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Incubators for Extremists? Radicalism and Moderation in Indonesia's Islamic Education System

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Incubators for Extremists? Radicalism and Moderation in Indonesia's Islamic Education System[1]

Abstract

Islamic schools and universities in Indonesia have been accused of producing militant Islamist extremists. The Bali bombers, for example, attended 'hard-line' (garis keras) *schools and a recent spate of book-bombs targeting champions of Islamic moderation were sent by a student at the State Islamic University. But is this perception actually correct?*

This paper looks at the struggle between moderate and extremist ideas in Indonesia's madrasahs and Islamic tertiary institutions and its implications for Australian policy. It asks whether Islamic thought in Southeast Asia is becoming more or less radical; whether education in Islamic societies should be reformed to counter extremist ideas; and if so, how.

1 This paper is an edited version of the Miegunyah Distinguished Visiting Fellow Public Lecture given by Professor Jamhari Makruf at the Melbourne Law School, the University of Melbourne on 10 June 2014. The recording of the lecture is available at: www.law.unimelb.edu.au/melbourne-law-school/news-and-events/news-and-events-details/diaryid/8212

Incubators for Extremists? Radicalism and Moderation in Indonesia's Islamic Education System

Professor Jamhari Makruf

Miegunyah Distinguished Visiting Fellow

In March 2011, Pepi Fernando was arrested by Indonesian police after it was discovered that he had sent book bombs to several institutions that speak on behalf of liberal Islam. It was also found that Pepi and his cohorts were in the process of making pipe bombs to attack a number of churches through gas pipelines. Had their plan succeeded, the city of Serpong in the South Tangerang area, just outside Jakarta, would have been devastated.

It turned out that Pepi is a graduate of Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, an Islamic tertiary education institution with a reputation for supporting moderate understandings of Islam, where I am Vice-Rector. Pepi studied at our Faculty of Tarbiyah (Education) and Teacher Training and graduated in 2001.

This news shook Indonesia and led many to start questioning Islamic education in general. In fact, Pepi's case is only the latest in series of cases of graduates of Islamic educational institutions becoming involved in terrorism. The most notorious is, of course, the 2002 Bali Bombing, which involved graduates of the Ngruki *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in Solo, led by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir.

In 2009, my university conducted a survey of Islamic education in non-religious state schools in Jakarta and West Java. The results were surprising and included three linked findings. First, conservatism in among students in secondary schools was on the rise. Second, the teaching of Islamic religion subjects at these schools was still based on outdated learning materials that have never been revised. Third, religion teachers were widely regarded as the most uninspiring of all teachers. Our study found this was because there had been almost no support provided to these teachers to improve teaching skills. Efforts to upgrade pedagogy had only been undertaken for subjects dealing with exact sciences, while teachers of religion have been ignored for decades.

These findings raise an important question: is it true that institutions for Islamic education in Indonesia teach religious radicalism? Have Islamic education institutions become breeding grounds for radical behaviour leading to religious violence in the world's largest Islamic country, where over 80 per cent of the population are Muslims?

In this paper, I try to provide some answers to these complex questions.

It must be acknowledged at the outset that there is certainly potential for religious radicalism in Islamic education institutions in Indonesia. This, however, is a vast generalisation and very far from being accurate description of the Islamic education sector. There has, in fact, been a strong effort from within the Islamic education institutions to change the current paradigm, with some taking concrete steps to deliver major change. If this process of change does not continue, however, Islamic education institutions could indeed find themselves mired in conservatism and radicalism.

In this paper, I offer a broad explanation of religious radicalism and efforts to check its influence in Islamic education institutions in Indonesia.

ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN NATIONAL EDUCATION

Indonesia has two models of education: general (conventional) education and Islamic education. Islamic education covers about 30 per cent of the sector. Given that 80 per cent of Indonesians are Muslims, this means there are, in fact, more Muslims in the conventional schools than in the Islamic ones. Conventional education, from primary to tertiary levels, is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Culture, while Islamic education, from primary to tertiary level, is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.[2]

In Law No. 20 of 2003 on National Education, 'Islamic education' is loosely defined as referring to any regular school with specific religious characteristics. This reflects the fact that conventional education and Islamic education are actually located within a single national education system. Both implement the same curriculum, are accredited by the same agency, and follow the same progression from one level to another. Both conventional education and Islamic education adhere to the same assessment standards for graduation through identical national exams. Despite this, they remain separate systems in administrative practice, one looking principally to the Ministry of Education, the other to the Ministry of Religion.

