

## **Salafism in Indonesia: Transnational Islam, Violent Activism, and Cultural Resistance**

Noorhaidi Hasan  
(UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta)

The eruption of religious conflicts and sectarian violence that have engulfed the political arena of post-Soeharto Indonesia appears to be more an anomaly than a prevailing feature when located in a broader picture of the country's history. Despite the fact that a large majority of Indonesia's population is Muslim, pockets of multi-religious and multi-ethnic communities that enjoyed ages of peaceful coexistence were established across the archipelago. In fact, Indonesian Muslims have traditionally been known for their accommodative and tolerant stance toward local custom and religious diversity. Nonetheless, migration, industrialization, mass-education, and the advancement of media and communication technology have affected traditional values and local wisdoms which had been keys in the establishment of peaceful coexistence in this plural society. Due to the intensification of globalization, Indonesia has likewise been increasingly susceptible to the influence of transnational Islam which aggressively promotes rigid purification of faith under the banner of Salafism.

The collapse of Suharto's New Order regime in May 1998 heralded *Reformasi*. Along with the dynamics of political transition and democratic reforms after Suharto a more complicated political landscape emerged. Not only did this *Reformasi* lead to the abrupt end of authoritarian government and repressive measures employed by the state in dealing with criticism and opposition, it also created opportunities for suppressed ethnic identities and religious ideologies to come to the surface (Sidel 2004). Eventually, a number of militant Islamist groups achieved notoriety by taking to the streets to demand the comprehensive implementation of the *shari'a*, raiding cafes, discotheques, casinos, brothels, and other dens of vice. More importantly, they called for jihad in a number of Indonesia's trouble spots, such as Ambon. In the provincial capital of Maluku, a bloody communal conflict had erupted between Christians and Muslims in

1999. During the conflict, thousands of Salafis from Java and other islands of Indonesia ventured to frontlines to fight jihad against Christians and establish their footholds.

## **THE EXPANSION OF SALAFISM IN INDONESIA**

Salafism began to flourish in Indonesia in the second half of the 1980s, evident in the appearance of young men wearing long beards (*lihya*), Arab-style flowing robes (*jalabiyya*), turbans (*imama*), and ankle-length trousers (*isbal*) and women wearing a form of enveloping black veil (*niqab*) in public places. Identifying themselves as Salafis, followers of the pious ancestors (*Salaf al-Salih*), members were inclined to stand distinctly apart from the “anything goes,” open society around them. They lived in small, exclusive, tight-knit communities. Under the changing political circumstances during the 1990s, the movement evolved rapidly to the extent that it succeeded in establishing an exclusivist current of Islamic activism organizing study sessions openly in university campuses and mosques located both in city outskirts and villages in the countryside.

Before the collapse of the New Order, Salafism was relatively consistent in developing a stance of apolitical quietism. The movement’s main concern emphasized the purity and oneness of God, meaning to accept and believe in the oneness of God and His absolute authority considered the foundation of Muslim life; other Salafi concerns centered on the call for a return to strict religious practice as well as the moral integrity of individuals. Seemingly trivial, superficial issues, such as *jalabiyya*, *imama*, *lihya*, *isbal*, and *niqab* have constituted the main themes in their day-to-day discussions. A commitment to wear the *jalabiyya* by men and the *niqab* by women, for instance, has been viewed as much more important than taking part in political activities. Salafis believe that Muslim society must first be Islamized through a gradual evolutionary process that includes education (*tarbiyya*) and purification (*tasfiyya*) before the comprehensive implementation of the *shari’a* can be realized. As a strategy to achieve this end, they have been fervently committed to *da’wa* activities, participating in the establishment of *halqas* (study circles) and *dauras* (workshops).

Salafism can be conceptualized as a form of reconstituted Wahhabism, marked by its concern with matters of creed and morality, such as strict monotheism, divine attributes, purifying Islam from accretions, anti-sufism, and developing the moral integrity of the individual. Because of the pejorative connotation of the term Wahhabi

among Muslims, the term Salafi has been used as the banner of the movement, thus crucial for political convenience (DeLong-Bas 2004: 123-124; Hasan 2007; Commins 2009: ix). The genealogy of Salafism could be traced back to the efforts made by classic Salafi articulators, including Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855), Ahmad ibn Taymiyya (d.1328) and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350), to advocate a return to pure Islam which inspired Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1787) to launch a movement in the eighteenth century. With a puritanical spirit, Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab urged his followers, also known as Wahhabis or *Muwahhidun*, to fight against the superstitions prevalent in the Arabian society. Known as Wahhabism, the movement was later enshrined as Saudi Arabia’s state religion (Nevo 1998; Al-Rasheed 2002; DeLong-Bas 2004; Lacroix 2011).

