

Talib or Taliban?

Indonesian students in Pakistan and Yemen

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وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا

and he to whom wisdom is granted receiveth indeed a benefit overflowing (Al Baqara 2:269)

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Executive summary

This paper looks at the issue of Indonesian students who study at Islamic educational institutions in Pakistan and Yemen. Its primary goal is to understand whether the presence of Indonesian students at Islamic institutions in Pakistan and Yemen poses a risk, either in terms of radicalisation, or in the formation (or re-formation) of direct contacts between Indonesian extremist groups and counterparts in these countries such as al-Qaeda.

In the last decade Indonesia has mounted a very successful counter-terrorism campaign. But while the terrorist threat is greatly reduced, it has not completely disappeared. In particular there has been a decentralisation of the terrorist threat away from large movements, notably Jemaah Islamiyyah (JI), towards smaller groups. The emergence of new terrorist threats in coming years will ultimately depend on what happens within Indonesia. Nevertheless, if al-Qaeda or similar groups were able to create new venues for the training and indoctrination of Indonesian extremists either in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen or elsewhere, this would pose a challenge for Indonesian counter-terror efforts. Not only could this improve the technical proficiency of Indonesian extremists or open up new sources of funding, but it would once again provide, in the cloistered atmosphere of the training camp, networks of personal loyalty and an excellent incubator for the production of hardened followers of the al-Qaeda or other extremist narratives.

Pakistan – and obviously Afghanistan – played important roles in the connections that were formed between Indonesian extremists and al-Qaeda. Despite Western counter-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the latter continues to be an important node for international terrorist activity. Yemen, on the other hand, is an increasingly important node for extremist movements in both its immediate region and internationally.

As was shown in an earlier Lowy Institute monograph, *Joining the Caravan? Islamism, the Middle East and Indonesia*, students have been an important vector of Islamic and Islamist ideas in Indonesia, including, in some instances, extremist ideas. That said, this paper does not assume that all study by Indonesian students in these two countries is risky in terms of either radicalisation or the formation of extremist links. It aims to contribute a more detailed understanding of where in Pakistan and Yemen Indonesian students study, the nature of the institutions they attend and the numbers of Indonesian students at the various institutions. In other words, it seeks to provide a balanced assessment of the kinds of student connections between Indonesia and Pakistan, and Indonesia and Yemen, that both should and should not be a cause for alarm.

This paper has largely relied upon fieldwork in Indonesia, Pakistan and Yemen. It is by no means a complete survey of study by Indonesian students in these two countries, but nevertheless provides much new information for understanding the issue and for further research.

Based on interviews with students and on information provided by some institutions (and by cross referencing a number of these estimates) we believe that there are currently some 300 Indonesian students studying at Islamic institutions in Pakistan and somewhere between 1500 and 2200 Indonesians studying in Yemen.

There appears to have been a gradual decline in the overall number of Indonesians studying in Pakistan over the last decade. The two largest concentrations of Indonesian students are in Islamabad at the International Islamic University (IIU) and at institutions of the Jama'at at-Tabligh movement in Gujerat and Punjab. The number of Indonesian students at the IIU has remained constant since 2000. Both the IIU and the Jama'at at-Tabligh sit within the Islamic mainstream within Pakistan.

There has, however, been a sharp drop in the small number of Indonesian students attending extremist institutions, notably Abu Bakr Islamic University in Karachi. Many members of the Ghuraba Cell, a group of Southeast Asian students linked to JI attended Abu Bakr and their arrest and deportation in 2003 has had a major impact on Indonesian student numbers at this institution. Tighter visa regulations and closer supervision of institutions with known extremist leanings also appear to have had an impact.

This does, however, create the risk that Indonesian extremists will seek entry into more mainstream institutions in Pakistan as a cover for their activities. Our research uncovered one rumoured, but unconfirmed, report of an individual Indonesian extremist attending the IIU in an effort to build connections with the Pakistani extremist movement, Jama'at ud-Da'wa. The apparent ease by which an extremist could join the Jama'at at-Tabligh in Indonesia and travel to Pakistan as part of a Tablighi group was also a concern, even though we found no conclusive evidence of this having occurred.

In terms of radicalisation, it was not possible for our research to make a conclusive assessment of the impact of study in Pakistan and Yemen on most Indonesian students. What we can point to, however, is strong anecdotal evidence that students go to institutions that are closely aligned with their existing religious or ideological outlook. This was especially evident in the case of Yemen, illustrated by the way that divisions within the Indonesian 'Yemeni-Salafi' community affected which institutions students would attend in Yemen.

In terms of Yemen, the fact that in little more than a decade Indonesian student numbers in Yemen have grown from perhaps a few hundred to some two thousand might ostensibly be a cause for concern among counter-terrorism authorities. Yet our research finds that the bulk of the Indonesian student population – over three quarters – attends well-established Islamic educational institutions with a mainstream religious outlook. A common theme among the Indonesian students interviewed was how Yemen reflected an attractive mix of exotic locale but culturally familiar Islam.

Nevertheless, the significant number of students attending *salafi* institutions in Yemen – about a quarter of the total Indonesian student body in the country – raises a number of risks in terms of potential extremist connections. This is not to say that all of these *salafi* institutions are extremist in the sense of advocating violent *jihad* of the al-Qaeda variety. Indeed our report points to some clear tensions and divisions between the *salafi* communities in Yemen and the Yemeni branch of al-Qaeda (AQAP) that have, for example, made it difficult for the latter to recruit in *salafi* institutions. Of greater concern were other factors including: the relative, geographic isolation of many *salafi* institutions; the fact that many Indonesian students at these institutions appear to have poor levels of Arabic and had often breached their visa conditions, both of which potentially left them in a vulnerable situation; the fact that some institutions were in conflict areas, as a result of which some students were being provided with weapons training; and the fact that a number of Yemeni and international extremists had either been graduates or one-time students of these institutions.

That said, we were not able to find any evidence of AQAP recruitment among the Indonesian student body or even much interest in Indonesia itself, at least as reflected in AQAP's propaganda. Nevertheless, there is more interest in Yemen among Indonesian extremists and this may well grow if AQAP is able to sustain its current prominent international profile – and especially if it is able to mount successful terrorist spectacles in coming years. Given the relative ease of obtaining a visa to travel to Yemen, either for study or tourism, this situation will need to be closely monitored.

In this regard it is not yet clear whether Yemen's uncertain political future will prove either a boon or an obstacle to the development of direct contacts between Indonesian and Yemeni extremists. There is an understandable concern among Western governments that AQAP might be able to use any new ungoverned spaces to expand its presence in the country. Equally, though, the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh has been at best an ambivalent ally in the war against al-Qaeda in Yemen. It is by no means certain, however, that AQAP will find ready acceptance everywhere in Yemen, even if the central government's remit is curtailed by prolonged instability.

