ah, Terrorism and Governance in South-East Asia”

Professor Tim Lindsey was appointed as an ARC Federation Fellow in 2006, a 5-year appointment funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC) to research “Islam and Modernity; Syari’ah, Terrorism and Governance in South-East Asia”. “Terrorism in Southeast Asia responds to challenges that western-derived modernity poses for Islam, including market economies, democracy and nation states. Professor Lindsey will examine the different responses to these challenges through research in regional Muslim communities, institution building, mentoring young scholars and community engagement in the Southeast Asian region. The Fellowship also aims to help strengthen the University of Melbourne’s new Centre for Islamic Law and Society as a hub for research and public engagement on issues related to Islam and law in our region. He aims to achieve a better understanding in Australia of Islam in Southeast Asia and thereby strengthen Australia’s capacity to navigate our regional relationships.

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Indonesia’s Islamic Educational Institutions and Radicalism Among Muslim Youth

Dr Dina Afrianty

After more than a decade, Indonesia’s transition to democracy is still challenged by a great number of issues. Many have expressed doubts that Indonesia will ever completely its transition and become a truly democratic country. Clean governance seems far from reality because of rampant corruption, ineffective bureaucratic systems, and weak legal enforcement. Political leaders have shown a lack of moral commitment, being more interested in winning political support from elite and special interest groups. Indonesian authorities have also shown an inability to protect the rights of citizens to equal access to economy, education, freedom and justice. Although the Yudhoyono administration claims the Indonesian economy is progressing, in reality, most people find life is becoming more difficult. Food prices are increasing, as is the cost of education.

The Indonesian administration faces other pressing social and religious issues, which also endanger Indonesia’s transition to democracy. These include continuing horizontal conflicts among social groups, increased religious intolerance and religious radicalism. I will focus on four aspects of these problems. First, many of these conflicts involve issues relating to religion and ethnicity, but there are cases where economic concerns lead social groups to use violence. The emergence of activist, even aggressive, groups based on ethnicity and religion but exploiting economic grievances such as the Front Betawi Rembug (FBR) and Front Pembela Islam (the Islamic Defenders Front) have made matters worse.

Second, in the last several years Indonesia has witnessed a rise of religious intolerance in the broader community. Minority religious groups such as Ahmadiyah, for example, have become targets of violent attacks by the radical groups. In February 6, 2011 a group of Muslims attacked Ahmadiyah followers and their properties in Cikeusik, a village in a remote area of Banten province in Western Java. Three Ahmadis were killed and a number injured. Property owned by the Ahmadis was destroyed. In other places, followers of Ahmadiyah continue to live under threat, causing some to flee their own homes, including many women and children. Another form of religious intolerance involves the destruction of Christian churches in several places in Indonesia. Tempo

1 This paper was presented at an Asian Law Centre/Centre for Islamic Law and Society Brown Bag Seminar on Wednesday 7 September 2011 at the University of Melbourne.

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interested in joining the ranks of moderate Indonesian Muslims. tolerant and moderate Islam but more is needed, as radical groups are clearly not misplaced. Indonesia’s Muslim civil society groups have put great effort into promoting capturing terrorists, with many jailed and some killed (including leader Noordin M Top), terror attacks continue. The Bali Bombing and the terrorist activities that followed make Indonesia’s image as the moderate and tolerant face of Islam in Indonesia seem misplaced. Indonesia’s Muslim civil society groups have put great effort into promoting tolerant and moderate Islam but more is needed, as radical groups are clearly not interested in joining the ranks of moderate Indonesian Muslims.

UIN Jakarta and the Book Bombers
A series of terrorist activities since the beginning of 2011 are a reminder that radical groups are still at work in Indonesia. In March 2011, for example, Indonesians were shocked by the news of terrorist attacks in Jakarta. Unlike previous attacks targeting foreigners and western interests, this time Indonesian individuals and government institutions were chosen. These included the founder of Jaringan Islam Liberal, the Liberal Islam Network, Uli Abshar Abdhalla; the leader of Pancasila Youth Group, Yapto Soejoesomarno; the head of the National Narcotics Boards, Gorries Mere, a former counter-terrorism chief; and the controversial Indonesian artist, Ahmad Dhani, who has often criticised radical Muslim groups. Terrorists placed explosive materials inside books and sent them to these individuals’ houses and offices by courier. These actions later became famous as the bom buku or book bombs. None of the book bombs claimed any lives, but a police officer lost his arms as the bomb addressed to Uli Abshar Abdalla exploded when he tried to defuse it.