It is worth noting that what is generally known as Salafism arose nearly one century after Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab had succeeded in exerting his influence throughout the Arabian Peninsula. It refers specifically to the reform movement centered in Egypt and led by Muhammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905) and Rashid Rida (d. 1935) who introduced new approaches to Islam in responses to the contemporary demands of modernity by integrating Islam and modern, Western-style scientific rationalization, one that was significantly distinguishable from Wahhabism. The ideas developed by Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rashid Rida in turn inspired the establishment of Muslim modernist movements such as Muhammadiyah in the early 20th century of Indonesia.

Salafism has developed as a consequence of Saudi Arabia’s immensely ambitious global campaign for the Wahhabization of the Muslim *umma*. This campaign can be seen against the background of the Arab Cold War, especially when Saudi Arabia tried hard to reinforce its position as the center of the Muslim world following the fading influence of Arab Socialist Nationalism developed by Gamal Abdul Nasser in post-Arab-Israel War of 1967 (Kepel 2002: 46). Thanks to the skyrocketing of world oil prices which gave considerable economic benefits to Saudi Arabia during the 1970s, this kingdom had the opportunity to sponsor a variety of *da’wa* activities all over the Muslim world, the purpose of which was to ensure the acquiescence of the Muslim world, boost Saudi legitimacy at home, and fulfil Western political projects (Fraser 1997: 222; Al-Rasheed 2008: 2). In this way Wahhabism was exported and spread. This campaign was later intensified, particularly in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution

and the takeover of the *Masjid al-Haram* by Juhayman-led group in 1979 (Abukhalil 2004; Trofimov 2007; Hegghammer and Lacroix 2007).

In fact, the political developments in Saudi Arabia during the 1980s and 1990s informed much about the changing landscape of Salafism. Multiflying the impact of the Juhayman affair, the Sahwa movement that had been promoted by Muslim Brotherhood-inspired activist-cum-clerics came to challenge both the political and religious establishment in Saudi Arabia. Notable among them were Egyptian Muhammad Qutb, Syrian Muhammad Sur al-Nayef Zayn al-'Abidin, Saudi Aidh al-Qarni, Safar al-Hawali and Salman al-Awda. Uncomfortable with the religio-political aspect of the Wahhabi tradition, they argued that Islam is not simply a set of ritual, but a blueprint for social and political engagement with the contemporary world (Al-Rasheed 2007: 65-67). Rivalries and alliances established as a consequence of the Juhayman's takeover of the *Masjid al-Haram* and the rising influence of the Sahwa urged the establishment of the circle of prominent Salafi authorities serving as the main patrons of the Saudi state around Muslim clerics like 'Abd al-Aziz bin Baz (d. 1999), Nasir al-Din al-Albani (d. 1999), Muhammad bin Salih al-Uthaimin (d. 2001) and Rabi ibn Hadi al-Madkhali.

With the world's largest Muslim population and its strategic position in Southeast Asia, Indonesia was of particular interest to Saudi Arabia. The inflows of Salafism came particularly from the Indonesian Council for Islamic Propagation (*Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia*, DDII) and the Jakarta-based College for the Study of Islam and Arabic (*Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Arab*, LIPIA). With generous financial support from Saudi Arabia, DDII was active not only in sponsoring the construction of mosques and Islamic schools, but also in the dispatching of Indonesian youths to study in various universities in the Middle East. An international branch of Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud University in Riyadh, LIPIA came to intensify the Saudi campaign by providing free higher education for a younger generation of Indonesian Muslims (International Crisis Group 2004: 7-8). Thousands of *madrassa* graduates received the opportunity to study at LIPIA; some then had the chance to continue their studies in Saudi Arabian universities, particularly at the Islamic University of Madina. Despite LIPIA's curricula and teaching materials imbued with Saudi anti-pluralistic Wahhabi ideology and political propaganda, the Indonesian

government allowed the institution to operate as it is seen as helping Indonesia to solidify its bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia (Kovacs 2014: 5-6). One of the most remarkable impacts of the Salafi campaign was the emergence of a new type of Muslim intellectual who had the zeal to disseminate Salafism. These actors set up foundations and *madrasas* financed directly by philanthropic agents in the Middle East, which played a crucial role in the further expansion of Salafism.

