

# RADICAL ISLAM, ISLAMIC FERVOUR, AND POLITICAL SENTIMENTS IN CENTRAL JAVA, INDONESIA\*

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*Abstract.* So-called radical Islam is not a discrete category. Springing from virtually the same matrix, it and moderate Islam cannot clearly and unambiguously be separated, so that the social categories of 'Muslim democrats' and 'Muslim radicals' are not, in some respects, sharply opposed. Both are inspired by a desire for greater Islamic penetration of Indonesian society—the shariatisation of society—though to varying degrees of intensity. Other common features are: the rejection of Western hegemony, partly on the basis of solidarity with the perceived suffering of Muslims elsewhere in the world and partly for cultural reasons; scepticism towards the secularist government and its policies, and personally towards the president (prior to the 2004 presidential elections); and a concern about the perceived lawlessness and moral decline of Indonesian society, for which (at least partially) the West is to blame.

## *Introduction*

The aim of this paper is to make a contribution to the understanding of the phenomenon of radical Islam (*Islam garis keras*) in Indonesia. Radical Islam appears to be epitomised by the activities of Jemaa

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\* An earlier version of this paper was prepared for the Indonesia Council Open Conference, 29 and 30 September 2003 at the Australian National University, Canberra. At that occasion a short summary of the paper was given.

Acknowledgments: I am indebted to my research assistant Dr Joko Susilo, puppeteer (*dhalang*) extraordinaire of *Wayang Kulit* and staff member of Sekolah Tinggi Seni Indonesia (STSI) Surakarta. His verbal skills, local knowledge and personal dedication have contributed much to the fieldwork. He is of course not responsible for the conclusions drawn in this paper. Among those who gave freely of their time and offered hospitality, there were several staff members of STSI Surakarta, functionaries, officials and teachers of the Muhammadiyah organisation (*madrasah*, state schools and Muhammadiyah University) in and around Surakarta, and many private individuals. Lest they become personally associated with the contents of this paper, they shall remain anonymous. I also wish to thank three anonymous referees.

Grants from the Asian Studies Research Centre and the School of Social Sciences, Otago University, as well as general research and study leave support from this university made the research financially possible.

Islamiyah (JI), a shadowy 'terrorist' organisation with, allegedly, al-Qaeda links. It gained global notoriety through the Bali bombing in October 2002 but appears to be behind several other atrocities. International opprobrium was also heaped on Laskar Jihad and Front Pembela Islam, two extremist Islamic organisations which also came to world attention in very recent years through international media reporting. Scientific analysis as well as news reporting of such phenomena has tended to create the perception that there is an extremist and violently militant fringe of Indonesian Muslims, which is uncharacteristic and sits uneasily in the otherwise irenic environment of the multi-religious, civil-pluralistic and democratic Indonesian society. Above all, this has created the impression of a phenomenon that is totally unconnected with a category of Muslims who adhere to totally different sentiments. Presenting Indonesian Islam in terms of two fundamental categories of a radical faction and a moderate one containing the vast majority of ordinary, 'mainstream' Muslims, though not totally untrue in some respects, suggests an imperviousness of these categories which has no equivalence in actual reality.

'Radicals' are not born as such but make up their minds at some stage in their lives—either as adolescents, and often in defiance of parental authority, or later in life and apparently quite suddenly; or they may suddenly drop out of that category *Islam garis keras* by leaving such organisations. I have come across several cases of people who once belonged to radical organisations but, simply by leaving them, without substantially changing their religio-political views, for all intents and purposes seem to have joined the ranks of 'mainstream' Muslims. (In other cases, however, such a move was precipitated by a change in the person's ideological perspective.) There is a much easier transition than generally assumed from ordinary Muslimhood to radicalism through a number of shared sympathies.

The often sensationalised portrayal of radical Islam as a phenomenon largely disconnected from the mass of ordinary Muslims is distorting. So-called radical Islam needs to be more adequately contextualised by realising that Muslimhood per se shares perceptions and inclinations from which acute concerns and aspirations grow and percolate up to feed the radical syndrome.<sup>1</sup> A discourse anal-

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<sup>1</sup> The International Crisis Group (ICG) reports on radical Islam are very authoritative, but by being sharply focused and paying little attention to the wider ideological background, reinforce this impression of radical Islam as an isolated phenomenon (see International Crisis Group, 'Indonesia: violence and radical Muslims' [Jakarta: ICG, 2001], available at [www.crisisweb.org](http://www.crisisweb.org); International Crisis Group, 'Al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia: the case of the 'Nguruki network' in Indonesia' [Jakarta: ICG, 2002], available at [www.crisisweb.org](http://www.crisisweb.org); International Crisis Group, 'How the

ysis that focuses on perceptions rather than empirically observable facts and deeds makes it clear that it is not possible either on classificatory, or practical, or ideological grounds clearly and unambiguously to separate radical Islam from other forms. There is a vast ideological spectrum in which radical phenomena are in fact integrated and seamlessly blend in. Indonesian Islam is extremely multifaceted and far from forming an ideological bloc. It constitutes a vast and only loosely coherent spectrum ranging from very moderate, tolerant forms, entirely compatible with Western-style democracy and a pluralistic society, to extremely bigoted, intolerant and militant forms. However, there is wide sympathy, far beyond that extreme brand of Islam, for some of the political objectives and social concerns espoused by radical forms of Islam, which makes it difficult if not impossible to draw a clear dividing line between radicalism and more moderate forms. While the brutally aggressive tactics used by some radical forms of Islam are indeed widely condemned, and their flamboyant and violent operations are rejected as morally wrong and counter-productive by Muslims and non-Muslims alike—and in this sense do clearly form a minority phenomenon—the motives which give rise to such radical forms are shared more widely and enjoy tacit sympathy, even among Muslims who by all accounts would have to be considered ‘moderates’.

A characteristic event, I think, clearly showing the fluidity between radical and non-radical forms of Islam and a shared sympathetic

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Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network Operates’ [Jakarta: ICG, 2002], available at [www.crisisweb.org](http://www.crisisweb.org); International Crisis Group, ‘Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia: damaged but still dangerous’ [Jakarta: ICG, 2003], available at [www.crisisweb.org](http://www.crisisweb.org). The report ‘Indonesia: violence and radical Muslims’ initially approximates a contextualisation, but mistakenly, I think, comes to the conclusion that radical Islam is quite weak because it fails to realise its connectedness with widely shared sentiments. Some Indonesians who appeared to be familiar with these reports criticised them as biased and incorrect. For them, these reports, rightly or wrongly, represent precisely the kind of American hegemonic perspective, interventionism and intellectual imperialism they reject. The gender of the author (Sidney Jones) does not help, as devout Muslims find themselves unable to credit her with authority and understanding in matters Islamic. S. Yunanto, on militant Islam, while pointing out the embeddedness of this form of Islam in the political conditions of the day, loses sight of the wider ideological perspective which would contextualise it within a globalising world; S. Yunanto, *Gerakan Militan Islam di Indonesia dan Asia Tenggara* (Militant Islamic Movements in Indonesia and Southeast Asia), second edition (Jakarta: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2003). Van Bruinessen does contextualise radical Islam—to which he refers with the somewhat infelicitous label ‘vigilante groups’—but does so mainly in historical terms tracing its genealogy back to the Darul Islam movements of the 1950s and the Masyumi party; M. van Bruinessen, ‘Genealogies of Islamic radicalism in post-Suharto Indonesia’, *South East Asia Research*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2002), pp. 117–154.

undercurrent, was when Jaafar Umar Talib, the leader of Laskar Jihad (an extremist Islamic organisation; see below) was arrested in May 2002; the (then) vice president Hamzah Haz made several gestures of support, such as demonstratively visiting the arrested man in prison.<sup>2</sup>

When one takes this into account, so-called radical phenomena tend to be less conspicuous in the political landscape of Indonesia and must be accepted as legitimate expressions of political ideology. It is highly indicative that prominent Indonesian publications quoted in this paper, while stopping short of condoning actual terrorist phenomena, have repeatedly expressed views exonerating radical Muslims and radical political expressions. From a Western point of view, the stigma of being biased and even factually untrue may adhere to these views, but within the context of Indonesian political thought they appear to have much greater legitimacy.

Following on from previous years' fieldwork in other parts of Indonesia on Islamic activities, my research was conducted (in July and August of 2003) in Solo (Surakarta) and the surrounding districts (*kabupaten*) of Klaten, Sragen and Boyolali in central Java. The information presented here is mainly based on informal conversations with, and more formal interviews of, Islamic teachers, social scientists, officials of the education system, politicians and functionaries of Islamic organisations. I visited *pondok pesantren*, ordinary schools, and other educational institutions, such as the Muhammadiyah University in Solo, in order to canvas Muslim views being passed on to younger generations. In one *pesantren*, considered entirely 'mainstream', a poster of Osama bin Laden was prominently displayed. When I pointed to it my hosts smiled apologetically and changed the subject. While to the best of my recollection no one there professed any sympathy with the tactics of terror or tried to defend them, the presence of such a poster in a boarding school which is run in a very strict and disciplined manner, organises everything centrally and allows for few individual expressions, does demonstrate the easy transitionality between 'mainstream' and 'radicalism'.

A first-hand insight into the ideological world of radical Islam came through the high-profile organisation of Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia, which held its second convention, a three-day affair from 10 to 12 August 2003, in Solo. The event consisted of the main *Kongres* and was preceded by a *tabligh* (propagation of Islam) rally attended by several thousand people as well as some prominent Muslim political leaders.