Glossary of Islamic terms used in the report

Da'wa – preaching; literally the ‘call’ to Islam.

Fiqh – Islamic jurisprudence.

Jihad – literally ‘striving’; it can be defined broadly as any effort taken in the cause of Islam although it is often used more narrowly to refer to holy war.

Khuruj – literally to ‘go out’ preaching the Islamic faith, a defining activity of the *Jammat at-Tabligh* movement.

Madrassa/madaris (pl) – a school or college.

Pesantren – Islamic boarding or day school in Indonesia.

Salafism/salafi – fundamentalist movement seeking to reform and purify Muslim society on the model of the ‘pious predecessors’ (*‘as-salaf as-salih’*), the first three generations of Islam.

Shafi’i – one of the four schools of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence (the others being *Hanafi*, *Hanbali* and *Maliki*).

Shari’a – God’s revealed law.

Sufism/Sufi – Islamic mysticism.

Tafsir – exegesis of the Quran.

Ulema – Islamic scholars.

Ustadz – respectful title for a teacher.

Usul ad-Din – theology; literally ‘roots of religion’.

Wali al-amr – doctrine of obedience to rulers or those vested with authority.

Ziyarah – Islamic cultural practice of visiting the tombs of saints.

Individuals and organisations mentioned in the report

- Abd al-Majid al-Zindani – *prominent Yemeni political figure, founder of al-Imam University in Sana'a, and listed as a terrorist by the United States.*
- Abu Bakr Ba'asyir – *co-founder of Indonesian extremist group, Jemaah Islamiyyah.*
- Abu al-Hassan al-Maribi – *Yemeni salafi figure and head of Dar al-Hadith Institute in Marib.*
- Abdul Rahim Ba'asyir – *Indonesia extremist and son of Jemaah Islamiyyah co-founder Abu Bakr Ba'asyir.*
- Abdullah Sungkar – *late co-founder of Indonesian extremist group, Jemaah Islamiyyah.*
- Sheikh Abdulrahman al-Adeni – *Yemeni salafi figure and founder of Dar al-Hadith institute in Lahj.*
- Anwar al-Awlaki – *a dual American-Yemeni citizen and extremist spiritual leader.*
- Dr Azhari Husin – *late, Malaysian extremist and bomb-maker.*
- Ghuraba cell – *Jemaah Islamiyyah student cell in Pakistan broken up by Pakistani authorities in 2003.*
- Hafiz Saeed – *co-founder of Pakistani extremist group, Lashkar-e-Toiba.*
- Imam Samudra – *late Indonesian extremist and one of the leading perpetrators of the 2002 Bali Bombing.*
- Jafar Umar Thalib – *prominent Indonesian 'Yemeni-Salafi' figure and commander of Laskar Jihad.*
- Jama'at ad-Da'wa (JuD) party – *Extremist movement in Pakistan affiliated with Lashkar-e-Toiba.*
- Jama'at-e-Mujahedeen – *Pakistani salafi movement that fought in the jihad against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.*
- Jama'at at-Tabligh – *Islamic movement based in the subcontinent focused mainly on da'wa activities.*
- Jemaah Ansharut Taudhid – *Indonesian extremist movement founded by Abu Bakr Ba'asyir.*
- Jemaah Islamiyyah – *Indonesian extremist movement founded by Abu Bakr Ba'asyir and Abdullah Sungkar.*
- Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) – *Pakistani extremist group founded by Hafiz Saeed and Zafar Iqbal.*
- Lukman B'aabduh – *prominent figure in the Indonesian 'Yemeni-Salafi' movement.*
- Muhammad Jibril – *Indonesian extremist jailed for his involvement in the 2009 bombings of the Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta.*
- Muhammad Rais – *Indonesian extremist and member of Jemaah Islamiyyah; was a trainer of Indonesian militants in Afghanistan.*

Muhammad Saleh Omair al-Kalawi – *Yemeni AQAP leader killed in an air strike December 2009.*

Sheikh Mukbil bin Hadi al-Wad'i – *late, prominent Yemeni salafi scholar and founder of Dar al-Hadith Institute.*

Nasser al-Bahri – *Yemeni 'old-guard' al-Qaeda leader and former bodyguard of Osama bin Laden.*

Nasser al-Wahayshi – *AQAP leader.*

al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) – *Yemeni branch of al-Qaeda (in Arabic, 'al-Qaeda fi Jazeerat al-Arab').*

Noordin Top – *late, leading Indonesian extremist.*

Qassim al-Raymi – *'new generation' AQAP figure.*

Qomar Suwaidi – *prominent figure in the Indonesian 'Yemeni-Salafi' movement.*

Sheikh Rabi al-Madkhali – *prominent Saudi salafi scholar.*

Riduan Isamuddin (Hambali) – *leading Indonesian extremist and link between Jemaah Islamiyya and al-Qaeda.*

Rusman Gunawan (Gun Gun) – *Indonesian extremist and brother of extremist leader Riduan Isamuddin (Hambali).*

Syaifudin Zuhri – *Indonesian extremist and alumnus of al-Iman University in Yemen killed by Indonesian police in the aftermath of the 2009 Ritz-Carlton and Marriott Hotel bombings in Jakarta.*

Umar Farouk Abdul Mutallab – *perpetrator of December 25 2009 attempt to blow up a Northwest Airliner.*

Umar Patek – *leading Indonesian extremist arrested in Pakistan in March 2011.*

Umar Sewed – *prominent figure in the Indonesian 'Yemeni-Salafi' movement.*

Sheikh Yahya al-Hajuri – *Yemeni salafi figure and successor to Sheikh Mukbil bin Hadi al-Wad'i as head of the Dar al-Hadith Institute.*

Introduction

Since September 11 2001, Islamic educational institutions around the world have been viewed with varying degrees of suspicion in the West. That concern has in part been based on the role that a small number of institutions have played in the production of extremist ideas and activists. Allied to this concern has been a fear that foreign students (from either Muslim or non-Muslim countries) studying at Islamic institutions abroad would end up as either conduits for extremist ideas back to their home countries or new recruits for al-Qaeda or similar extremist groups.

The most notorious example of both phenomena was the emergence of the Taliban from Jamiat-Ulema-e-Islam schools for Afghan refugees in Pakistan in the 1990s. The phenomenon of the Taliban helped promote the fear of the Islamic school as an instrument for turning an innocent student or *talib* (the Arabic, Farsi and Pashto word for student) into a member of an extremist movement, the Taliban (the plural of student in Farsi and Pashto) – a fear accelerated after the events of September 11 2001. Reality, as is usually the case, is often more complex. There is a tradition going back centuries of students from both predominantly Muslim and non-Muslim countries attending Islamic centres of learning in the Middle East and South Asia without most either being radicalised or becoming foot soldiers for extremist movements. Nevertheless, there have been specific instances where study of an Islamic education abroad has either been a radicalising experience or has been used by extremist movements to establish contacts and exchange ideas and methods with foreign-based counterparts.