The division of management for these two models of education in Indonesia cannot be separated from political accommodations made at the dawn of Indonesia's independence. There were two principal competing ideals at that time, with one camp wanting to base the state on Islam, while the other aspired to a secular nation. This led to fierce debate, which was finally resolved by a compromise in the form of agreement

2 The Ministry of National Education has authority over TK (Kindergarten), SD (Primary School), SMP (Junior Secondary School), SMA (Senior Secondary School), vocational schools and general (conventional) universities. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has authority over RA (Raudhatul Athfal – Islamic Kindergarten), MI (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah – Islamic Primary School), MTs (Madrasah Tsanawiyah – Islamic Junior Secondary School), MA (Madrasah Aliyah – Islamic Senior Secondary School), and Islamic universities.

to the establishment of a secular state that would safeguard religious values (Anshari, 1997). Part of this compromise included the formation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs to manage Islamic affairs such as the *hajj* pilgrimage, collection of *zakat* (alms), Islamic family law (marriages and divorces) and Islamic education (Azra and Umam, 1998). Islamic family law has been formalised in national laws and absorbed by the Indonesian national legal system. It is now under the authority of the secular Supreme Court (Lindsey, 2012: 273-75). Many are of the opinion that similar steps should be taken with Islamic education to create a single ministry to ensure the harmonious synergy and development of both types of education. Those who oppose this are also numerous, however, claiming that the religious content of Islamic education requires more specialised supervision.

The political impact of this division over the status of Islamic education has been more pronounced in recent years. Take the disproportionate budgetary policy for education, for example. Funding for Islamic education is relatively small. As at 2002, the budget for all Islamic tertiary education institutions - which total 52 (from institutes to universities) - was equal to that of just one secular university, the Universitas Indonesia, which is under the Ministry of Education and Culture. The same was true of Islamic primary and secondary schools, which were also assigned a very small budget.

This naturally affected the provision of Islamic education facilities and human resources. To make it worse, funding for Islamic education is taken from a budget allotted to the Department of Religion for the development of a wide range Islamic institutions, not just educational ones. For many years, this led to a minimal allocation of state budget for the improvement of religious education.

ALTERNATIVE FUNDS, ALTERNATIVE IDEAS

As a result of the limited availability of funds, many Islamic Education administrators have long sought sources of funding outside the government, including from the general community, who feel that the Islamic education benefits them. In fact, many Islamic education institutions are located in poorer areas and villages, and Islamic education is often a welcome alternative for poorer communities and villages, due to its proximity. Islamic education institutions are also generally cheap, and some even accept farm produce in place of fees. The Muslim community in Indonesia also feels safer enrolling their daughters there, believing their daughters' virtue will be better protected.

Perhaps this community involvement is the reason there are so many more private Islamic education institutions than public ones. According to data from the Director General of Islamic Education in the Ministry of Religious Affairs, approximately 90 per cent of Islamic education institutions at all levels of education are private, with only the remaining 10 per cent public, that is, managed and funded by the state.

This imbalance is also the underlying reason why Islamic teaching in Indonesia is characterised by very great diversity. Teaching in *pesantren*, private Islamic boarding

schools, depends heavily on the kind of beliefs held by the people who run them. The books used for teaching also vary greatly between institutions. It is this that makes it possible for some Islamic education institutions to teach religious radicalism. On the other hand, this diversity in the interpretation of Islam in Indonesia is precisely why the generalisation that Islamic education always teaches religious radicalism should be rejected.

Since most Islamic education is provided by private institutions, the state has a hugely challenging task in discharging its responsibilities in this field. The Ministry of Religious Affairs is responsible for Islamic education but is not allowed to interfere with what may or may not be taught, nor has it been possible to insist that Islamic schools must bestow a standard diploma that graduates could use in seeking employment or continuing their studies. Many Islamic education institutions argue that their primary objective of providing education is not to provide qualification for further studies or employment, but rather simply to make students better Muslims. This one of the causes of diversity in Islamic education. There is no single standard applied from one Islamic school to the next and even the leverage that might be exerted through funding is ineffective because government aid is often rejected by many schools, precisely to avoid government interference.

EFFORTS AT REFORM

Major efforts to make Indonesia’s highly diverse Islamic education institutions into more uniform state/public institutions took place when Mukti Ali and Munawir Sadzali were Ministers in the 1970s and 1980s. Mukti Ali attempted to merge smaller Islamic education institutions located close to one another, and endow them with state school status so that school management and teachers were under state control. His efforts were moderately successful, as the Ministry of Religious Affairs was then able to design a curriculum for this type of schools. Still, not many schools were willing to take part in this new system.