<sup>2</sup> BBC News 5 May 2002, *The Strait Times*, *Washington Post*, [www.newstrove.com](http://www.newstrove.com)

*Context*

The city of Solo enjoys a reputation not only as a centre of traditional Javanese culture, but also of being at the hub of religious and political dynamics of a fairly radical nature. Jemaa Islamiyah (JI), accused of forming a vast, international and al-Qaida connected network of terrorism, is supposed to have a significant ideological centre there in the form of the Pondok Pesantren Al Mukmin Ngruki, Sukoharjo. At the time of my fieldwork this school came under close police investigation for insinuating JI ideology.<sup>3</sup> Three men involved in recent terrorist attacks were reportedly educated there (two of the Bali bombers and the suicide bomber of the Marriott Hotel). Needless to say, the *pondok's* leadership denied any culpability, an opinion which I found was supported by people who appeared to know the school well. They argued that this *pesantren's* teaching is entirely 'mainstream' with many of its teachers having been trained by Muhammadiyah, an organisation widely considered 'moderate'.

This *pesantren* used to be the home base of the radical *ustadz* Abu Bakar Ba'asyir who had been indicted on serious charges of treason (under a post-September 11 counter-terrorism act), which if proven may have entailed the death penalty. When he was first arrested in 2002, among a host of charges he was accused of immigration violation and, more seriously, of being behind several terrorist bombings and of plotting to assassinate Mrs Megawati Sukarnoputri when she was still vice president. But undoubtedly most prominent among the list of his alleged crimes was that he was suspected—and continues to be so—of being the ideological and spiritual leader of Jemaa Islamiyah. However, on 2 September 2003 he was sentenced on a lesser charge of *makar*—attack on the government and 'subversion' (attempting to overthrow the legitimate government)—to four years' imprisonment,<sup>4</sup> and released early in May 2004 (but rearrested and re-charged shortly afterwards). Given that links with JI could not be proven, the guilty verdict in effect related to minor document falsification charges and chiefly to his spreading of an anti-government political message.

<sup>3</sup> See *Solopos*, 12 August 2003, p. 1. The ICG report 'Al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia' presents the 'Ngruki network' as an ideological extension of Kartosuwirjo's Darul Islam movement of the 1950s. In tracing the genealogy of radical Islam, van Bruinessen comes to virtually the same conclusion; van Bruinessen, 'Genealogies of Islamic radicalism'. Jawa Barat's Negara Islam Indonesia (NII) is seen by some as Darul Islam's (Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia [DI/TII]) successor movement.

<sup>4</sup> *Jawa Pos*, 4 September 2003, p. 1; see also [www.republika.co.id](http://www.republika.co.id) (29 August 2003).

Ba'asyir was 'outed' to a worldwide public as JI head in *Time* magazine<sup>5</sup> and unmasked as a sinister and acutely dangerous source of terrorist indoctrination.<sup>6</sup> Labelled not only a leader of JI but also a sympathiser of al-Qaida and a recipient of moneys from this terrorist organisation, he himself went on record immediately after these allegations were made, rejecting the reports of his being associated with JI and asserting that what is called JI is only a group of Muslim worshippers called the 'Sunnah group'.<sup>7</sup> He claimed he had only been preaching, but has no connection with militant groups. He did not deny harbouring sympathies for al-Qaida, but in this respect he is by no means unique among Muslims in Indonesia.

Ba'asyir is also a founding member and current head (*amir*, commander) of Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI). MMI came into existence in 2000 and has strong links to the Pondok Ngruki, founded in 1972 by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and the late Abdullah Sungkar, also a radical cleric. Both men also were formerly prominent teachers there and appear to have exerted a profound influence. Despite his fierce reputation, however, people who knew Ba'asyir personally were adamant that his teaching, albeit uncompromising and harsh, did not incline towards preaching terrorism.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See *Time* magazine, 4 February 2002, pp. 44–45 and 11 February 2002, pp. 22–27.

<sup>6</sup> Accusations had previously already been levelled against him by the Singaporean and Malaysian governments (cf. *Kompas*, 25 February 2002, pp. 1, 11, and 28 February 2002, pp. 1, 5), but had received little attention in the rest of the world.

<sup>7</sup> *Kompas*, 25 February 2002, pp. 1, 11.

<sup>8</sup> It is impossible at the moment, given very conflicting reports, to form a picture of Ba'asyir as a person, along with his involvement in JI matters and, for that matter, his guilt or innocence. The portrayal of him as a mild and peaceful person is supported by ICG, 'How the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network Operates', p. 3, which states that Ba'asyir is considered too weak by JI to be effectively its leader. Abuza, on the other hand—and sharing this certainty with *Time* magazine—perceives a clear and causative connection between JI, Abu Bakar Bashir (sic) and the Al Mukmin school; see p. 450 of Z. Abuza, 'Tentacles of terror: Al Qaeda's Southeast Asian network', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (2002), pp. 427–465, and implicitly also Z. Abuza, 'Funding terrorism in Southeast Asia: the financial network of Al Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiya', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2003), pp. 169–199. The evidence, however, does not seem to have swayed the court sentencing him in September 2003. This view is widely shared by Muslims. As the website *Republika* ([www.republika.co.id](http://www.republika.co.id), 29 and 30 August 2003) reported, there is no proof. In fact, this report notes that the judge in the Bali bombing case concluded that JI's involvement in the Bali atrocity was unknown. The bombers denied being members of JI, claiming to have acted by themselves. *Republika* goes as far as calling JI a 'ghost organisation', *organisasi hantu*. (This is, of course, totally different from the ICG reports. The *Christian Science Monitor* of 2 May 2002 and [www.newstrove.com](http://www.newstrove.com) drew similar conclusions.)

However, more recent developments in the re-trial of Ba'asyir have more distinctly

This was certainly a time of heightened awareness of Islamic issues, and a vigorous debate occurred in the media and among people during my stay. Not only was Ba'asyir's case widely discussed, other popular topics were the trials of the so-called Bali bombers, resulting in the subsequent convictions and sentencing to death of two of them—both their demeanour before the court, making them easily recognisable as fanatical Muslims, and their joyous embracing of the prospect of a martyr's death. Threats of retaliatory actions were issued at that time from obscure sources, but quickly attributed by the police to JI. Imminent bomb attacks were threatened against Muhammadiyah University in Solo and Solo airport.<sup>9</sup> Also in that period, in early August a (suicide) bomb attack was carried out on the Marriott Hotel in Jakarta with considerable loss of life and numerous injuries. Local newspapers, making the best of an atmosphere of volatility, were full of sensationalist and more or less well-founded reports about the activities of so-called fundamentalist and radical Islamic groups (above all JI). For days on end, the local tabloid, *Solopos*, published headlines on JI and real and imagined bomb attacks, airing all kinds of conspiracy theories. That most of these troubles were not entirely the figment of a heated journalistic imagination was borne out by several other events: explosives had been discovered a short time before in the grounds of Parliament and a significant cache of explosives and weapons confiscated in the city of Semarang, to the north of Surakarta. Popular opinion blamed all of this on radical Islamic groups or on other obscure and sinister forces. A spate of robberies and deadly attacks on money transports were attributed to the actions of GAM (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, the Free Aceh Movement)—or GSA (Gerakan Separatis Aceh) as official sources prefer to call this organisation—which was rumoured to finance its violent campaign in this way. There was widespread speculation that radical Islamic groups might be involved in the struggle in Aceh and might have the support of al-Qaida.<sup>10</sup> Conspiracy theories were rife and were freely bandied about—even among social scientists—and made credible because of the lack of reliable information. Not only did blame fall on radical Islam in general and JI in

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pointed a finger at him as JI's *amir*. Some witnesses apportion responsibility to Ba'asyir in this capacity for the bombing attacks, while others absolve him from direct blame (e.g. [www.solopos.com](http://www.solopos.com) 5 January 2005; Yahoo news 21 December 2004).

<sup>9</sup> *Solopos*, 7 August 2003, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Qaida operatives allegedly had visited Aceh in the recent past; see, for example, Z. Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003), p. 144.

particular, but also the dark hand of Suharto and his supporters was suspected of fomenting such trouble. Alternatively, America and the CIA were also suspected of being behind these goings-on. Adding to this volatile mix, several radical Muslim organisations represented in Solo made their presence felt in various ways.

### *A Portrait of MMI*

One is on empirical terra firma when considering the ideology of an openly existing and legal organisation of radical Islam such as Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia.<sup>11</sup> MMI's ideological line is basically a charter for the establishment of a theocratic state. It had fairly clearly been outlined in a paper Ba'asyir delivered at the first congress in 2000.<sup>12</sup> Its intent and tenor—above all its 'chiliastic' advocacy of the complete shariatisation of Indonesian society—were faithfully reflected in numerous papers delivered during the second *Kongres*, their appeal confirmed by the enthusiastic responses of the audience. Above all, these programmatic ideas were forcefully reiterated in Ba'asyir's speech from the chair, which he had drafted by hand in prison and which was read on his behalf by *ustadz* Wayudin.<sup>13</sup> Despite MMI's strong representations to the court, temporary release to attend the congress had been denied Ba'asyir by the judge. However, despite the fact that he was unable to participate in person, he was unanimously re-elected as *amir* (leader), obviously in a show of defiance of the process of law under which he had been indicted of very serious charges.

The *Kongres* was preceded on Sunday 10 August 2003 by a public *tabligh* (or *tabliq*, *tablik*) in the stadium of Solo. Seven thousand people were expected to take part. The more interesting part was the actual congress scheduled for Monday and Tuesday, 11 and 12 August, in the vast complex of Asrama Haji Donohudan, of Boyolali near

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<sup>11</sup> Abuza claims that MMI is serving as an umbrella organisation for a number of other very radical movements; Abuza, 'Tentacles of terror', p. 447. He also asserts that there is 'substantial evidence' that MMI serves as an important conduit to channel funds to JI and terrorist groups as well as acting as a recruitment agency for them; Abuza, *Militant Islam*, pp. 142, 143.

