



INDONESIA

Quick Facts

Population: 260,580,739 (July 2017 est.)

Area: 1,904,569 sq km

Ethnic Groups: Javanese 40.1%, Sundanese 15.5%, Malay 3.7%, Batak 3.6%, Madurese 3%, Betawi 2.9%, Minangkabau 2.7%, Buginese 2.7%, Bantenese 2%, Banjarese 1.7%, Balinese 1.7%, Acehnese 1.4%, Dayak 1.4%, Sasak 1.3%, Chinese 1.2%, other 15% (2010 est.)

GDP (official exchange rate): \$923.3 billion (2016 est.)

Source: CIA World FactBook (Last Updated July 2018)

INTRODUCTION

The world's largest Muslim population lives not in the Middle East, but in Southeast Asia. Out of Indonesia's population of 266 million people, some 232 million—or just over 87 percent—is Muslim.¹ Indonesia is the largest Muslim-majority democracy in the world. Furthermore, Indonesia is also one of the most pluralistic societies in the world in terms of the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious affiliations of its population. Much of this diversity is attributable to the country's geography, with the Indonesian archipelago consisting of more than 17,800 islands and islets.

The Indonesian government officially recognizes only five religions—Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. The pluralism of the archipelago has meant that Indonesia has been given to conflict and pogroms for much of its history, but from 1966 on this was largely contained by the repressive authoritarian regime of former Indonesian President Suharto. The end of Suharto's thirty-two year rule in 1998 resulted in intense jockeying for newfound political space in Indonesia on the part of various social and political groups and organizations, including Muslims.

In Indonesia, Islamism is not a monolithic phenomenon.² While the virulent brand of Islamist activism epitomized by the ideology and agenda of both jihadi and paramilitary groups is undoubtedly a feature of the broader social-political terrain in post-Suharto Indonesia, they form but a small faction of the wider Muslim community. And while trends of religious conservatism are clearly evident in the country's social and cultural sphere in recent years, this has not translated into significant support for the Islamist agenda of implementing Islamic law and creating an Islamic state.

ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

Indonesia won its independence from the Dutch in 1945. Since then, the nation been divided over the legal status of Islam in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious state. Issues such as incorporating sharia into the Indonesian Constitution and the establishment of an Islamic state are still hotly contested, but some Islamic political parties have attempted to adopt a more inclusive political agenda. These groups promote

a pluralistic ideology and focus on the implementation of universal Islamic values. Outside the arena of party politics, there has also been a proliferation of Muslim civil society groups that are contributing to the cacophonous debate over the role and place of Islam in contemporary Indonesia. While many of these groups adopt a more pluralist and accommodative approach, some have taken to propounding more rigid and uncompromising positions on the extent to which Islam endorses pluralism.

Political Parties

Partai Keadilan Sejahtera – PKS (“Prosperous Justice Party”)

PKS is the most organized of all of Indonesian Islamist parties, with some 400,000 carefully selected and well-trained cadres. It has also cultivated an image of collective decision-making in which no individual leader stands out. Additionally, PKS has successfully contained its internal differences and prevented public schisms. The party is popular with the modernist Islamic constituency, especially among students and educated middle-class Muslims. Apart from representing its members’ aspirations in parliament and engaging in tarbiyah (educational) activities, PKS provides public services. For example, PKS set up a Pos Keadilan (“Justice Post”) from which its members could provide assistance to affected communities in ethnic/religious conflicts or natural disasters. In December 1999, a year after PKS’s official founding, its social services were institutionalized into the Pos Keadilan Peduli Umat (Justice Post Concerning Muslim Society), and expanded to include assistance to farmers in selling their underpriced crops.³

PKS was originally founded in July 1998. The party emerged from the 1980s organization known as Lembaga Da’wah Kampus (LDK), or “University Students’ Body for Islamic Predication.”⁴ LDK formed partially in response to the suppression of student movements in the late 1970s. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and its dawah (proselytization) activities in mosques also inspired radical Muslim students in the LDK. The LDK is also linked to the Brotherhood’s educational system. By the early 1980s, LDK had expanded into a large organization and its alumni subsequently entered the political arena.⁵ Eventually, those alumni established the PKS.

In Indonesia’s 2004 elections, PKS secured 7.3 percent of votes, and 45 out of 550 seats, in the country’s parliament, making it the only Islamic party to improve its position since the previous election. The party then retained a similar level of popular support in the 2009 elections. PKS’s success over time has in part been due to a political agenda that emphasized not the implementation of sharia or the creation of an Islamic state, but the broadly popular theme of “clean and caring government” in opposition to incumbent parties—both Islamist and secularist—that were widely perceived by voters to be corrupt and elitist.⁶ Nonetheless, PKS is still considered a religious party, with its primary focus the promotion of Islamic values.

The powerful tarbiyah movement found in secular state universities is essential for the group’s success.⁷ Campus activism is one of the main conduits of Islamic political communication in Indonesia. That activism is also in line with the party’s advocacy for a transformation of society. The tarbiyah movement engages its members through hundreds of regular gatherings, sometimes on a weekly basis. These meetings are not only attended by the upper echelons of the party, but also by ordinary people. Often, these meetings do not even focus on significant political issues, but rather on religion and religious understanding. Furthermore, these meetings become catalysts for member interaction, establishing party discipline and helping new recruitment. This level of regular contact gives PKS easy, meaningful access to thousands of its followers. Given this extensive political machinery, PKS is well placed to mobilize members quickly during election times.