Mukti Ali also made it mandatory for those who wished to continue on to Islamic universities to have a diploma recognised by the state, in an effort to pressure Islamic schools to grant standard diplomas to their graduates. Unfortunately, many Islamic education institutions simply refused to do so, instead offering their students the opportunity to take equivalency exams at state schools if they were interested in continuing their studies or seeking employment.

An increasing number of Islamic education institutions have adopted this policy of education standardisation in recent years, due to demands from the community for assurance that their children can continue their education at a tertiary level in an increasingly competitive job market.

MIDDLE EAST FUNDING

Minimal funding from the government also led many Islamic education administrators to seek funds from the Middle East. There is plenty of evidence that large amounts of money from the Middle East have been channelled to private Islamic education institutions in Indonesia (Wahid, 2014: 11). Bank transactions and direct cash transactions have become much more restricted since 9/11 but before that many Islamic education institutions received funds from individuals in the Middle East, primarily from Saudi Arabia and countries around the gulf. *Muhsinun* (literally 'good people', the term given by Islamic education institutions to such donors) often provide regular financial assistance in a range of different forms as part of the individual *zakat* or compulsory religious charitable donations that they must make every year. These contributions are usually used for constructing buildings and printing reference books but many have stopped since regulations on fund transfers were tightened (Wahid, 2014: 274).

The surge of funds from the Middle East had an impact on the content of text-books used at the institutions they fund. Salafi Wahhabi books have been circulated in line with the support of *muhsinun* from Saudi Arabia. After Imam Khomeini's Shia revolution in Iran at the end of the 1970s, some Indonesian Muslims joined in the celebration, despite the fact that the vast majority of Indonesians are Sunni Muslims. Saudi Arabia, however, was quick to provide funds to print salafi books in Indonesia to counter the impact of revolutionary Iranian Shi'ism (Liddle, 1996; Wahid, 2014: 83-84 and 88), and this led to an escalation in conservative influence.

The *muhsinun*'s desire to spread salafi ideology coincided with circumstances in which Islamic education institutions in Indonesia were severely underfinanced. It is truly ironic that at a time where Islamic education institutions were struggling in poorer and village communities the government did not pay attention to them. In fact, much of the assistance provided by OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries through the World Bank, ADB (Asian Development Bank) or bilateral donors still often excludes Islamic education institutions. It is usually said that the rationale behind such exclusion is that OECD countries are secular and do not condone contributions to religious institutions.

Whatever the reason, the result was that Islamic education institutions looking for a helping hand had nowhere to turn but the Saudi Salafis, despite the fact that the vast majority of these institutions are basically regular schools that are not much different from state public schools. The distinction exists merely in the addition of a few hours of subjects on Islamic studies.

Worse still, the reluctance of OECD countries to provide assistance to Islamic education institutions has only served to strengthen the assumption of cultural hostility. This has been reinforced by an outpouring of assistance from countries around the gulf over the last three decades, reinforcing the message that their ideology should be followed. Only in the last few years has assistance from OECD countries finally been allocated

to improve Islamic education institutions, but much damage has already been done.

The contribution of Islamic education to national education is very important. Based on the gross enrolment rate of all levels of education from kindergarten to university, around 30 per cent of the Indonesian population, as mentioned, attends Islamic education institutions. Regardless of their limited funds and basic management, Islamic schools therefore have made significant contributions in producing educated Muslims (*Muslim terpelajar*). In doing so, these schools have also created a tradition of Islamic education with a uniquely Indonesian focus. Despite this, Islamic education is still routinely overlooked when developing national education policy. From the Dutch colonial period until after independence, and even in the New Order era, Islamic education has always been considered 'second class' (Makruf, 2009: 250).

RADICALISM IN THE ISLAMIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

As mentioned, the Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat, PPIM) at my university conducted a survey on religious education in secondary schools in Jakarta and West Java to obtain student responses to religious teaching content and teachers of religious subject. As also mentioned, it turned out that there were conservative tendencies in religious teachings in schools; and students in public (conventional) schools felt that those who teach religious subjects were the most boring teachers. The results of this survey explain much about why religious conservatism thrives among school students. One reason is that texts used are not up to date. This can be seen from the case studies and themes discussed, which have remained unchanged from one generation to the next for decades, if not even centuries.

Salafi Texts

The tendency to radicalism in Islamic education institutions has triggered much debate; was it the poverty of students along with the underfunding of Islamic education institutions that created vulnerability to indoctrination? Was it marginalisation of Islamic education institutions that led them to feel justified in carrying out violent resistance? Or was it simply the kind of religious teaching they received that cultivated radicalism? Without wanting to delve too deeply into these issues, there are several cases of *pesantren* in Indonesia that support religious radicalism, and they are identical in that they adhere to the salafi religious ideology. Of course, it must also be noted that salafi ideology alone would not be sufficient to turn a school radical were it not compounded by the socio-political factors that foster religious radicalism.