Only days after the book bombs, authorities found another set of explosives planted near a newly-built and modern church in Serpong area, a Chinese-dominated area located on the outskirts of Jakarta, in Banten Province. Obviously, the bomb was intended to target Chinese Christians celebrating Easter. The explosive was placed under a gas pipeline near the church. According to authorities, if it had exploded, the bomb would have killed thousands of people attending Easter prayers.

About a month after this, on April 15, 2011, Indonesians were again shocked by a suicide bomb that exploded during Friday prayers in a mosque inside a police compound in Cirebon, West Java, the first bomb to explode inside a mosque. The bomber, Muhammad Syarif, 32 years old, carried it into prayers, strapped to his body. It killed him instantly and seriously injured the local head of police, along with dozens who were praying with him.

These terror attacks awakened many Indonesians to the fact that Islamist radicals and terrorists are still hard at work, even though state authorities have killed their leaders. Questions then emerge such as with which group are these new terrorists affiliated, and from where do they get support? The International Crisis Group (ICG) reported in April 2011 that Islamist terrorists have changed their strategy from working in large groups to smaller groups, or even operating individually. According to the ICG, this is due to ideological shifts that favor individual action and targeted small-scale killings, rather than less-focused mass casualties.

The revelation that most of the terrorists are young Indonesian Muslims also upset many. The book bombs and the Serpong bomb were invented and designed by a group of young Indonesian Muslims suspected of association with NII (Negara Islam Indonesia or Indonesian Islamic State). They were led by Pepi Fernando.

Pepi graduated from the State Islamic University (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and worked at a production house. At least two other members of Pepi’s group were affiliated with UIN Jakarta. Pepi was a former student of the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Education at UIN in 2002. Earlier in October 2009, three students of UIN Jakarta were arrested as they provided shelter to the fugitive terrorist suspect, Saifuddin Zuhri (The Jakarta Post, April 26, 2011).

The fact some of the book bombers were graduates or current students of UIN Jakarta shocked many of us who work there. Many Indonesians wondered how a modern Islamic higher educational institution such as UIN Jakarta can turn someone into a terrorist or a radical. They were perplexed, because they have long seen UIN Jakarta (previously the Jakarta IAIN State Institute for Islamic Studies) as the Islamic educational institution that pioneered inclusive and pluralist methodologies for the teaching of Islamic subjects such as Islamic law, Islamic theology and Islamic philosophy. As a result, conservative Indonesian Muslims have traditionally seen UIN Jakarta as a beacon of liberal Islam, and a place that supports ‘deviant’ Islamic teachings. This is because many of IAIN graduates are known for their pluralist and liberal views and support for so-called ‘Western’ values such as democracy, religious pluralism, religious freedom, inter-religious marriage and women’s rights.

Many UIN/IAIN graduates are Muslim thinkers of national standing. They include the late Professor Harun Nasution, who introduced pluralist methodology in understanding Islamic thought, and the late Nurulcholish Majid, who in the 1970s called for Islam not to be used as political ideology. In more recent times, other prominent national leaders have also been professors at UIN Jakarta, such as Professor Azymandari Azra, our former Rector, and Professor Din Syamsuddin, the Chairman of Muhammadiyah, the second largest Muslim-mass based organization in Indonesia. Many other UIN/IAIN Jakarta graduates are also famous for their community development activities, such as Professor Musdah Mulia and Lies Marcoes, who have both promoted gender equality to traditional Muslim communities.

The latest developments have therefore created bewilderment among moderate Indonesian Muslims. How UIN students and graduates can be influenced by conservative ideas to accept radical understandings of Islam has now become a national issue. This had led people to ask whether it has something to do with UIN academic curricula.