The image of PKS as a clean party, free of corruption, has in recent years been undermined by several controversies. This includes the imprisonment of PKS lawmaker Muhammad Misbakhun for fraud and the resignation of another PKS lawmaker, Arifinto, for watching pornography during a parliamentary session. In addition to these internal crises, PKS lost influence in the ruling coalition in 2011 when President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono replaced the party’s research and technology minister, Suharno

Surapranata, with environment minister Gusti Muhammad Hatta as part of a cabinet reshuffle. The move was purportedly a response to the Islamist party's departure from coalition positions on policy issues. Subsequently, in February 2013, party president Luthfi Hasan Ishaq was detained on corruption charges in a move that shocked the party membership. He was jailed for sixteen years.

Despite these controversies, however, the party suffered only a one percent dip in support in the subsequent April 2014 parliamentary elections. Analysts have argued that strong campaigning, particularly by secretary-general Anis Matta, as well as efficient party machinery, helped to contain the fallout from these corruption cases.

Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa – PKB (“National Awakening Party”)

The PKB, whose stronghold lies in East Java, was established specifically to contest parliamentary elections in June 1999 in the wake of the political downfall of former president Suharto the preceding May. It was established as the political arm of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), a rural-based Islamic organization with an estimated membership of fifty million with a liberal pluralist agenda that withdrew from active politics in 1984. Chaired by Matori Abdul Djilil, its effective leader was Abdurrahman Wahid, who headed the NU. In the election of June 1999, it secured third place with 17.4 percent of the vote and fifty-one out of 462 electoral seats, behind Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan and Partai Golongan Karya (Golkar). Following the election, Abdurrahman Wahid was elected party president by the People's Consultative Assembly. The PKB has, however, been unable to sustain its momentum, managing to secure only 10.5 percent of the votes in 2004 and just five percent in 2009, fifty-two seats and twenty-eight seats respectively. These poor performances can be attributed to internal conflicts and intra-family disputes arising from Abdurrahman Wahid's decision to sack a string of party chairmen, including his own nephew.

The party experienced a change in fortunes when Rusdi Kirana, a successful non-Muslim businessman and owner of Indonesia's largest airline, Lion Air, joined the party and became deputy chairman. Later, the chairman of the NU, Said Agil Siraj, openly endorsed the party during its 2014 campaign. In the 2014 election, the PKB proved to be the most successful of the Islamic parties, securing about nine percent of the vote due to its strengthened relations with the NU and strong campaign funding.

Partai Bulan Bintang – PBB (“Crescent Star Party”)

The PBB, which claims to be the descendant of Masyumi, the largest Islamic party of the 1950s, was founded in July 1998. Masyumi had been banned in the 1960s by President Sukarno, and its leaders were jailed. After they were released, former Masyumi leaders decided to establish the DDII (Dewan Da'wah Islamiyah Indonesia) to maintain its members and leadership networks, as well as to insulate themselves from further political gridlock and turbulence. The DDII is a modernist Islamic organization and has close relations with other similar bodies such as the Muhammadiyah and Persis.⁸ The PBB was eventually formed from this collective.

As heir to the Masyumi legacy, PBB espouses a classic Islamist political agenda including the introduction of elements of sharia into the Constitution. Both the PBB and PPP (elaborated below) advocated the formal introduction of sharia into the constitution in the 2002 annual session of the People's Consultative Assembly. In the 2004 elections, the party garnered 2.6 percent of votes, a slight increase from its previous performance in the 1999 elections. However, in 2009, the party won only 1.8 percent, failing to meet the mandated 2.5 percent legislative threshold and losing its seats in the People's Representative Council. The marginal support for the party was again evident during the 2014 elections, when it garnered a mere 1.5 percent of the vote.

Partai Persatuan Pembangunan – PPP (“United Development Party”)

The PPP emerged from a merger of four Islamic parties during Suharto's reign in 1973, and was one of the three legal parties during the New Order. From 1973-1998, the PPP was politically neutered, but

remained the medium for the expression of Islamic concerns within the regime. While the PPP never posed a serious threat to the then-incumbent Golkar party, it defeated Golkar in strongly Islamic provinces such as Aceh and occasionally posed a serious challenge to Golkar's electoral dominance in West Sumatra, South Sumatra, East Java and South Kalimantan. The PPP's status as the main opposition party ended when Abdurrahman Wahid withdrew the NU from the party in 1984, which meant the loss of 30 million votes. Most NU leaders resigned after this turn of events.

The party's share of votes has declined drastically over the years, with its popularity dropping by more than two percent (to 8.2 percent of votes) in 2004 as compared to its performance in the 1999 elections.⁹ In 2009, the party's share dropped further still, to 5.3 percent of votes, earning it just 37 seats in the People's Representative Council. Its popularity improved marginally in 2014, when it secured 6.5 percent of the votes due to strong patronage ties with Religious Affairs Minister Suryadharma Ali and Public Housing Minister Djan Faridz. Worthy of note is the fact that the PPP has managed to endure the transition from a regime-sponsored party to a democratic party after 1998 because it retained some standing as a voice of Islamic interests and because of the continued involvement of a range of both modernist and traditionalist Islamic leaders who had participated in the party during the Suharto era.¹⁰

Like the PKS and PBB, the PPP officially states that its ideological basis is Islam. The PBB, PPP, and PKS all share similar perspectives on sharia, but differ on the means by which to pursue their aims. The PKS does not focus on the formal adoption of sharia, but the PBB and PPP advocate amending the Indonesian Constitution to incorporate the principles of Islamic jurisprudence.

