



CIGI PAPERS
NO. 95 — MARCH 2016

A THREAT TO STABILITY? ISLAMIC EXTREMISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM IN INDONESIA

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FORGING A NEW INDONESIA-CANADA PARTNERSHIP: ABOUT THE PROJECT

Project Leader: **Leonard J. Edwards** is a CIGI Distinguished Fellow and former deputy minister of Foreign Affairs (2007–2010), of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (2004–2007) and of International Trade (2001–2004). He has also served as Canada’s ambassador to Japan and Korea.

The Global Security & Politics Program at CIGI is undertaking a timely project to investigate the potential in strengthening and deepening Canada’s relations with Indonesia. Researchers are exploring and building awareness of opportunities for closer bilateral ties in several areas, including business, diplomacy, security and governance. Indonesia represents by far the largest economy in the Southeast Asian region and it has been projected by the McKinsey Global Institute to be the seventh-largest economy in the world by 2030, making it an important partner for Canada in the region. The project aims to lay out a path toward sustainable engagement with one of the key countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Jacques Bertrand is professor of political science and the director of the M.A. program in Asia-Pacific studies at the Asian Institute, Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto, and a core faculty member of the Asian Institute’s Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, of which he was the founding director (2010–2012). A graduate of Princeton University (Ph.D.), Jacques also holds degrees from the London School of Economics and McGill University. His work has focused mainly on ethnic conflict, nationalism and democratic politics in Southeast Asia. He is the recipient of several grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and from the United States Institute of Peace. His books include *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia* (Cambridge, 2004); *Multination States in Asia: Accommodation or Resistance* (Cambridge, 2010); *Political Change in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge, 2013); and *Democratization and Ethnic Minorities: Conflict or Compromise?* (Routledge, 2014).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper evaluates the threat posed by Islamic extremist and fundamentalist groups to Indonesia's overall stability. Although the January 2016 attacks in Jakarta demonstrate the need for continued vigilance, this paper argues that the perception that Islamic extremism and fundamentalism are on the rise is deceptive. In fact, Islamic extremism in Indonesia reached its height in the early 2000s, with radicalized groups participating in religious conflicts in Eastern Indonesia and carrying out large-scale terrorist attacks such as the bombings in Bali in 2002. Since then, the government has undertaken various initiatives to improve the country's security apparatus and counterterrorism measures, leading to a downward trend in the frequency and scale of these events. Presently, the majority of Islamists engage in non-violent activities and pose little threat to the country's stability as a whole. Ultimately, this paper views fundamentalism and extremism as symptoms of broader problems in Indonesia, and argues that addressing these issues should help to further reduce the problems of religious fundamentalism and extremism.

INTRODUCTION

In July 2014, an Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) recruitment video went viral. In this video, a young Indonesian man calling himself Abu Muhammad Indonesia fervently called upon his fellow Muslim brethren to "join the ranks" of ISIS in Syria. The striking image of Indonesian men clothed in black, marching in formation while carrying assault rifles, created a media frenzy. The video also sparked deep fears that the havoc created by ISIS in the Middle East would soon come to Indonesia. These fears were compounded by media reports of ISIS flag-raising at universities and mass protests. In neighbourhoods across the country, Indonesian citizens raised banners telling ISIS supporters that they were not welcome. In a country where Islam has long been characterized as civil, tolerant and moderate, the reaction to the pro-ISIS events highlighted just how fearful the majority of Indonesians are about Islamic extremism in their country.

Are these pro-ISIS incidents a harbinger of increasing religious fundamentalism and extremism¹ in Indonesia? While Muslim fundamentalists and extremists are a part of Indonesia's religious and political landscape, this paper's

view is that Islamic fundamentalism and extremism are not on the rise, nor do they pose many risks to Indonesia's stability as a whole. Islamic extremism reached its zenith in the early 2000s, with extremists participating in religious conflicts in Eastern Indonesia and carrying out large-scale terrorist attacks such as the 2002 Bali bombings. Since then, Indonesia has been seen as a counterterrorism success (Zammit and Iqbal 2015). The capacity of the security apparatus has markedly improved, leading to the crippling of terrorist networks. Many of the people involved in extremist activities in the early 2000s have been killed or apprehended or have directed their activism into non-violent channels. That being said, the January 2016 terrorist attacks in Jakarta demonstrate that security officials must continue to remain vigilant.

