

# STUDIA ISLAMIKA

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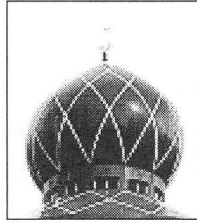
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## Indonesian Fundamentalism?

By: Jamhari

***H**aving being forgotten for so long, Islam in Southeast Asia, since the 80s, has come to the fore. Southeast Asian Muslim, considered as different, unorthodox, syncretic and marginal, who do not speak and write Arabic, now plunder the academic world with a wealth variety of Islamic expressions. The difference is no more viewed as a deviance than as strength of Islam in accommodating the local cultures and traditions. The long process of Islamization of Southeast Asia, mainly through trading activities and Sufism, provides an experience for Islam of patience and appreciation when encountering the difference. Southeast Asian Islam has been identified with peace and dialog.*

*Islam in Southeast Asia provides an example of how a religion develops within a community with a wide variety of ethnic groups. Instead of pushing the local cultures and traditions aside, Islam opens up itself to them and incorporates them into the web of universal Islam. Now one can see the difference of Islamic expressions in Melayu, Aceh, Bugis, Banten, Java, Bugis, Sunda, Patani, Mindanau, Brunai, etc.*

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*Being localized, Southeast Asian Islam does not close its self to the global cultures and civilization. Its relationship with the Middle East, the homeland of Islam, is still well maintained, but the new and fresh relationship with the West is also developed. While the graduates of the Middle East previously dominated the Islamic discourse, now it also involves the Western graduates. As a result, Southeast Asian Islam is now familiar with, and even made a significant contribution to, global issues such as civil society, democracy, gender, human rights and good governance.*

*The face of peace, tolerant, moderate and modern Southeast Asian Islam is shaken by the rise of radical Islam. Now Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia the most important Muslim country in the region, becomes the nest of Islamic terrorism. What can one explain?*

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*Contrary to what one might think, modernization does not bring religions to an end. Rational forces, science and technology and material satisfaction do not marginalized, let alone eliminate, spiritual mystery. Instead, the word now witnesses the increasing religious dedications among religious communities. They spend more and more time in mosques or religious gathering and activities. "Revival" or "rediscovery" of religion are sometimes used to explain these phenomena. However, having a high commitment to religious doctrines, some zealous followers fall into militanism. Islamic militanism in Lebanon and Palestine, Zionism in Israel and the militant Catholics and Protestants in Northern Island are only some of the examples.*

*Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat (Center for the Study of Islam and Society) UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta has done a national wide research to understand the current religious phenomena in Indonesia. The survey, done in 2001, confirms the strengthening attachment of Indonesian Muslims to Islam. While the execution of santri religious rituals (such as fasting during Ramadhan, praying five times a day and pray before starting working) increases, the abangan practices (such as giving ritual offering, burning incense and asking suggestion from a shaman) decrease. (Some of the findings were published by Tempo 29 December 2001). Among other things, the findings can draw some light on the raise of Islamic political parties during the 1999 general election and the long*

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debates, that follow the election, on the implementation of the shari'ah law in Indonesia and on whether or not to reinstate the Jakarta Charter, particularly the words "with the obligation of the followers of Islam to put Islamic Shari'ah into effect" in the UUD 45.

A year later PPIM did another research with bigger sample (In 2001 research only 16 provinces were included, in 2002 all provinces were included) and it shows that the strengthening of religious attachment coincides with the increasing tendency of fundamentalism. More people agree with the application of Islamic government. (Compare the research findings in *Tempo* 31 December 2001 and *Tempo* 29 December 2002. The full output of the research is being processed for publication in a book form). While the majority of Indonesian Muslims are still moderate and tolerant, thanks to the important role played by mass Muslims organization especially NU and Muhammadiyah, the increasing tendency toward fundamentalism begs an explanation. After the collapse of the New Order fundamentalism finds its way gradually into the public sphere. It seems that the suppression of any social and political, as well as ideological, movements detrimental to the New Order establishment had created a time bomb.