New texts for teaching religion are in extremely short supply. This brings about a sort of recycling of particular, selected Islamic teachings taken from classic Islamic books, often very ancient. Unfortunately, the imparted knowledge regarding the history of Islam, for example, centres on the early wars between Muslims and non-Muslims. The events that are revealed here are victories and defeats. Each of these episodes in history concludes with God coming to aid the Muslims. It is understandable that these lessons

would give the impression that the battles took place in a black and white world, with Muslims pitted against the rest - a world of either victory or defeat. This wartime history of Islam sows the seeds of conviction in the inevitability of recurring conflict between Islam and other religions. The presence of other groups within a Muslim society is considered a threat. This is also a foundation for hatred of the West and continuous suspicion of anything the West does to Muslims. The extremists believe that all action taken by the West, even if it is appears good, is secretly intended to destroy Islam.

It must be recognised that such views are still palpable within the Islamic education system. An education that considers that differences are inexorably a source of conflict substantiates Huntington's erroneous notion of the inevitable clash of civilisations. It is not surprising that the reading these texts influences the views of young Muslims and carries them away to an evocative world view coloured by inter-religious conflict.

The Case of Ngruki

The Almukmin Ngruki *pesantren*, for example, is a breeding ground for radicalism in Indonesia, where Muslims and the West are always assumed to be at odds. Located in the Solo, Central Java, this *pesantren* was founded by the late Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir. Imprisoned during the Soeharto era in the 1970s as political enemies who wanted to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia, they eventually escaped to Malaysia (ICG, 2002; Fuaduddin et al, 2004). After the fall of Soeharto in 1998, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and a few members of the Ngruki network returned to Indonesia. Abu Bakar Ba'asyir is well known for his involvement with the terrorist group, Jemaah Islamiyah, but he established the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia or MMI), and then Jemmah Anshorut Tauhid (JAT), as new instruments to promote the implementation of his version of Syariah Islam in Indonesia (Makruf, 2004; Wahid, 2014: 78).

Abu Bakar called himself a salafi, claiming to follow the same thinking of the first generation of followers of Prophet Muhammad (Fuaduddin et al, 2004: 93; Makruf, 2004). He has stated that Islam should be practised in a complete totality, where one cannot pick and choose. To him, Islam is not only a religion but also a political system that must be enforced in the everyday life. A Muslim must apply Islamic laws in all aspects of life. In order to ensure that Islamic law is applied, an Islamic state must be established, and this requires an armed *jihad* against any who oppose it (Fuaduddin et al, 2004: 124-25).

The teachings of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir are exceptionally influential at Ngruki. It is not surprising to observe behaviours seen as associated with the first generation of followers of the Prophet Muhammad, such as wearing white robes like Arabs, growing out beards, wearing long pants that are cut short above the ankles, and commanding women to wear *cadar* (veils covering everything but the eyes). These salafis only associate with others within their group and isolate themselves from the public (Puslitbang, 2003: 32-43; Wahid, 2014: 212-14).

In terms of formal education, however, the Ngruki *pesantren* follows the education system determined by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The formal curriculum and the subjects are no different from other Islamic schools under the Ministry. The students also sit the national exams to graduate and receive a diploma that can be used to continue to a higher level of education (Fuaduddin et al, 2004: 70). In addition to these formal subjects, however, the Ngruki *pesantren* offers informal training sessions for students at the end of their studies (Fuaduddin et al, 2004: 131). These informal lessons, which are not included in the curriculum, are where the hardline salafi doctrine espoused by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir is imparted.

An *Aqidah* (creed or beliefs) book written by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir is the main reference for these informal studies in Ngruki. This book teaches absolute obedience to the religion: there is no grey area, only black and white. Islamic law must be implemented in the lives of the Muslim people. Being Muslim means a comprehensive endeavour (*kaffah*), where each individual is responsible for realising and carrying out Syariah Law. Following any law other than the Salafi understanding of Islamic law is considered *musyrik* (polytheistic, blasphemous to the One God) (Fuaduddin et al, 2004: 119). Adhering to and upholding another political system, such as democracy, is also *musyrik*, one of the cardinal sins in Islam.

Another case in point is the salafi *pesantren* in Gresik, Al-Furqon Al-Islami, East Java (Wahid, 2014: 165-208). This is not a large *pesantren*, with only 300 students and simple school facilities that are far from decent. The students here also wear *ghamis* (Islamic robe-like shirts), grow their beards and live in an isolated environment.