<sup>12</sup> A.B. Ba'asyir, 'A system for the caderisation of mujahidin in creating an Islamic society', address delivered at MMI Congress 5–7 August 2000, Yogyakarta; translation by T. Behrend available at [www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/asia/tbehrend/radical-islam.htm](http://www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/asia/tbehrend/radical-islam.htm) (visited 3 January 2004).

<sup>13</sup> See picture *Solopos*, 11 August, 2003, p. 1.

Surakarta.<sup>14</sup> This is an enclosed compound normally accommodating thousands of intending pilgrims from the region, gathering there in preparation to undertake the *hajj*. It contains a vast array of dormitory blocks, mess halls and lecture theatres, and, of course, a mosque.

As may be expected, a gender division was strictly observed. Women were entirely separated from men, having their own programme, lecture hall, dormitories and mess halls. Hardly a woman was seen mingling with the men outdoors in a public area where street stalls displayed wares of all kinds for sale, ranging from Muslim skull caps to—somewhat surprisingly, given the anti-Western and anti-American tenor of the conference—Coca-Cola. Announcements made it clear that women were expected to wear the *hijab*, though penalties for dereliction were not spelt out. But presumably the rule would have found a sympathetic reception among the participating women.

It is often claimed by analysts that ‘fundamentalist’ organisations and radical movements attract the poor and uneducated.<sup>15</sup> This, in my experience, is almost certainly an oversimplification. It may be true for the paramilitary thuggish troops which seemed to be an indispensable part of the proceedings, but the majority of the audience in the *Kongres*, and of course the leadership, gave the impression of being relatively well educated and reasonably well off. Certainly, the enrolment fee of Rp 100,000 would have proved an insurmountable barrier to low-income earners.<sup>16</sup>

Security was tight, provided by the ubiquitous presence of troops of uniformed and more or less threatening-looking *laskar mujahidin* (Mujahidin soldiers), and consisted in frequent identity-card checks, the use of metal detectors at the entrance of the lecture hall and a somewhat peremptory frisking for concealed weapons. According to

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<sup>14</sup> Boyolali is a neighbouring district of Solo. This designation is slightly misleading as the Asrama is not located in the town of Boyolali and is only about seven kilometres outside Solo city boundaries. The area could easily be seen as a suburb.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. M.D. Ibrahim, ‘Islam and democracy in Indonesia’, unpublished paper (Auckland, New Zealand, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> The view that it is exactly the educated and economically comfortable middle classes who show an increased commitment to Islam seems to be more to the point; cf. R. Stark and R. Finke, *Acts of Faith: The Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 75. While it does not logically follow that the middle classes are the ‘hotbed’ from which militancy and extremism arise, just such a conclusion is certainly more in line with my observations. (For instance, virtually none of the identified terrorists belonged to an economic ‘under-class’.) In any case, a reasonable inference may be that militancy and extremism do not appear to be primarily and causally linked with economic criteria. Quite in a Marxist sense, the poor and uneducated in Indonesia are too caught up in the drudgery of making a living to become closely involved in matters of dogmatic Islam.

the *Jakarta Post* (9 August 2003, p. 5), the police had promised to provide security for the *Kongres* as long as it was open to the general public. There was, however, no sign of a police presence. I do not know whether the reason for this was simply false news reporting, breach of promise by the police, or perhaps because MMI decided not to open the *Kongres* to the general public. In an atmosphere of acute suspicion and xenophobia, a bomb scare occurred on the second day. It failed to seriously disrupt the proceedings, however. Whether out of Islamic fatalism or trust in God, it hardly caused a stir. However, on the third day security had been tightened even further and was supplemented by demanding pockets be emptied at the entrance of the lecture hall. A latently underlying xenophobic suspicion flared up every now and then, but by no means threatened me personally.<sup>17</sup>

The *Kongres* gave a good insight into the agenda of MMI. The motto of the conference, prominently displayed on the wall behind the head panel, stated in bold letters: *Kongres Mujahidin II—Penerapan Syariat Islam di dalam pemerintahan—Merupakan tuntutan Tauhid—Sebagai cara efektif membangun kesejahteraan dan keadilan* (Implementation of Islamic *sharia* in government—demanded by divine oneness—an effective way to build prosperity and justice). The congress's main concern was the demand for the full implementation of Islamic *sharia*. Indeed, Ba'asyir's address (entitled *Pidato Amanah Amirul Mujahidin Ustadz Abu Bakar Ba'asyir*, presidential address of the Mujahidin leader *ustadz* Bakar Ba'asyir), engaging in an almost chiliastic visionary rhetoric, dealt chiefly with this issue. Though fitting into the congress's general tone of fiery religious fervour, it was conspicuous by its medievalist, fire-and-brimstone *katba*-style: a harsh exhortation of the importance, and indeed divine imperative, to implement the *sharia*, not piecemeal and with concessions to modern times, but in its totality (*syari'ah Allah/Islam secara kaffah*) and without compromises. There was no hint of a possible recognition of contemporary values and of a modern *Weltanschauung* which might suggest modifications. Implementing, and

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<sup>17</sup> I should make it clear that—although some no doubt would have thought of me as a *kafir harbi*, a hostile stranger or infidel—I was in no way accosted. Despite some noticeable suspicion, I was treated throughout with unfailing courtesy. Several participants were openly friendly when they learned I was from New Zealand, and obviously had no problem shaking my hand and talking to me. Whether this was considered by them good Muslim hospitality towards the uninvited stranger or an expression of the underlying general Indonesian friendliness shining through the aggressive facade of the organisation, it is impossible to say. In any case, concerns for my safety expressed beforehand by some well-meaning friends proved groundless. But these expressions of concern directed my way were a good indication, if not of the true nature of MMI, then certainly of the public perception it 'enjoys'.

living by, *syariat secara kaffah* or *in totalitas* was demanded with unmitigated harshness, as a duty not only of individual true-believing Muslims (*orang orang beriman*) but of the government as well. There was simply the divinely prescribed duty to obey, which required living by the *sharia* 'in any aspects of personal life, family, society, government and country, and in international relations'. This imperative was presented as the divinely commanded *ibadah* (devotion, pious conduct) and as a requirement of leading a dutiful and pure life (*beribada*). It was not a matter for discussion, subject to rational deliberation or democratic choice. In fact the speech plainly brought out a millennial flavour by promising that the total implementation of *sharia* would be like heaven for the believers.

Of the government was demanded that in following the example of the *nabi* (the prophet Mohammed), who had united in his exemplary person political and spiritual leadership, it make itself the instrument for the implementation of *sharia*. The litany of condemnation of the enemies of Islam included the current Indonesian government, harshly chided for its refusal to bow to the demands of true-believing Muslims. The speech was peppered with vicious asides to the West (*Barat*), whose influence was held at least partly responsible for the government's intransigence. But, the speech thundered, Muslim leaders had always fought against the colonial powers of *kafir Belanda*, *Inggris* and *Jepang* (the Dutch, English and Japanese infidels) and had won, by the grace of God, thus holding out promise for the future. This struggle, judging by the tone of the speech, was not of a military nature. It was obviously conceived in terms of a metaphysical struggle, as the West in general was equated in the speech with Satan (*syetan*). The devil's work (*aktivitas syetan*) in battling Islam is never done: now it occurs through the agency of the West. Its influence, derided as a form of modern colonialism but made worse than the rapacious Dutch colonialism of old through its pernicious hold on the Indonesian government, represents *syetan*, who seeks to prevent the implementation of *sharia* by any means. But it is a holy goal (*tujuan suci*) to struggle to implement *sharia* in the nation—*formalisasi syari'ah Islam dalam pemerintahan* (the formalisation of Islamic law in society).

In keeping with its theological-chiliastic style, the speech was liberally spiced with lengthy quotations from the Qur'an. In fact, nearly a third of the eight-page text was made up of quotations from the Qur'an, which supposedly supported and underpinned the polemical points. Given the vague and discursive nature of these quotations, this was, however, not self-evident for the mind untrained in Islamic thinking. The speech also did not shy away from strong words in referring to Western influence, calling it the *kader-kader penjajah kafir yang terlaknat*

(the cursed colonialist infidel cadres) which prevent the implementation of *sharia*. There were no concessions to the multi-religious condition of Indonesia beyond a rather superficial assurance that non-Muslims (*bangsa Indonesia yang non Muslim*) would be treated with 'fairness and justice' (*perlakuan yang lebih baik dan lebih adil*) under the *hukum hukum Allah* (God's laws).

These main dogmatic and rather polemic points were made with sheer endless redundancy and with various rhetoric flourishes, in a manner which holds little appeal to the non-religious mind looking for a reasoned argument in favour of a particular political goal. Given the circumstances at that time of Ba'asyir's imprisonment and the charges he faced, it is not surprising that his presidential address, despite its fiery language, did not call for direct violent action to achieve the goal; it did not mention the word *jihad*, nor did it contain a call for civil disobedience.

With the possible exception of two papers given by men close to Muhammadiyah which used a conciliatory, moderating tone, other speeches delivered at the congress were equally uncompromising in their views and demands, openly xenophobic towards Western society and hostile to non-Muslims. However, perhaps bar one which came close, none openly advocated militancy. Numerous were the unfavourable comparisons between the contemporary times and conditions and the (imaginatively interpreted) era of the *nabi* (prophet) who, as one speaker said, did not shy away from forcing people to embrace Islam for their own good. Especially electric points made by the speakers and presenters of papers were echoed with shouts of '*Allahu Akbar*' and 'Allah' from the audience, with arms stretched into the air, fists clenched or index fingers raised high.