3 NII is believed to be a continuation of the Darul Islam movement of the 1950s, which aimed to turn Indonesia into an Islamic State. The NII has been accused of kidnapping to recruit new followers. See also Chaedar, AI 1999, Politik Proklamator Negara Islam Indonesia S.M. Kartosuwirjo: Fakta dan Data Sejarah Darul Islam, Jakarta: Darul Falah.
In fact, many Indonesian and foreign observers have paid great attention to Islamic curricula in Indonesia since soon after the Bali Bombings in 2002, particularly in pesantren and madrasah. This derived from the fact that many of those involved in these attacks were graduates of traditional Islamic educational institutions. UIN Jakarta played a significant role at that time in assessing curricula because it was seen as a moderate Islamic higher educational institution. Working with the Ministry of Religion and various foreign research institutions, UIN helped review madrasah and pesantren curricula while also helping introduce new subjects such as civic education, democracy and good governance for pesantren and madrasah students.

Many have argued, however, that most pesantren and madrasah do not, in fact, disseminate radicalism, including a Professor of Sociology from the State Islamic University in Bandung (Kompas, April 26, 2011). In addition, Woodward et.al (2010) argue that there is not enough evidence to say that traditional Islamic educational institutions such as pesantren are incubators of radicalism, since the majority of these institutions are owned by the two mainstream Muslim mass-based organizations, Muhammadiyah and NU, which are generally moderate.

Following the debate on whether Islamic educational institutions are responsible for disseminating radical interpretation of Islam and conservatism, a research institution based in Jakarta, LAKIP, Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Perdamaian (Research Institution on Islam and Peace) conducted a survey of religious instruction in schools. This was carried out at the end of 2010 in ten areas surrounding Jakarta. It found that more than 50 per cent of high school students agree to the use of violence if it is done on behalf of Islam. The survey also found that teachers at high schools likewise support the use of violence, but suggests that this radical tendency among students and teachers is not driven by how religious instruction is taught in schools. Rather, students and teachers were inspired to support radicalism because of information obtained from social media accessed on the Internet and social interaction with the wider community.

In a press release posted on the UIN Website, the Rector of UIN Jakarta, Professor Komaruddin Hidayat, has guaranteed that there is no element in any part of the UIN curricula that teaches students to be radical and to support violence. Professor Hidayat argued that the fact that some UIN’s students join Islamist terrorist networks should not be seen merely as the result of the teaching process at UIN. According to him, it is unfair to say that what happened to Pepi Fernando and other UIN students represents a failure by UIN in educating moderate and inclusive Muslims. He said this development has to be seen in the broader context of Indonesia’s socio-economic, religious and political problems. He also argued that UIN’s students are no different to students at other universities. They are not immune to infiltration of any ideology since they are social beings and part of a larger community which is currently experiencing huge socio-religious transformation. He believed that the penetration of radicalism and conservatism seen at UIN has also taken place in other educational institutions in Indonesia. However, he also admitted that the lesson has been learned that it is no longer safe to think of UIN Jakarta as exempt from penetration by radical ideology.

The important question now is how UIN, as an institution, can respond to this and what steps have been taken to address this problem. To answer this, I begin by briefly discussing UIN’s socio-religious position as an Islamic educational institution in the wider context of Indonesia’s education system.

From IAIN to UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta

As an Islamic higher educational institution, the development of UIN Jakarta cannot be separated from Indonesia’s wider socio-economic and political transformation since independence in 1945. Over that time it has made significant contributions to the nation’s development.

The UIN Jakarta was named after the prominent Islamic preacher who introduced Islam in West Java, Syarif Hidayatullah. It was first established in 1957 under the name of ADIA (Akademi Dinas Ilmu Agama, The Academy for Islamic Studies). The establishment of this institution was driven by the government’s practical need for Islamic teachers to teach Islam at both public and private schools at that time. ADIA offered three departments, the Department of Islamic Education, the Department of Arabic Literature and the Department of Islamic Proselytization. Graduates of ADIA were recruited by the Ministry of Religion to become teachers and to work as government officers in the Ministry. As need for graduates with Islamic studies backgrounds increased in the 1960s, ADIA became the State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN).