The teachings imparted at Gresik essentially maintain the purity of the *aqidah* or ritual of Islam by shutting off association with those outside the community for fear it may undermine faith. They believe that religious ideology must be returned to that which they believe was held by the Salafi, the first generation of the Prophet's companions who practiced a form of Islam that was still pure and uncorrupted. This *pesantren* teaches *aqidah* based on the book *Kitab al-Tawahid* (The Book of Monotheism) of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, the eighteenth century Arabian founder of Wahhabi ideology. The use of this book as the primary reference for teaching at this *pesantren* is linked to financial assistance from Saudi Arabian *muhsinun* that has poured into it.

Lately, however, the tightening of regulations regarding money transfers from abroad has meant that several salafi *pesantren* have been forced to close while others – like the one in Gresik - now seek additional funds from the surrounding community in order to remain open (Wahid, 2014: 208).

A SECOND WIND FOR ISLAMIC EDUCATION

In 2003, the government passed the new education law, No 20 of that year, which brought many improvements to national education, including a requirement that at least 20 per cent of the state budget is to be allocated for education, a provision also in the Constitution (art 31(4)). The resulting increase in funds was a second wind for improving the quality of education in Indonesia. Huge programs started, such as those to develop human resources by providing opportunities for teachers and lecturers to upgrade their qualifications. In addition, educational facilities also received a large portion of the new funds flowing through the system. On the whole, this new Education Law has offered important new opportunities for major reform of the system.

The excitement over an increase in the state budget allocation for education aside, Law No 20 of 2003 is still an important milestone because it mandates, first, that the legal standing of Islamic education is now officially equal to that of conventional education; and, second, that Islamic education is entitled to the same rights of access to government programs. If the government launches a program for school improvement, it will now automatically include Islamic schools. If the government increases the welfare of teachers and lecturers, Islamic education institutions will receive those benefits as well. Third, Islamic education now has the same budgetary rights as conventional education. The 20 per cent increase in the education budget also means an increase in the budget allocation for Islamic education. This had a very positive impact on the quality Islamic education. Improvements to the infrastructure of Islamic education institutions at all levels can already be observed. Human resources have also improved sharply. For instance, qualifications of teachers at Islamic schools have improved in many institutions. According to research conducted by the Australian Aid Program, for example, there had been a mismatch in approximately 60 per cent of teachers at Islamic primary and secondary schools when it comes to the subjects they were teaching and their educational background. Many teachers are still teaching English without any a background in that language. Some lecturers in some Islamic universities are, for example, tasked with teaching English simply because they graduated from Australia or Canada. With the availability of increased budget, however, and an increase in the number of positions that can be funded, it is now much easier to ensure teachers and lecturers can be allocated according to their expertise.

Significant transformations have also been seen in revamping the education system. Islamic educational administrators are now more aware of the need to professionally organise the provision of education. It is quite disheartening that the administration of education at Islamic education institutions has been so very poor in the past. This is evident, for example, in the licensing and accreditation process for Islamic schools, which has happens only irregularly at best.

Recently, there have been some encouraging developments in Islamic education. Some Islamic schools have begun to adopt more modern management systems, and are trying to catch up on developments in science and technology. In addition, other

Islamic education institutions have also adopted comprehensive learning by making efforts to equally integrate general sciences and Islamic knowledge (Makruf, 2009).

These developments have encouraged a new atmosphere in the Islamic education system. Islamic education institutions such as *madrasah*, *pesantren*, and Islamic universities are no longer trapped at the margins but are starting to move into the mainstream. As more and more Indonesians move to the cities, so Islamic education institutions at all levels have become an urban phenomenon and some schools have even become favourites of the Muslim middle class in Indonesia. A few have even become competitive with the best conventional schools.

In the face of this, there remain crucial questions regarding Islamic education institutions. How will they formulate their role amidst the dizzying and rapid social and economic changes taking place in Indonesia? It must be acknowledged that there is a tug of war between conservative and progressive groups but Islamic education institutions must be able to produce Muslims who comprehend modern religious teachings, grasping Indonesian characteristics along with a global perspective. How can they convey an understanding of Islam that is conducive to the requirements of the era? What role should they have in the formation of a new socio-political and cultural system in Indonesia?

One answer is that building links between the Islamic education system and modern issues such as democracy, civic values, civil society and good governance will be of vital importance, as we work to create a new Islamic education system in Indonesia.

REFORM AT UIN SYARIF HIDAYATULLAH JAKARTA

In the next part of this paper, I explain the process of change at one tertiary Islamic education institution, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta.