Overall, fundamentalism and extremism are issues that need to be managed. The negative consequences of terror attacks by extremists are clear. However, the majority of active Islamists in Indonesia engage in non-violent activities. The consequences of these latter activities are less obvious, but no less important — in fact, many have a significant impact on democratic quality. Ultimately, this paper views both fundamentalism and extremism as symptoms of broader problems in Indonesia — specifically, economic inequality, a disillusionment with democracy and a weak rule of law. Addressing these three broader problems should lead to progress in dealing with the problems of religious fundamentalism and extremism.

AN OLD STORY: ISLAMIC EXTREMISM IN INDONESIA

Indonesian Islam is regularly characterized as tolerant, moderate, civil and pro-democratic by international and domestic observers (Geertz 1968; Hefner 2000). Indonesia's largest Islamic organizations (such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah) are well known for their explicit support of democracy and for promoting interreligious tolerance and harmony. For example, as an act of interreligious solidarity, the youth wing of Nahdlatul Ulama stands guard over churches during their Christmas services to deter acts of violence. However, this dominant narrative of Indonesian Islam suppresses an important part of the story. Fundamentalist and extremist segments have long co-existed with their moderate and tolerant counterparts.

The political place of Islam in Indonesia has been a point of contention since the founding of Indonesia as a country in 1945. More precisely, when a general principle of monotheism was included in the constitution over a more explicit inclusion of Islam, many Islamists who fought for independence felt betrayed. Many of these Islamists joined the Darul Islam (DI) rebellion (1948–1962), engaging in

¹ The term "religious fundamentalists" refers to those who seek to defend the purity of a religious tradition against secularism. This religious tradition is based on a selective — but literal — interpretation of holy texts. Islamists are a subset of Muslim fundamentalists, seeking to order state and society with the teachings of Islam. Fundamentalism is a particular set of ideas that is distinct from practice; in other words, fundamentalist groups are not necessarily violent. This paper uses the term "religious extremists" (or simply "extremists") in reference to fundamentalist group members who use violence to defend their theology and fulfill their mission.

jihād² to establish the Indonesian Islamic State. Both DI and its later incarnations (for example, Komando Jihad) used violent tactics in an attempt to achieve their political vision, which included the establishment of sharia law. While the DI rebellion was ultimately defeated, the dream of an explicitly Islamic Indonesia has continued to flourish among some segments of the Indonesian population.

In fact, there is a great deal of historical continuity as regards the profile of fundamentalists and extremists. DI's strongholds during the 1950s remain strongholds of fundamentalism and extremism today (International Crisis Group 2005). Furthermore, most of today's extremist groups can be directly linked to DI members. For example, many members of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), the terrorist group responsible for the Bali bombings and with links to al-Qaeda, were the descendants of original DI members. Groups such as the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), Laskar Jundullah and Angkatan Mujahidin Islam Nusantara are similarly connected to the DI lineage. Outside of familial and geographic continuity, the tactics used by today's Islamist groups are also not altogether new. For example, jihadists associated with the Komando Jihad operation in the 1970s bombed entertainment venues and churches in Sumatra and Java. These targets and methods are not that different from the targets and methods used by contemporary groups. Similarly, leaders of DI would rob non-Muslims to fund their movement (a practice called *fa'i*); groups such as JI also use this method to raise money for their activities (ibid., 5). Overall, Islamic fundamentalism and extremism are not new phenomena. Fundamentalists and extremists then and now have similar backgrounds, target similar places and use similar methods.

What is new, however, is Indonesia's political context. Two factors in particular contribute to the appearance that Islamic extremism is a new and growing phenomenon. First, under President Suharto's authoritarian New Order regime (1967–1998), the press had difficulties reporting events involving ethnic, religious, racial and tribal issues (known collectively by the Indonesian acronym SARA). Suharto's position was that a public discussion of these issues would inevitably lead to chaos, so he banned newspapers from explicitly publishing such stories.³ Consequently, incidents of religious and ethnic violence could have been underreported. As Ashutosh Varshney, Mohammad Zulfan Tadjoeddin and Rizal Panggabean

(2008) note, this was especially true for national newspapers. Today, no such limits on the press are in place. Increased coverage of religious extremism might suggest to some that it is at an all-time high in Indonesia, but this perception might be skewed by the stark differences between the institutional context then and now. In short, just because there are more news stories about religious extremism does not necessarily mean that it is on the rise.