This study looks at this question of Islamic study abroad and its relationship with the forging of extremist connections in two specific instances: that of Indonesian students studying at Islamic institutions in Pakistan and in Yemen. Indonesian students have long been undertaking Islamic study in a number of Middle Eastern and South Asian countries including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Sudan, as well as the two that are the focus of this paper. As was shown in an earlier Lowy Institute monograph, *Joining the Caravan? Islamism, the Middle East and Indonesia*, students have been an important vector of Islamic and Islamist ideas in Indonesia, including, in some instances, extremist ideas.¹ Indonesian students study abroad for a range of reasons. In some cases they are simply following a practice throughout the Islamic world whereby students study at Islam's most prestigious centres of higher learning such as al-Azhar University in Egypt. In Indonesia, however, pursuing Islamic study abroad also reflected the fact that up until 2001 academic qualifications from *pesantren* (religious secondary schools) were not recognised for admission to Indonesian state universities.

The goal of this paper is to help understand whether the presence of Indonesian students at Islamic institutions in Pakistan and Yemen poses a risk, either in terms

of radicalisation, or in the formation of connections with transnational extremist movements such as al-Qaeda. While Indonesian students abroad could come into contact with extremist ideas or activists in any number of countries in the Middle East and South Asia, we have chosen to focus on Pakistan and Yemen for a number of reasons. Pakistan (and obviously Afghanistan) played important roles in the connections that were formed between Indonesian extremists and al-Qaeda. Despite Western counter-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the latter continues to be an important node for international terrorist activity. Yemen, on the other hand, is an increasingly important node for extremist movements in both its immediate region and internationally. The Fort Hood shootings by Major Nidal Hasan in November 2009 and the December 25 2009 plot by Umar Farouk Abdul Mutallab to blow up a Northwest Airline flight have both been linked back to an American Yemeni imam with links to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Anwar al-Awlaki.

It is valid to ask whether international connections formed by students (or anyone else) matter in terms of the extremist threat in Indonesia. As *Joining the Caravan* demonstrated, extremist connections between the Middle East and Indonesia played a significant, although not defining, role in the development of Indonesian extremist groups, notably Jemaah Islamiyyah (JI). Al-Qaeda and other extremist groups in the Middle East provided, variously, inspiration, money and training for their followers and emulators in Indonesia. There were also important personal connections between al-Qaeda leaders and JI, forged largely in the training camps of Afghanistan. At the same time *Joining the Caravan* noted that as strong as some influences were, there was almost always some process of adaptation involved, where Middle Eastern ideas and forms of activism were made to fit an Indonesian context or in some cases discarded as irrelevant.

In recent years the terrorist threat in Indonesia has diminished – although there remain very real concerns about the emergence of new decentralised individuals and groups that have developed outside of those groups like JI that have traditionally been the focus of Indonesian counter-terrorism efforts. In parallel to the decline in the level of threat, there has been a significant – though not total – disruption of the direct, personal and physical connections between al-Qaeda and its followers in Indonesia. This has been the result of, among other things, the arrests and deaths of key Indonesian extremists who had maintained direct contacts with al-Qaeda, such as Riduan Isamuddin (Hambali), the end of Taliban rule in Afghanistan and the closure of al-Qaeda's training camps there, and the disruption of financial flows between, and travel by, extremist groups and individuals.

One can debate how much this has affected the technical proficiency or motivation of new generations of Indonesian extremists. Bomb-making skills do not need to be taught in an al-Qaeda training camp. The internet and translations of jihadist

tracts published cheaply in books and magazines remain important vectors for the transmission of militant ideas, regardless of the state of formal links between al-Qaeda and Indonesian extremists. Nevertheless, if al-Qaeda or similar groups were able to create new venues for the training and indoctrination of Indonesian extremists either in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen or elsewhere, this would pose a new challenge for Indonesian counter-terror efforts. Not only could this improve the technical proficiency of Indonesian extremists or open up new sources of funding, but it would once again provide, in the cloistered atmosphere of the training camp, networks of personal loyalty and an excellent incubator for the production of hardened followers of the al-Qaeda or other extremist narratives.

We have chosen to focus on Indonesian students studying abroad in part because there is historical precedent of a minority within this group forming extremist connections. The most notorious example was that of the so-called Ghuraba cell in Pakistan (a JI cell of Southeast Asian students studying in Pakistan). But we have also chosen to focus on Indonesians studying at Islamic institutions abroad because it is an activity that is often open to misinterpretation. Given, for example, growing and valid concerns about al-Qaeda's activities in Yemen, governments and observers might be understandably alarmed about the fact that there are now, by our estimation, some 2200 Indonesian students at Islamic institutions in Yemen. Yet as our study shows, many of these students are studying at institutions unlikely to expose them to extremist ideas or activists.

In this regard, the goal of our paper is not just to examine the risk of extremist connections being formed through student travel. Its goal is to contribute a more detailed understanding of where in Pakistan and Yemen Indonesian students study, the nature of the institutions they attend and the numbers of Indonesian students at the various institutions. It should be noted with respect to the latter that student numbers in this paper are in most cases estimates based on figures provided by a number of sources. Where possible we have attempted to obtain official figures from the institutions themselves, or from government authorities, but this has not always been possible (not least because some institutions are highly sensitive to questioning on this topic). Otherwise, figures have been obtained from student associations or from estimates by students themselves. An attempt has been made to try to reconcile different estimates where they vary, but in general these numbers should only be seen as a guide rather than as definitive.

We hope that by placing some new detail on the table we will encourage further research on this important subject. There are valid counter-terrorism concerns about the presence of these students in Pakistan and Yemen. Yet seeing all Indonesian students studying in these two countries (or elsewhere for that matter) as potential risks in terms of radicalisation or the formation of extremist connections would not only be unfair, but also counterproductive if it makes educational institutions

less transparent about their activities. In this sense the aim of this paper is to contribute to a balanced assessment of the kinds of student connections between Indonesia and Pakistan, and Indonesia and Yemen, that both should and *should not* be a cause for alarm.

Indonesian students in Pakistan

Introduction

It is impossible to speak of extremist connections between Indonesia and Pakistan without understanding the role that Afghanistan played in the evolution of militant thinking and activism in Indonesia. As occurred in many Muslim countries in the 1980s, a few hundred Indonesians went to Afghanistan, ostensibly to fight alongside Afghan Mujahedeen against the Soviet Union. In most cases the real lure was the prospect of gaining military skills that could then be applied in Indonesia, illustrated by the fact that Indonesians continued going to Afghanistan long after the Soviets had departed. In particular, it was in Afghanistan that Jemaah Islamiyyah's most militant members became personally acquainted with the leaders and ideas of what would one day become al-Qaeda. Unsurprisingly, it was this same militant sub-group that argued for JI to accept al-Qaeda's 1998 call for a *jihad* against 'Jews and Crusaders', a call that led eventually to the Bali bombings of 2002.

