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## TERRORISM IN INDONESIA: AN OVERVIEW

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**Abstract:**

*Islamic extremist has plagued Indonesia over the last decades. As one addresses this phenomenon it is important to understand the causes behind those violent acts by looking at the influences and modus operandi of several terrorist groups that have operated (or currently do) in Indonesia. Specifically, this article will analyze the roots of Jemaah Islamiyah, Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid, Laskar Jihad, Mujahidin Indonesia Timur as well as the recent ISIS attempt of establishing a foothold in Indonesia. Only by looking at a considerable group of terrorist movements, it is then possible to understand the historical, religious and cultural causes behind the latter as well as realistically assess if terrorism can be a strategic instability factor for the Indonesian government.*

**Key Words:**

*Terrorism; Indonesia; Jemaah Islamiyah; Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid; Laskar Jihad; Mujahidin Indonesia Timur; ISIS; counterterrorism.*

## TERRORISM IN INDONESIA: AN OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

The relationship between Islam and the secular Indonesian State has always been a complicated one, a similar reality witnessed in other countries in the Southeast Asia. Looking at the particular example of Indonesia, some authors claim that the first example of Islamic radicalism can be traced to 1803 when the Padri movement, a Muslim revivalist group, emerged in West Sumatra. As the local Indonesian populations requested the support of the Dutch forces, the Padri movement was defeated and by 1938 it was completely extinguished.

Notwithstanding this earlier movement, most of the authors identify the early inspiration behind the most recent Islamic extremist groups as Darul Islam, a group created after the independence proclamation in 1945, when the Indonesian Constitution defined *Pancasila* – five core principles that support the foundations of the Indonesian State – as the national ideology, without making any reference to Islam. Consequently, Muslims across the country became dissatisfied not only due to this absence in the Constitution but also due to the political adoption of a secular posture for Indonesia. Such decision led to the Darul Islam rebellion in West Java in 1948 which later spread to other regions in the country and has only controlled in 1960.

For some years, during the 1950's when the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) was rejoicing some popularity, the Islamic militias were important allies of secular anti-communist groups against the PKI. A few years later when Suharto regime came into power (1967), political Islam was once again repressed and classified as extreme right. However, in the last years of his mandate, Suharto aware that he had lost the support of the Indonesian military, turned to Muslims as an attempt to maintain the political status quo. To achieve such purpose, Suharto supported the construction of madrassas, mosques among other initiatives that may have been one of the early drivers behind the emergence of the current Islamic extremism in Indonesia.

As the Suharto regime crumbled in 1998, in the aftermath of 1997 Asian financial crisis, the new political context in Indonesia – although still committed to *Pancasila* – allowed previously repressed political forces extremist groups to emerge. As the newly elected President Habibie initiated his term, less restrictive policies began to be adopted that would ultimately loosen the control placed upon religious groups, including the release of imprisoned Muslim activists.

The subsequent President, Abdurrahman Wahid, would follow a similar path. Additionally, freedom of speech was also permitted to radical Muslim groups, including some that had the final purpose of undermining the country's political

pluralism for the future implementation of a Caliphate. Still, the elections of 1999 demonstrated that the Indonesian population had little support to give to such groups which received only 6% of the votes.

However, the Indonesian Government posture changed drastically in 2002 with the Bali bombings. In October 12<sup>th</sup> of 2002, a terrorist attack perpetrated by Jemaah Islamiyah killed 202 people, most of them tourists. Even though this attack led to an increase of the Governmental pressure on terrorism, some conditions in Indonesia -over the last year- have facilitated terrorists' operations, namely the long and porous borders, recurring social and political instability, past confrontations between Christian-Muslim communities and the already existing radical networks.

The purpose of this article is to provide a general overview of the main terrorist groups that operate in Indonesia, or have done so in a recent past, in order to allow a better understanding of the origins and methods used. Particular relevance will be given to Jemaah Islamiyah, Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid, Laskar Jihad, Mujahidin Indonesia Timur and ISIS.

## JEMAAH ISLAMIYAH (JI)

The origins of the JI can be traced to the Darul Islam, a West Java insurgent movement that looked to impose Islamic law after the end of Dutch colonization period, and its influence on the two founders of JI -Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, both Indonesian citizens with Yemeni descent. But before founding JI and while members of Darul Islam, Sungkar and Ba'asyir, had to leave Indonesia due to the pressure of the authorities and fled to Malaysia.