Second, under the authoritarian regime, security forces had more leeway with regard to the tactics they used to address extremism and fundamentalism. During the 1970s and 1980s, political Islam of all stripes was heavily repressed, as it was seen as a potent threat to the regime's power. In addition to implementing measures that severely limited the political space of Islamic parties and organizations, the regime was able to easily get rid of individuals whom they deemed "subversive" or who they believed posed a threat to the stability of the state. Many of these so-called "subversives" were Islamic extremists and fundamentalists. One such case was Irfan Awwas Suryahardy, one of the leaders of MMI and the younger brother of notorious terrorist Abu Jibril. The editor of an Islamist newsletter in the 1980s, Suryahardy was charged with subversion for disseminating militant literature and served nine years in prison (Abuza 2007). Such tactics are less viable in a democratic system, where freedoms of speech and the press are considered crucial and protected. Under a democracy, groups have the right to express their opinions as long as they follow the law — no matter how repugnant Western and Indonesian observers might find their ideas. Overall, it is not particularly surprising that Islamist groups are now more visible and active, given the new institutional context.

ISLAMIC EXTREMISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM IN DEMOCRATIC INDONESIA

In May 1998, after weeks of protests, Suharto stepped down after 32 years in power. His resignation marked the beginning of democracy in Indonesia. While the quality of democracy in the country could be improved upon (for example, high-level corruption is rampant), scholars and other observers generally agree that Indonesia's overall democratic progress has exceeded expectations and has developed relatively well from a comparative perspective (Aspinall and Mietzner 2010). That being said, the process of democratization also provided greater space for Islamists to mobilize and act, during a time when state capacity was weakened and overburdened.

The Rise and Fall of Jihadists

The early days of democracy were the heyday of extremism and jihad in Indonesia. Although communal violence erupted across the Indonesian archipelago after the end

2 It is important to emphasize that "jihād" is the Arabic word for "struggle" and is a highly contested term. Broadly, it is the work one does to follow Islamic teachings (for example, doing good works). However, the term has been misappropriated by militant Islamist groups to mean violent warfare. This is certainly true of Salafi-Jihadism, a hybrid ideology of groups such as al-Qaeda. For a good conceptual overview of terminology, see Hegghammer (2009).

3 For an in-depth discussion of the press in Indonesia during the New Order regime, see Hill (2007).

of the New Order, it was the Christian-Muslim conflicts in Maluku and Poso that attracted the participation of Islamic extremists from across the country. Several jihadist groups formed to fight alongside their Muslim brethren. For example, Laskar Jihad established a paramilitary training camp in Bogor, West Java, soon after the conflict erupted and sent thousands of well-trained and well-armed fighters to Maluku. The involvement of these extremist groups drastically altered the dynamics of the conflicts in Maluku and Poso (Bertrand 2004). Prior to the arrival of these external volunteers, Christians and Muslims were arguably matched in strength. The arrival of support from Laskar Jihad, Laskar Mujahidin and other groups gave the Muslim “side” an advantage over their Christian counterparts. Although most of these groups were officially disbanded after the resolution of the Poso and Maluku conflicts in 2001 and 2002, respectively, these conflicts were crucial in building networks among those with extremist leanings. Some of these relationships were durable, leading to further extremist acts in subsequent years.

Some groups carried out large-scale terrorist attacks on Indonesian soil. Members of JI killed 202 people in the 2002 Bali bombings, the attack that is most remembered internationally. Among the most coordinated and geographically widespread attacks were the Christmas Eve bombings of 2000, in which bombs were sent to churches in 11 cities in Java, Sumatra, Batam and Lombok and set to go off at the same time (International Crisis Group 2002). An offshoot of JI led by Noordin Top also helped carry out a series of bombings on Western luxury hotels and embassies in Jakarta: the Marriott Hotel in 2003, the Australian embassy in 2004, and the Ritz-Carlton and Marriott hotel bombings in 2009 (International Crisis Group 2009).

The dates of extremist violence are clustered in the early 2000s. Since then, there has been a downward trend in the frequency and scale of such incidents (Tomsa 2007). Bombings have continued but they have been much smaller in scale, with few or no casualties. For example, one of the few church bombings in Indonesia in recent years happened in Sulawesi in 2013. The perpetrators threw Molotov cocktails at three churches in the early hours of the morning. While there was significant property damage, it is important to note that the perpetrators used small explosives and attacked at a time when it was unlikely that people would be hurt. In other words, the large-scale terrorist attacks of the past are now quite rare.

The decline in the frequency and scale of extremist attacks can be explained by a number of factors. One of the most important is an increase in the willingness and capacity of the security forces to prevent religiously motivated violence and to apprehend the perpetrators. In the early days of democracy, security forces were often ineffective. As a result, extremist groups were able to access weapons,

raise funds, and recruit and train members for warfare without much difficulty. In fact, much evidence exists that security forces collaborated with jihadist groups during the Poso and Maluku conflicts (Bertrand 2004, 127). At worst, the police and army actively allowed jihadist troops and weapons to enter conflict zones in violation of a presidential decree; at best, they turned a blind eye. Even when the neutrality of the security forces was not in question, their capacity was weak, due to several factors: poor training; a lack of coordination between the police, the military and intelligence agencies, all of which were responsible for responding to terrorist threats; and infighting between various security bodies.