The rapid proliferation of Salafism was coupled with the eruption of tension among its protagonists, particularly following the Afghan War in the late 1980s. The Salafis were divided into three factions: purists, politicians, and jihadists. While the purists were primarily concerned with the purity of Islam and thus rejecting political activism, the politicians were politically minded and highly critical of incumbent regimes. Close to the latter, the jihadists believed in the necessity of jihad to fight for Islam (Wiktorowicz 2006). These three categories are identical to what Hegghammer and Lacroix (2011) refer to as quietists, reformists, and jihadists respectively. Reflecting what occurred in Saudi Arabia, the increasing number of Salafis returning to Indonesia from the Salafi teaching centers in the Middle East resulted in the competition for the position as the legitimate representative of the movement.

The upshot was that fragmentation and conflict became inevitable. All of the rivals claimed to be authentic Salafis committed to the purity of the movement goal, and in so doing gained generous financial support from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries. They were split into two main currents: the so-called Sururis and non-Sururis. For the latter, the former were followers of Muhammad Surur al-Nayib Zayn al-'Abidin, one of the main critics of Saudi regime, as shown above. Despite their anti-regime criticism the Sururis remained the most favored group to receive money from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait through funding agencies operating in Indonesia (Hasan 2009). To boost their legitimacy, the non-Sururis strengthened their alliance with Muqbil Ibn Hadi al-Wadi'i of Yemen, and were thus also known as the Yemenis.

## **POLITICAL AND JIHADI ACTIVISM**

Salafism captured Indonesia's public attention when its activities began to be associated with violent jihadism. The trigger was the involvement of its proponents in responding to Indonesian political developments after Suharto. Through various mass

religious gatherings, *tabligh akbar*, Salafi activists lost no time in attempting to engage in the changing political landscape. Under the leadership of Ja'far Umar Thalib one current set up the Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah (the Communication Forum for Followers of the Sunnah and the Community of the Prophet, FKAWJ) in February 1999. Subsequently, they issued a resolution calling on Indonesian Muslims to perform jihad in Maluku, where skirmishes between local Christians and Muslims had escalated into full-blown communal conflicts (Hasan 2006; van Klinken 2007). This call was legitimized by *fatwas*, religious legal opinions, given by a number of prominent Salafi '*ulama* in the Middle East (Hasan 2005). On 6 April 2000 Ja'far Umar Thalib's supporters gathered in the Senayan Main Stadium in Jakarta to state their determination to fight jihad. Under the auspices of Laskar Jihad (Jihad Force), thousands of them in fact enlisted to venture to the frontlines and fight against Christians. Until its disbanding in October 2002, Laskar Jihad dispatched more than 7,000 fighters to confront Christians in Maluku.

The Laskar Jihad was not the only Salafi group mobilizing fighters to fight jihad in Maluku. Laskar Mujahidin, for instance, also mobilized volunteers, who were believed to have certain historical linkages with the home-grown Darul Islam and al-Qaeda-linked Jamaah Islamiyyah. Given their differing doctrinal interpretations and ideological orientations, Laskar Jihad and Laskar Mujahidin often displayed mutual hostility (Hasan 2006: 196-197). Often portrayed as a quietist Salafi group, the former justified its resort to political activism and violence by emphasizing the necessity for Muslims to protect their Muslim brothers from the attacks of belligerent infidels. Associated with the Salafi jihadi ideology, the latter, on the contrary, highlighted their operation in Ambon as just a preliminary action in a greater jihad against enemies attacking Muslims all over the world.

Laskar Mujahidin's successful operations in Ambon convinced Jamaah Islamiyah to strengthen their foothold in Indonesia. During the first phase leading up to the *Reformasi* from January 1993 to May 1998 Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, founders of Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), operated freely out of Malaysia and developed Jamaah Islamiyah's organizational capacity, focusing on recruitment and building operational bases. By the late 1990s, six *wakalah*, or subdivisions, had been set up in Malaysia, as well as a seventh in Singapore. At the same time the group maintained its

network in Indonesia. During a second phase from May 1998 to December 2000, following Sungkar's and Ba'asyir's return from Malaysia to Indonesia, the leaders further expanded and consolidated their network, organizing the first coordinated attacks on a dozen churches on Christmas night of 2000 (Solahudin 2013: 6-8).