The major themes of the congress were, quite probably, a good reflection of sentiments extant among the more radical Muslims. A common theme among them (but shared also by the more moderate) is the disdain they have for the West, from which particularly the USA was singled out as especially deserving of hatred. The theme of at least two papers was an exposition and condemnation of Western *hegemoni*. Even Muslims who do not feel the need to align themselves with the ideology of a radical Islamic organisation have expressed similar sentiments to me. There are two major reasons for this: first, the concept of *solidaritas*, or *ukhuwa*, causes them to empathise strongly with the fate of Muslims in other parts of the world (*umat Islam* or *umat beragama*).

It is especially the Palestinian issue that causes the greatest annoyance, and it is the role America plays in it, by what is seen as its unswerving support for Israel, that causes most antagonism. But also

more recent conflicts, such as the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq by so-called coalition forces, contribute much towards igniting Muslims' ire. These military interventions are simply seen as ploys of American power politics, either to secure oil interests or, perhaps less rationally, to humiliate Islam.

The other major reason for the virulent dislike is even less clearly defined: it is the perceived immorality, the greedy materialism, the 'junk culture' that emanate from the profligate West, and again in particular from America, and are seen to corrupt Muslim culture, values and the youth. While only a few appeared inclined to perceive this condition specifically in terms of the Islamic concept of the evil of *Jahiliya* (chaos, paganism, barbarity and immorality), the sentiment that this influence was highly undesirable and pernicious was shared almost unanimously among Muslims of any shade of moderation or radicalism. It is rare to find moderate and practical views such as the one expressed to me by a university lecturer, a committed Muslim and former 'radical', who expressed the view that 'If we Muslims don't like what comes from America, why don't we offer something better and make it attractive to our young, instead of just hating America for the garbage it dumps on us?'<sup>18</sup> Interesting was the implied guilt of Muslims who, through their own indecisiveness, allowed this situation to develop—a rather infrequently expressed notion of Western hegemony.

It is the incremental, creeping destruction of Islamic morality and values, of Islam's *Weltanschauung*, through the commercialism, hedonism, consumerism and anthropocentrism surreptitiously insinuated by the unceasing avalanche of Western cultural products that is feared most. Muslim sentiments are implacably opposed to this prospect for the diminution it will necessarily mean to the substance of Islam. In accordance with the Islamic perspective that tends to perceive belief and practice as coextensive, to Muslims their way of life, culture, traditions and religion are inseparable and in fact are one and the same. Hence it is meaningless to them to distinguish whether secularism and anthropocentrism destroy Islam or consumerism and commercialism undermine their traditional way of life.

Few if any I spoke to, though, expressed a need to destroy what they see as the source of the problem, the West. As this would have expressed a 'terrorist' argument, few were prepared to risk articulating this perception. But most spoke of the need to stop this incessant influx by providing a shield against it—and I surmise this

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<sup>18</sup> I have somewhat paraphrased these comments, which were originally given in the Indonesian language.

shield is to be a strengthened belief in Islam and a renewed allegiance to its principles. For some the need is urgent and pressing, as they do not believe in the random effect of Westernisation or globalisation but see a concerted campaign by the West to weaken, undermine and destroy the Islamic world and its mainstay, its source of strength: Islam itself.

Not surprisingly, in the *Weltanschauung* of radical Islam there feature the related issues of human rights and modern democracy as yet other dangerous Western imports. They are at best regarded with suspicion and at worst rejected as un-Islamic and pernicious, and as ideological products of a hostile West—clandestine tools with which to destroy Islam. Both (basic) human rights (*hak asasi manusia*) and parliamentary democracy are seen as ideological forms alien to Islam and superimposed by foreign powers to dominate Indonesia and to alienate the people from Islam. Though moderate Muslims try to argue and teach that *hak asasi manusia* is a concept not in contradiction with the doctrines of Islam and in fact is an integral part of Islam, and equally that *demokrasi* is not too different from the Islamic notion of (*ber*)*musyawarah* (engagement in deliberation to achieve a meeting of minds) and the *syura* system, their words seem to fall on deaf ears among radical Muslims.

The world view of radical Islam, with its intolerance towards any influence considered alien and therefore hostile, is nothing new. Views and activism which derived their moral and social benchmark from their perception of the time and example of the prophet and his companions have always existed within Muslimhood. In Indonesia it is not necessarily the preserve of a spreading Wahhabism, as some commentators seem to believe.<sup>19</sup> Latterly, of course, not least through the intermeshing forces of globalisation and its information and communication network, the messages of radical Islam have been able to spread rapidly and without carrying the label of a particular denomination.

Indonesia's *orde baru* regime had ruthlessly suppressed, and to some extent may even have controlled for its own purposes, any expression of this kind. The price that *demokrasi* seems to have to pay now is a greater social openness towards, and uncontrolled dissemination of, this kind of Islam. A price which the whole world has to pay is the

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<sup>19</sup> For example, Abuza, *Militant Islam*. The same connection is made at [www.cdi.org/terrorism/laskar.cfm](http://www.cdi.org/terrorism/laskar.cfm) (14 June 2002). Van Bruinessen also hints at the influence of Wahhabism, but at the same time suggests that some Muslim ideologues may have arrived at such ideological positions independently; van Bruinessen, 'Genealogies of Islamic radicalism', pp. 124, 125.

formation, on the extreme fringes of this world view, of groups who see themselves locked into mortal combat with the satanic enemies of Islam and who as defenders of Islam believe, given the importance of their task and the hateful nature of a powerful adversary, that they are unfettered by any normal human constraints. The Qur'an interpreted in certain ways supplies the needed justification.<sup>20</sup>

Hefner certainly has a point in arguing that the struggle is not a Huntington type conflict between Islam and the West, but takes place within Islam and between forces of ultraconservatism and neo-fundamentalism on the one side and progressive, pluralist 'Muslim democrats' on the other.<sup>21</sup> But only in a rough abstraction is it possible to divide the two sides; as the various shadings described in this paper demonstrate, there is no strong, unambiguous dividing line between them. Organisations and individuals on both sides seek to strengthen the influence of Islam on the polity, to facilitate a greater influence of Islam on the practice of governance and to use this greater Islamic dominance to stem the effects of globalisation and Westernisation.

It is, however, a macro-conflict between the West and Islam in one sense: namely that, in the perception of radical Islamists regarding the global situation, moderate Muslims, as well as Indonesian society and polity at large, have been corrupted and infected by the evil West, predominantly America. Thus even the 'brotherly' feud among Muslims indirectly engages the West. But on the other hand one must not forget that even modernist Muslims, sharing the same naive identification of globalisation with Westernisation, bemoan the uncontrolled influence of these processes and seek (democratic) means to turn the tide. Huntington's notion is clearly reflected on the Muslim

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<sup>20</sup> This paper does not purport to allocate 'blame' to Islam per se as a source of extremism. Such vilification of the whole religion, all too popular nowadays in Western discourses, reveals a total misperception of this religion. For Indonesia specifically, Effendy, among others, has pointed out Islam's multiple interpretability and applicability in the political discourse; B. Effendy, *Islam dan Negara: Transformasi Pemikiran dan Praktik Politik Islam di Indonesia* (Islam and the State: Transformation in Thinking and Praxis of Islamic Politics in Indonesia) (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1998). The intention here is rather to make a contribution, in a wider sense, to a clearer conception of expressions of anti-hegemonism in the sense that the radicalisation of Islam can be understood to be causally connected with globalisation and the hegemonic forces propelling it. The worldwide strengthening of an Islamic identity is part of a cultural closure, a protecting mechanism in the attempt to preserve cultural integrity against the homogenising and levelling effects of the hegemonically driven globalisation (cf. S. Harrison, 'Cultural boundaries', *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 15, No. 5 (1999), pp. 10–13).

<sup>21</sup> See p. 763 of R. Hefner, 'Global violence and Indonesian Muslim politics', *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 104, No. 3 (2002), pp. 754–765; S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

side in the radical Islamists' Manichean image of an implacably hostile dichotomy between Islam and the West. After all, fanatics of all persuasions see themselves engaged in a struggle of cosmic proportions.<sup>22</sup> Islam predisposes people to perceive the failure of contemporary Indonesia in moralistic terms, thus striking in both 'moderate' and 'radical' Muslims a familiar chord: it is a kind of Orientalism in reverse.<sup>23</sup> Islam's missionary zeal, so well and characteristically represented by *dakwah* (Islamic proselytisation) and its manifold efforts, fails to appreciate the missionary momentum of the cultural Other, the secularised West. Carried by a spirit of pursuing an important, cosmic mission—a spirit antecedent to Islam's rejection of the cultural Other—it must perforce see in another powerful hegemonic entity a serious and satanic threat. The absence of any awareness of subtler nuances of globalisation or comprehension of the complexity of Western hegemony, and the intolerant view this engenders, are counterpoised with an idealised notion of oneself: clearly this is the juxtaposition of two essentialised entities which basically admit to no synergy or synthesis.

### *The Rise of Radical Islam*

The rise, and relative success, of contemporary radical Islam must be seen to be inextricably linked with religious and political circumstances in the wider society: a climate of political volatility in the wake of the collapse of Suharto's *orde baru* regime, which appeared to many to have introduced a power vacuum after years of heavy-handed military dictatorship; the perception that subsequent to it came a decline of law and order; and the introduction of *reformasi* that brought *demokrasi* (parliamentary democracy) and the unfamiliar freedom of holding openly even strongly dissenting political views.<sup>24</sup> Unfamiliar freedoms created not only a sense of uncertainty but, among committed Muslims, a sense of discontent about unrealised political opportunities, which left them bereft of real power. It only aggravates the situation, from a strict Muslim point of view, that *demokrasi* is emphatically based on secularist principles and appears to have little regard for (radical) Muslim sensitivities.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. M. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 145, 216.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. E. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. M. Ressa, *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of Al-Qaida's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia* (New York: Free Press, 2004); Yunanto, *Gerakan Militan Islam*.