It was the Bali bombing that led the president at the time, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, to focus on improving counterterrorism measures. One initiative was the creation in 2003 of Densus 88. In coordination with local police, this elite counterterrorism detachment, which was partially trained and funded by Western states, arrested, jailed or killed more than 200 people involved in extremist activities. Among those captured were the most radical of JI leaders and the key strategists behind the various bombings (among them, Hambali and Noordin Top). Densus 88 has not been without controversy, as it has been accused of using torture and other forms of human rights abuses to hunt down terrorists. It is difficult to deny, however, that the country’s policing capacity has increased since the early days of democracy. JI networks and affiliate groups still exist, but effective policing has essentially crippled them, making it significantly more difficult for them to carry out attacks. Some work remains on ensuring that such antiterrorist units respect citizens’ rights.

Another factor in the decline of extremist attacks’ frequency and scale, besides improved policing and the decimation of the more radical subset of JI, is that the remaining members of JI and like-minded groups have themselves become less inclined to carry out large-scale attacks against civilian targets. There have long been intra-group tensions around the bombing of civilian targets outside war zones — even prior to the 2002 Bali bombings — and these disagreements have deepened in the aftermath of these attacks (Chernov Hwang 2012). Many JI members realized that many of the casualties of the luxury hotel bombings were Muslim workers (for example, hotel staff), a consequence they found to be morally objectionable (Kingsbury 2005). Furthermore, JI soon realized that there was little public support for these acts of violence, which compromised JI’s ability “to win support among the broader Muslim populace” and, consequently, to achieve its overarching goals (Chernov Hwang 2012, 3). As a result, many members of extremist groups have turned to other methods and organizations in the last few years.

The most prominent of these is Jama’ah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), founded in 2008 by Abu Bakar Ba’asyir, the former leader of JI and MMI. JAT counts many former members of

extremist groups as part of its leadership and its rank and file. This fact is unsurprising, given JAT's ideology and goals, which include the establishment of a caliphate and a duty to prepare for, and carry out, jihad against enemies of Islam. However, unlike JI and its splinter groups, JAT is an "above ground" organization that carries out jihad in non-violent ways. Specifically, JAT seeks to spread Salafist ideas⁴ through *dakwah* (that is, proselytization), participation in protests, and dissemination of publications. In short, while the foundational ideology of these groups remains radical, the groups themselves are explicitly non-violent (International Crisis Group 2010).

It is important to acknowledge that not everyone has turned away from the use of violence. Small fragments of the extremist networks continue to function. However, for the reasons mentioned above, the forms of violence they employ are quite different. The extremists who are still operating tend to target police officers or rob stores (Zammit and Iqbal 2015). As indicated by the scale and the targets of these later acts of violence, the Indonesian jihadist movement is now a shadow of its former self.

What about ISIS? Does the prominence of ISIS supporters contradict the argument that the strength of extremism is on the decline? After all, the January 2016 attacks were the first major acts of terror in years. According to reports of this incident, a suicide bomber detonated himself at a Starbucks across the street from the Sarinah complex, the earliest foreign-style shopping mall in Indonesia. Following this first explosion, several other explosions occurred in the area. Attackers also engaged in a gunfight with the police. In all, three civilians and five of the perpetrators died (Yi and Harding 2016). ISIS soon claimed responsibility for the attack, and police suspect that Bahrūn Naim, an Indonesian currently in Syria, planned the attack (Pisani 2016).

The January 2016 attacks are troubling. At the same time, it is important to resist drawing hasty conclusions about levels of extremism in Indonesia as a whole from this incident. All indicators suggest that support for ISIS in Indonesia is very low. For example, the number of Indonesians going abroad to fight alongside ISIS remains comparatively small (Delman 2016). According to the 2015 Global Terrorism Index, a high-end estimate of the number of Indonesian foreign fighters is less than 200. In comparison, conservative estimates note that more than 1,000 French citizens have gone abroad to join ISIS — and France has a significantly smaller Muslim population than does Indonesia (Institute for Economics and Peace 2015).

Furthermore, the Sarinah attacks, although gruesome and horrifying, remain quite distinct from the acts of terror of the past. The attackers did not seem to choose a target intended for maximum carnage. The attackers also did not shoot indiscriminately, and early reports indicate that the terrorists focused on the police station in the area. This target choice would seem to fall in line with current trends (Soloway 2016). These facts suggest that Indonesia is not necessarily regressing in the area of extremism, while the January 2016 attacks provide a reminder that security risks remain.