The rise of JI is of particular importance because the group constitutes the strongest expression of Salafism in the political landscape of post-Suharto Indonesia. Despite its historical ties to the Darul Islam, JI remains a new phenomenon that demonstrates how transnational dynamics have transcended established cultural and political boundaries and penetrated different milieus. JI is believed to be the most active group in disseminating the Salafi jihadi ideology in Indonesia. The ideology prospered during the Afghan War via Abdullah Azzam's thoughts who managed to contextualize Sayyid Qutb's radical view to obliterate the "infidel" regimes in power in the respective countries (the so-called near-enemy) to push for offensive jihad against the infidels wherever they are. The latter is deemed to be an integral part of the jihad against *jahiliyahism* (the state of non-Islamic "ignorance"), in which every Muslim is obliged (as a *fard 'ayn*) to participate in order to fortify the integrity of the Islamic territory. In the mid-1990s, Ayman al-Zawahiri, known to be close to Osama Bin Laden, developed an alternative vision of the jihad movement: the war against jahiliyyahism had to attack its source directly, that is, had to attack the "Salabis," whom he identified as the United States, its Western allies, and Zionist Israel (Gerges 2009). His ideas clearly shifted the focus of jihad towards the "distant enemy" that Bin Laden adopted, which had been formulated at the end of the 1980s and had become the backbone of the creation of the World Islamic Front for Jihad in 1998, which later transformed into the infamous al-Qa'eda.

From 1985 to 1990 some 200 Darul Islam members in the *usroh* network were in fact dispatched to Afghanistan to participate in military training (*i'dad ashkari*) at Harby Pohantum founded by Shaikh Rasul Sayyaf. The purpose was to acquire military knowledge and skills for jihad against the New Order government. In Afghanistan, the militants became acquainted with the jihadi Salafi teachings. Their adoption of jihadism stirred up conflicts in the internal *usroh* network. They criticized the ideology of the vanguard of the Darul Islam leadership believed to be imbued by traditional Islamic teachings. One important target of their critiques was Ajengan Masduki, the then DI

commander deemed to have deviated from the fundamental Islamic teachings by joining a Sufi Order (Solahudin 2013: 145-148). Sungkar led the campaign against Masduki. Shortly thereafter, he established JI.

With the support of Abu Bakar Baasyir, Sungkar responded to Bin Laden's message to shift from a local jihad to implement the *shari'a* law to an international jihad targeting America by joining the World's Islamic Front for jihad. While many senior members in JI's Regional Command (Mantiqi) I, such as Hambali and Mukhlas, supported Sungkar and Ba'asyir's call, Mantiqi II officials like Ibnu Thoyib, Achmad Roihan, and Thoriqudin rejected it. The debates were set aside after serious communal conflicts exploded in Ambon and Poso. In the eyes of JI's leaders, these communal conflicts had opened the door to jihad. Conflicts of interest among its protagonists have informed the dynamics of JI after the death of Sungkar in 1999, a situation that eventually gave rise to various factions planning terror operations without any recourse to the leadership's decisions (Solahudin 2013). Baasyir, who came to replace Sungkar, called Muslims to unite and fight for jihad, believed to be the only way to implement the law of Allah (Abuza 2003: 167). He resigned in 2000 and was quickly replaced by Abu Rusdan and, subsequently, by Abu Dujana, who continued the previous confrontational stance of JI (Pavlova 2006: 4).

Despite such fragmentation, the JI network and its offspring remain alive and well in Indonesia particularly because they are grounded in the Salafi jihadi ideology. From his cell in Nusakambangan prison, in July 2008 Baasyir established Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT), a splinter faction from JI; in July 2014, the organization pledged its loyalty to the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS), calling for jihadists to perpetrate terror attacks (Counter Extremist Project 2016). Following its decision to support ISIS, JAT became divided into two smaller groups; Jama'ah Anshorus Syariah (JAS) and Jama'ah Anshorut Daulah (JAD). While the former emphasized their commitment to implement the *shari'a*, the latter opted for violence and terror tactics.