*In summa*, the situation suggests that the hypothesis of Islamic radicalism as a site of resistance to state hegemony only for a small marginalised segment of society is not entirely correct.<sup>25</sup> A degree of disgruntledness with the current status quo is widely shared in the Muslim community. Metaphorically speaking, then, spectacular forms of radicalism are only the highly visible tip of the proverbial iceberg. Most Muslims see radical Islam—as distinct from terrorism—as a legitimate, if extreme, expression in a democratic landscape responding to an unsatisfactory situation.

Radical Islam, of course, thrives in a climate of political unease. It is thus in order to outline the political situation in Indonesia that gives rise to Muslim discontent. Perhaps a basic factor has been the historical and chronic unhappiness of devout Muslims about the failure of Islam to rise to a more prominent position in the nation and about the *sharia* remaining on the margin of society.<sup>26</sup> The efforts to

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. N. Hasan, 'Islamic radicalism and the crisis of the nation-state' (2000), available at [www.isim.nl/newsletter/7/regional/1.html](http://www.isim.nl/newsletter/7/regional/1.html)

<sup>26</sup> See B.J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1982); R. McVey, 'Faith as the outsider: Islam in Indonesian politics', in J.P. Piscatori (ed.), *Islam in the Political Process* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) pp. 199–225; G. Fealy, 'Islamic politics: a rising or declining force?' in D. Kingsbury and A. Budiman (eds), *Indonesia: The Uncertain Transition* (Adelaide: Crawford House, 2001), pp. 119–136, and 'Divided majority: limits of Indonesian political Islam', in S. Akbarzadeh and A. Saeed (eds), *Islam and Political Legitimacy* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 150–174. Also, for example, K. Hamayotsu, 'Islam and nation building in Southeast Asia: Malaysia and Indonesia in comparative perspective', *Pacific Affairs* Vol. 75, No. 3 (2002), pp. 353–375.

Muslim grievances about their disempowerment in Indonesian politics. According to Abuza, the rise of radical Islam has to do with the failure of national political economies producing inequalities, poverty, unemployment and corruption. While the economic argument superficially sounds convincing and is widely accepted as a valid explanation of the global rise of Islamic radicalism, it is only a partial explanation. It ignores the increasing Islamisation of the middle class in Indonesia, who is economically enfranchised. This indicates a move of the whole society in the direction of greater Islamic commitment which inevitably also produces a radical wing. Elsewhere this author asserts that a fundamentalist movement grew out of the economic and political turmoil of 1997–1998. In fact Indonesia had a number of fundamentalist movements (usually called Darul Islam) for some time. But these were suppressed by Suharto's military-backed regime and even under Sukarno had been violently broken up. See Z. Abuza, 'Tentacles of Terror: Al Qaeda's Southeast Asian Network', *Contemporary Southeast Asia* Vol. 24, No. 3 (2002), p. 433 & 445; E. Kolig, 'Modernisation Without Secularisation? Civil Pluralism, Democratisation, and Re-Islamisation in Indonesia', *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* Vol.3, No. 2 (2001), p. 30; L. Newland, 'Under the Banner of Islam: Mobilising Religious Identities in West Java', *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2000), pp. 199–222; M. van Bruinessen, 'Genealogies of Islamic radicalism in post-Suharto Indonesia', 'Genealogies of Islamic radicalism in Post-Suharto Indonesia', *South East Asia Research*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2002), pp. 117–154.

expel Dutch colonialism and then to purge the country of the 'spectre' of communism have seen Muslims in the political forefront, but they have remained unrewarded. Muslims did not get closer to the realisation of their aspirations of creating a nation more intensively pervaded by the ethos of Islam. Various Darul Islam movements and Islamic secessionist movements expressed this discontent very visibly in the past. Latterly, again, Muslims see themselves as having had a vital role in ending Suharto's oppressive regime and ushering in the democratisation of the country.<sup>27</sup> Yet, once again, Muslimhood has failed to wrest concessions from an unsympathetic government. After Abdurahman Wahid's flawed administration, sympathetic to (moderate) Islam but in the final analysis inept, had made a few concessions to Islam, the next government was headed by a secularist president, Mrs Megawati Sukarnoputri, with a secularist agenda and little commitment to Islam.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the fact of President Megawati Sukarnoputri heading the numerically largest political party, the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia—Perjuangan (PDI–P; The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle), which seems also to have garnered Muslim votes, her presidency was far from being welcomed by Muslims. A survey revealed that two-thirds of PDI–P voters were *santri* (devout Muslims).<sup>29</sup> Although the self-identification of *santri* versus *abangan* (laissez-faire or syncretistic Muslims) is extremely dubious, it does show that Muslims who consider themselves devout do not adhere to expected voting patterns or have the expected party political allegiances.<sup>30</sup> A columnist with the *Jakarta Post*, in analysing the 1999 elections, surmises that of the 30 per cent of Indonesians who voted for PDI–P, 62 per cent were devout Muslims.<sup>31</sup> Quite sensibly, he adds that in his view this does

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<sup>27</sup> See R. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> At the time of writing, Megawati was still in office. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Megawati lost this year's (2004) presidential elections in which for the first time the nation's leader was elected by direct popular vote. Previously, the president was appointed by parliamentary process, which admitted behind-the-scene power-political machinations not necessarily endorsed by the electorate.

In addition, Megawati had lost her initial appeal as a strong symbol of opposition to the Suharto regime and of pro-democracy, which had made her more acceptable for Muslims earlier on.

<sup>29</sup> W. Liddle and S. Mujani, 'Religion in the 1999 general elections', *Kompas*, 1 September 2000.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Z. Adnan, 'Islamic religion: yes! Islamic political ideology: no! Islam and the state in Indonesia', in A. Budiman (ed.) *State and Civil Society in Indonesia* (Clayton, Victoria: Monash University papers on Southeast Asia No. 22, 1994); B. Pranowo, 'Islam and party politics in rural Java', *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1994), pp. 3–19.

<sup>31</sup> www.thejakartapost.com (28 May 2002)

not indicate that these Muslims are content with the party's secularist agenda.<sup>32</sup> Nor, one might add, with the fact of Megawati's gender. As this columnist implies, even these moderate Muslims would like to see a re-Islamisation of Indonesian society: 'Public life is seen as rife with "social sins" such as prostitution, adultery, gambling, corruption and the like. Religion matters because it eradicates social sins and builds a much more decent life according to one's religious point of view.' He continues:

A popular Muslim view is that our public life is so permissive and 'secular' that it brings about a hostile environment for the devout Muslim ... What ensues from this line of thinking is a seemingly tempting conclusion that, as long as Islamic principles and doctrines don't materialize in public life, the Muslim community in particular, and the whole society in general, will be incessantly haunted by disorder, chaos and disharmony.

Yet, it seems, a sizeable number of Muslims voted for a secularist party.

Apart from diffuse discontent about Megawati's alleged dithering in important matters and her alleged lack of vision for the future of the country—Crouch, with a rather more detached perspective, expresses a similar sentiment when he speaks of her 'holding operation'<sup>33</sup>—there were also her alleged sympathies for communism: being 'her father's daughter', as some people suspected. In particular, Muslims, even those of a more moderate persuasion, bemoaned the fact of her gender, some blaming it as the cause for weak leadership. The Islamic perception that a woman ought not to be the leader of a nation has been expressed to me in various forms, ranging from slight misgivings to doctrinaire and absolute rejection. Several Islamic scholars and teachers cited to me the Qur'an chapter and verse: 'Men are the protectors of women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other',<sup>34</sup> which they interpret as God's command that women may not lead.<sup>35</sup> This in their view beyond any doubt states the

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<sup>32</sup> Khamami Zada points out the significance of Islam in elections. Most candidates and parties refer to Islam in order to attract the Muslim vote, but this does not mean that these candidates or parties pursue an Islamic agenda; Khamami Zada, 'Faktor Islam dan Pemilu Presiden' (The Islamic factor in the presidential election), 10 June 2004, available at [www.kompas.com/kompas-cetak/0406/10/opini/1049092.htm](http://www.kompas.com/kompas-cetak/0406/10/opini/1049092.htm)

<sup>33</sup> H. Crouch, 'Political update 2002: Megawati's holding operation', in E. Aspinall and G. Fealy (eds), *Local Power and Politics in Indonesia: Decentralisation and Democratisation* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003), pp. 15–34.

<sup>34</sup> *The Noble Qur'an*, English translation (Madinah: King Fahd Complex, n.d.), surat 4 An Nisa ayat 34.

<sup>35</sup> Surprisingly, there was no mention of the hadith 'a people who entrust their

divinely ordained incompetence of women for leadership, and especially so for the highest office in the country. The fact counted for little that she had done the *hajj* and may now use the honorific title *haja*. (Presidential pictures, which could be seen in all schools and official buildings and rooms as well as in many private homes, routinely rendered her name as President H. Megawati Sukarnoputri, the H standing for *haja*.) The commonly held view among Muslims seemed to be that she is only a nominal Muslim, that she used to be Hindu before her political ascent and had converted only for *raisons d'état*, that she has communist sympathies and generally cannot be trusted. The views about the vice president, Haji Hamzah Haz, a strongly committed Muslim (with reputedly 'fundamentalist' sympathies), were more divided. But hailing as he does from Kalimantan, he did not seem to be well respected in central Java because of regionalist and ethnic loyalties.