To get to Afghanistan, Indonesians had to pass through Pakistan, as was the case with the vast majority of foreign fighters that went to join the *jihad* against the Soviets in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Even after the Soviets left, Pakistan continued to be an important destination for those Indonesians traveling to Afghanistan to train in al-Qaeda's camps. It would be wrong, however, to assume that Pakistan was simply a transit point. Indonesian extremists also formed connections with counterparts in Pakistan and trained in their camps as well as al-Qaeda's. It was also in Pakistan that an important JI group, the so-called Ghuraba cell, was established and subsequently broken up by the Pakistani security services. The arrest in Pakistan of JI fugitive Umar Patek, arguably the most wanted terrorist in Southeast Asia, in March 2011 underlined the continuing, even if significantly reduced, extremist connections between Indonesia and Pakistan. The fact that he was arrested in the same city that al-Qaeda's leader, Osama bin Laden, was eventually found to be hiding two months later is strong circumstantial evidence, at least of the continuing importance of maintaining direct links with al-Qaeda central for at least some Indonesian extremists.

Significant numbers of Indonesians have also studied at Islamic universities and institutions in Pakistan. Most have done so without either being radicalised or going on to have careers in extremist movements. In this chapter we will examine the experience of Indonesian students in Pakistan, look at the main institutions at which they study and examine the extent to which there have been any connections between student travel and radicalisation or the forging of extremist links.

Why Pakistan?

As at 2009 there were some 150 Indonesian students studying at a variety of institutions in Pakistan registered with the Indonesian High School and University Students Association (Persatuan Pelajar dan Mahasiswa Indonesia – PPMI).² Not all Indonesian students in Pakistan are registered with the PPMI, particularly those studying at *madaris*.³ There is conflicting information about how many Indonesians are currently, or have recently, been studying at such institutions. According to one source interviewed for this paper, in 2007 there were probably about 150 such students in Pakistani *madaris*, most of them members of the Jama'at at-Tabligh movement (see below) studying at the organisation's headquarters in Raiwind, in Lahore.⁴ A small number (fewer than ten) of Indonesians are also known to be studying at the Ahl-e-Hadith *madaris* in Gujrat and Faisalabad.⁵

While Pakistan has never rivalled other major centres of Islamic learning such as al-Azhar University in Egypt as a destination for Indonesian students, as the foregoing student numbers suggest, it has still been important enough. The reasons Indonesian students have chosen Pakistan (and particular institutions in Pakistan) vary. A number of Indonesian Pakistan alumni interviewed pointed to the quality of education and the low costs (relative to other countries) of studying there. Others pointed to the relatively open atmosphere at Islamic universities there (although this was contrasted with the situation in *madaris* in Pakistan where the teachers generally taught from an outline, emphasised memorisation over interpretation or analysis and did not encourage exchanges of views in the same way). One interviewee noted that the kind of open atmosphere that was present in Pakistani universities only became available in Indonesia in the reform period (after 1998).⁶ The affiliations of an Indonesian student's religious teacher also seemed to be a significant factor in their choice of foreign institution. That is, if the teacher has good connections with a foreign institution then he seems more likely to recommend it to the student or help them gain admission.

The terrorist attacks of September 11 2001 seems to have had a greater impact on the destination of Indonesian students studying in Pakistan, rather than on total numbers (although anecdotal evidence collected through our interviews suggest that there were more Indonesians studying in Pakistan in the 1990s than there are today). There has been a definite decline in the number of students studying at those institutions associated with extremist ideas or movements. For example, Indonesian student numbers at Abu Bakr Islamic University, the institution at which most of the JI-affiliated Ghuraba Cell members were attending, have declined significantly. The number of Indonesian students attending the more mainstream International Islamic University appears to have remained steady (see below).

Even those seeking to study at more mainstream institutions seem to have been affected by tighter visa regulations and the Pakistani government's introduction of the Deeni Madaris Registration and Regulation Ordinance in 2002. This both placed greater limits on foreign student enrolments and made it more difficult for foreign students to enrol in educational institutions without coming to the attention of the security services. One anecdotal example brought to our attention was that of an Indonesian of partial Pakistani descent who wanted to visit relatives in Pakistan. Even though he fulfilled all the requirements, including getting a guarantee from his relatives in Pakistan, he had to wait a month to get a non-extendable two-week visa.⁷ Indonesian students now typically wait months for a visa and those interested in studying at religious institutions must be approved by the Pakistani Ministry of Interior.⁸ A visa is granted only after clearance is obtained from relevant national intelligence agencies, who also seek information from Pakistani missions abroad and authorities of the countries of the students. If the student is approved, a No Objection Certificate (NOC) is issued only for the school at which the student intends to study.

Institutions

Of those Indonesian students registered with the PPMI, the largest concentration is at the **International Islamic University (IIU)** in Islamabad. In 2010 there were some 64 Indonesian students enrolled at the University (53 male and 11 female).⁹ This represents a slight increase on students attending in 2000 (60 students – 41 male and 19 female).¹⁰ The IIU is considered the most prestigious Islamic educational institution in Pakistan. It was established in 1985 and has emerged as the main seat of learning for both local and international students. It includes 20 departments from nine faculties including the Faculty of *Shari'a* and Law, *Usul ad-Din* (theology), Arabic, Languages and Literatures, Social Sciences, Management Sciences, Applied Sciences, Academy, *Shari'a* Academy, Centre for Basic Studies and the Iqra Centre for Technical Education. The IIU has international accreditation and an international faculty. There is a focus on research, the university has good internet access and an excellent library, and there are hostels and dormitories for foreign students. Even though tuition is not waived, the costs are relatively low.

Study at the IIU

Lanny Octavia is not representative of the background and experience of all Indonesian students who attended Islamic educational institutions in Pakistan. Nevertheless, her recounting of her experiences at the International Islamic University from 1997 to 2001 provides some interesting detail that both confirms some and rejects other preconceptions that have developed about foreign students undertaking Islamic education in Pakistan.

Lanny went to Pakistan because she felt study abroad would add more value to her education. She chose Pakistan on the recommendation of her *pesantren* teacher. His good connections with the International Islamic University in Pakistan were also a factor, as was the IIU's combination of an Islamic and international education that was delivered in both English and Arabic.

Lanny did not receive a scholarship to study at the IIU but was supported by her parents. Because she had a good grade point average she did receive two terms' free tuition during her time at IIU.