## **SALAFISM IN THE AGE OF WAR AGAINST TERRORISM**

Following 9/11 attacks, Jakarta came under increasing international pressure to act swiftly against the radical Islamist groups. Initially, the Indonesian government was hesitant. Traumatized by the New Order's repressive security measures, the Indonesian



civil society reminded President Megawati Sukarnoputri's administration of the danger of employing the enemy-centric model of repression. Faced with intricate political problems, Megawati attempted not to "hurt" Islamist groups and remained idle in countering the threats posed by Islamist radicalism. All of this changed dramatically after the 2002 Bali bombing, which demonstrated the grave threat radical Islamist groups posed to Indonesia. In spite of Vice-President Hamzah Haz's initial denial of information provided by Singapore, Malaysia, and the U.S. authorities about the cells of the Jamaah Islamiyah masterminding a series of bombing attacks in Indonesia, including those on Bali, the police investigation quickly punctured the idealistic bubble. It appeared that Jamaah Islamiyah had some 2000 members and a wider support network of about 5,000 people. The police also uncovered the strong ties Jamaah Islamiyah had with Al Qa'eda. The message was clear: the War against Terrorism had come to Indonesia. Particularly in response to the Bali bombing, the Indonesian parliament passed two anti-terrorism laws: Law No. 15/2003 provides the legal basis for the police to detain terrorist suspects up to six months before an indictment is drawn up, while it gives to prosecutors and judges the authority to block bank accounts belonging to individuals or organizations believed to be funding terrorist activities; Law No. 16/2003 aims specifically at retroactively prosecuting the Bali bombers.

Just five days after the first Bali bombing in October 2002, the Laskar Jihad leadership surprisingly announced the organization's dissolution. The disbanding had to do with the dispute between Ja'far Umar Thalib and his main lieutenants about the purity of their jihad activism. Some Salafis on the advisory body of Laskar Jihad began to feel that the political steps taken by Ja'far Umar Thalib had deviated from the Salafi fundamental teachings on avoiding politics, let alone violence. A number of these critics, including Abu Munzir Dzul Akmal and Abu Muhammad Dzulqarnain, requested clarification from Ja'far Umar Thalib. Dissatisfied with his explanation, they mobilized support from other Salafis to work toward the disbanding of Laskar Jihad. As far as they were concerned, Laskar Jihad had strayed from Salafist doctrine because of the personal—politico-economic—interests of its top leadership. They held Ja'far Umar Thalib responsible for making Laskar Jihad part of an embarrassing political game (Hasan 2006: 211-212). Dzul Akmal and Dzulqarnain sent a letter to the Saudi Salafi scholar, Rabi' ibn Hadi al-Madkhali, requesting a *fatwa* concerning the existence of

Laskar Jihad. In response, the *mufti* issued a *fatwa* recommending Laskar Jihad disband.

Laskar Jihad's dissolution confirms the vulnerability of the Salafis to tensions and conflicts imbued by ideological disputes and political-economic rivalries. In fact, after the disbanding of Laskar Jihad, the Salafis who had been united under the influence of Ja'far Umar Thalib became divided into three major groups under the command of three rival leaders: Lukman Ba'abduh, Dzulqarnain, and Abu Turab al-Jawi (Sunarwoto 2016: 206-207). Lukman Baabduh was deputy commander of Laskar Jihad in Maluku, whereas Dzulqarnain was the head of its fatwa section. Abu Turab came late to Maluku and was not part of the Laskar Jihad elite group. However, he was able to exert his influence among certain Salafi circles because of his loyalty to Yahya al-Hujuri, the successor of al-Wadi'i in leading Darul Hadith in Yemen. After the death of al-Wadi'i, rivalry and conflict occurred between al-Hujuri and Abd al-Rahman al-Mar'i al-Adeni. While Baabduh sided with al-Adeni, Abu Turab decided to defend al-Hujuri.

It is of interest to note that all the Salafi authorities associated with Laskar Jihad, including Ja'far Umar Thalib, came to actively engage in countering violent jihadism. Endorsing what Nasir Abbas, former commander of Jamaah Islamiyah, said in his *Uncovering Jamaah Islamiyah: Confession of a Former JI Member*, Ja'far Umar Thalib has strongly criticized the interpretation of Bin Laden on jihad and the Jamaah Islamiyah decision to follow the interpretation. He asserted that Bin Laden did not qualify as a mufti so that his fatwa should be ignored. According to Ja'far, jihad is legitimate only under certain conditions, including with the approval from the competent political authority and only for defensive purposes. Abu Hamza Yusuf also criticized Imam Samudra (one of the Bali bombers) who also claimed to be Salafi. According to Yusuf, the claim is false because Samudra had idolized problematic personalities, such as Safar al-Hawali, Salman al-Awda, Osama bin Laden, Abdullah Sungkar, and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir.