Extremism in Indonesia might very well be at a crossroads. Experts have observed that ISIS's perceived successes have played an important role in rallying support for the organization (Rose 2015). To ensure the continuing decline of extremism in Indonesia, the state must find a way to stymie further attacks in order to undermine narratives of success. To do so necessarily requires state bodies to evolve. For example, as Navhat Nuraniyah (2015) notes, the government has had difficulties in developing coherent strategies for dealing with foreign fighters. Although Indonesian fighters are few in number, their movement across borders is a security threat that needs to be addressed. After all, some of Indonesia's most famous terrorists (such as Hambali) were trained and further radicalized abroad. What is more, the suspected mastermind of the January 2016 attack, Naim, is a foreign fighter in Syria.

The Age of the "Hard-Liner"?

The grave consequences of terror attacks are clear and pressing. However, as this paper has noted, the majority of Islamists who are active in Indonesia primarily engage in non-violent activities. In particular, those Islamic fundamentalists who are "hard-liners"⁵ are highly visible and politically active. The costs of their activities are indeed less conspicuous than the costs of terrorism. However, these costs are also significant. Specifically, many of the activities of Islamic hard-liners have an important impact on democratic quality.

Hardline groups often hold ideologies similar to their extremist counterparts'. Both group types have the abstract goal of establishing a political system based on sharia law and also seek to defend Islam. What distinguishes extremists from hard-liners are their tactics. Extremist groups such as JI use explicitly violent methods to meet their goals, providing military training (such as bomb making) to their members. Hardline groups use methods that are qualitatively different. Although the activities of hard-liners occasionally turn violent (as when a protest devolves into a small-scale riot), violence is not a central

4 Salafism is a religious movement that emphasizes a return to a doctrinally "pure" Islam. It is largely non-violent, although extremist groups do often self-identify as Salafist (for example, JI and al-Qaeda).

5 Islamic hard-liners are essentially militants who seek to order state and society with the teachings of Islam. Their repertoire of political actions tends to be aggressive and confrontational.

part of their repertoire.⁶ When they carry out violence, it mostly takes the form of small riots and vandalism. Thus, while the activities of hard-liners have resulted in property damage and left many of their victims with physical and mental trauma, serious injuries and deaths resulting from this activity is rare.⁷

The most well-known group of hard-liners in Indonesia today is the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI). The FPI wields a great deal of influence, due to its ability to mobilize large numbers of people. A key FPI leader has stated that the organization's purpose is to "defend the rights of the Muslim *ummah*, [to ensure that] Islam is valued as a religion," and to oppose the influence of liberalism in Indonesia.⁸ The FPI and other hardline groups are frequently featured in the news, meting out their form of vigilante justice. One of their most important goals is ridding the country of "centers of vice" (Wilson 2014, 250) by conducting hundreds of raids on brothels, bars and dance clubs.

Hardline groups are also interested in the issue of apostasy. Although they have sometimes targeted churches, for the most part they have focused on Indonesia's Ahmadiyah communities. Ahmadiyah is a sect of Islam that believes that Muhammad is not the last prophet — a foundational tenet of mainstream Islam. This theological difference of opinion means that many Muslims think that Ahmadis are heretics. The FPI has held massive protests to pressure the government to ban the sect, forcibly closed Ahmadiyah mosques and pressured Ahmadis into converting back to the "true" Islam. In many ways, the FPI and other hardline groups have achieved their goals with regards to the Ahmadiyah. The sect's ability to practise was legally curbed at the national level in 2008 and was banned in a number of provinces (for example, West Java and South Sulawesi) and districts or cities (such as the city of Pekanbaru in Riau Province). While hard-liners were not the only forces involved in the charge against Ahmadis

in Indonesia, they were a significant factor. Their actions around the Ahmadiyah issue increased its political salience and their unruly protests worried many leaders who sought to maintain stability by restricting or banning the practice of what they perceived to be the source of the problem: the Ahmadis' "deviant" beliefs (Crouch 2014).

While hardline groups do not threaten Indonesia's stability to the same extent that extremist groups do, their actions have had negative effects on democratic quality⁹ and governance. Organizations such as Freedom House (Prud'homme 2010) and Human Rights Watch (2013) have argued that these bans violate fundamental human rights, such as the freedom of conscience. The failure to protect religious minorities such as the Ahmadiyah is thus problematic from the perspective of human rights. Furthermore, the protection of minority rights is central to the concept of substantive democracy.