Following up the previous findings, PPIM undertakes another research and this time special attention is given to fundamentalism. Needless to say that neither is "fundamentalism," nor other interchangeable terms such as "militant Islam" "radicalism" and "revivalism", capable of fully describing such a complex phenomena. They are not the terms used by the followers of this groups for themselves and, therefore, pejorative. Nonetheless, in this research we still employ these terms to refer to "Islamic group(s) whose fanaticism and ideological basis are intensely geared towards replacing the existing value system in society." In the name of democracy and freedom of expressions, they hold huge demonstration especially in big cities like Jakarta, Bandung and Yogyakarta, and, if necessary, they employ physical force as means of achieving their goals.

The purpose of the research is to achieve a comprehensive and incisive description of the radical Islamic movements in Indonesia, and to identify key features, characteristics, organizations, values, potencies and networks within this movement. Furthermore, it is also aimed at analyzing their interpretation and understanding of religion, and their response to such contemporary issues as religious pluralism, leadership, political affiliations, human rights, gender and good government. While religious

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*understanding is considered epitome, the research will also put emphasis on the diversity of social and economic background of both radical Islam and religious establishment to which the radical Islam opposed. Their interpretation and understanding will be analyzed from various non-religious perspectives. This is important since religious understanding is in fact a response to the surrounding social setting.*

*The following questions are to be answered: When and how were the groups and movements established? What is the nature of the movements (including issues of exclusivity and inclusiveness)? Do they represent or follow the concepts of similar movements previously existed? Do they actively engage or, on the contrary, withdraw from the public life? If they are reactive, to what and to whom are their reactions directed? Do they have charismatic leaders? If they rely on religious references such as the Holy Scripture, how are these references interpreted and applied? How do they respond to other religious groups? How do they respond to the rights of other believers? How do they respond to the religious violence? How do they respond to good governance? How do they react to the existing economic, social and political situation? What do they perceive to be the ideal economic, social and political structure? Do they perceive politics to be a part of religious life? Who they deem appropriate to lead the country? How do they perceive history and human freedom? Where do they get their inspiration?*

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*There are grounds to say that fundamentalism is part of the religious tradition. There will always be some followers who choose the strictest and the most rigid interpretation of the scripture, just like those who choose the loosest interpretation of it. From this perspective, the actors of Bali blast, as well as September 11<sup>th</sup> event, will always find justifications for their actions in the scripture or prophetic traditions. And it its self it is not new. Looking back in the history of modern Indonesia, one can see the DI/TII movement. Particularly strong in West Java, Aceh and Makassar, it sought to apply Shari'ah in Indonesia. This idea is not coming from nowhere. As indicated above, religious understanding and interpretation of the scripture is a product of the complexity of social, economic and political realities. Understanding the religious justifications is as important as understanding social, economic and political background.*

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*Taking these complexities into account, we choose some of the groups, which have been so far identified as fundamentalists. Among them are MMI (Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia), FPI (Front Pembela Islam) and FKA WJ (Forum Komunikasi Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah). In terms of the application of Shari'ah in Indonesia, there is no significant difference among them. However, one should be aware of their differences to the extent that they often dislike each other. Each group has its own background and raison d'etre. The trigger of their formation also varies, and that include political events at national level and Muslims-Christians conflict in some areas in Indonesia. Four target groups will be the focus of the research: (1) the elite and influential groups, (2) the organization in the movement, including their vision and activities, (3) members and followers, and (4) their network.*

*Declared in August 200 in Yogyakarta by thousands of Muslims throughout Indonesia, also attended by foreigner delegates, MMI's main agenda is to establish Shari'ah. Abu Bakar Ba'asyir was elected as the amir (chief) of MMI. Aiming at establishing an Islamic state, they conceive themselves as the heirs of DI/TII movement and it is not unexpected that the followers of DI/TII joint the camp. Unlike other fundamentalist groups, for examples FPI and Lasykar Jihad, MMI choose politic and academic channels as vehicles to achieve the goal. Seminars, books, pamphlets, Internet, lobbying politicians in parliaments, and the like are among their activities. Although MMI was established as a kind of joint-office for all people or parties (regardless of their geographical or state origins) who share the same agenda, in realities it is considered, even by other fundamentalist groups, as being a distinct group with its own agenda. Lately their amir Abu Bakar Ba'asyir was arrested, accused of attempting the murder of Megawati and of being the main actor behind bombings in varies places in Indonesia. He is also linked with the Jama'ah Islam of Southeast Asia, an organization that has agenda to destroy Western, or, to be precise, American, facilities in the region.*