Radical Muslims begrudge especially the fact that the government as a whole refuses to adopt the *sharia* as the basis of state law (*hukum nasional* or *hukum negara*) and totally rejects the idea of introducing the Jakarta Charter (*piagam Jakarta*) into the constitution. The constitution as adopted in 1945 contains an article (*pembukaan Undang Undang Dasar pasal 29 ayat 22*) which allows free choice of religion, instead of referring, as the Jakarta Charter does, exclusively to *ibadah Islam*. Interestingly, I found that few seem to be precisely sure what the introduction of the *piagam Jakarta* would practically mean and what actual consequences this might entail. It seems to be demanded more as a symbolic, almost iconic, act of recognition of the predominance of Islam, rather than because of a clear vision of the practical, beneficial consequences—despite vague statements I heard to the effect that introducing it will save the nation and restore security and decency. The cornucopia of blessings expected to flow from it is chronically so vague in concrete detail as to be wholly mystical. Only a few see this as the necessary basis, and precondition, to create an Islamic state. Less radical Muslims, of course, would still like to see an increased influence of Islam in everyday life and social ethics. This is to be achieved by education and voluntary embracing of Islamic doctrine and not by the enforcement of piety through the state.

Further important ingredients in the social context are the vigorous dynamics of re-Islamisation efforts. The re-Islamisation (*dakwah*) is so

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affairs to a woman will not prosper' (cf. B. Platzdasch, 'Islamic reactions to a female president', in C. Manning and P. van Diermen [eds], *Indonesia in Transition: Social Aspects of Reformasi and Crisis* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000), pp. 336–349.

well entrenched and so ubiquitous in the daily lives of Indonesians that much of it has become virtually unnoticed. Uncountable *pesantren* and *madrrasah*, offering an education to tens of thousands of Indonesians, boys and girls, have become the routine conduits of inculcating an Islamic message in the masses. There is now no university which does not have a *masjid* (mosque) on its campus, or at least a *musyollah* (prayer room); and there is a staggering and ever-growing flood of printed Islamic literature. Beyond that, special efforts—for instance, in the form of *tabligh* rallies often combined with sports events or the staging of popular music—are being made to reach the masses and to gather them around the banner of Islam, though perceptions of what that means and what purpose it serves vary widely.

Some organisations, in the service of defending Islam, specialise in the eradication of immorality (Front Pembela Islam and Lembaga Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia); others specialise in the physical defence of Muslims (Laskar Jihad), and yet others (such as MMI) see as their major goal the creation of a theocracy based on the legal enforcement of the *sharia* (*syariat*). In the perception of the desired significance and future role of the *sharia* there is an important difference. Some see the need to modify and re-interpret this ancient code of behaviour, to apply it selectively and only in some areas of society—perhaps even as a matter of individual and free choice in a multi-religious society (as is Muhammadiyah's official agenda). Others see doing so and making compromises as not only undesirable but illicit in a religious sense. In their view, it would mean tampering with the meaning and content of God's word, a blasphemous act. Insisting on the scriptures' inerrancy and eternal literalist applicability, they demand the *sharia*'s unmodified, unrestricted and total implementation (MMI and Negara Islam Indonesia, NII). As in the rest of the Muslim world, there is a stark, and ultimately unbridgeable, difference between ideological streams that seek to adjust Islam to modern reality and those who seek to adjust the world to Islam. (But in my experience, holding to the latter view does not necessarily mean advocating violent means.)

The proliferation of *dakwah* initiatives, the growth in the fervour to (re-)Islamise society, is an intriguing phenomenon which invites hypothesising about its causes. Apart from the global dimension of the rise of Islamic fervour in response to unwanted globalisation processes and the resultant perceived need to strengthen an Islamic identity,<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> M.K. Pasha, 'Globalization, Islam and resistance', in B.K. Gills (ed.), *Globalization and the Politics of Resistance*, (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 241–254; Harrison, 'Cultural values'; J. Friedman, *Cultural Identity and Global Process* (London: Sage, 1994).

there are also more parochial reasons. Secular education and information through popular media paradoxically seem to stimulate anti-globalisation attitudes by visually impressively delivering a picture of what Westernisation (and more specifically Americanisation) means and helping to develop a long-range, projective, trajectory vision of a future cultural condition that is recognised as undesirable. It is not so much, in my view, social groups on the edge of society (in economic and educational terms), but precisely the opposite, who seem to become the ideologues and agencies of organised attempts to stem the undesired effects of globalisation. A contributory factor is also the democratic opening in the post-Suharto era, which now allows free and organised expression of such initiatives, previously tightly controlled. Concerted re-Islamisation efforts per se are of course not a very new phenomenon,<sup>37</sup> but undoubtedly they have enormously increased in breadth and intensity in very recent years. Paradoxically, in so doing they are making ever better use of opportunities offered through both globalisation and democratisation.

*Dakwah* initiatives of whatever type, in seeking to inculcate their respective vision of a desirable society (in some cases of a decidedly utopian kind) in principle subscribe to the *hadis* (prophet's saying) that 'there is no compulsion in religion'. Within this general framework, to which all organisations at least theoretically adhere for basic recruitment purposes, *pengajian* (persuasive preaching) is a major part and vital ingredient in this endeavour. The 2002 ICG report *How the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network Operates* (pp. 21–22) mentions the intensive recruitment effort of radical Islam. But there is nothing in this method that would principally distinguish it from other forms of techniques used to draw adepts to less radical causes. Like more moderate mainstream organisations (such as Nadlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah), it also tries to spread its message and recruit followers with tactics not dissimilar to mainstream Islam and the organisations representing it.

Islamic revitalisation efforts, and the messianic fervour that inspires them and grows in tandem with them, almost inevitably generate an extreme fringe of individuals who, stirred by radical ideas, not only see it as justifiable to implement ideological goals of an Islam in which theology and politics are inseparable, but are prepared to do so if

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<sup>37</sup> See, for instance, R. Hefner, 'The political economy of Islamic conversion in modern east Java', in W.R. Roff (ed.), *Islam and the Political Economy of Meaning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) pp. 53–78; and R. Hefner, 'Islamizing Java? Religion and politics in rural east Java', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (1987), pp. 533–554.

necessary by force or any means in a brutally Machiavellian sense. In a broad sense, strict and conservative interpretations of Islam make little difference between theology and politics, creed and praxis, and on this basis demand a closer conflation of religious principles and governance, state and society. This perceived need is easily developed then into a violent campaign of *jihad* waged in the defence, and against paranoically perceived enemies, of religion. The notion of an inextricable connection between belief and action becomes both aim and means.

Even reputedly moderate organisations such as ICMI (Organisation of Muslim Intellectuals) have associated themselves with proclamations (reported, for instance, in *Solopos*, 13 August 2003, p. 6) that Islam cannot be separated from politics, that practising Islam of necessity results in specifically Islamic politics (*politik Islam* or *siasah Islam*). And even though it was stated that Allah sanctions party politics, politics as a whole have to follow his commands.<sup>38</sup> The statement, as reported, hastened to add, however, that *dakwah* is supposed to be peaceful and to lead to the introduction of Islamic *sharia* in a peaceful manner.

The view that the practical politics of a (predominantly) Muslim nation should reflect Islamic values (*nilai-nilai Islam*) is widespread, encompassing not only radical Muslims. The vision of a state that is if not theocratic, then at least to some extent hierocratic, is the guiding light for many and is by no means the preserve of an extreme interpretation of Islam. Most conspicuously, at several points in MMI's congress, the *nabi* (prophet Mohammed) and his time were cited as the shining beacon of ideally blending Islam with politics. With much approval, his example of inseparably combining spiritual and political leadership in a perfect show of *din al Islam* (perfect Islamic piety) was frequently held up.

### *Radical Islam and its Ideology*

It is mainly in the realm of objectives that for Indonesians 'radical' Islam becomes distinguishable, if diffusely only, from what one may call, somewhat inadequately, 'mainstream' or moderate Islam. Such classifications, whether used by the people or arrived at by 'scientific' analysis, are essentially highly subjective and possess no hard delineations. The terminological category of 'radical Islam', *Islam garis*

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<sup>38</sup> The quoted reference to Qur'an surat 30 Ar Ruum ayat 31–32 as supporting doctrine, however, makes little sense.

*keras*<sup>39</sup> or *Islam radikal*, is only vaguely definable in terms of an ideological section within the broad spectrum of Indonesian Muslimhood's religious commitment. It is no more than a rather diffuse part of a plethora of more or less dogmatic Islamic initiatives. Perceptions of what constitutes proper orthodoxy (*ibadah, iman*) and orthopraxy (*takwa, rukun Islam*) differ in greater or lesser nuance. But not only do the notions of what constitutes 'true belief' and 'correct practice' differ considerably: the designation of what is 'radical' also depends on subjective and widely varying assessment. Only in a few cases (such as JI, MMI, Laskar Jihad, Front Pembela Islam and the like) is there a more general consensus (among non-Muslims and 'moderate' Muslims) that these stand out as fine representatives of a more radical, harsh or uncompromising kind of Islam. However, calling forms of Islam *Islam garis keras* does not necessarily imply rejection, derogation or even criticism, even among clearly 'moderate' Muslims.

A major principle, which often serves as the dividing line separating radical Islam from moderate forms, lies in the former's more or less uncompromising demand for the wholesale, unmitigated and even literal (*leterlek*) implementation of the *sharia Islam*. Thus it is justified to say that the defining ambitions of 'radical Islam' aim at the establishment of a theocratic state. A much less clear dividing line in this classification is the willingness to use violence in achieving this objective. Some forms of so-called radical Islam renounce violence as a legitimate tactic—for example, MMI makes no official statements in favour of using violence—while others (such as Laskar Jihad and Front Pembela Islam) openly confess to violence as a necessary and legitimate means in the religiously sanctioned pursuit of *jihad*.