Both state and non-state actors are aware of the need to address the issue of hard-liners — especially when these groups engage in rioting, intimidation and vandalism. There have been — and continue to be — attempts to disband the FPI and like-minded groups. The present governor of Jakarta, Basuki "Ahok" Purnama, most recently sought to ban the FPI after its protests against his inauguration in 2014 turned violent. The FPI has managed all attempts to shut it down and is perceived to be highly resilient. Perhaps attempts to address the issue of hard-liners by banning these groups are misguided. After all, members of the FPI are entitled to exercise their democratic rights through activities such as protest. Arguably, the state should instead focus on strengthening law enforcement to limit the criminal aspects of hardline activity.

EXTREMISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM: SYMPTOMS OF LARGER PROBLEMS?

While fundamentalism and extremism will always be a part of the religious and political landscape, they are exacerbated by three broader problems in Indonesia: economic inequality and a lack of economic opportunities, disillusionment about democratic governance and a weak rule of law. These problems are structural and institutional. As the scholarship indicates, the processes

6 The line between hardline and extremist groups is not always clear, given their broad ideational similarities. For example, although JAT is an above-ground organization and maintains that it is non-violent, counterterrorism units discovered a military training camp run by JAT, and several people affiliated with JAT have carried out violent incidents. As an illustration, the perpetrator of a mosque bombing in Cirebon, West Java, had spent time in JAT-affiliated institutions (International Crisis Group 2010). The fact that people can migrate between extremist and hardline groups creates further ambiguities. However, despite these ambiguities, hard-liners can be treated as distinct from extremists, on the basis that hard-liners' tactics are generally non-violent and that any violent acts they do carry out are on a significantly smaller scale than those of their extremist counterparts.

7 In July 2013, a woman was intentionally hit by a car, and died, during an FPI raid in Kendal, Central Java. The incident was widely reported in the local media. To the best of our knowledge, this is the only death resulting from FPI activities in the last 10 years.

8 Interview by Jessica Soedirgo, West Java, September 25, 2014.

9 Measuring democratic quality is highly contentious. This paper uses the measures proposed by Larry Diamond and Leonardo Morlino (2004). Beyond procedural dimensions (such as free and fair elections), a *quality* democracy must fulfill the following dimensions: quality of results (good governance) and quality of content (political, civil and social rights). Most relevant to this paper is the dimension of quality of content.

of radicalization¹⁰ are complex and cannot be reduced simply to economic inequality or poor policing. While the demographic characteristics of members of hardline and extremist groups tend to be known (Hegghammer 2013), it is difficult to predict which individuals will ultimately join. Recruitment to and membership in hardline or extremist groups are informed by, for example, social networks (Sageman 2004) and political socialization (Della Porta 1988). That being said, the pool of individuals available for recruitment is heavily influenced by these structural and institutional factors. Addressing these broader problems will make it more difficult for hardline and extremist groups to recruit members, thereby reducing the threat of religious fundamentalism and extremism in the long run.

Economic Inequality

The contrast between the world of the rich and the world of the poor is stark in Indonesia, as it is in many developing economies. Although Indonesia's economy has been growing and poverty has decreased, economic inequality is rising. To give one example, Indonesia's Gini coefficient rose from 30 to 41 between the years 2000 and 2013 (World Bank 2015). Poverty is not uncommon in the global South, but high levels of economic inequality and the lack of economic opportunities (as evident in, for example, high levels of youth unemployment) have contributed to extremism and fundamentalism in Indonesia.

There is an obvious socio-economic dimension to extremist and hardline groups. Members of the FPI, for example, come from three constituencies: poor, unemployed men from urban areas; lower middle-class students and graduates from Islamic educational institutions; and traditional Islamic leaders, many of whom have been victims of rapid urbanization (Wilson 2014). In short, members of the FPI tend to be people who are economically marginalized. This membership profile is not a coincidence; the ability of hardline groups to recruit members from the urban and rural poor suggests that there is an economic dimension to the phenomenon. While theology does play a role in recruitment and membership, it is not the only driver. After all, while many of the FPI's claims are framed in religious terms, there is a strong class element to their demands. In addition to campaigning against vice and apostasy, members of hardline groups will also rail against the injustice of income inequality and its consequences (ibid., 265).

More practically, membership in these groups — extremist and hardline — provides economic opportunities. Many hardline groups operate protection rackets. The FPI, for

example, extracts rents (for instance, "haram levies") from business owners and places of worship. There are also many stories about FPI members being hired to intimidate parties in land disputes or to mobilize mass protests at the behest of politicians or companies (ibid.). Economic incentives are also used by recruiters for extremist groups. A recent ISIS returnee noted that he joined ISIS because his recruiter told him that all of his debts would be paid and that he would receive a large salary (Sundryani 2015). Although the dynamics of hardline and extremist groups are not exactly the same, the financial benefits that membership brings in both group types can be attractive for those with few economic opportunities.