As an IAIN, it offered more disciplines in Islamic studies: the Faculty of Islamic Education (Tarbiyah), Faculty of Islamic Law (Syar’iah), Faculty of Islamic History and Literature (Adab), Faculty of Islamic Theology and Philosophy (Ushul ad diin), and the Faculty of Islamic Proselytisation (Dakwah). Graduates of IAIN were mostly recruited by Ministry of Religion to fill various professional positions as judges in the Islamic courts, teachers in pesantren and madrasah, and as Islamic preachers (da’i). Students at IAIN were mostly graduates from pesantren and madrasah, traditional Islamic educational institutions mostly located in the rural areas. After graduation, these alumni returned to their community or their pesantren and madrasah, or became teachers in their villages. This was one of IAIN’s real contributions to Indonesian community development.

The Jakarta IAIN developed into a modern Islamic higher educational institution in the early 1970s, when it started to introduce western social methodology in understanding Islamic knowledge. The Minister of Religion at this time was Dr. Mukti Ali, a modernist scholar and graduate of McGill University in Canada, who worked as Professor at the Yogyakarta IAIN. He introduced a series of initiatives designed to modernize Islamic educational institutions, including IAIN (Hefner et al, 2006: 186, Jamhari and Jabali 2002) through a collaborative project with McGill University, under ICIHEP, the Indonesia-Canada Islamic Higher Education Project, which was supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). This program allowed graduates and lecturers of IAIN to go to McGill University to pursue their graduate degree. Until 2002, the program successfully produced about ninety Masters and Doctors (Jamhari and Jabali 2002, viii). Before the program was introduced, graduates and lecturers of IAIN had mainly travelled to the Middle East — especially Saudi Arabia and Egypt — to pursue their graduate degrees.

The ICIHEP program enabled IAIN to combine both the Islamic and western
methodologies in understanding Islamic knowledge. A number of IAIN graduates gained their graduate degrees from universities in the United States, including the late Professor Nurcholis Madjid; Professor Din Syamsuddin, the current Muhammadiyah Chairman; Professor Azyumardi Azra, the former Rector of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta; and prominent historians and political analysts, including Professor Bahtiar Effendy, among others. The fact that many of these Professors gained their degrees from Western universities led to accusations that IAIN has become the beacon of liberal Islam in Indonesia.

Professor Harun Nasution was one of the influential academics at IAIN who pioneered academic transformation of IAIN curricula. In the 1970s, he introduced a new perspective in understanding Islamic thought. He called for a move to a pluralistic approach to Islam, writing a book, that later became a major textbook read by many IAIN students, titled 'Islam diinjau dari Berbagai Aspek' or 'Islam Seen through Various Aspects'. His approach to Islam was a breakthrough in the study of Islam in Indonesia, and it later inspired many Indonesian Muslim thinkers to adopt a pluralistic understanding of Islam. He conveyed the message that through a pluralist understanding of Islam, Indonesian Muslims could eventually accept and respect differences among religious followers in Indonesia.

Harun Nasution’s concept of pluralist Islam influenced many of IAIN's students, making them moderate, tolerant and pluralist. According to Dr. Saiful Mujani, the current Executive Director of Indonesia Survey Institute (LSI, Lembaga Survey Indonesia), another alumni of IAIN, UIN should introduce the teachings of Naution to all students, so they will accept his approach to understanding Islam. His book should be read not only by students studying at the Islamic Faculties but also by those studying at the Faculties of Medicine, Economics and Science and Technology (Personal communication, September 2010).

The transformation of IAIN to become a UIN began in the early 2000s when Professor Azyumardi Azra initiated plans to transform IAIN to a full-fledged university. Being a University meant that UIN would no longer offer only Islamic studies but also social and natural sciences. As Indonesians became more religious, he believed more Indonesian Muslim families would expect their children to become pious Muslims but at the same time succeeding in ‘secular’ and professional careers as engineers, medical practitioners, accountants, lawyers and others. This was not possible if Islamic educational institutions offered only religious studies. This inspired Professor Azra to transform the IAIN into an UIN.