Lanny noted that at the time it was not common for Indonesian women to go overseas to study (she was 17 when she left Indonesia for Pakistan). In her years at IIU there were about 20 women and, she thought, about 100 men. The men went to IIU campus in Islamabad and the women went to another campus out of town.

While at the IIU she was advised by a senior in her cohort to be wary of the Indonesian women in her group who were affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan). In terms of group dynamics within her cohort of Indonesian students, you were either in the Ikhwan group or not. In any event, because she wanted to improve her language skills, she lived and associated mainly with Pakistani and Chinese students.

Lanny attended some of the gatherings at the IIU organised by the Forum of Indonesian Students (now PPMI). There were mostly separate gatherings for men and women, but if it was a joint gathering then the room would be divided by a curtain. Discussion topics included 'leadership training', 'Islamic thought' and 'happy family/harmonious marriage'.

Lanny noted that study at the IIU was very self-tailored, with students choosing their own subjects. Some of her Indonesian counterparts were very critical of the teachers, especially Afghan teachers who tended to be very traditional. But she was advised by a more senior Indonesian student that it was better not to criticise the teacher if you wanted to get good marks. There were many Middle Eastern lecturers at the IIU. Lanny found the Egyptian lecturers better as they were more open-minded. The Pakistani and Afghan teachers, particularly those in the Usul ad-Din (theology) faculty, had strong Jama'at-e-Islami backgrounds and tended to be more ideological.

She also found at the IIU subjects she had never come across before. Alongside traditional subjects such as *tafsir* (exegesis of the Qoran) and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) there were discussions of *ghazwal fiqri* (the ideological assault of the West on the Muslim world), Zionism, freemasonry and critical approaches to the Bible.

Students tended to reflect their academic focus. *Usul ad-Din* students tended to be more ideological than *shari'a* students. She noted that many of her fellow students came from the Middle East. One of her counterparts was the daughter of the late Arab jihadist figure Abdullah Azzam. She was older and would dominate the class. In general Arab students were often patronising towards their Asian counterparts.

While at the IIU, Lanny also travelled around Pakistan. She visited Lahore and Peshawar. She usually travelled with a friend and sometimes she went on organised trips. She noted that it was not easy to travel around as a woman, and was often harassed by Pakistani men, even when wearing *hijab*.

Lanny considered herself a 'conservative Muslim' when she went to Pakistan. Now she considers herself a 'liberal Muslim' although she became a liberal Muslim after she returned to Indonesia.

Another significant concentration of Indonesian students is at **Binoria University in Karachi (Jamia Binoria S.I.T.E.)**. This is regarded as one of the most modern *madaris* in Pakistan. It was established by Maulana Muhammad Naeem under the patronage of his father Qari Abdul Haleem in 1979, is located on 12 acres of land and has some 4500 students. Of these, between 150 and 200 are from overseas. Degrees gained at Binoria are equivalent to university degrees and are recognised by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan.

According to information provided by an official Indonesian source, of the 29 Indonesian students reported to be studying in Karachi, 22 are enrolled at Binoria. However, information provided by the university suggests that only some nine or ten Indonesians are currently studying there (as well as students from Thailand (70), Malaysia (ten), Philippines (two or three) and Fiji (seven)).¹¹ It is possible that this discrepancy simply reflects poor or out-of-date records. It is also possible, however, that Indonesian students have registered as attending Binoria University, but actually attend – or have transferred to – other institutions in Karachi.

One reason for doing so would be if the institution in question were under close observation for having links with extremist movements. In Karachi two particular institutions, both part of the Ahl-e-Hadith network of *salafi madaris* in Karachi, have a track record with regard to extremism and have hosted Indonesian students in the past. One is the LeT-affiliated **University of Islamic Studies (Jamia Darasat al-Islamia)**, which was attended by members of the Ghuraba cell (see below). It was not possible, however, to confirm if there were still Indonesians studying at this institution. The other was the **Abu Bakr Islamic University (Jamia Abu Bakr)**. Again, many of the Ghuraba cell members were attending Abu Bakr Islamic

University when the cell was uncovered in 2003. Since then, Indonesian student numbers at the university have dwindled from 22 in 2003 to three in 2008, to one in 2010.¹² The number of students from Indonesia and Malaysia may have been as high as 40-45 each in the past and approximately 100 Thai students had also been educated at the University.¹³

The Abu Bakr Islamic University was founded by Choudhury Zafarullah. In 1978 Zafarullah had bought the land for a new *madrassa* in Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Karachi. Once the Abu Bakr Islamic University started operating, Zafarullah left for Saudi Arabia to undertake further study at Imam Muhammad bin Saud University in Riyadh from 1980 to 1985. Zafarullah sought guidance from Saudi scholars on the curriculum and administration of the university which by then was open to students. He also received funds from scholars and others in Saudi Arabia. Zafarullah was a member of the *salafi* organisation, Jama'at-e-Mujahedeen, which took part in the anti-Soviet *jihad* in Afghanistan. Jamia Abu Bakr has taught the ideology of the Jama'at and individuals involved in Jama'at-e-Mujahedeen have played an important role at the institution.

The university is one of a number of *salafi* institutions established in Karachi after the start of the anti-Soviet *jihad* in Afghanistan.¹⁴ It was the first non-Arab, non-governmental educational institution where Arabic was the medium of instruction. Its curriculum is the same as that for the Islamic University (Jamia Islamiyya), Medina, and Imam Muhammad bin Saud University in Riyadh. The teaching staff have been recruited from a range of Islamic universities throughout the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq and Sudan. The university provides free board and lodging for those selected for admission. It also operates a women's institute, Jamia Aisha Siddiqa.

Jama'at at-Tabligh

A significant number of Indonesian students – perhaps between 100 and 150 – also attend institutions run by the Jama'at at-Tabligh movement (see box) in Gujerat and the Diyatul Ulum madrasah in Punjab.¹⁵ In addition, some 100 to 130 Tablighis from Indonesia travel to Pakistan for the movement's annual gathering at Raiwind (Raiwind Ijtima). In recent years the number of Indonesians attending the annual gathering has declined, mainly because of post-9/11 difficulties in obtaining visas. In 2000, for example, some 2-300 Indonesian Tablighis were travelling to Pakistan.¹⁶ As a result, many more now go to the Jama'at's other big gathering in Dhaka. In the past many Jama'at members would go on from Dhaka to India and Pakistan: among the movement's members the expression 'IPB' was commonly used for 'India-Pakistan-Bangladesh'.¹⁷

Despite occasional suspicions about Jama'at at-Tabligh's possible involvement in terrorism, little evidence has ever been presented of the movement's involvement in extremist activism – although individual members may have been involved from time to time. It is difficult to estimate Jama'at numbers in Indonesia because the head office claims to have never registered its members. In addition, the system of membership is very relaxed – as long as someone undertakes *khuruj* (literally to 'go out' preaching the faith, a defining activity of the Jama'at) once, he can claim himself to be a member, even if he or she is never active again. Some estimate memberships to be around 300,000 members, for example the Ijtima conducted by the Jama'at in 2008 in Serpong, Tangerang, was attended by 300,000 people, although not every Tablighi attended that program.¹⁸ The Tablighi movement is said to be growing rapidly within the Indonesian police: according to one source, the Tablighi movement in Makassar is so entrenched in the police there that new recruits are approached by their seniors in the force within days of their arrival.¹⁹ Indonesian members of the Jama'at are often mistaken for salafis because of similar dress. They are, however, usually condemned by the *salafi* movement as insufficiently religious and are not typically targeted for recruitment by extremist movements in Indonesia.