While there, the JI founders were committed in the recruitment of young Muslim volunteers to fight the Soviet Army in Afghanistan. It is believed that this was where they were able to network with individuals that later would become high-ranking officials within the al-Qaeda hierarchy. After a dispute with a Darul Islam leader (Ajengan Maskudi), Sungkar decided to split from the group and pursue the implementation of JI. However, JI was only formally founded later in 1993 while Sungkar and Ba'asyir were in Malaysia. Five years later both moved back to Indonesia as the then President Suharto stepped down. In 1999, with the death of Abdullah Sungkar, Ba'asyir takes control of the organization.

Some of the JI's members were unhappy with the decision as they saw Ba'asyir leadership as too weak. Divergences among JI members grew even further when Ba'asyir decided, with other Muslim political activists, to create *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI) in August of 2000. The MMI is an Islamic organization -that supports jihad and non-jihad groups- whose main ideological platform is to establish Islamic law in Indonesia while abandoning the ideal of creating an Indonesian Islamic State. Albeit

of the work developed at the MMI, Ba'asyir retained the spiritual leadership of JI but left the MMI in 2008. In the same year, Ba'asyir decides to organize a new group radical group - Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid.

In terms of ideology, one can say that JI is an ideological hybrid between Darul Islam and Saudi Wahhabism, basing its beliefs on scholars such as Sayyid Qutb, who defends doctrines that legitimize jihad against non-Islamic regimes. Based upon these principles, JI aims for the implementation of an Islamic State in Southeast Asia, including areas of Malaysia, Indonesia, southern Thailand, the southern Philippines and Singapore. It is possible to say that JI represents an evolution from Darul Islam as it possesses a more international perspective and a more entrenched jihadist ideology, with profound interest in domestic targets, namely Government institutions and officials, as well as external targets, mostly Western targets.

In terms of members, at its peak, JI probably had between 500 to several thousand members, although it is difficult to assess the actual number although regarding its structure, JI had several units subjected to the orders of an Amir. There was also a Regional Consultative Council that had the final objective of providing support to the Amir. This Council was formed by operational or administrative units known as Mantiqis, which were spread in several countries and regions throughout Southeast Asia, such as Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, south areas of the Philippines, Sulawesi, Papua and Australia. All of these locations were divided in four Mantiqis in a way to coincide with the same areas where the JI aimed to create an Islamic State. Each Mantiqi was further divided into several branches (curiously a structure very similar to the one implemented by Hezbollah) with an emphasis on social services for additional popular support of its activities. However, some accounts mention that due to recent Indonesian security operations, the structure may have been dissolved and reorganized into several functional groups: Dakwah (Islamic outreach), Education, Logistics, Information and Military Affairs.

Still, in spite of a new organizational structure, JI has also split into two separate factions. An official faction, therefore with a formal structure, has decided to place additional emphasis on ideology and recruitment. Working without a functional structure, we find the other (unofficial) faction that devotes most of its activities to bomb-making and whose members are known as the “bombers”. As the official faction rejects any violent actions directed to non-combatants, the second faction upholds the use of extremist actions towards “enemies of Islam”.

One of the main aims of any terrorist group is to recruit further elements and increase its strength. To reach that purpose, propaganda was developed as an essential tool of the recruitment process. JI uses publications to disseminate its message from publishers such as Arafah Group and others. Further methods include internet divulgation for wider audiences and personal recruitment methods for smaller groups of people in madrassas. Still the group uses the internet as the main recruitment method.

Regarding funding capabilities, JI uses different methods. Islamic charities, for instance, are important means that channel financial assets to JI along with profits from corporations, hawala system, weapons smuggling and extortion. Common criminal activities are also another method sought by JI to finance its operations.

JI terrorist network became widely known after the Bali bombing of 2002, but other attacks are also attributed to this particular group. In the usual *modus operandi*, attacks resorted to explosives even before 2002, including a car bomb detonation at the parking lot beneath the Jakarta Stock Exchange building in September of 2000. Other attacks include assassination (or the attempt to) of domestic and foreign political officials, police and military personnel.