The Jakarta UIN now has ten faculties and a Graduate School. The faculties include the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Education, Faculty of History and Humanities, Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, Faculty of Syariah and Law, Faculty of Islamic Proselytisation and Communication, Faculty of Dirasat Islamiyah, Faculty of Psychology, Faculty of Economic and Social sciences, Faculty of Science and Technology, Faculty of Medicine and Nursing, and the graduate schools. There are about twenty thousand students currently enrolled.

The transformation has led to demographic and institutional changes at UIN, which I believe have contributed to recent developments. First, students studying at UIN are no longer only graduates of pesantren and madrasah, but also include graduates of other public and secular schools, such as SMA (State Senior High Schools). Students at UIN are therefore no longer possessed of a uniform level of basic religious understanding, as in the past. Graduates from pesantren and madrasah have a better understanding, for example, of Qur’anic exegesis and the history of Islam. Some pesantrens also teach Comparative Religion to their students. With this background, these students are not easily influenced by radical teachings, which often use Qur’anic verses to justify their claims. On the other hand, students from secular SMA schools are not equipped with similar religious skills and understanding, and so are more easily influenced by radical teachings that penetrate campus life through student organizations (Woodward et.al, 2010).

Second, students at UIN now come from more diverse socio-economic backgrounds. They are no longer dominated by those from low income and village-based families. Many middle-class and secular Indonesian Muslims who live in urban areas across Indonesia are also interested in sending their children to study at UIN. They choose to study at the Faculties of Medicine; Economics and Social Sciences; Science and Technology; and Psychology. Students who are not graduates of pesantren and madrasah are required to take Islamic subjects such as Ibadah (worship) Practice, Arabic, Qira‘at and some others. It is argued that students who came from secular backgrounds are often excited to learn about Islam, making them vulnerable to radical influence. In fact, some join Islamic organisations in order to be able to learn more about Islam than they can in class.

Third, UIN is challenged by the fact that it cannot expect academics working at UIN to have mainstream understandings of Islam. In the past, the religiosity or religious affiliations of academics at IAIN could be easily identified, since most belonged to one or another of the mainstream Islamic organisations of Nahdhatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah or Persis. With more Faculties and the number of academics increasing, their diversity increases as well. It cannot be expected that all will have similar understanding of Islam.

Fourth, since students at UIN now come from different socio-religious and economic backgrounds, their preferences regarding student activities are also varied and they have a greater choice of organisations to join. When it was still an IAIN, students were mostly divided into just three socio-religious organizations: the Indonesian Muslim Students Association (HMI, Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam), a moderate Muslim organisation; the Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah, or Muhammadiyah Students Association, which is affiliated to the second largest Muslim mass-based organisation in Indonesia; and PMII (Perhimpunan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia), the Muslim Indonesian Students Association, which belongs to Nahdhatul Ulama, the largest Muslim mass-based association.

With Indonesia’s political democratization, hard-line organisations such as the Front Pembela Islam, Hizbut Tahrir, and others have now penetrated campus life. In fact, a large range of conservative organisations seek to obtain followers from among students at UIN, for example, the Lembaga Dakwah Kampus or LDK (Campus Predication Association), Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia or KAMMI (the Indonesian
Muslim Students Action Union), among many others. Having all these organisations on campus provides students with more choices for social and religious affiliation.

Professor Baharir Effendy and Dr. Hendro Prasetyo, the Dean and Vice Dean of Faculty of Social and Political Sciences (FISIP), recently conducted a survey of UIN students' religious intolerance and radicalism. To measure their tendency to support and sympathise with radicalism, the survey asks students questions such about their familiarity with radical Muslim leaders such as Abu Bakar Baasyir; Habib Rizieq, the leader of the Islamic Defenders Front; and Kartosuwiryo, the leader of the Darul Islam movement in the 1950s. It found that 94.2 per cent of students are familiar with Abu Bakar Baasyir; 82.1 per cent know about Habib Rizieq; and 40.9 per cent are familiar with Kartosuwiryo. The students claimed to know about these radical leaders from various sources, including the media and books, but the survey did not elaborate whether the students also understand the radical teachings these Muslim leaders have propagated. Despite this, about ten to eleven per cent of students surveyed said that although they may not really understand their teachings, they would nonetheless be willing to follow the instructions of these radical leaders. This number is still far smaller than the huge majority of students who reject radical teachings but Dr Prasetyo argues their presence on campus is still an alarming development. He says that terrorist networks and radical groups have always relied on a small number of people. They do not require many to voluntarily become suicide bombers, for example, to cause great damage. In addition, Professor Effendy and Dr Prasetyo believe that although the numbers of students affiliated with the mainstream moderate student organisations is still much greater, radical groups are more pro-active in recruiting new members than the moderate ones.