I have selected UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta for several reasons. First, it is my own university – the one I know best! Second, the reform of universities has a significant impact on Islamic education in general. Ninety-five per cent of UIN students were recruited from Islamic education institutions, with 85 per cent of UIN graduates returning to the system by working in an Islamic education institution or other religious institutions such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Religious Courts. Consequently, changes at UIN influence Islamic schools and other religious institutions where UIN alumni work, right across the nation. Third, UIN Jakarta is considered a role model for Islamic universities in Indonesia. Therefore, transformations that take place at UIN Jakarta will, in many cases, be emulated by other UIN. Fourth, the transformations that have already taken place at UIN Jakarta are fundamental ones.

Before becoming a full-fledged university, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta was a State Institute of Islamic Studies (Institut Agama Islam Negeri or IAIN) which focused exclusively on teachings and research on Islamic knowledge through five faculties;

the Faculty of *Ushuluddin* (Islamic theology), the Faculty of *Syariah* (Islamic law), the Faculty of *Tarbiyah* (Islamic education and teacher training), the Faculty of *Adab* (Islamic history and civilisation), the Faculty of *Dakwah* (Islamic outreach and propagation) and a Postgraduate School. It was only in 2002 that IAIN Jakarta transformed into a UIN with a broader mandate, whereby it was allowed to undertake teaching and research regarding both Islamic knowledge and general (conventional) fields of study.

Since 2014, UIN Jakarta has 12 Faculties. In addition to the original five religious faculties, there are now six new, general faculties: the Faculty of Economy and Business, the Faculty of Science and Technology, the Faculty of Psychology, the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, and the Faculty of Natural Resources and the Environment.

Within twelve years, UIN Jakarta has experienced an extraordinarily rapid institutional transformation from being a purely religious institution to becoming a genuine modern and multi-disciplinary one.

Seven other non-university institutes in Indonesia have now followed in Jakarta's steps and become UINs. It is anticipated that by becoming a UIN, Islamic universities will be able to play a greater role in intellectual and religious life Indonesia. In addition, the quality of human resources at a UIN requires a higher academic benchmark, encompassing a broader spectrum of subjects, not limited to Islamic studies alone.

There were hot debates in our senate meetings when we were deciding whether or not to become a UIN, generally centred on the fate of the religious departments. It was feared they would not be competitive and would slowly die out, leaving the UIN no different to other conventional universities, depriving Indonesia of tertiary institutions that can produce Islamic scholars (Makruf, 2013: 29-35).

Those who objected to becoming an UIN argued that if Islamic education is intermixed with other more general studies, the result would be distortion of Islamic ideology. There were also questions as to whether there could be a clear distinction between fields of study when an Islamic university also taught general disciplines (Makruf, 2013: 108-10). In response to these objections, the proponents of transformation contended that there is really no need to agonise over the possibility of the society becoming less interested in religious studies. It is precisely through this process of opening the general faculties to attract a greater portion of the community, they argued, that the UIN could have to opportunity of teaching religious studies to *more* members of the community.

The supporters of change also argued that since the birth of Islam there has never been any real division between Islamic studies and general studies. Were the great Muslim scholars like Ibnu Sina (Avicenna), Aljabar, Al-kindi and Ibn Rusydi (Averroes) not experts in fields of science as well as Islamic belief? In reality, a separation of Islamic studies and general studies was atypical in the golden age of Islam.

The truth is that, like it or not, Islamic education institutions are also changing. There is an increasing number of Islamic education institutions offering a conventional secondary education to allow their graduates to continue to non-religious studies. Basically, becoming a UIN was the only logical response to the changes in society's expectations of secondary school education.

It is important also to understand that the integration of sciences that is now being nurtured at the Jakarta UIN differs greatly from Islamisation of Knowledge espoused by Ismail al-Faruqi (1982).[3] Faruqi's Islamisation presupposes the existence of a difference in epistemology between Islam, on the one hand, and general science, on the other, which is regarded as secular. Consequently, Faruqi argues that science requires Islamisation and not vice versa.

This approach has been developed at the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur but does not seem to have flourished. It has generally not been adopted in Indonesia's UIN system. This is because the UIN approach is not so much one of Islamising science, but of integrating the two sources of knowledge. Integration of Islam and science takes as fact that science is based on God's creation; Islamic studies spring from Al-Quran, which Muslims believe to be divine revelation, and knowledge originates from nature, which is also God's creation. In short, there is no contradiction between Islam and science.

The transformation of our IAIN into UIN Jakarta would not have run smoothly if the paradigm of Islamic understanding at IAIN Jakarta remained constant. Two important figures at IAIN Jakarta were indefatigable in building support for a change in this paradigm: the late Harun Nasution (the rector of IAIN from 1974 to 1984, then the director of Postgraduate Studies of IAIN from 1984 to his death in 1994); and Azyumardi Azra (the rector of IAIN/UIN 1998-2005, and the director of Postgraduate Studies from 2006 until the present). Of course, there are other noteworthy figures in the process of transformation into UIN Jakarta. These two were, however, probably the most influential.