One of the most concerning interactions of the JI is the one it had with the al-Qaeda network. Those links were formed during the presence of JI leaders in Afghanistan and the relationship formed with al-Qaeda's leaders and mujahideen between 1985 and 1995. Nonetheless we cannot consider these links as an al-Qaeda's direct control capability of JI. Doubts surrounding these links were clarified after two JI members - Ali Ghufron and Iman Samudra - were arrested in connection with the Bali bombings. Ghufron's testimony confirms a meeting with Bin Laden in Afghanistan in the 80's as well as the al-Qaeda's funding of the Bali bombings. Authorities also believe that the JI lacked the technical knowledge to produce the type of explosives used in the 2002 Bali bombings. Still, both organizations have separate goals as al-Qaeda envisages a more global agenda and JI has clearly defined regional objectives. In August of 2014 the now-imprisoned spiritual leader of JI- Abu Bakar Ba'asyir -pledged support to ISIS, albeit is yet to be uncovered if this link will be more than just propaganda for the extremists cause.

## JAMAAH ANSHARUT TAUHID (JAT)

As previously mentioned, in July of 2008, Ba'asyir founded the Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT) to pursue a strict interpretation of Islam and with the aim to implement a Caliphate in Indonesia. Ba'asyir decided to create this group after disagreements with members of the MMI. As this group is being formed, it became clear that it integrated three types of associates: Ba'asyir supporters from the MMI, some members of JI and other close associates. Some sources claim that, in 2012, JAT had between 1500 to 2000 members

In terms of ideology, JAT -in a similar way to JI- has adopted the ideology of salafi jihadism, including Abdullah Azzam, Sayid Qutb and Abu Qotadah as ideological references. From these beliefs, the group has taken two separate ideals: 1) the necessity for the group to possess a military preparation and 2) local Indonesian officials (that do not adhere to the Islamic law) are as important targets as Western targets.

In terms of structure, the organization was highly dependent of Ba'asyir that had the support of two departments: an executive council that encompassed his closest advisers and an administrative office that comprised five other departments (finance, morality enforcement, religious outreach and media, education and secretariat). For propaganda purposes, the JT used social media websites, published a monthly magazine, had its own website and produced its online videos mostly focusing on lectures by Ba'asyir. Although investing significantly on publicizing its message, the JAT has not able to gather much popular support and some communities even refused to host Ba'asyir lectures.

In terms of interactions with other groups in Indonesia it is possible to assess that some of them (including the JI) did not cope well with JAT as they felt that Ba'asyir led too many failed efforts. However, the JI's Sumatra cell found the local JAT network was quite appealing for new recruits and such led to disagreements between both organizations. Problems were also verified with some factions of Darul Islam as, in 2009, JAT explored internal divergences between Darul Islam's members, and took the opportunity to recruit a significant number of the latter's members.

In 2010, Indonesian counterterrorism officials uncovered a JAT terrorist training camp which later led to the imprisonment of Ba'asyir which was replaced by an acting leader, Mochammad Achwan, known for bombing a Hindu temple in 1985. Notwithstanding the arrest of its leader, since 2011, the JAT has taken several terrorist actions, namely suicide bomber attacks in Cirebon and Solo as well as murdering Indonesian police officers. The United Nations and the United States declared this group to be a terrorist organization in 2012. Although the group denounced any violent activities, the fact remains that -as in previous organizations- Ba'asyir has been unable to control its members or their actions on behalf of JAT. Terrorist activities of this group include attacks against civilians and Indonesian officials, namely police officers.

However, when looking at JAT we must be conscious that it is a divided movement and it will hardly pose any threat to the Indonesia's stability. These divisions led to the establishing of Jamaah Ansharusy Syariah (JAS) in August of 2014. Mochammad Achwan (at the time acting leader of JAT) and Abdul Rohim and Rosyid Ridho, sons of Ba'sayir decide to form this group after disagreements with Ba'asyir about the support pledge given to ISIS. It currently claims to have 2000 members in Jakarta, West, Central and East Java and other Indonesian regions.

## LASKAR JIHAD

This particular group was formed by Umar Thalib, in 2000, as the paramilitary wing of the Sunni Communication Forum established in 1998. Its founder is an Indonesian with Yemeni ascent that researched Islamic studies in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, where he became an outspoken opponent of the Pancasila and was heavily influenced by the work of Sayyid Qutb, a radical Salafi. While in Pakistan, he decided to join the mujahedeen in Afghanistan from 1987 to 1989 and then returned to Indonesia. In 1991, Thalib travelled to the Middle East, where he contacted scholars from the Salafi-Wahhabi movement, especially from Saudi Arabia, and later returned once again to his home country in 1993. Such experiences proved to be paramount in the definition of the strategy and methods used by this group, namely in supporting jihad activities and the implementation of sharia law. However, Laskar Jihad -despite following Wahhabism- does not aim to establish an Islamic State which is pointed out by critics as an incongruence in the group's beliefs.