Lukman Ba'abduh took more significant steps toward condemning Salafi jihadists by publishing a book entitled *They Are Terrorists*. In this book he condemns Bin Laden as a Kharijite, which is to say (in Salafi parlance) one who destroys Islam by spreading the doctrine of "excommunication" (*takfir*) and perpetrating terror. In another book, Ba'abduh reiterates his criticism of Imam Samudra and other like-

minded individuals as a deviant group that is too quick to apply the doctrine of *takfir* to legitimate rulers and Muslims who hold different views. Differences among Salafi jihadists and Salafi quietists in interpreting jihad and other key Salafi doctrines have prevented them from establishing a hegemonic discourse, thus crucial in the dynamics of Indonesia's Counter Violent Extremism (CVE).

## **THE WANING APPEAL OF THE SALAFIS**

In response to the growing difficulties confronting Salafism after 9/11, certain groups of Salafis have demonstrated their readiness to accommodate calls for reforms and movement toward the Islamic mainstream. For instance, they did not hesitate to undertake a review of their school curriculum and incorporate both religious and secular-worldly knowledge into course syllabi. Accordingly, the curriculum adopted in their *madrasas* helps somehow to bridge the educational dualism that has characterized Muslim education for almost two centuries. Yet the main character of the *madrasas* is maintained as Islamic teaching centers aimed to train a new generation of Muslims rooted in and committed to the dissemination of the Salafi faith (Wahid 2014). Interestingly, with this reformed system and relatively modern management requiring students to pay tuition fees and living costs, the *madrasas* have apparently facilitated the mobility of Salafi teachers and students in Indonesia. At some Salafi *madrasas* in Indonesia, for instance, it is not difficult to find students from neighbouring countries like Malaysia and Singapore. Those *madrasas* apparently have succeeded at creating a system that enables them to operate independently, without Saudi money. This is particularly the case for the *madrasas* under the control of Dzulqarnain and his allies. Some of the *madrasas* have even successfully evolved into established Islamic education institutions attracting middle class families.

In tandem with the significant changes in Indonesia's political context after Suharto and the dynamics after 9/11, the space for maneuver available for the Salafis is no longer sufficient to maintain their footholds at the grassroots. Elsewhere (Hasan 2010) I have argued that the attempt to set up Salafi *madrasas* as the node for informal social network for the purpose of propagating Salafi ideology in remote areas of *abangan* villages, which were perceived to be the "red" areas imbued with syncretic, communist influences, was largely ineffective owing to the Salafis' exclusivist and self-

limiting character. Though generally located in areas of urban or semi-urban settlement, these *madradas* have emerged as enclaves that draw a firm distinction with the “anything goes,” open society around them. Teachers, students, and other members of the *madrada* form tight-knit communities restricting contacts with outsiders. Except for certain important reasons, students are not allowed to have contact with people from the surrounding community. Their daily life is routine to the point of being monotonous. The main components of their activities consist of praying, studying, and memorizing the Qur’an.

The rigid Salafi religious doctrines and exclusivist life-style taught in the Salafi *madrada* have attracted only a small number of *abangan* children, and thus not brought about significant change in the larger Muslim population as a whole. These young Muslim recruits were disaffected youth eager to feel a sense of empowerment and declare their independence from village elders. The rest remained skeptical regarding the Salafis’ claim to promote authentic Islam while criticizing local religious practices. Instead, the proliferation of Salafi *madradas* has compelled villagers to practice Islam and traditional rituals as their attempt to de-contextualize the Salafi call for purifying Muslim beliefs and practices.

This was the course of events in Batikan, Muntilan, a village located several kilometers from Borobudur, where the Madrasa Minhaj al-Sunnah was established with the financial support of a local businessman and owner of a network of restaurants in Central Java. No doubt, the presence of this *madrada* inspired more villagers to attend Friday congregation and daily collective prayers, and more women to wear headscarves. Nonetheless, they have been also very active in attending *selamatan*, *barzanzi*, and *hadrah*, traditional rituals and practices deemed *bid’a* (religiously unacceptable “innovation”) by the Salafis. These performative events have been organized as a cultural strategy employed by the villagers to resist Salafism. They believe that there is no need for the Salafis to keep promoting the strict version of Salafi Islam if it only disturbs their village conviviality and harmonious life.