Harun Nasution

Harun Nasution completed his undergraduate studies in social sciences at the American University in Cairo, after being disappointed with the Faculty of *Ushuluddin* at Al-Azhar University. Later, Nasution was awarded a Masters degree and a PhD from the Institute of Islamic studies at McGill University. It was at McGill that Nasution was inspired by critical Islamic studies (Uchrowi and Thaha, 1989: 3-62). On his return to Indonesia, he wrote a book in two volumes regarding Islam seen from different perspectives (Nasution, 1974). While this book is not a long one, it is very evocative and it is has now been made compulsory in all Islamic universities in Indonesia by the Ministry of

3 A summary of Faruqi's notion of Islamisation of Knowledge can be found in Sulaiman (2000: 30-44).

Religious Affairs.

The chief argument in this book is that there is a rich tradition of diversity in Islamic studies. Nasution explains each aspect of Islamic studies from this perspective. So, for example, *Kalam* (the science of theological discourse) contains a variety of viewpoints, often diverging to the point of being conflicting. The same can be found in Islamic law, where there are several *mazhab* (schools of thought) that are often quite dissimilar in their legal determinations. Nasution maintained that these differences were common, and the different points of view were all based on acceptable arguments. They only became negative, he argued, when the political powers relied upon them for their own benefit. He was, therefore, of the opinion that differences in religious interpretation should be kept out of politics. The history of Islam proves, he argued, that conflicts between Muslims occur when a particular Islamic ideology is forcibly imposed by the state. Furthermore, Nasution thought that if the Muslim people were able to tolerate variations within the tradition of Islamic sciences itself, then Muslims would also find it easier to appreciate differences outside Islam.

Under Nasution's influence Islamic studies have become broader and more systematic. Openness to differences of opinion regarding Islam and even to ideas outside Islam is growing, and Western social concepts have also received a great deal of attention. This paradigm shift is the root of a more far-reaching change in the future.

Azyumardi Azra

Azyumardi Azra became rector in 1998, as a political uprising occurred in Indonesia. The fall of Soeharto that year and the start of widespread reform provided an opportunity for Azra to further develop Islamic education institutions. He completed his BA in education and the history of Islam at IAIN Jakarta, and later obtained a Masters and PhD in history at Columbia University in New York (Dwifatma, 2011). I am pleased to say that he was also a recipient of the Miegunyah Fellowship from the University of Melbourne in 2004, and is a Senior Associate of the Law School's Centre for Indonesian Law, Islam and Society. I am honoured to follow in his footsteps.

Azra's expertise in the field of history enriched his analysis of Islam with newly-discovered historical data. He was of the opinion that religious thought requires deep consideration of the historical and social factors surrounding it. The views of *ulama* during the earlier centuries were inseparable from the historical factors and socio-political factors of their era. In order provide meaning and context, Azra argued for the introduction of a more self-consciously socio-historical approach to Islamic studies in Indonesia.

The views held by Azra crystallised with his establishment of 32 new research institutions at UIN. These have spearheaded Islamic research, using the approaches of the social and political sciences and, in particular, his own critical, socio-historical approach. Some of these research institutions focus on fields of Islamic studies that had previously been neglected in Indonesia, such as studies of the Middle East,

Central Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Islam in the Western World. Others are encouraged to research major Islamic themes such as Democracy, Interfaith Dialogue, Conflict and Peace, Gender Studies, as well as Education and International Politics (Azra, 2006). Some of these institutions – for example, the Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM), the Centre for Studies on Religion and Culture, the Indonesian Centre for Civic Education, the Centre for Women's Studies, and the Centre for Education and Development – are advancing rapidly.

The new Islamic studies developed by UIN Jakarta under Azra have led to wider developments in Islamic studies in Indonesia. Islamic studies no longer prioritises the 'beliefs and faith' approach which only gave birth to justifications of, and apologies on behalf of, Islam, but instead addresses genuine socio-religious issues. The establishment of research institutions at UIN Jakarta found its momentum (very coincidentally) in the 9/11 tragedy of New York, compounded by the Bali bombing which led to the deaths of many innocent people, including Indonesians and Australians. Islam in Indonesia was then under great pressure internationally, as the trope of 'the friendly face of Islam' in Indonesia seemed to change to one of cruelty.