Notwithstanding the increased difficulties that Indonesian Tablighis face in obtaining a visa for travel to Pakistan, there remains a risk that Indonesian extremists could use Tablighi cover for their own travel. All Indonesian Tablighi members who travel to Pakistan have to coordinate with the central office of the movement in Jakarta at Kebon Jeruk Mosque. Basically, every member who has the financial means to do so is allowed to go to Pakistan, but it is usually recommended that new members first do *khuruj* in Indonesia. Usually members from Indonesia will travel on tourist visas for Pakistan. Only Jama'at members can travel with the group, but because the membership system in the movement is so loose, anyone could in theory join at any time. If an extremist wanted to travel with the Jama'at members to Pakistan all they would have to do is pretend to be a member for a certain period and then sign up to go.²⁰

That said, we were not able to find any evidence since 2002 that any Indonesian extremist had travelled to Pakistan as a Tablighi. Prior to 2002, however, a number of Indonesian extremists claimed that they had travelled to Pakistan and Afghanistan as a part of the Tablighi movement – although it is not clear how truthful these claims were (and it is possible they were made in order to obscure how these individuals really travelled to Pakistan).

Jama'at at-Tabligh

The Jama'at at-Tabligh was established by Muhammad Ilyas in Mewat, Northern India, in 1926. The aim of the group was to educate Muslims about their religion, prevent their conversion to other religions and ensure that they were aware of their duties in the light of Quran and Sunnah. *Da'wa* (preaching – literally 'calling' people to Islam) is the main task of the Jama'at.

The Tablighi ideology centres on the relationship between the faithful and Allah.²¹ Tablighis believe that closeness to Allah is achieved through an individual's initiation into the movement and subsequently into the Tablighi routines and rituals through which he or she learns about Allah, gets to know about His omniscience and omnipotence, and ultimately through pure concentration and conviction feels Allah's presence. The summons for tabligh (a call towards religion) could be explained as an invitation to join the Tablighi Jama'at and participate in its routines and rituals to practise the faith in the omnipresence of Allah who is always with the faithful. Furthermore, the claim orders the faithful to comply with the commands of Allah in practice so that he or she can get a real sense of Allah's being and might, understand His attributes manifested in nature and in human beings, and come to truly appreciate Him.

Khuruj is a key element of Tablighi activism. *Khuruj* has three central rituals – *ta'leem* (education), *jolah* (preaching mission), and *bayaan* (religious talk or speech). The objective of *ta'leem* is to arouse a desire for righteousness and good deeds. Therefore, at *ta'leem* members are encouraged to sit next to each other in a state of *wudu* (ablution) and give their undivided attention to what is being read. *Jolah* or *gasht* (preaching visit) means a group of a minimum of three Tablighis visiting Muslims in the local area where the *jama'at* (group) had planned to work for a given period of time. It is a quick visit designed to seek the participation of local Muslims in the Tablighi *ama'l* (deed). *Khusus* *jolah* refers to a special visit by one or more men to a particular Muslim for the purpose of Islamic propagation and to encourage him to practise Islam more rigorously and make *din* (religion) his total way of life.

Although the Jama'at had been active in areas currently constituting Pakistan, it increased its focus on reminding Muslims of their duties after that country's independence in 1947. The Tablighi Markaz was established by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas in Raiwind, Lahore. For the last 55 years, the Jama'at has been holding its annual gathering (Ijtima) at this location.

The Jama'at has gradually increased its influence in a number of sections of Pakistani society, including the armed forces. According to one source, in some

cases even promotions in the armed forces can be influenced by affiliation with the Jama'at. Known personalities with affiliations to the Jama'at include former Pakistani President General Zia ul Haq. Former Head of the ISI, Javed Nasir, had also been a member of the Jama'at for more than two decades.

Although the Jama'at is dominated by the same Deobandi school of thought that inspired the Taliban, the movement in Pakistan has not been associated with sectarian or *jihadi* activities. There is, however, some evidence that while the Jama'at does not promote militancy, some of those affiliated with the group may have engaged in militant activities. In September 2010, for example, a 'search operation was launched following information of the law-enforcement agencies that militants might use some areas as hideouts... The raids were conducted at Manga Mandi, Jia Bagga and areas near Tablighi Markaz'.²² Earlier in 1995, News International had reported that the Pakistani extremist group Harkatul Mujahedeen were 'impressed by the Tablighi Jama'at', and that most of their workers came from the Jama'at.²³

Radicalisation or teaching to the converted?

It was not the goal of the research to provide a definitive account of the typical Indonesian student experience in Pakistan (if such a thing exists). It was not possible to interview a large number of the Indonesian students who had attended Islamic educational institutions in Pakistan over the years nor to establish a reliable methodology for assessing whether their views had become more (or less) radical when they came home.

Nevertheless, one observation that we would draw from our research was that, by and large, students from Indonesia seem to have gone to those institutions that reflected their religious or ideological disposition before leaving Indonesia (or at least that of their religious teachers). As the example of student L above illustrates, students were sometimes introduced to new ideas and individuals with more radical outlooks. But as the example also demonstrates, it did not always follow that exposure to these ideas or individuals left the student more radical in outlook.

More importantly, it does seem that those Indonesian students who had extremist views or links to extremist movements had these views or links before they went to Pakistan. This in turn influenced – with some exceptions – which institution they attended in Pakistan. This was best illustrated by the so-called Ghuraba cell. In 1999, JI figure Hambali tasked his brother Rusman Gunawan (Gun Gun) and Abdul Rahim, the son of then JI spiritual leader Abu Bakr Ba'asyir, to form a secret cell from Indonesian, Malaysian and Singaporean students studying at Abu Bakr

Islamic University and the University of Islamic Studies in Karachi. Significantly, many of the Indonesian members of the cell (see list below) had attended the al-Mukmin Pesantren established by Abu Bakr Ba'asyir and JI founder Abdullah Sungkar.