Radical Islamist Groups

Front Pembela Islam – FPI (“Front of the Defenders of Islam”)

The Front Pembela Islam (FPI) was founded by Muhammad Rizieq Syihab, a young man of Hadrami descent born into a family of sayyids (reputed descendants of the Prophet Muhammad).¹¹ Sometimes mistakenly characterized as a Salafi group, FPI is actually Sufi in orientation. Before establishing FPI, Syihab was a prominent religious preacher in addition to being a religious teacher in an Islamic school in Central Jakarta.¹² Laskar Pembela Islam (LPI), the paramilitary division of FPI, was a loosely organized entity with an open membership.¹³ The majority of its members were from mosque youth associations and a number of Islamic schools (madrassas) in Jakarta. Other members, particularly among the rank and file, were simply unemployed youths, including those from the notorious preman (thug) groups, whose motivation in joining was economic reward for carrying out militant actions. Members were indoctrinated by Syihab, who taught that they should “live nobly, or better, die in holy war as a martyr.”¹⁴ LPI eventually succeeded in expanding its network to cities outside Jakarta. It claims to have established eighteen provincial and more than fifty district branches with tens of thousands of sympathizers throughout the country.¹⁵

LPI first made its presence felt on the national stage in a mass demonstration on August 17, 1998, where it denounced Megawati Soekarnoputri's presidential candidacy. In line with its puritanical ideological beliefs, it became “the most active group in conducting what it called razia maksiat (raids on vice)” to assert its political demands more visibly.¹⁶ Moreover, the group demanded that the government abrogate the policy of *asas tunggal* (“sole foundation”) which required all political and social organizations to accept the longstanding ideology of the state, Pancasila.¹⁷ In addition, the group rallied support for the adoption of the Jakarta Charter, which would have given Islamic law constitutional status. On one occasion, the group also reportedly ransacked the offices of the National Human Rights Commission, which it felt “had not been objective in its investigation of the Tanjung Priok massacre (where the army had shot hundreds of Muslim demonstrators).”¹⁸ In addition, the FPI also threatened Americans in Indonesia, apparently in retaliation for the United States' attack on the Taliban in Afghanistan.¹⁹

In 2016, FPI was at the forefront of protests against Jakarta gubernatorial candidate Basuki “Ahok” Tjahaja Purnama for the alleged crime of blasphemy. These protests culminated in two rallies in Jakarta

which took place on November 4th and December 2nd. The first rally was attended by between 150,000 to 250,000 people, while the second was much larger, with attendance estimated at 500,000 to 750,000.²⁰ The successful mobilization against Ahok is believed to have contributed to his eventual defeat at the gubernatorial election, as well as his subsequent conviction in May 2017 for the crime. Syihab himself has since come under the spotlight as the Indonesian police sought to question him for a case involving pornography.

Laskar Jihad – LJ (“Holy War Force”)

LJ first captured the attention of the public in early 2000. It mobilized in response to purported Christian violence against Muslims in the Moluccas, an archipelago within Indonesia, and the apparent inability of the Indonesian central government to protect local Muslims. The LJ was a paramilitary group established by Ja’far Umar Thalib and leading Salafi personalities such as Muhammad Umar As-Sewed, Ayip Syafruddin and Ma’ruf Bahrun.

Before its militant turn in 2000, LJ had mostly been an apolitical and quietist movement, though it was influenced by puritanical Wahhabi Salafism.²¹ Many of its members were educated and were at some point part of campus Islamic student movements, or had been in surreptitious contact with Darul Islam, an Islamist militant group (discussed in further detail below). They had come under the charismatic influence of Thalib, who had spent years studying in conservative and radical circles in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, after which he had been dispatched to Afghanistan to take part in jihad.²² It is widely known that from 1994 to 1999, the cadres of LJ contented themselves with teaching and preaching Wahhabi Islam. However, it was the conflict in the Moluccas, alluded to earlier, that propelled them into radical activism and violence. Shortly after the conflict started, the group established a training camp in West Java and was dispatching thousands of its members to the Moluccas, both as relief workers as well as fighters.²³

Modelled after a military organization, LJ consisted of “one brigade divided into battalions, companies, platoons, teams and one intelligence section.”²⁴ As its symbol, the group adopted the image of two crossed sabres under the words of their creed: “La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammad Rasul Allah” (there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger).²⁵

In terms of its doctrinal positions, LJ dismisses man-made laws in favor of its own interpretation of sharia. It rejects notions of democracy and popular sovereignty, maintaining that they fundamentally contradict the teachings of Islam. The group was also outspoken in its condemnation of Megawati Sukarnoputri’s presidency on the grounds that she was a woman. Although the organization claims that it is not interested in politics – and specifically, in replacing the current regime with an Islamic state – during the height of its activism, LJ repeatedly instigated violent street riots, often claiming to do so in the pursuit of sharia. Other acts of violence included attacks on cafes, brothels, gambling dens and other places, which they considered representations of vice.

In the aftermath of the Bali bombings of October 2002, public opinion swung decidedly away from these local paramilitary groups as Indonesian Muslims expressed outrage at the targeting of co-religionists. At the same time, their patrons from the security services withdrew support and endorsement because of international attention. Both FPI and LJ were quickly disbanded.

Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia – MMI (“Jihad Fighter Group of Indonesia”)

The MMI “places a different emphasis on sharia discourse than does LJ and FPI, associating it with the Jakarta Charter and the historical struggle of the Darul Islam movement” (described below).²⁶ It appears to be a front for various groups that have some relation to the Darul Islam. The group’s key organizer is Irfan S. Awwas, and its chief religious authority is Abu Bakar Ba’asyir.