As it happens, because UIN Jakarta was already concerned by the intolerant attitude of some Muslims towards differences within their own religion and those outside, several research institutions there had already started to study the problem. The horrific events of that time made their work suddenly far more relevant and important. Not surprisingly, UIN Jakarta has now become one of the most important institutions in the Indonesian Islamic world and is often referenced in political and religious issues.

CURRICULUM REVIEW

Azra's success in transforming IAIN into UIN was an extraordinary event. The physical changes were readily apparent with the addition of facilities more fitting for an established university. There was also a rapid improvement in human resources. The community response was remarkable as well, as applicants for admission to UIN Jakarta rose sharply. Although there are still some factions who question the fate of Islamic studies, most welcomed the creation of UIN Jakarta. In fact, some groups of Muslims who had been at first hesitant to associate with UIN have now entrusted it with the education of their children.

What is more impressive still is that several *pesantren* that previously lacked appreciation for Islamic studies at IAIN Jakarta have now decided to collaborate with UIN Jakarta following the establishment of general faculties, so that its alumni can enrol in them.

Nonetheless, something is still lacking. Our transformation entailed the opening of many new faculties, changes in the physical infrastructure, and the teaching of new disciplines but it took a while before it could contend with substantial internal structural changes to teaching, mainly through the curriculum. I am particularly grateful to Professor Tim Lindsey, who has given much of his time to assist me in conducting a curriculum review

at two of our largest and most important faculties, the Faculty of Syariah and Law and the Faculty of *Tarbiyah* (Education and Teacher Training). This curriculum review provided an impressive road map for developing UIN Jakarta into an Islamic university with an international reputation.

Why is a curriculum review important? We found that since its establishment in 1952, IAIN Jakarta had never undergone an external curriculum review. A few reviews were conducted internally, but in a makeshift, non-systematic manner. There was therefore strong demand for an effective, systematic external curriculum review. Second, we also found that the existing curriculum has been designed chiefly on the basis of the interests and availability of lecturers. It is no accident then that there was an excessive number of courses that overlapped, since many of the lecturers available happen to have the same field of expertise, coming as they do from similar backgrounds. Third, there was a lack of international comparison. There was no clear benchmarking.

The results of the curriculum review conducted by Professor Lindsey and his colleagues confirmed our preliminary findings. The review also made several important recommendations. First, degrees must be restructured to offer double degrees and so on, so they are competitive in the employment marketplace. Second, courses must be redesigned to ensure clear weighting for their load. Third, courses must be enriched with extensive and well-supervised field experience. Fourth, there must be an increase in the number of reference books in order to provide a broader scope for comparison. New books need to be developed so that Islamic studies are not focused on the classic studies alone. Fifth, human resources need to be enhanced by improving research and teaching capabilities to align with modern demands (see Lindsey et al, 2009; and Gallagher et al, 2010).

The curriculum review received an overwhelming response, to the point where many other UINs in Indonesia have requested the same. This review is, however, only the first step in assisting the progression of Islamic education institutions into universities that are on par with the world's great universities. These efforts will help deemphasise differences and eliminate suspicions of Muslims towards non-Muslims.

ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION 'GREAT REFORM' (I-HEGRA)

As a follow up to the curriculum reform, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has now formed a team to design the direction that all Islamic universities will take in the future. This design is expected to provide direction for the Ministry of Religious Affairs in arranging and preparing funds and resources. I have been appointed to lead this team and can report that our initial design for reform encompasses the main points:

a. **Institutional reform**, which involves paradigm shift in Islamic education institutions from a religious institution into an academic institution, and improvements in facilities.

b. **Academic and research reform**, which consists of a change in curriculum, textbooks, and the vision and mission of education.

c. **Human resource reform**, where human resources are deliberately improved in accordance with the strategic policies.

d. **International networking**, whereby wide-ranging networks are established to ensure that Islamic education is open and receptive.

e. **Financing reform**, with directional financing corresponding to academic objectives, and shunning political financing.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, equating Islamic education in Indonesia with radicalism can lead to inaccurate understanding of what it really is, and a failure to notice the huge efforts that have been undertaken in recent decades to improve the quality of Islamic educational institutions. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that any element of radicalism in this form of education is largely a result of the State's long-term neglect of Islamic education. As a result, Islamic education institutions have in the past often felt there is little benefit accruing to them from the State and they have, in many cases, turned to seek alternative sources of financing, opening many to infiltration by radicalism.

Despite this, Muslims themselves now realise the need for reform of Islamic education. UIN Jakarta has undergone a remarkable transformation into a university that teaches Islamic studies that are contextual and receptive.

If Islamic education institutions in Indonesia endeavour to transform themselves, the perception of them is also bound to change, and more importantly, so will the perceptions of the students they teach.

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