With the support of seven fatwas issued by Salafi scholars in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, initial jihad activities of Laskar Jihad focused on the Maluku Island, more precisely in Ambon, where in 1999 – due to regional, ethnical and religious reasons – violence between Christian and Muslim communities erupted and Thalib found the Government response to the killing of 400 Muslims in Maluku as insufficient. In fact one could say that this particular group used this confrontation to justify its existence.

To engage in jihad, Laskar Jihad built a training camp -in East Java- that gathered around 3000 fighters, who later were sent to Maluku to receive military grade weapons such as AK-47. President Wahid tried to prevent Laskar Jihad's members of going to Maluku but his efforts proved to be insufficient and confrontations between Christian and Muslim communities erupted. The group has also able to control of Ambon which later to led to a governmental intervention. Furthermore, Laskar Jihad operatives used to target civilians so to enhance the polarization between these communities, not only in Maluku but in other regions across Indonesia as well.

Due to its paramilitary nature, Laskar Jihad possessed a similar structure to the one that the Indonesian army resorted to, including brigades, platoons, teams and intelligence departments. Other interesting aspect about Laskar Jihad is its ability to actually influence the Indonesian public opinion by resorting to mass communication networks. For instance, due to the adopted posture on the religious issues in Maluku, Laskar Jihad began to be seen as the organization that defends Muslim in the Oriental regions of Indonesia. This achievement later translated in some capability to influence political stakeholders and by some reports the Laskar Jihad members, in 2000, operated with some connivance of the military as the Government did not want to alienate the Muslim population.

However, with the already mentioned Bali bombings in 2002, the situation changed substantially. President Megawati signed two antiterrorism decrees a week after the attacks and the government took a different -and more aggressive- stance against Muslim extremists. In May of 2002, Laskar Jihad's leader was taken into custody -without major political repercussions for the Government- although he was released months later.

Also in 2002, the executive board of the Sunni Communication Forum decided to dismantle the Laskar Jihad by considering that the jihad waged in Maluku had resulted in some "mistakes or deviations from (...) morality".<sup>1</sup> The disbandment of Laskar Jihad became official when a Saudi Salafi scholar issued a religious decree to close the group as well as the Sunni Communication Forum, mostly due to the high-media profile that the group's leader Thalib had acquired.

Other identified reason for the termination of Laskar Jihad's activities was the growing involvement of its members in political maneuvers. Finally, the quick termination of Laskar Jihad created the impression that the Indonesian Government may have exerted significant pressure for such to happen mostly due to the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and the alleged links between Laskar Jihad and al-Qaeda.

## MUJAHIDIN INDONESIA TIMUR (MIT)

In the last months of 2012, the Poso (Central Sulawesi) branch of JAT celebrated alliances with different groups in the region in order to form the Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT). From this group, Santoso (a former commander in JAT) emerged as the leader and soon after its creation, low level confrontations with the Indonesian authorities began. These confrontations include assassinations of police officers and bombings always avoiding civilian casualties as the group is thought to be locally funded and does not wish to alienate supporters.

Although this sort of low-level conflict may not be seen as relevant considering attacks previously perpetrated by other groups, we must consider four important reasons for which this group should be closely monitored. Firstly, MIT represents one of the few active nationalist militant networks in Indonesia, with particular focus in Java and Sulawesi.

Secondly, this particular network has assembled a group of combat veterans instead of inexperienced recruits that sometimes are used by other radical organizations. Thirdly, the chosen location -Poso- allows MIT members to gather some local support

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<sup>1</sup> Press release issued by the *Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah*, also known as the Sunni Communication Forum

due to the previous religious confrontations held in the past and is one of the reasons why MIT does not target civilians. Finally, Santoso -MIT's leader- has pledged support to ISIS, although MIT is a group with little transnational connections.