Of the militant organizations that have become active during the post-New Order era in Indonesia, the MMI is arguably one of the oldest. According to observers, “it is a loose alliance of a dozen minor Muslim paramilitary organizations that had been scattered among cities such as Solo, Yogyakarta, Kebumen,

Purwokerto, Tasikmalaya and Makassar. Notable member groups are Laskar Santri (Muslim Student Paramilitary Force), Laskar Jundullah (God's Army Paramilitary Force), Kompi Badar (Badr Company), Brigade Taliban (Taliban Brigade), Corps Hizbullah Divisi Sunan Bonang (God's Party Corps of the Sunan Bonang Division), Front Pembela Islam Surakarta (Front of the Defenders of Islam of Surakarta/FPIS) and Pasukan Komando Mujahidin (Holy Warrior Command Force)."²⁷

MMI members continue to lobby for the incorporation of sharia into the country's constitution, particularly at the local and regional level in former Darul Islam strongholds. One of the MMI's main objectives is to establish an Islamic khilafah (caliphate). MMI has also been active in making calls for jihad, particularly in the Moluccas and other troubled spots. In contrast to the large-scale mobilization of LJ, however, MMI has preferred to operate in small units that are well trained and armed. On June 12, 2017, the U.S. Department of State formally designated MMI a terrorist organization under Executive Order 13224.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir ("Party of Liberation")

Hizb-ut Tahrir (HuT) is a political organization founded in 1952 in Lebanon by Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani.²⁸ It is unclear when HuT came to Indonesia, but some scholars trace the organization's presence as far back as the 1970s. In Indonesia, the party is commonly known Hizb-ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). Before the fall of Suharto's regime, HTI remained underground, moving from one mosque to another. It avoided any documentation or public coverage that might reveal its existence and activities. Therefore, HTI's presence was largely unknown until President Suharto stepped down. During the subsequent era of Reformasi (political reform), however, the group made its appearance through several public rallies. But, for fear of prosecution, HTI has never revealed the identity of the leader of its Indonesian branch. Its public representative, Ismail Yusanto, claims that he is just the group's spokesperson.

HTI advocates the implementation of sharia in Indonesian culture, viewing Islam as not just a religion but also a political system and way of life.²⁹ Like the MMI, its most important objective is to establish an Islamic khilafah.³⁰ The group also espouses the promulgation of one global government for all Muslims. It is not surprising, therefore, that this group rejects the idea of nationalism or the nation-state. At present, HTI is arguably one of the fastest growing Islamic movements in Indonesia with strong presence in the Islamic state university campuses across Indonesia. Unofficial estimates place its membership at one million,³¹ and the organization has been drawing new members from the younger rank and file of established Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah. The growing popularity of HTI has led the Indonesia government to initiate legal proceedings that could lead to the prohibition of the movement.³² On 10 July 2017, President Joko Widodo signed a proposed amendment to the 2013 Law on Mass Organisations which would allow the state to ban any social or political group that did not pledge allegiance to the state ideology of Pancasila. The underlying concern however, was the ability of HTI to mobilise mass support, as was evident in its role in fomenting mass protest against Jakarta gubernatorial election candidate Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) in late 2016 and early 2017.³³

Darul Islam and Jemaah Islamiyah

The Darul Islam movement, led by S. M. Kartosoewirjo, first emerged in the mid-1940s in West Java as part of the broader armed anti-colonial movement against Dutch reoccupation after the Second World War. Kartosoewirjo declared the formation of an Indonesian Islamic State Negara Islam Indonesia (NII) based on sharia in 1949. At the same time, armed elements from the Darul Islam movement launched insurgency operations against the newly formed Indonesian Republic, which Kartosoewirjo viewed as a betrayal of the anti-colonial enterprise. By 1954, the movement had spread to Central Java, Aceh, South Sulawesi, and South Kalimantan, posing a serious internal security threat. A combination of military campaigns and offers of amnesty to Darul Islam members, however, gradually eroded the influence of the movement.³⁴

The collapse of the Darul Islam Movement did not signal the end of Islamist extremism. Rather, it forced those extremist forces to evolve and take on a different, more clandestine form. In 1993, a new and more lethal extremist movement known as al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah – commonly referred to as Jemaah Islamiyah, or JI – was founded by two former Darul Islam leaders, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir. JI saw itself as the heir of Darul Islam, although it sought to achieve the goal of an Islamic state through more militant means, including the deliberate targeting of civilians. Many prominent members of JI were veterans of the jihad against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan during the 1980s, and had been recruited through Darul Islam channels.³⁵ The Bali bombings of October 2002, however, proved to be a watershed for JI, sparking an internal debate over the issue of the killing of Muslims and whether the organization should focus its immediate attention on proselytization rather than bombings in order to advance its goals.

Together with a crackdown by Indonesian security forces, this schism eventually forced a split in JI, with a hardline faction led by two key Malaysian leaders—Noordin Top and Azahari Husin—breaking away from the main organization and continuing a reign of terror with the JW Marriott Hotel in Jakarta (August 2003), the Australian Embassy bombing (September 2004), and the Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta (July 2009). While security operations have since led to the deaths of both men, the spring 2010 emergence of a heretofore unknown group in Aceh, called Al-Qaeda in Indonesia, underscores the fact that while on the run from increasingly effective security operations, jihadi groups and individuals may be active and evolving. JI has been forced to assume a lower profile, in part because of the success of the Indonesian government's counter-terrorism operations, but also because of internal differences over the extent to which the organization should embrace the global jihad or focus its energies and attention of a local jihad against the “near enemy” of the Indonesian state. However, this new posture should not be mistaken for inactivity. JI continues to recruit through its existing networks. It remains particularly active in Indonesian prisons, where incarcerated JI activists and militants enjoy easy excess to other prisoners because of the inadequacies of the under-resourced prison system.