*The FPI's embryo is the Pam Swakarsa (a sort of military civil, civilians recruited by military to do what the police and military do), which was formed to counter balance the students' movements demanding Habibie's resignments and to secure the yearly MPR assembly (meaning, to ensure that Habibie was not forced to resign). Habibie, the newly appointed president at the initiation of Soeharto, was viewed as part of the New Order. Later on, when Habibie's presidency could not be defended,*

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FPI, under the leadership of a young preacher Habib Rizieq Shihab, becomes a pressure group to remove the *maksiat* the religiously bad things such as prostitutions, pubs and liquor stores. PFI is soon able to catch public eyes because of their use of physical violence, if necessary, to achieve the goal. As far as the application of Shari'ah is concerned, FPI joined the force to include Jakarta Charter in UUD 45 through mass mobilization. However, their "expertise" is still the removal of *maksiat*, and this is what PFI differs from other fundamentalist groups such as LJASWJ and Majelis Mujahidin. Declared in South Jakarta on the day of independent day August 17 1998, firmly based on the doctrine of *ahlussunnah wal-jama'ah*, FPI stick to their main agenda *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (propagate the good deeds and prohibit the bad ones). For them, supporting the application of Shari'ah does not necessary mean establishing an Islamic State. They accept the current form of Indonesian state. What they strive for is the formation positive laws for Muslims in accordance with the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

The main figure behind FKAJWJ is Ja'far Umar Thalib. Based, and declared on February 14<sup>th</sup> 1999, in Yogyakarta, FKAJWJ is closely linked with *Jama'ah al-Turath al-Islami*, a semi clandestine group also based in Yogyakarta. Thanks to the economic, political, social and religious crisis, KKAJWJ was born. Like FPI, they support the application of Shari'ah in Indonesia but they do not support the creation of an Islamic state. Their main concern is to restore the respect of Islam, which was destroyed during the New Order. Their focus is to improve the islamicity of individuals. Also like FPI they, they support the presidency of Habibie and considered those who opposed him as being detrimental to Islam, but their main entry to the national stage in year 2000 is their call for Jihad in Ambon to help Muslims against Christians. They formed *Lasykar Jihad* and sent them to Maluku on the precept that Jihad is a necessity to protect the nation from the RMS rebellious group, who were behind the attack against Muslims.

MMI, FPI and FKAJWJ are only three among many similar groups working in Indonesia. They include *Darul Islam*, *Hizbut Tabrir*, *Tarbiyah Islamiyah* and *Ikhwanul Muslimin*. But the questions are: Are these groups a natural and normal outcome of democracy, which requires openness and participation? Are they purely political movements aiming at political and economic gains? Or a cultural movement against modernity? Or a puppet movement to discredit certain other groups? Later, when the

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research is fully done, hopefully more light can be drawn to these questions, as well as others as stated above.

While in waiting, going back to the findings of PPIM research in 2001 and 2002, one cannot underestimate the power of moderate groups in Indonesia. In 20001 about 45% of the respondent (or 42% in 2002) Indonesian Muslim feel that they are part of NU community, while 11% (or 12% in 2002) that of Muhammadiyah. The further interpretation of the relevant data from the questioner reveal that there is a close relationship between the attachment of the people to the Muslim mass organizations and their agreement to civility and democracy. The more they attach to these organizations the more they agree to civic and democratic values. Only small number of Indonesian Muslim community belongs to radical groups. It is correct that one only needs a couple of people to explode a bomb, but to put so much emphasis on the radicalism will potentially look down the majority, and this attitude is counter productive to fight against radicalism.

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