The cell probably numbered anywhere from 20 to 40 individuals. Its exact purpose remains unclear. It may have been modelled on Abdullah Azzam's famous Maktab al-Khidamat (Office of Services) which facilitated the movement of foreign fighters into Afghanistan during the anti-Soviet *jihad*, with the Ghuraba cell intended to facilitate the training of JI members in Afghanistan. Gun Gun's police testimony indicates that the cell was formed in a house that was being used as a transit point for Malaysians and Singaporeans travelling to Afghanistan to undergo military training.²⁴ In at least one instance the Ghuraba cell was used to support a terrorist operation in Indonesia: Gun Gun helped organise money from Pakistan that was used to finance the 2003 Marriott bombing. It has also been claimed that the planner of al-Qaeda's September 11 attacks, Khaled Sheikh Muhammad, wanted to use the cell to launch a follow-up attack on the west coast of the United States shortly after 9/11. Hambali reputedly resisted this because he saw the group primarily as a way to train future leaders of JI.²⁵

Training was indeed a key activity for the cell of JI members in Afghanistan and Pakistan and continued right up until 2001. The fullest account of the period 1999-2001 is provided in the unpublished biography of JI member Muhammad Rais, who served as an instructor at Camp al-Farouk – an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan where a number of Indonesians received military training. Rais was later arrested for a minor role in the 2003 Marriott bombing. In the biography Rais claims that among those Indonesians that underwent training in Afghanistan in the period, were Abu Bakr Bas'syir' Abdul Rahim and former JI bomb-maker Dr Azhari Husin (killed in an Indonesian police raid in 2005).

In his police testimony Gun Gun also gave an account of training he received in Afghanistan in June-July 2000 and again in July 2001.²⁶ Gun Gun explained that the training included:

Introduction to light weaponry for 20 days (theory and practice) including how to use AK-47s and PK, while other weapons we were introduced to were RPG, M-16s, Uzi, Macarov, and TT Pistols; military skills [crawling on all fours, stalking, rolling, lying prone, somersaults, climbing, etc] for ten days; map-reading and use of a compass; 10 days' training in explosives including making Molotov bombs, throwing grenades, introduction to anti-tank mines, and how to make TNT.²⁷

Training was not just provided in al-Qaeda camps however. In his unpublished biography, Muhammad Rais also claims to have gone to military training camps run by the Pakistani extremist group Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) in Pakistani Kashmir. Rais claims that JI members attending Islamic schools in Pakistan would go to Kashmir on holidays to undertake this training, particularly those attending Jamia Abu Bakr and the University of Islamic Studies in Karachi. According to Rais, staff at these schools usually arranged travel for students who wanted to go to Kashmir, with costs borne by the students themselves.

The training provided to JI is consistent with the LeT's track record of providing training to foreign extremists.²⁸ It is noteworthy that LeT literature after 2000 began to pay more attention to events in Indonesia. In one example a report referred to the 'massacre' of Muslims being perpetrated by Indonesian Christians with the support of the United States, Australia and New Zealand.²⁹ One interviewee in the Indonesian extremist community noted that the LeT-affiliated Jama'at ud-Da'wa party (JuD) continued to have no objection to providing training and education to Indonesian extremists, but that Indonesians would need to get to Pakistan for this to take place.³⁰ Indeed, the same interviewee said that as of mid-2010 an Indonesian extremist had succeeded in enrolling at the International Islamic University in Islamabad with the goal being to build new cooperation with the JuD.³¹ It is not clear with which Indonesian group the individual is affiliated, but he appears to be an associate of former Ghuraba cell member Muhammad Jibril and a graduate of a JI *pesantren* (see below). If the claim is correct it would also indicate that Indonesian extremists are now avoiding Pakistani institutions like Jamia Abu Bakr that are under the counter-terrorism spotlight because of their record of extremist connections.

Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jama'at ud-Da'wa

Lashkar-e-Toiba was established in 1990 by a group of salafis under the leadership of Hafiz Saeed and Zafar Iqbal. Both of them had been teaching in the Engineering University, Lahore, and had participated in the Afghan *jihad* of the 1980s. As the Soviet occupation neared its end, their attention shifted to Kashmir. Although there is no concrete evidence available and there are claims that LeT was funded through donations from interested individuals from within Pakistan and the Middle East, the group would not have been able to establish itself at the turn of the 1990s without some support from Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence agency.

The LeT was established as part of the Markaz Dawa wal Irshad which had already been in existence since the mid-1980s. As a group committed to *jihad*

in Kashmir, the LeT mobilised groups across the country, with the primary focus on Punjab and Sindh. These groups were launched across the border into the Indian part of Kashmir throughout the 1990s. Effectively, the LeT was functioning as a part of the Pakistani military strategy vis-à-vis India during this decade. For example, the LeT was actively involved in the 1999 armed confrontation between Pakistani and Indian forces in Kargil province in Kashmir, with LeT members establishing a presence throughout the province.

After the Pakistan government's withdrawal from Kargil, the LeT continued to focus on the Kashmir issue. But it had already become active in international issues, particularly Chechnya and Bosnia, with some of its members actively raising funds for *jihad* in these areas. The literature published by the LeT also came to include a number of areas as worthy of their concern beyond Kashmir such as Palestine, Chechnya, Kosovo and Eritrea. The 1990s, therefore, saw a gradual widening of the area of concern for the LeT beyond Kashmir.

The LeT came under increased scrutiny following its attack on the Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001. Following the movement of Indian forces along the border with Pakistan, the Musharraf regime banned the LeT. However, even prior to the announcement, Hafiz Saeed had technically ceded the control of LeT to those based in the Pakistani part of Kashmir. He established Jama'at ud-Da'wa (JuD) which claimed to focus on developments within Pakistan. In this capacity, the JuD has continued to mobilise people across the country, actively promoting an educational system which inculcates *salafi* thinking among girls and boys from an early age. Its main base, Muridke, houses a large educational complex along with housing facilities. JuD has also actively participated in social welfare activities, building a network of individuals who can become active in times of crises. The 2005 earthquake in Pakistan saw JuD members rescuing and then providing rehabilitation support to victims of the earthquake.

Though JuD has always denied providing military training to students in Muridke, others have argued that the nature of facilities in the base suggest otherwise. In the Pakistani part of Kashmir, LeT has operated training centres: Muasker Toiba, Muasker Aqsa, Muasker Ummul Qara and Muasker Abdullah bin Masood. Within Pakistan, Markaz Muhammad bin Qasam (in Maldasi, near Hyderabad), has provided training to jihadis as well.