The Islamic State

Islamic jihadi extremism found new expression in Indonesia through the growing appeal of the Islamic State of Iraq and As-sham, otherwise known as ISIS, in the country. Since 2014, videos have surfaced of Indonesians who have arrived in Iraq and Syria and who are engaging in armed conflict in support of ISIS and other jihadi groups such as Jabaat al-Nusra. As of mid-2017, it is estimated that 500-700 Indonesians have made their way to these conflict zones in the Middle East, but it is difficult to determine conclusively what the exact number is.³⁶ Notably, a significant percentage of these people are believed to be women and children.³⁷ Indonesians form a large contingent of Katibah Nusantara, a Southeast Asian wing of ISIS. Originally based in al-Hasakah province, Syria, and comprising mostly Indonesian and Malaysian fighters and their families. Analysts believe that Bahrum Naim, an Indonesian jihadi, Bahrum Naim, who left for Syria in May 2014, leads the wing.³⁸

Indonesia was the victim of the first ISIS-inspired attack in Southeast Asia. This occurred on January 14, 2016, when self-proclaimed followers of ISIS set off bombs at a Starbucks outside the Sarinah mall and at a nearby police outpost, and gunfire broke out on the streets at Jalan Tamrin in the heart of Jakarta.³⁹ While the casualty toll was limited, it could have been higher had the militants succeeded in conducting the attack on a much larger and more popular shopping mall, as was their original intent. They were discouraged by the tight security at that mall.

The emerging influence of ISIS has caused a split in the Indonesian jihadi community. Pro-ISIS elements include followers of the late Poso-based jihadi leader, Santoso, as well as Aman Abdurrahman, who is currently incarcerated but who has actively translated ISIS material into Indonesian for mass consumption in Indonesia. In Syria, the Indonesian Bahrum Naim claims to be the leader of “ISIS Indonesia,” although at this writing there is no clear evidence that such a group exists, or how it may be linked to Katibah

Nusantara. It is important to note that JI is at odds with ISIS as a result of both theological and personality differences. Ironically, because of its anti-ISIS position, JI has been granted a public platform in the country of late, from which it has readily denounced ISIS. An example is how Abu Tholut (Imron), a convicted terrorist serving a prison sentence in Indonesia, has been given airtime to criticize ISIS. Notwithstanding the higher visibility of ISIS today, in Indonesia JI maintains a much larger following. Moreover, JI has, over the years, managed to regroup and consolidate, as well as recruit new members.⁴⁰

A wave of violence on May 2018 triggered fresh concerns for the growing threat posed by pro-ISIS groups and individuals in Indonesia. On May 8, pro-ISIS detainees at a Jakarta detention centre staged a riot which led to the deaths of five police officers. Several days later, on May 13, several members of the same family launched coordinated attacks on three churches in Surabaya in East Java. Of grave concern in these attacks was the participation of young children – the youngest was a nine year old girl. That same evening, a mother and son were killed when their husband/father accidentally detonated an explosive device. A day later, another family attempted to bomb the police headquarters in Surabaya. The only survivor from that family was an eight year old girl. Equally pertinent to note was the fact that all three families were acquainted with each other, and had studied under the same religious teacher who was deported from Turkey back to Indonesia for attempting to join the Islamic State.⁴¹ This spate of attacks indicated that pro-ISIS sentiments remained alive in various pockets of Indonesian society despite the tightening web of counter-terrorism efforts. More importantly, the nature of the assailants – family units including children – suggests that the threat has evolved in a way that will make it even more difficult for the security forces to tackle.

ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

Like most of the Muslim world, Indonesia was not immune from the global Islamic resurgence that began in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a consequence of the failure of Arab nationalism. During this period, numerous students made their way to the great Islamic learning centers of the Arab world. Many were also sent to secular schools and universities in Europe on government scholarships, where Islamic civil society movements were active among Muslim communities. Locally, an Islamic dawah (proselytization) movement began in Bandung around the campus-based Salman mosque and soon spread across the country to other tertiary education institutions. This movement was organized around study groups modelled after the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, as previously discussed. The related tarbiyah (education) movement began in the early 1980s at various university campuses.⁴² The legacy of this process remains evident today in the increased social activism of the country's various Muslim communities.

A driving force for the development of the dawah movement was the socio-political suppression of Islamist intellectuals. The Suharto administration had placed substantial restrictions on the expression of religiously-referenced political aspirations on the part of the Muslim majority, to the extent that socially active Muslim groups like the NU and Muhammadiyah were effectively de-politicized. More conservative Muslims were also concerned about the increasing assertiveness of what was thought to be “liberal” Islamic ideas in Indonesian society. In the words of one scholar:

the general mass media, as another manifestation of the public sphere, tended to serve as the state ideological apparatus in championing modernization. The media was thus preconditioned to be sympathetic to the renewal movement. Realizing that the public sphere was hostile to their ideo-political aspirations, the Islamist intellectuals created a subtle and fluid social movement, which was relatively impervious to state control, as a new foundation for constructing collective solidarity and identity.⁴³

Salafi influences within the country can largely be traced to the late 1950s, when a small number

of modernist Muslim intellectuals were attracted to the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood.⁴⁴ However, it was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s that these ideas and organizational techniques began to win a sizeable following. The main group influenced by these ideas was known as the Tarbiyah group. Unlike in Malaysia, where Islamists leaders had direct relationships with fundamentalist Ikhwan and Jamaat leaders, Indonesian Islamist leaders learned these ideas mainly through Indonesian translations of books written by Ikhwan activists. An influx of financial support from Saudi Arabia beginning in the mid-1970s created an alternative strain of Salafism.⁴⁵ The College of Islamic and Arabic (more commonly known by its Indonesian acronym, LIPIA) popularized this form of Salafism. Formed in 1980, LIPIA has been a major conduit for Saudi funding into the Islamic education system in Indonesia through scholarships and curriculum material. The curriculum in LIPIA hews closely to Saudi versions of Salafist theology and ideology, with an emphasis on the teachings of Ibn Abdul Wahab and Ibn Taymiyyah, and the Hanbali school of classical Islamic jurisprudence.