Other verbal attributes used in reference to radical forms of Islam are *radikal, fanatik* and, to a lesser extent also and perhaps as a concession to Western terminology, *fundamentalis*. As much as the designation of 'radical' not unusually is a matter of contention, the precise meaning of *fanatik* also depends on personal perception. To my surprise I found that some very committed Muslims do not mind referring to themselves, perhaps with a degree of self-irony, as *fanatik*.

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<sup>39</sup> The Indonesian term *keras* (derived from the Dutch word *kras*, meaning strong and robust) in conjunction with Islam denotes the hard, uncompromising character of a certain version of Islam. It also points to a certain radical nature and connotes undertones of aggressiveness, if not violence, inherent in the kind of Islam so referred to. Some Indonesians use this expression in conjunction with the term *garis*, line, to underline the distinctiveness of this form, which they think is set apart more or less clearly from mainstream Islam, while others prefer the softer expression *aliran*, stream, expressing thus a view of a more fluid, less clearly delineated or compartmentalised condition of Islam and its variants.

In this case of self-labelling it is of course devoid of the connotation of violence, let alone terrorism, which this term may have for others.

The subtle shading and complexity of Muslim ambitions makes classifying them very difficult, as for instance Liddle's account of post-Suharto politics makes clear.<sup>40</sup> 'Modernists' (*Muslimin moderen*) want an 'Islamic Indonesia' just as much as radicals, but find it easier to agree to a separation of state and Islam and are less fanatical in their ambition to enforce piety and shariatise society than other more radical Muslim sections.

A multitude of Islamic organisations, most legal and public (*umum*) but some operating on the margins of legality in some of their activities and leading a rather shadowy existence, are in evidence in and around Solo. Clearly the most conspicuous and ubiquitous is Muhammadiyah, represented by a string of schools, boarding schools, universities, training facilities and other educational institutions. Nadlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia's largest Islamic organisation, is much less conspicuous, keeping a relatively low profile in the cityscape. Other organisations noticeable in one way or another, and maintaining some form of presence, are Ulamat Islam Surakarta, Lembaga Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (LDII), Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII), Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) and Front Pembela Islam (FPI). Allegedly, there are several more organisations more or less hidden from normal public view and busying themselves with their version of *dakwah*. Laskar Jihad,<sup>41</sup> Komite Indonesia untuk Solidaritas Dunia Islam (KISDI) and Gerakan Pemuda Islam (GPI) allegedly also operate in this city but could not be contacted, nor did I see any sign of their presence in the vast, labyrinthine city. Some operate in the semi-shadow on the edge of legality and refuse any approach by outsiders. Even committed Muslims, but of a less radical bent of mind, abhor the chaotic multitude of such organisations or look upon it in bemused and somewhat suspicious amazement. The thuggery of FPI represented by its local branch, the FPI Surakarta, is notorious and generally despised, despite the local branch leader Cholid Hasan's attempt to create a reputable facade. In the name of combating immorality the local branch reputedly displays the same kind of mindless violence as its Jakarta *Pusat* branch. In characteristic fashion, when the *ketua* (leader) Habib Mohamad Rizieq Shihab was sentenced in a Jakarta court to seven months in jail for incit-

<sup>40</sup> See p. 38 of R.W. Liddle, 'Indonesia in 1999', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (2000), pp. 32–42.

<sup>41</sup> See M. Davis, 'Laskar Jihad and the political position of conservative Islam in Indonesia', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (2002), pp. 12–32.

ing violence and provocation against the government, his followers demolished the courtroom and had to be evicted by a strong force of police.<sup>42</sup>

The Jakarta-based Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) maintains a high profile but, due to its supra-organisational function as a religious authority charged with controlling the purity of faith, is not directly engaged in recruiting followers. Its ambition to settle religious disputes through the imposition of *fatwa* (theologically based rulings) in an authoritative manner is usually thwarted by the negative perception many Muslims have of it as an erstwhile tool of the Suharto regime, set up specifically for the purpose of gaining influence on Muslims. Its current secretary, Din Syamsuddin, is better known for his political statements than for his theological wisdom, though of course from a conservative Muslim point of view the two sides cannot be separated: theology is tantamount to politics. However, while some of his pronouncements may seem radical from a Western point of view,<sup>43</sup> many apparently mainstream Muslims consider him a moderate—which he may well be by comparison with some other prominent Muslim leaders.

There can be no doubt that there is a considerable groundswell of more or less radical forms of Islam in central Java, though in the overall mix of Indonesia's religious and ethnic multitude, and among 220 million people (of whom 180 to 190 million are supposedly Muslim), hard-core radicalism of the violent kind (probably) constitutes only a small minority. Jemaa Islamiyah is by far the most notorious and internationally best-known radical phenomenon, fitting best the current political, if stereotypical, label of Islamism and Salafism.<sup>44</sup> It apparently pursues a politically extreme agenda in which a violent conception of *jihad* seems to feature prominently. The major goal rightly or wrongly attributed to JI is the creation of a larger Islamic state (*negara Islam, daulah Islamiyah*) in *Asia Tenggara* (Southeast Asia) comprising Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, the southern Philippines, and perhaps also the southernmost parts of Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See *Solopos*, 12 August 2003, pp. 1 and 13, and *The Jakarta Post*, 12 August 2003, p. 8. *Panjimas*, No. 13, June 2003, p. 116 lists several more Islamic organisations, but I am unsure whether these are active in Surakarta.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Hefner, 'Global violence'.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. J. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>45</sup> Reports such as appeared in *Solopos* (24 July 2003, p. 2), outlining the confession of a former JI member and giving details of this organisation and its goals, have to be taken with a grain of salt. In such cases there is the double uncertainty of unverified,

Seen within the realm of even the more extreme sectors of Indonesian Muslimhood, this is no more than a pipe dream. It certainly is not a vision that is widely shared. Indonesian radical Muslims do not tend towards geopolitical aspirations of establishing a global, nor even regional, 'caliphate' that transcends colonialist state creations. Whether such ambitions would be specifically Deobandist, as Abuza hints,<sup>46</sup> or whether they simply resurrect a much older doctrine of the indivisibility of the *umma* (world community of believers) is debatable. Pan-Islamism of a more or less embracing kind is certainly an integral element of modern extreme Islamist aspirations, but does not feature prominently in the agenda of Indonesia's radical Islam. As far as I can see, the undoubtedly present sense of solidarity with global Muslimhood is rarely, if ever, magnified into a serious political ambition of a global political unification of all Muslims. For instance, MMI and its *amir*, the *ustadz* Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, openly profess to seek the implementation of a theocracy in the Indonesian nation, but do not propound a vision of a geographically more encompassing Islamic state.

### *Muslim Apologists*

There is also a sizeable class of Muslims who refuse to accept the 'bad press' radical Islam receives, mainly through international media. 'Apologists' of whatever ilk doubt the existence of JI and its extreme goals altogether, preferring to consider the media hype a figment of the imagination of the powerless and clueless police searching for someone to blame. Others, characteristically, see the sinister portrayal of JI in the media as no more than an orchestrated smear campaign against Islam, organised by hostile—as they say, 'probably American'—agencies and other *agents provocateurs* operating in the shadows with their own dark motives. Yet others do not doubt the reality of this organisation, but believe that its purpose is not to pursue an Islamic agenda, but simply to destabilise the nation, a tactic pursued either by a vengeful and scheming Suharto and his cronies, or by 'America'. A good example of this perception is the August 2003 *Republika* article which calls JI a 'false flag' put up by the USA and the CIA, both of which are accused of being behind the acts of terrorism

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sensationalist newspaper reporting and so-called confessions which may perhaps have been obtained by dubious police methods and be far from the truth. (Apart from various ICG reports: see, for example, [www.pacificnews.org](http://www.pacificnews.org) 28 May 2002.)

<sup>46</sup> Abuza, 'Militant Islam', p. 13.

in Southeast Asia.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, public opinion does not put it past those agencies to try and break up Indonesia and bring it to its knees for their own sinister aims. Those who blame Suharto hypothesise that it is his plan to re-establish his or his cronies' regime; others suspect an American conspiracy to smear Islam and to weaken and discredit a united Indonesia.<sup>48</sup> Even educated, otherwise seemingly level-headed persons do not believe that an underground secret terrorist organisation with an extreme Islamist agenda is solely to blame for the bomb terror that has befallen the nation. Conspiracy theories implicating a *faktor x* (whereby *faktor x* may be the USA, Suharto and his allies<sup>49</sup> or even a totally unknown force) are discussed with great gusto and conviction. The well-published views of Din Syamsuddin, secretary of MUI, blaming America in this regard, are fairly characteristic of this murky melange of paranoia and misinformation. But he is by far not the only prominent voice cautioning against simplistic explanations of the existence of **JI**. Like countless Muslims, he is concerned that the activities of **JI** might be taken as representative of Islam as a whole. And, also like countless Muslims, his anti-Western sentiments subliminally suggest to him that somehow the West, if ever so obliquely, is to blame.

Let me give here a brief resume of the potpourri of views expressed in the media with a view to exonerating Islamic extremism during the short period of my fieldwork. Rather extravagantly, it was reported of FPI's Cholid Hasan that he thinks the bomb terror is the work of America.<sup>50</sup> Irfan Awwas, MMI's *Kongres* chair, was credited with the view that **JI** is a phoney label; **JI** is not a secret organisation—any group of Muslims meeting together is a *jemaat islamiyah*, an Islamic group, thus expressing doubt about the existence of **JI** as a terrorist organisation.<sup>51</sup> The Islamic magazine *Sabili* ascribed to him the—very widespread—view that **JI** is an invention of the USA to harass and stigmatise (*stigmatisasi*) *Islam garis keras*, if it is not an invention of the Indonesian government itself in a clumsy ploy to distract from

<sup>47</sup> www.republika.co.id (29 and 30 August 2003).