The failure of the Salafis to win followers is likewise evident in the case of Kepakistan, an *abangan* village located in densely populated hill country twenty-five kilometers to the north of the town of Wonosobo on the Dieng Plateau. When I visited the community in the early 2000s, the Salafis had expanded their influence so as to

dominate village. Almost half of the five hundred families in the village transformed themselves into Salafis, and more than thirty of them joined the Laskar Jihad mission in Maluku. Interestingly, they have remained modest farmers or agricultural laborers working every day on ex-plantation farmland owned by affluent businessmen, planting potatoes, carrots, cabbages, and other vegetable crops. But one hour before the noon prayer, these believers usually rush home to take a bath, don the *jalabiyya*, and go to the mosque. The conversion of the Kepakisan people to Salafism appears in many instances to have involved the conversion of whole families, though it was not always the head of each family who led the conversion—the eldest son was more often the catalyst.

Some elites in Kepakisan, including the then-village head Supoyo, supported the development of Salafism in their village as part of their effort to get closer to the New Order political forces and mainstream religious groups. The village elites were involved in supporting the Salafi propaganda through their sponsoring of the building of Salafi *da'wa* infrastructure. Mosques and teaching centers of Salafism were established, including three educational institutions for children, men, and women, known as Tarbiyatul Atfal, Tarbiyatul Rijal, and Tarbiyatul Ummahat respectively. To fortify their stronghold in Kepakisan, the proponents of Salafism were keen to establish contacts with fellow Salafi followers in other Indonesia's cities. *Daurahs* and other religious gatherings were held regularly at Masjid Baitul Makmur. With the presence of prominent Salafi *ustadhs*, including Lukman Baabduh, Muhammad Umar As-sewed, Qomar Suaidi, Muslim Abu Ishaq, and Afifuddin, the events succeeded in consolidating followers and further promoting the Salafi messages. The return of a group of native Salafis from a younger generation of Kepakisan, who had completed their studies in various Salafi *madrasas*, intensified Salafi *da'wa* activities in Kepakisan.

Nevertheless, the “golden age” of Salafism in Kepakisan has apparently come to an end. When I returned to the village in 2015, the influence of Salafism was waning. After Pak Poyo passed away in 2002 tensions rose, involving conflicts between Salafi and non-Salafi villagers. The latter, who had from the outset felt threatened by the Salafi *da'wa* expansion, launched measures against the Salafis. The position of Salafi opponents strengthened too as a result of changes to the political map of Kepakisan. Pak Poyo's close family, including some of his sons, not only withdrew their support, but also appeared to have become the main agents of the anti-Salafi opposition. They felt

that the Salafis presence in their villages had contributed to the deterioration of family relations and village conviviality.

Krismono (2016: 207-208) indicated that the growing influence of Tablighi Jamaat, which was brought by Nur Syam, the eldest son of Khairuddin, a senior *takmir* of Masjid Baitul Makmur, has also helped to accelerate the declining influence of Salafism in Kepakisan. Nur Syam had studied at Pesantren Payaman Magelang, which is one of the centers of Tablighi Jamaat in Central Java. Returning home in the village, he actively promoted Tablighi Jamaat doctrines with the help of senior *tablighi ustadhs* from Temboro of East Java. Both Nur Syam and Khairuddin assumed that the da'wa methods of Tablighi Jamaat is more suitable to the Prophet's Sunnah when compared to the Salafi method that was inclined to accuse villagers of *bid'a* and *shirk*. Nur Syam built a center of Tablighi Jamaat in Musalla Al-Hidayah, not far from Masjid Baitul Makmur, and actively preached tablighi teachings from door to door. Conflict becomes inevitable. Proponent of the Salafis and Tablighi Jamaat engaged in heated debates. For the Salafis, Tablighi Jamaat's ideology deviates from the fundamental tenets of Islam. While in the eyes of the proponents of Tablighi Jamaat, the Salafi ideology has not only endangered village cultural practices but also divided the community.