During this period, Indonesia was still ruled by the authoritarian New Order regime, which was extremely suspicious of Islamic parties and groups. It was Indonesia's fifth Prime Minister, Mohammad Natsir, and his organization, the DDII, that was chiefly responsible for encouraging Islamic student activism in Indonesian universities.⁴⁶ While it is difficult to establish the extent of Natsir's relationship with Ikhwan and Jamaat leaders, it is clear that he played a major role in facilitating the travel of Indonesian students to Ikhwan and Jamaat-dominated universities in the Middle East and Pakistan. He was also responsible for introducing the Ikhwan's religio-political ideas and methods of organization to Muslim students on various campuses. It was these students who established the Lembaga Dakwah Kampus, LDK (Campus Proselytising Network). Ikhwan-inspired students subsequently formed a separate organization, the Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia, (KAMMI) ("Indonesian Muslim Undergraduate Action Association"). With the collapse of the New Order regime, activists of KAMMI formed what would become PKS, which was discussed at the beginning of this chapter. PKS maintains strong links with the broader transnational Salafi network, often attending international Islamist gatherings organized by the Ikhwan and Jamaat.

Wahhabi ideology had made in-roads into Indonesia since the 1960s through charities and institutions meant to proselytize. This influence was expressed in the financing of mosque-building, funding of preachers, and performance of missionary activity, not to mention subsidizing generous scholarships and building a tuition-free university system whose flagship is the Institute for the Study of Islam and Arabic in LIPIA, Jakarta. The followers of Wahhabism believe that Muslim society must first be Islamized through a gradual evolutionary process that includes tarbiyah and tasfiyyah (purification) before the implementation of the sharia can be realized. As a strategy to reach this end, they are fervently committed to dawah activities, such as participating in the creation of Islamic study groups (halaqah) and Islamic courses (daurah). Following the Wahhabi tradition, the Tarbiyah Movement has various activities including organizing training of Islam in schools and universities, training of Islam for beginners, the study of jurisprudence for women, tutorial study, and the translation of Islamic books. They study Islam intensively, as well as carrying out proselytization (da'wah) training for coaches, and hold intensive meetings (liqo), Islamic courses (daurah), religious tourism (rihlah), evening activity (mabit), camping (mokayyam), seminars, and discussion. In this fashion, the movement seeks to influence Indonesian youth by demonstrating growing piety in society.

While conservative forces aligned themselves with the Salafi movement and the various social and, eventually, political organizations, alternative patterns of thinking were also emerging elsewhere within the Indonesian Muslim community. During the late 1970s and early 1980, people—particularly younger intellectuals—sought to recalibrate Islam's role in Indonesian society. This phenomenon, initially called the "reform movement" (gerakan pembaruan) and more recently "cultural Islam" (Islam kultural), consciously rejected the political agenda and aspirations of Islamist parties since independence and sought

to redefine Islam's relations with—and role in—the state from a purely apolitical, cultural perspective. Among the chief proponents of this movement were former president Abdurrahman Wahid and the well-known intellectual, the late Nurcholish Madjid.⁴⁷

Cultural Islam was particularly critical of political Islam (or Islamist activism) on several counts. Islamist parties had experienced very limited success in achieving their goals. Moreover, they had not been able to unite Muslims politically, nor managed to garner a majority of votes at general elections. Neither had they succeeded in getting Islamic laws implemented in local or national government. What was required instead, proponents of cultural Islam believed, were alternative ways of achieving the aspirations of Indonesian Muslims to live pious lives—aspirations that had in fact been hampered by the preoccupation of Islamist leaders with politics.

The position of supporters of Cultural Islam on the formal role of the sharia in the state was highly controversial. Many younger intellectuals repudiated the concept of an Islamic state, arguing that the Quran contains no prescription for the structure of the state. Instead, they supported the religiously neutral Pancasila as the basis of the Indonesian state, asserting that the pluralism and religious equality inherent in the concept were consistent with Islamic principles. In addition, this sentiment disputed the notion that Muslims should only support Islamic parties. Pluralist, “deconfessionalized” parties were not less virtuous for Muslims to belong to than exclusively Islamic ones, they argued.⁴⁸

The democratization of Indonesia was a critical factor in expanding the space for Islamic discourse and activism. Along with the proliferation of faith-based political parties, Indonesia also witnessed the emergence of many Islamic civil society groups, including the radical organizations introduced above. This included Muslim groups whose interpretation of Islamic scripture was deemed by the mainstream as unorthodox. One such movement was the Liberal Islam Network, or Jaringan Islam Liberal, a movement that shunned received wisdom and encouraged critical thinking among Muslims. Formed in early 2001, it has come under heavy criticism from fundamentalist quarters in the Indonesian Muslim intellectual community, including the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia. At the same time, the movement has also had an uneasy relationship with more moderate organizations such as the NU.⁴⁹

An increasing concern in this climate of openness has been the instances of hostility and even violence perpetrated by more extremist Muslim groups against fringe organizations. Such is the case against the Ahmadiyah, an Islamic sect of South Asian origin deemed deviant by the two largest Muslim organizations in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. While fatwas against the Ahmadiyah have not resulted in violence against them by NU and Muhammadiyah members, the Ahmadiyah have nevertheless been victimized by the FPI. On January 28, 2011, members of FPI attacked an Ahmadiyah mosque in Makassar and forced the congregation to evacuate the premises before destroying their property.⁵⁰ Since then, attacks on Ahmadiyah places of worship and members by Muslim vigilante groups such as FPI have become all too frequent. The Indonesian government of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was often unable or unwilling to stem this vigilantism. The same appears to be the case with the government of Joko Widodo.