In terms of funding, MIT was one of the first terrorist networks to generate considerable amounts of funds through internet fraud -by hacking foreign exchange trading websites- to support Santoso's training camp in 2012. All of the people involved in this fraud were arrested but they still were able to earn \$40 thousand in few months. Other methods of funding included bank robberies and other criminal activities. Even if the authorities in Indonesia have promptly reacted and over the past years were able to dismantle most of the MIT's structure, its leader -Santoso- is still at large and is now one of the most wanted terrorist in Indonesia.

## ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND SYRIA (ISIS)

Recently authorities in Indonesia have expressed their fears over the security challenges brought by ISIS. It is an understandable concern since the last time that Indonesians travelled abroad to join foreigner radical movements -during the 80's and 90's decade when 200 Indonesians trained in Afghan al-Qaeda training camps- the unfolding results brought to Indonesia extremists responsible for the Bali bombings of 2002. Most of these preoccupations are based on the ISIS recruitment increase in Indonesia.

Despite of the Government numbers pointing to 159, certain reports state that this number can be much higher, making this country the biggest ISIS fighters' supplier in the Southeast Asia. Most Indonesians present in Syria used channels facilitated by JI, the Ring Banten faction of Darul Islam and MIT, some closely associated with ISIS forces. On the other hand, the networks used by JI are mostly associated with the al-Nusra Front. For example, recently the Turkish authorities -feeling the need to stop the entry of foreign jihadists in Syria- arrested 16 Indonesians for attempting to cross the border into Syria while 16 other Indonesians were unaccounted for as they had probably entered Syria to join the ISIS forces.

Some reports also note that Indonesian radical Islamic groups are increasing the support of ISIS by organizing events in over 50 cities to attract additional funding and new recruits, including a radical Indonesian groups meetings in Jakarta and other Indonesian cities to declare their support to the ISIS forces. Experts believe that jihadi groups in Indonesia will attempt to use ISIS as a method to gather indoctrinated and military trained recruits. In this particular point, ISIS may be appealing to some Indonesian radicals -regardless of low number of Indonesian recruits- due their strict interpretation and implementation of the Islamic law. This is seen by Indonesian radicals as a major achievement of ISIS -the implementation of *sharia* in a territory

under their own control- still unreached by Indonesian Islamic radical groups. Additionally, Indonesian ISIS recruits also see Syria as a legitimate location for jihad.

This brings us to one of the fundamental security shortcomings identified in Indonesia. The lack of laws that prohibit the involvement of Indonesian citizens in ISIS activities abroad, including military training or propaganda. For example, Chep Hernawan, an Indonesian businessman and self-proclaimed national representative of ISIS, was arrested for one night but police was unable to charge him with law violation due to the lack of adequate legal framework.

In terms of propaganda, ISIS forces also rely on the support of known Indonesian radical leaders. In July of 2014, when the Islamic State leader Abu al-Baghdadi appeared in a Youtube video appealing to Indonesians to join the jihad, several leaders from radical groups pledged allegiance to the ISIS forces, such as the now imprisoned Ba'asyir (former leader of JAT). Ba'asyir pledges struck a chord in several Indonesian smaller extremists groups as well as in the leader of the Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT), all who issued their own pledges to support this group. Anshorullah and Anshar Al-Daulah are other groups that support ISIS, by either declaring the intention to join the ranks of ISIS in Syria or by promoting this group through charity events. On the other hand, some local radical groups, have rejected the Islamic State ideals, including one of the leaders of JAS (Mochammad Achwan) and the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI).

ISIS's propaganda efforts not only rely on radical groups but in social media platforms as well. Through websites, Facebook and Twitter, the number of online ISIS supporters has been increasing, although not all of them condone the violent methods that this group resorts to. Such originates a deep concern of the authorities, due to the fear of the expansion of ISIS in Indonesia as it includes the largest Muslim population in the World (around 250 million people), 80% of which are linked to social media and, therefore, susceptible recipients of this sort of radical message.

As a reaction to the increasing popularity of ISIS in Indonesia, in 2014, the government decided to outlaw ISIS and the Indonesian Ullema Council (Muslim clerical entity) defined ISIS as a violent and radical movement while requesting Muslims to reject the radical ideals of ISIS. Furthermore, in the beginning of 2015, authorities have understood the need to impose a stricter antiterrorism law in order to properly address this threat, including the revocation of the passports of the citizens who travel to join ISIS or the close monitoring of the ISIS supporting detainees. More recent decisions by the Indonesian government also instructed the removal of Islamic State propaganda videos and the Indonesian Ministry of Information and Communications Technology decided to upgrade its surveillance capabilities to properly monitor websites and social media platforms that advocate radical messages.