<sup>48</sup> Hefner also mentions the view he encountered that it is the West's ambition to bring about the disintegration of Indonesia because it is a majority-Muslim country (Hefner, 'Global violence', p. 755). But he ascribes this view to radical Islamists, while I found it much more widespread, even among moderate Muslims. He also mentions the alignment of radical Islam with Suharto-nationalism and old regime elites: this is certainly another widely held suspicion.

<sup>49</sup> An otherwise well-informed and very aware opinion was that **JI** had already been formed by Suharto during his regime to be used for special undercover purposes.

<sup>50</sup> *Solopos*, 7 August 2003, p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> *Solopos*, 11 August 2003, p. 1.

domestic political debacles.<sup>52</sup> JI, when conjured up, *Sabili* argued, performs the same function as a scapegoat as Darul Islam did in the *orde lama* (Sukarno's rule). Perhaps even more daringly, *Solopos* attributed the opinion to Awwas that the UN would be responsible for the formation of JI.<sup>53</sup> (This perhaps best shows the extent of the conspiracy paranoia that is rife in central Java.) In headline news, *Solopos* reported MUI as saying that the name JI was invented by the USA to smear the name of Islam and that the police should investigate more carefully before accusing anyone.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, the *Bali Post* published a lengthy interview with MUI secretary Syamsuddin in which he cautions against the use of the label JI as it besmirches the name of Islam.<sup>55</sup> These examples show that there is a wide substratum of opinion which refuses to blame extreme Islam and extends to it the benefit of the doubt.

### *Some Questions of Responsibility in a Democracy*

Distinguishing moderate from radical forms of Islam on the basis of teaching (*pengajian*) methods or on the basis of conversion techniques is not possible. In other words, it would be wholly inappropriate to perceive of extreme Islam using brainwashing techniques, as is often alleged to happen in the recruitment to extreme cults.<sup>56</sup>

As I have said before, *dakwah*, even for radical causes, employs an approach of gentle persuasion. The technique of attracting followers to more radical movements does not appear to be greatly different. MMI, for instance, specifically pointed out that it uses 'open and soft' *dakwah*, emphatically avoiding anything physical, harsh or sinister.<sup>57</sup> Stressing this was obviously an attempt to counteract some bad press ahead of its *Kongres*. Given a groundswell of sympathy with the general aims of radical Islam, there is no need to employ unusual methods of conversion. It is interesting, in this context, to note Zada's

<sup>52</sup> *Sabili*, No. 2, 14 August 2003, pp. 16–21.

<sup>53</sup> *Solopos*, 12 August 2003, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> *Solopos*, 10 August 2003, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> *Bali Post*, 15 August 2003, p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> There are hints in *dakwah* that may resemble mind-altering techniques used in radical conversion. Roy uses words such as 'initiation', 'conversion' and 'psychological internalisation', but a terminology that overemphasises the dramatic and emotional nature of recruitment may be on the edge of hyperbolisation; O. Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 69. However, I cannot speak for techniques that relate to the specific preparation for suicide bombing missions or other dangerous enterprises.

<sup>57</sup> *Solopos*, 11 August 2003.

argument that radical Islam is strengthened by foreign, especially American, provocation and maligning of Islam—especially in the post-September 11 era, when Western opinion-makers and political pundits began to raise accusations against this religion as a whole.<sup>58</sup> Even moderate Muslims will rise to the defence of their faith and in the process become radicalised.

A radical and hard teacher such as Abdullah Sungkar, who had gained a reputation for personal harshness and unpleasantness, seems to be rare. People who knew him told me that besides his usually intolerant and vitriolic views, he tended to rant, spoke loudly and excitedly, and would impose an unbearable discipline on his audience, such as allowing no one to relax, drink or smoke while he spoke, or permitting anyone to get up and leave during his long sermons (*kotba*). He seems to have been regarded as somewhat of an unpleasant person among the usually socially mellow Javanese. Ba'asyir, the co-founder of Pondok Ngruki, though well known for his uncompromising and hard views in matters of Islam and political *Weltanschauung*, seems to fit more the Javanese social mould of pleasantness in his personal approach. Sungkar's and Ba'asyir's personal *dakwah* seems to have been closely intertwined from the beginning. In fact, Sungkar, they said, may have been more inclined towards radical action, and the extremism shown by some may in fact be the legacy of his teaching, a residual effect of his influence, rather than Ba'asyir's doing.<sup>59</sup>

Radical teaching, soft and sweet as it may be, because it can tap into a subliminal stratum of certain sentiments can thus lay the groundwork for a sense of commitment which does not shy from violent action. The bitter, rancorous and bigoted message of political Islam taught by Ba'asyir, and formerly by Sungkar also, may in itself not be terrorist, but is apparently apt to nurture a fanaticism which in some then leads to acts of an extreme nature. Once this mindset has been achieved, such acts are considered justifiable *jihad* against a powerful enemy, or may seem justified in view of the magnitude of the task to defend the true faith and restore it to its rightful place in society. But the question Indonesia is faced with is: how is this kind of radical *dakwah* to be regarded in a liberal democracy—even though for Indonesia this kind of Western-style liberal democracy is a new experience? Inevitably, in my fieldwork conversations the issue

<sup>58</sup> Khamami Zada, 'Islam Radikal dan Tuduhan Terorisme' (Radical Islam and accusations of terrorism), 27 September 2002, available at [www.islamlib.com/id/index.php?page=article&id=159](http://www.islamlib.com/id/index.php?page=article&id=159)

<sup>59</sup> See ICG, 'How the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network Operates', p. 3.

of civil liberties, freedom of belief and thought—and being able to openly express it—as well as individual accountability, occasionally came up.

Radical teachers such as Ba'asyir, through their extreme critique of the political status quo, may be accused of creating an atmosphere of militancy and fanaticism in which a few men of violence flourish. This is not unlike the fact that perhaps hundreds of radical *imams* (spiritual leaders) the world over mix extreme political agendas into their teaching and thus manage to poison a few receptive minds. Several Western countries, of undoubted liberal democratic pedigree, are taking steps against such spiritual leaders believed to act, willingly or unknowingly, as recruiters for extremist organisations. The question necessarily arises: are such *imams* shamelessly exploiting the democratic right of freedom of speech, or, in openly advocating critical opinions, are they to be regarded as part of the healthy and inevitable dialectic that should be allowed to flourish? It is the hallmark of authoritarian regimes to ruthlessly suppress such expressions and to create elaborate judicial and policing mechanisms to do so. Liberal democracies are expected to show more scruples.

Student leaders, radical philosophers and university-based sociologists in the 1960s and 1970s in Europe and North America also stimulated and encouraged extremist social phenomena, but in the end could not be directly held responsible for the violence of student unrest and the formation of urban terrorist groups such as the Red Brigades, Baader Meinhoff and the Weathermen. Their message of a radical social critique—their preaching of an implacably extremist, revolutionary gospel to overturn a 'morally corrupt' and 'unjust' social system—contributed vitally towards bringing to horrible life the murderous antics of such groups. Denying all culpability of such ideologues, of course, would be tantamount to claiming that Ayatollah Khomeini's teaching had nothing to do with Iran's Islamic revolution. Certainly, the Islamist Sayyid Qutb, founder of the Islamic Brotherhood in Egypt, was held accountable to the extent of paying the ultimate price: he was executed—or martyred, as some would say—in 1966. One might argue that such teachers of a radical, revolutionary gospel cannot possibly be so naive and blinkered that, even if they do not intend to stir such destructive consequences, they could in all honesty be unaware of the extent of their influence. However, in considering Ba'asyir's defence, a measure of the social and intellectual responsibility of such individuals has to be balanced with a notion of the freedoms of speech and expression a true liberal democracy has to extend to its citizens. Though unaccustomed to civil liberties, in my experience Muslims by and large show little sympathy with anti-

terrorist laws, believing they see in them the heavy hand of American hegemony and a sinister plot to curtail their religious freedom.<sup>60</sup>

Short of conducting a massive opinion poll, it is impossible to assess the views of the Muslim majority: is Ba'asyir taking civil liberties a step further than most or is he a terrorist pure and simple? One answer certainly lies in the fact that the organisation MMI, which openly seeks the overthrow of the secular democratic state, is entirely legal and is recruiting openly for its cause. Its activity is obviously regarded as no more than the legitimate practical arm of a democratically held political viewpoint. Under current anti-terrorist legislation, this activity can be seen as criminal only if clear evidence of a linkage with illegal action can be established. In the absence of evidence of such a link (with JI or al-Qaida), Ba'asyir and MMI are rightly seen as doing no more than giving expression to a relatively widely held political position in Indonesian society. For, considered in the broader political context of Indonesia, Ba'asyir's views do not stick out as an extravagant extreme, or as a strikingly bizarre feature of the political landscape. It appears so only when seen from a parochial Western perspective. Only in a Western context is the propagation of a God-state the work of a lunatic fringe. What steps should a modern, Western-modelled democracy (in contrast to an Islamic type democracy) take to neutralise a virulent socio-political and religious critique which, however, does no more than seamlessly extend a widely held unease about the situation? These are profound politico-philosophical questions with which Indonesian society has to come to grips.

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<sup>60</sup> Characteristically, the MMI website ([www.majelis.mujahidin.or.id](http://www.majelis.mujahidin.or.id); accessed January 2005) blames heavy-handed US intervention for Ba'asyir's arraignment.

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