When Salafism flourished in Kepakisan, some people who disagreed with the Salafi ideology chose to send their sons to NU religious schools (*pesantren*). After returning home, these young *ustadhs* sought to promote their more moderate version of Islam and were involved in the resistance against Salafism. Ramadan, for example, took a step further by establishing the Irsyadul Mubtadin Quranic Kindergarten. This institute developed rapidly and soon transformed itself into a *diniyah* school that drew growing attention from Kepakisan children. There they studied theology, fiqh, and hadith by using books commonly used in NU *pesantrens*. More importantly, Ramadan sought to revive traditional religious rituals, such as *barzanzi*, *salawatan*, and *yasinan* which had been prohibited when Pak Poyo was serving as Kepakisan village head. Such traditional rituals and gatherings have gradually evolved and attracted growing numbers of villagers.

Bambang, the eldest son of Pak Poyo, has been also very active in organizing resistance against Salafism. He was eager to challenge the Salafis by recruiting and mobilizing followers. To win the competition between him and the proponents of the

Salafis, Bambang made an alliance with NU's Barisan Ansor (Banser) at Batur Sub-district. He encouraged villagers to organize a demonstration in front of the village office to challenge Salafis influence. Eventually, Bambang and his followers succeeded in taking control over Masjid Baitul Makmur which had been the main center of Salafi *da'wa* activities. The local Salafi movement did not give up. They tried to consolidate themselves in the al-Huda musalla (prayer house), which they also began to use for their Friday congregational worship (Krismono 2016: 213-215). This marked the first time in the community that congregational worship was held simultaneously in two adjacent mosques.

There is no doubt that, despite their continuing efforts to maintain a foothold in Indonesia, growing social resistance against Salafism has put a halt to their expansion. Recently Ja'far Umar Thalib sought to extend his network of followers to Papua. His plan to build a *pesantren* in Arso 14 Jayapura and to establish 20 others across Papua sparked strong opposition from local Papuans. They organized meetings and coordinated with local government agencies to oppose the presence of Ja'far Umar Thalib and his *pesantren* which they believe would threaten peaceful life and inter-religious harmony in Papua (Al-Makassary 2017). According to them, tensions had been increasing when the so-called Tolikara incident of clashes occurred on Idul Fitri 2015, between the congregation of the Gereja Injili di Indonesia (GIDI) and Muslims. Comprehending the seriousness of the situation, the provincial branch of the Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI) eventually issued a call to expel Ja'far Umar Thalib from the islands.

## CONCLUSION

The efflorescence of the Salafism in Indonesia cannot be isolated from Saudi Arabia's immensely ambitious global campaign for the Wahhabization of the Muslim *umma*. Part of the Saudis' politics of expanding their geo-political and geo-strategic influence across the Muslim world, the campaign succeeded in creating networks of loyalty and allegiance, based on real benefits and clothed in the language of Islamic solidarity and brotherhood. Saudi Arabia realized the importance of local partners in running the campaign. In the Indonesian context, we cannot underestimate the role played by DDII and LIPIA in marketing Saudi religious ideology. *Da'wa* activities linked

to the campaign proliferated, followed by the establishment of Salafi foundations and *madrasas* in many parts of Indonesia's provinces.

For many years, the expansion of Salafism seemed unabated. A group of quietist Salafis, under the leadership of Ja'far Umar Thalib, resorted to political activism by calling for jihad in Maluku. In the midst of the bloody-communal conflict in the islands, the home-grown Darul Islam-linked Jamaah Islamiyah rose. They claimed to be the real Salafis to fight for Islam against belligerent infidels. Debates over authenticity among Salafis were rife. These all fragments informed the dynamics of Salafism in Indonesia, which reflect how dimensions of transnational Islam are entangled with local politics. The dynamics of Salafism in Indonesia also adds to debates about current dimensions of identity politics molded by transnational forms of political organization, mobilization, and practice which are coming into being through globalized political and social spaces.

Today, however, the expansion of Salafism in Indonesia appears to have ended in failure. The cases of Muntilan and Kepakisan described above illustrate two things: (1) that the Salafi campaign to take root in Javanese *abangan* villages depends much upon a supportive social and economic configuration; the absence of support from local elite and influential personalities makes the campaign vulnerable to resistance and opposition from villagers who felt threatened by the Salafi exclusivist ideology and self-limiting character, and (2) that a Javanese village cultural mechanism is at work to counter the expansion of the rigid ideology promoted by Salafism; the villagers would react against Salafism by de-legitimizing Salafi claims reviving traditional cultures and rituals.

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