Membership in hardline and extremist groups can bring other benefits too. Specifically, it confers social status and moral legitimacy for those on the margins. Despite their small size, these groups are able to exert influence because of their public visibility and institutional structure.¹¹ In addition to forcing the government's hand on issues such as the Ahmadiyah, these groups have been able to get international events cancelled or moved (for example, the Miss World Finals of 2013) and have forcibly closed businesses. Thus, membership can be an empowering experience, one that bestows clout and respect in the community. In other words, membership in fundamentalist and extremist groups can be a channel for social advancement for pockets of Indonesia's impoverished population (Wilson 2014).

Disillusionment with Democracy

Many pinned their hopes and dreams for Indonesia on the transformative power of democracy. However, these hopes and dreams have not all reached fruition. While there have been numerous positive changes in the country, democratic governance is seen by many to have increased corruption, exacerbated economic inequality, and lacked leadership in providing social protections for the poor. While some have expressed optimism about the future based on the recent ascent of political outsiders such as Joko Widodo, the majority of Indonesians feel alienated from the government and that it is not politically efficacious (Jackson 2014). In short, for many Indonesians, democracy has become associated with poor governance, which has led to disillusionment with democracy.

This disillusionment has led some people to push for an alternative system of governance. Some members of hardline groups have expressed the common sentiment that an Islamic system is preferable to democracy because an Islamic state would provide services such as free health care and education. These are governance outcomes that

10 As Neumann (2013) demonstrates, there is no consensus over the meaning of the word "radicalization." Following the definition by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (2009, 1), this paper uses the term to refer to a cognitive process whereby an individual's belief moves "from moderate mainstream beliefs to extremist views."

11 For example, International Crisis Group (2012) and Human Rights Watch (2013) have both argued that decentralization has provided hardline groups with more access points to the state, thus increasing their influence.

are achievable within a democratic system, but these members dismissed democracy because they did not trust it. They did not believe that democracy would actually lead to outcomes that would protect their welfare, so they sought to establish a system that would materially improve their lives.¹²

While disillusionment with democracy does not mean that Indonesia's current system is at risk, it is a problem. Poor governance outcomes have diminished the legitimacy of the current system among some segments of the population, which has indirectly fuelled the Islamist cause. Better governance outcomes that improve the lived experiences of Indonesians could ameliorate some of the grievances driving participation in fundamentalist and extremist causes.

Islamists have been disappointed by democracy in other ways. Many observers have argued that political Islam has "failed" in Indonesia. Islamic party vote share and support for sharia law have been on the decline since 1998 (Mujani and Liddle 2004; Tomsa 2012; Aspinall and Mietzner 2014). Their poor performance can be partially attributed to a string of corruption scandals involving leaders of Islamic parties. More generally, however, their loss in popularity is due to the fact that Indonesian Muslims — even those who consider themselves highly devout — largely do not support the Islamist project. Tomsa (2012) argues that the moderation of the Islamist Prosperous Justice Party's platform was likely driven by an attempt to capture a larger share of the vote. The failure of political Islam has arguably driven fundamentalists to seek out alternative means to achieve their ends. While a disproportionate influence by Islamists on politics and public policy is undesirable, there are likely ways for fundamentalists and extremists to be more included in formal channels to curtail their extra-legal impulses.

A Weak Rule of Law

Indonesia's weak rule of law is well established (Aspinall and van Klinken 2011; Horowitz 2013). Criminal activity such as graft and racketeering are commonplace and criminals rarely face consequences for their actions. This is also true for crimes committed by hardline groups. As mentioned, although hard-liners do not espouse violence, some of their protests do devolve into physical fights and vandalism. In these cases, they have faced no significant consequences. For example, when 50 members of the FPI completely destroyed a church in Sumedang, West Java, in 2013 for operating without a legal permit, nothing happened to the vandals. Egregiously, in response to pressures from hardline groups, the pastor of the vandalized church was

instead jailed for two years for inciting social disharmony. Along the same lines, when three Ahmadis in the town of Cikeusik were brutally beaten to death by a mob, the lead perpetrators were sentenced to only three to six months in prison. These incidents are not isolated events, but part of a pattern (Human Rights Watch 2013).