At its annual convention in August 2015, NU formally introduced the concept of “Islam Nusantara” or “Islam of the archipelago” into the discourse of Islamic thought and practice in Indonesia. Conceptualized as a counter-narrative to the virulent ideology of groups such as ISIS, Islam Nusantara is predicated on what is essentially Indonesia's rich Islamic tradition, which promotes peace, moderation, and tolerance. Despite the ambiguity surrounding the concept, ambitious NU and Indonesian leaders such as Said Aqil Siradj have suggested that Islam Nusantara could potentially take on a transnational character and be embraced and practiced by Muslims throughout the world. Yet the concept is not without controversy. Not only are the expansionist aspirations of its progenitors far too ambitious – it is difficult to envisage Arab Muslims in the heartland embracing a movement that emerged from the peripheries of the “Muslim World” - the legitimacy of the concept itself remains debated within Indonesian circles, including among NU leaders themselves. Conservative critics of Islam Nusantara have dismissed it as Bida'a (innovation),

which is forbidden in Islam. Others have criticized it as the contamination of “pure” Islam by Javanese culture, the dominant culture in Indonesia. Nevertheless, NU has been at the forefront of Indonesia’s ideological battle against ISIS, whose view of Islam it has denounced in publications and video material as “shallow and mistaken.”⁵¹ NU’s efforts to counter ISIS propaganda have also been taken to cyberspace, where it has launched a massive campaign to discredit the ideology of ISIS and promote a narrative of Islam that celebrates pluralism and preaches harmony with non-Muslims.⁵²

However, while most observers continue to consider NU and Muhammadiyah, with a combined membership of about 100 million, to be the guardians of Islamic moderation in Indonesia, there is evidence that these organisations are themselves coming under the influence of growing Islamic conservatism that has affected the Indonesian society in general. Conservative clerics and activists took over the leadership of both organisations in 2005, forcing out progressive and moderate activists from the organisation’s leadership. Even though moderates have now regained the senior leadership positions in both organisations, serious questions can be raised about whether the two organisations are still dominated by moderates or whether there are more conservative, hard-line Islamist activists taking over the organizations, slowly but surely, from the bottom-up. Tens of thousands of NU and Muhammadiyah activists joined the Defending Islam rallies in 2017, openly defying the senior leadership of both organisations who have urged them not to participate. Reports of young NU members joining Islamist groups like HTI and FPI and Muhammadiyah members joining PKS and other Salafi organisations, are frequently reported by senior activists of both organisations. Many NU and Muhammadiyah clerics and activists are having overlapping membership with one or more of these Islamist groups. Newly formed groups such as the ‘True Path NU’ (*NU Garis Lurus*), which was founded by young NU clerics who recently graduated from advanced Islamic studies programs in the Middle East, seek to remove any influence of ‘liberal’ and ‘pluralist’ teachings from the organisation.⁵³

Indonesia’s reputation for religious tolerance suffered a notable blow in 2016. Radicals mobilized by the National Movement to Guard the MUI Fatwa, a collection of Islamist groups, staged two massive rallies calling for the conviction of Jakarta’s incumbent governor, Basuki “Ahok” Tjahaja Purnama, for blasphemy against the Quran. Purnama is a blunt, ethnic Chinese Christian politician. As the nomenclature of the Islamist movement that organized the rallies denotes, the rallies were inspired by a MUI fatwa that declared Basuki a blasphemer for making reference to the Quran in a campaign rally speech. Under pressure from this Muslim social movement, the Indonesian government took the decision to distance itself from Basuki, who had hitherto been an ally of President Jokowi himself, and limited its intervention to calls for restraint.⁵⁴ In the event, the mobilization of opposition to Basuki’s candidature on religious lines proved successful. Basuki was defeated in the second round by the challenger, Anies Baswedan, a former education minister known to be a liberal but who nevertheless seized the opportunity to tap these conservative Islamic forces on his way to victory. Following his defeat, Basuki was convicted of the crime of blasphemy and sentenced to two years imprisonment by the North Jakarta District Court.⁵⁵ Notably, however, after deliberation among its clerics NU took the position that Muslims should be allowed to vote for non-Muslim political and administrative leaders.⁵⁶ The episode involving “Ahok” suggests that playing the religious identity card has appeal in Indonesia. Because of this, it is likely that opportunist politicians will turn to this strategy in the coming elections, especially the presidential elections which are likely to be held in 2019. The fact that this strategy is appealing because it works further suggests that there are segments of the Indonesian Muslim population for whom religious identity, and in particular more conservative expressions of it, is playing an increasingly important role in informing their political choices. While the religious debate is complex, the point to stress is that a growing trend of conservatism appears to define the trajectory of Indonesian expressions of Islam in a more outspoken fashion.

ISLAMISM AND THE STATE

While Indonesia is often considered a secular state, it is officially a state based on religion as premised in the first principle of the Pancasila, which enshrines “belief in Almighty God” (KeTuhanan yang Maha Esa). This was, in effect, a compromise between those wanting a secular state and those favoring an Islamic state. While there is no official state religion or formal acknowledgment of the authority of religious law in the constitution, the use of the term “Almighty God” implies monotheism, a concession to Muslim sentiment.