In terms of the activity of radical and hard line groups recruiting followers on campus, the survey found about 12.7 per cent of the respondents said they had been approached by Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, about 8.6 per cent by NII and about 6.5 per cent by FPI. Interestingly, UIN students did not see a need to hide their support or sympathy for radical and hard line groups from their friends. Many of the respondents claimed to know friends who had become members of a radical group. The survey indicates about 37.9 per cent of the respondents knew friends who are members of HTI, about 17.5 per cent of students knew members of NII and about 20.8 per cent knew members of FPI. Another alarming development revealed by this survey is the level of religious intolerance among students. The survey asked four questions about whether students would be willing to join activities conducted by radical groups such as FPI. Between 20 to 25 per cent are willing to join FPI in conducting raids on foreigners who ‘hate Islam’. The same number are willing to attack nightclubs, brothels and gambling places. In addition, between 8 to 11 per cent of students are willing to attack churches and Ahmadiyah mosques. This is a serious issue that needs to be addressed, not only by UIN but also the Ministry of Religion and moderate Islamic mass-organisations.

In response, UIN officials have initiated support to revitalize the compulsory Civic Education subject, and are considering introducing more Islamic subjects to students, emphasising pluralist understandings of Islamic knowledge and the study of comparative religion.

Conclusion

Lindsey (2011) rightly argues that even though they have always been only a small minority amongst the majority of moderate Indonesian Muslims, hard line and terrorist activists will continue to haunt Indonesia's new democracy. These groups will continue their efforts to achieve their agenda of enforcing and promoting conservative interpretations of Islam. They use various means from democratic action to violence. Although the results of Indonesia's recent two democratic general elections show that support for Islamic parties is in steady decline, there have been many sharia-based regional regulations enacted to regulate people's religiosity, including how women should dress and the consumption of alcohol. In the Depok Municipality, for example, the Mayor recently introduced a new policy that requires all Muslim households to turn off television during the evening prayer and parents to make their children to read the Qur'an.

All in all, one might consider Indonesian Muslims to be moving towards a more conservative position, since Islam is now much more visible in public in various cultural symbols. For example, more women now voluntarily wear headscarves and Muslim dress, making Muslim costume a fashion industry. More men and women now prefer reading Islamic fiction and watching Islamic movies and soap opera on television, or live in Islamic real estate complexes and send their children to Islamic schools.

In line with this, hard-line and radical groups continue trying to win new followers, using means that target Indonesia's youth. As mentioned, many terrorists are very young, and willing to do anything, including killing themselves. As to why this is, Indonesian Muslim leaders and analysts are divided. Some agree that theological elements are the main factors behind the willingness of young Muslims to join terror groups. They are indoctrinated in the belief that to die in the name of Islam will send them to heaven. Others, however, see it as a manifestation of wider influences such as economic difficulties that make these young people desperate about their future.

Despite these developments, I am confident that Indonesian moderate Islam will still win public debates over issues such as whether Islam should be the state's ideology and to what extent Islam should form part of Indonesian public cultural identity. To do this, it is important to empower moderate Muslins. UIN Jakarta along with other UIN/IAIN/STAIN across Indonesia should be considered important in promoting a pluralist, moderate and tolerant Islam. In addition, the increasing rise of Islam in public sphere should be seen as the positive result of democracy. It is democracy that has allowed Indonesian Muslims to express their beliefs, even if some of them have sadly decided to do so through violence and radicalism.
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