The fact that state officials frequently succumb to pressure from hardline groups means that there is little incentive for groups to stay within the confines of the law. More problematically, it is an open secret that hardline groups such as the FPI often "partner" with politicians, the police and the military. In a memo published by WikiLeaks, former Chief of Police Sutanto noted that he "found it useful to have the FPI available...as an 'attack dog'" and allegedly provided some funds to the organization (Saragih 2011). While it is clear that the FPI is autonomous, its links with people in positions of power — most of them also engaged in illegal activity — have made it easier to do what they please. Overall, the state is undeniably complicit in allowing fundamentalist extra-legal activity to thrive.

The success of counterterrorist units in addressing Islamic extremism highlights the importance of the courts and the police in curtailing violence. However, compared to improvements in counterterrorism, policing of hard-liners remains weak. Having a strong rule of law would help curtail the most problematic aspects of Islamic fundamentalism in Indonesia. After all, most people do not deny that fundamentalist groups should be able to exercise their democratic rights. What they do object to is their illegal behaviour. A stronger rule of law would deter some of the violent excesses of fundamentalist activity.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this paper takes the view that Islamic extremism in Indonesia is less of a destabilizing force in 2016 than it was 10 years ago, when large-scale terror attacks seemed to occur with alarming frequency. In the last decade, the networks of Islamic extremist groups have been weakened, due to improved policing and internal dissent about tactics. As a consequence, many members of extremist groups have joined above-ground organizations. While the actions of these fundamentalists can have detrimental effects on democratic quality, they remain largely non-violent.

Nonetheless, the attacks in January 2016 are a reminder that the threat of extremism and fundamentalism remains. To ensure the continuing decline of extremism in Indonesia, counterterrorism strategies must evolve. Indonesia also needs to address some of the broader structural problems that contribute to extremism and fundamentalism — a fact that President Joko Widodo acknowledged in his statements on the Sarinah mall attacks (Friedman 2016). In the long run, a more equitable distribution of wealth and better governance outcomes might reduce the ability of

12 These views were expressed in a series of face-to-face interviews with 10 hardline group members (including one ex-extremist), conducted by Jessica Soedirgo in Jakarta, West Java and North Sumatra from June to December 2014.

extremist and fundamentalist groups to recruit into their ranks. As argued, while some people join hardline and extremist groups for ideological reasons, many others are further incentivized by the economic and status benefits of group membership. Improved economic conditions and better governance outcomes might help to remove these incentives for some — although not all — potential recruits to fundamentalist and extremist groups.

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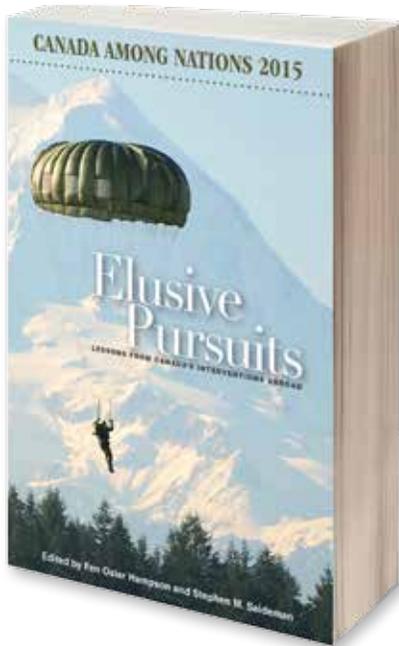
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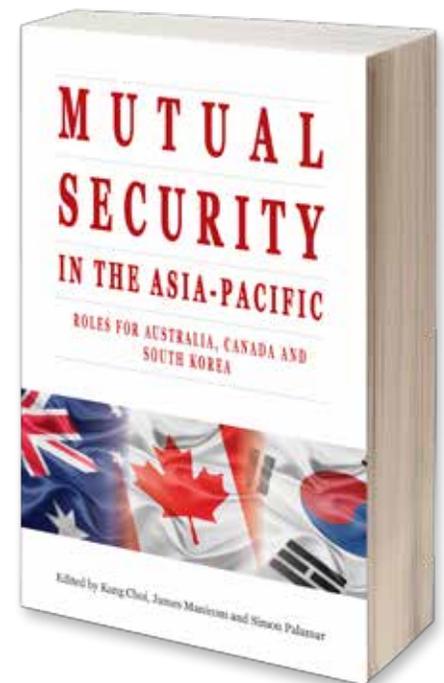
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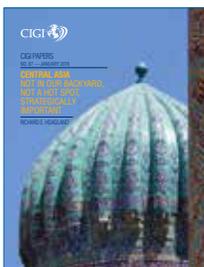
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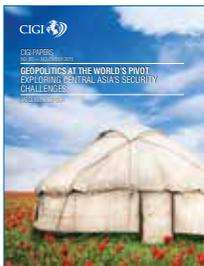
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