When considering the ISIS threat, a high-ranking Indonesian counterterrorism official even claimed that ISIS is more dangerous than al-Qaeda as the former is

willing to fight Muslim countries that do not apply the Islamic law according to ISIS interpretation. Moreover, experts have warned that Indonesian recruits of the ISIS may return from Iraq and Syria and reignite the jihadi violence in Indonesia as in the past previous members of other Muslim radical organizations did with veterans from the Afghanistan war. In a video broadcasted in 24 of December 2014, for example, an Indonesian ISIS fighter warned that the group will attack soldiers, police officers or anyone who opposes the implementation of the sharia law in Indonesia.

However some scholars warned that the indications of ISIS threats in Indonesia should be taken with a pinch of salt. Caution while making early assumptions should be implemented for three reasons. Firstly, the rallies supporting ISIS were organized by pro-sharia advocacy groups and not extremists. Contrary to the latter, these advocacy groups focus on the gradual implementation of Islamic law instead of pursuing the violent edification of a Caliphate – unless in a highly unstable political situation. In that sense, the support for ISIS should be seen as a way to win support for the implementation of an Islamic state in Indonesia.

Even within radical groups, like in JAT, ISIS has brought some divisions. As Ba'asyir pledged alliance to ISIS the MMI quickly responded that Sunni Muslims should reject its messages and practices. Secondly, jihadists differentiate between support and allegiance. As the Indonesian pro-advocacy groups merely expressed the (passive) support for ISIS, one should not mistake this for a more formal link to the operational cells. Third, the jihadi indiscriminate use of violence against Muslims is subjected to strong criticism by Indonesian Islam. For instance, large Muslim organizations, such as Muhammadiyah, have publicly rejected ISIS stating that this group is not religious but political and it jeopardizes the Indonesian independence and Constitution. Still, the danger posed by extremist veterans coming back from Syria should be closely monitored as it may represent a serious security hazard for Indonesian authorities.

## CONCLUSION

Radical Islam exists in Indonesia and such is unlikely to be altered in a near future. Historical, religious and political factors have all contributed to the rise of Muslim extremism in this country, even if different groups possess different strategies on how to reach their objectives. The ancient confrontation between Christians and Muslims is another factor to be taken into consideration when looking at the reasons behind the emergence of radical groups that constantly use religion as a justification for violent activities, including jihad.

However, it is improbable to see all these groups one day unite under one banner to create a Caliphate in Indonesia, especially because some groups, like Laskar Jihad, and prominent religious scholars do not support such radical ideals. Furthermore, elections results clearly demonstrate that Islamic radicalism in Indonesia is far from being embraced by the majority of the Indonesian population, while the current stable political and economic situation and more experienced counterterrorist agencies in Indonesia will make it harder for extremists to replicate actions similar to the Bali bombings. For example, in 2013, authorities registered 21 terrorist events and only seven in 2014.

The lack of leadership in extremist groups is another identified factor behind the decrease of terrorist activity in Indonesia. Additionally, diligences taken by the Indonesian authorities over the past years have helped to resolve some of the disputes between the Muslim and Christian communities although such rivalry must always be considered as a latent trigger for religious confrontation and radicalism.

Yet, several other factors underline the need for the Indonesian authorities to exercise vigilance over some of these groups. As radical groups began to lose popular support, they began to forge alliances with conservative groups, like the Front Pembela Islam (FPI) as a way to be able to deliver their messages to the civil society and to recruit additional members. This particular tactic may increase the difficulty of the Indonesian counterterrorism officials to cease the propaganda channels of radical groups. Other obstacles to the counterterrorist efforts include the political resistance of conservative Muslims to deradicalisation programs as they see these as a stigmatization of Islam through other means.

Finally, the conflict in Syria risks increasing the anti-Shia feeling in Indonesia and such may produce additional clashes in a near future. Indonesian authorities have been pursuing a solid strategy to counter radical Islamic groups although the newly found ISIS influence may provide a significant test to some of previously achieved successes. Fortunately, considering past experiences, the Indonesian authorities and society seem to have learn the most important lessons to prevent that such reality may reoccur.

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