Indonesia’s political and constitutional history reveals that among the most divisive debates surrounds the formal role of Islam in the state and the question of the position of sharia in the constitution. Much of this debate focused on the Jakarta Charter, an agreement struck between Muslim and nationalist leaders on June 22, 1945 as part of the preparations for Indonesia’s independence. The most controversial part of the charter was a seven-word clause: “with the obligation for adherents of Islam to practice Islamic law” (dengan kewajiban menjalankan syari’at Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya). Although often portrayed as an attempt to make Indonesia an Islamic state, the inclusion of these seven words in the constitution would not, by itself, have had this effect. Rather, it was left to Islamic parties to demonstrate whether they could garner sufficient support in parliament to advance sharia-based legislation.⁵⁷ Islamic leaders did, however, succeeded in having a stipulation inserted into the draft constitution that mandated the president be a Muslim.

On August 18, 1945, the day after the proclamation of independence, pro-charter Muslim leaders came under strong pressure from “secular” Muslims, nationalists, and religious minorities to drop the seven words regarding the practice of Islamic law, despite the initial agreement of the committee responsible for finalizing the constitution. Those opposing the clause were concerned that the embryonic Indonesian nation would collapse as pressure from Islamists caused the non-Muslim dominated outer islands to secede. Eventually, Muslim leaders were persuaded, in the interest of national unity, to exclude the charter. In addition to that, the clause requiring the president of the country to be Muslim was also dropped.

It was not until the 1970s that Islam experienced a resurgence in Indonesia. That period witnessed a surge in mosque attendance, enrollment in religious classes, adoption of Islamic dress (including the veil, worn by women), and expansion of Muslim education and social organizations. Although there were a small number of extremists at its fringe, the Islamic resurgence was never politically radical. Its primary social impulse was pietistic and ethical, aimed at heightening the role of Islam in social life.⁵⁸

The resurgence put greater pressure on the government to make concessions in favor of Indonesia’s Muslims. In response, Suharto began to extend greater aid to the country’s Muslim community in the late 1980s, increasing state subsidies for mosque building, Islamic education, Muslim television programming, the celebration of religious holidays, and preferential treatment for Muslim entrepreneurs in state contracts. He lifted an earlier ban on the veil in state schools, and imposed tighter restrictions on the activities of Christian missionaries. The president even went as far as to sponsor an Islamic faction in the armed forces, previously a bastion of conservative secular nationalism, with the assistance of his son-in-law, Prabowo Subianto.⁵⁹

The slew of legislative and institutional concessions to the Muslim community was a strong indicator of the New Order’s stance towards Islam. Prominent among them were “the expansion of the authority of religious courts in 1989, the establishment of the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals association (ICMI) in 1990, lifting of the ban on female state school students wearing hijabs in 1991, the upgrading of government involvement in alms collection and distribution, the founding of an Islamic bank (BMI) in 1992, and the abolition of the state lottery (SDSB) in 1993.”⁶⁰

While major Muslim organizations agreed to cooperate with the New Order regime in facilitating and implementing its social and educational initiatives, they also subtly pressed for democratic reforms. This challenge from moderate Muslims led Suharto to change his political strategy in the mid-1990s, and to

reach out to hard-line groups like Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII - Indonesian Council for Islamic Predication) and Komite Indonesia Untuk Solidaritas dengan Dunia Islam (KISDI – the Indonesian Committee for Solidarity of the Islamic World), which had developed reputations for being strongly anti-Western and anti-Christian. Suharto's efforts had a backlash effect, however. "With the onset of the Asian economic crisis in late 1997, support for the Suharto regime waned, and the President was forced from power in May 1998."⁶¹

Nevertheless, the end of Suharto's rule did not spell the end of efforts to exploit religious tensions for political advantage in Indonesian politics. After May 1998, and in the wake of the upheaval of post-Suharto democratisation in Indonesia, more than a few politicians and leaders appealed to ethno-religious sentiments in order to enhance their credentials. The tactic had an especially bloody consequence in Maluku, Central Kalimantan, and Sulawesi, upsetting a delicate demographic balance between Christians and Muslims with the rise of sectarian paramilitaries and bloody campaigns of ethnic cleansing.

Despite the lack of official support for the implementation of sharia, the issue appears to be gaining some traction at the regional level. One such case would be the north Sumatran province of Aceh, where sharia was promulgated under special autonomy laws in early 2002, though there is intense debate within the local Islamic community over the scope of the laws and the details of their implementation. The sharia issue has also attracted strong support from Muslim groups in South Sulawesi, West Sumatra and Banten, but is still far short of receiving majority support. In a number of districts in West Java, sharia has been implemented in a de facto fashion by local Muslim groups, often in concert with district government officials and ulama.⁶²

The prevalence of cases of sharia-inspired laws and by-laws being adopted in Aceh and several other local districts, especially conservative variants associated with hudud law, is rooted in the agreement between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement, where the introduction of sharia law was one of the concessions made to end a decades-old separatist insurgency (even though it was not clear that this was demanded by the Free Aceh Movement).⁶³ After implementation, there has been very little evidence that the Indonesian government harbors any intention to slow down, let alone overturn, this gradual process of sharia-ization, despite the fact that, as critics have pointed out, it runs contrary to Indonesia's secular constitution. The challenge of fending off these trends will prove daunting for President Joko Widodo – or any other presidential candidate for that matter – for the simple fact that the need to bolster religious credentials as well as to build political alliances would require some form of accommodation of conservative religious voices.

ENDNOTES

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- in Joseph Chinyong Liow and Nadirsyah Hosen (eds.), *Islam in Southeast Asia* vol. IV (London: Routledge, 2009), 52-53. In the 1950s, the Darul Islam (DI, the Islamic State) movement, spread to South Sulawesi and Aceh under the leadership of Kahar Muzakkar and Daud Beureu'eh respectively. At its core, DI is a political movement which was dissatisfied with the policies of the central government under President Sukarno. However, they used Islam to legitimize their existence and at the same time to denounce the nation-state of Indonesia.
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