Following the Mumbai Attack (November 2008) the JuD came under scrutiny, with Hafiz Saeed being placed under house arrest – only later to be released by the Lahore High Court. The JuD continues to be active in mobilising support for its ideas of changing Pakistan to a true Islamic state/society, and fighting the 'oppression' of the West, Hindus and Jews. Operating as Falah-e-Insaniyat, it

has raised funds for those affected by floods, and also provides medical support for all in need. It has also been able to raise funds publicly: during Eid al Adha 2010, for example, JuD ranked third after Shaukat Khanam Hospital and Jama'at-e-Islami as the recipient of animal hides which were later sold in the market to raise funds.

Ghuraba cell alumni

Whatever its ultimate purpose, the Ghuraba cell's life was relatively short. The arrest and interrogation of Khalid Sheikh Muhammad and of Hambali in August 2003 led to the arrest of Hambali's brother Gun Gun. In September 2003, Pakistani security services arrested almost all the members of the Ghuraba cell who were in Pakistan at the time. Most of those arrested were deported to their home countries (two Indonesian brothers travelling on Malaysian passports were deported to Malaysia).³² The six Indonesians deported to Indonesia were arrested and tried upon their return. Two were eventually released without charge. The six arrested were:

- **David Pintarto**: born in Sei Liput, Aceh, in 1981; attended Al-Mukmin Pesantren, in Ngruki; in 1997 moved to Darussyahada Pesantren, in Boyolali; while in Pakistan attended the Abu Bakr Islamic University in Karachi; following his arrest in Indonesia, he was released after two months without being tried.
- **Muhammad Anwar Siddiqi** (sometimes written as Muhammad Anwar al-Shadaqi): born Magelang, in Central Java in 1982; attended Al-Mukmin Pesantren in Ngruki in 1996; moved to Darussyahada Pesantren in 2001; while in Pakistan attended Abu Bakr Islamic University; following his arrest in Indonesia, he was released after two months without being tried.
- **Furqon Abdullah**: born in Purworejo, Central Java in 1976; attended Al-Mukmin Pesantren in Ngruki from 1986 to 1994; later moved to Ulul Albab Pesantren in Solo; while in Pakistan attended Abu Bakr Islamic University; following his arrest in Indonesia he was tried and sentenced to 14 months jail for document fraud.
- **Muhammad Saifudin**: born in Sleman in Central Java in 1980; attended Al-Mukmin Pesantren in Ngruki from 1992 to 1995; later attended Darussyahada Pesantren in Boyolali, graduating in 1998; went to Camp Hudaibiyah, a terrorist training camp in Mindanao, Philippines, from 1999 until March 2000 where he graduated 5th out of 22 students; in Pakistan

attended Abu Bakr Islamic University; after returning to Indonesia was sentenced to two years for involvement in the Marriott bombing, and was released in August 2005.

- **Husni Rizal** (alias Ilham Sopandi): born in Bandung in 1977; attended al-Mukmin Pesantren, in Ngruki (class of 1995); arrived in Pakistan July 2003; after his arrest and trial in Indonesia he was sentenced to 15 months for document fraud.
- **Rusman Gunawan** (alias Gun Gun): born in Cianjur in 1977; attended, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Tsanawiyah Manarulhuda and state Madrasah Aliyah, in Cianjur. While in Pakistan attended Abu Bakr Islamic University from 1999 to 2003; was originally going to go to International Islamic University in Islamabad but had insufficient funds; after his arrest and trial in Indonesia, he was sentenced to four years for helping fund the first Marriott bombing; released in November 2006.

Since the breakup of the cell, all six of those arrested and deported to Indonesia appear to have eschewed from any further extremist activism and are no longer particularly active within JI. Typically, JI members who had studied abroad would be assigned to *Da'wa* or teaching in JI *pesantren*, but at the time of writing not one of this group appears to be doing this. As of mid-2009 Gun Gun was living in Bengkulu and working in a coffee factory there. Furqon Abdullah was working as an embroiderer in Tasikmalaya helping out in his in-laws' enterprise. Ilham Sopandi was living in Bandung and selling headscarves. Muhammad Saifudin was studying for his BA at a private university in Yogyakarta.³³

Two key Indonesian members of the Ghuraba cell did not suffer the same fate as their countrymen. Despite being a leading member of the cell, Abu Bakr Ba'asyir's son, Abdul Rahim, was not picked up in the original sweep by Pakistani security services because he was in Indonesia at the time. His father had ordered him home in June 2002 to get married, and he remained in Indonesia after his father's arrest in the aftermath of the 2002 Bali bombings. Abdul Rahim is today the official spokesman and head of the *shari'a* committee of Jemaah Ansharut Tauhid, a new hard-line, but above-ground, organisation led by his father.³⁴

Another key cell member, Muhammad Jibril, was picked up by Pakistan security services, but because he had travelled to Pakistan on a Malaysian passport he was deported to Malaysia.³⁵ He later returned to Indonesia in 2005 where he became head of ar-Rahmah Media, a prolific publisher of jihadist videos, books and magazines.³⁶ After the breakup of the Ghuraba cell his connection to JI became more murky. His father Fihirrudin (alias Abu Jibril) was an early associate of JI founders Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakr Ba'asyir, but today heads Majelis

Mujahedeen Indonesia (MMI). Muhammad Jibril does appear to have been in contact with key extremist figure Noordin Top before the latter was killed (Top himself broke with JI in 2004).³⁷ Jibril was charged and convicted for his role in funding the 2009 bombings of the Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta perpetrated by Top's group.

There is strong evidence that Jibril returned to Pakistan at least once, in 2007 or 2008, since his deportation.³⁸ In a 2008 internet chat with one of the leading perpetrators of the 2002 Bali bombing, Imam Samudra (before he was executed), Jibril claims he entered Pakistan on a false passport in the name of Yunus Muhammad.³⁹ Jibril's main interest appears to have been to discuss cooperation with the media division of al-Qaeda in the dissemination of extremist videos (unsurprising given Jibril's role with Ar-Rahma media).⁴⁰ Perhaps most surprising was that Jibril suggested he was not seeking material assistance from al-Qaeda's media arm, but was offering instead to provide it. Jibril mentioned a plan to send USD 1500 to al-Qaeda's media arm as well as sending an Indonesian to work with them in Pakistan.⁴¹

In one of these chats (which were transcribed as a part of his trial dossier) Jibril also claims to have visited the Pakistani Taliban in Waziristan. In the conversation below Jibril calls himself 'Irhab 007' (Irhab in Arabic means 'terrorist'. In an interview with one of the authors in 2009, Jibril mentioned that his favourite film was 'Bourne Identity'.) 'Istisyad' is assumed to be Imam Samudra:

Irhab: It was our friends who executed Benazir earlier [27 Dec 07]. At the time I was staying in the house of a rich person named Syaikh Wasim. If I'm not mistaken, the Taliban came, they were really big.

Ist: How far have you got typing my book?

Irhab: I'm still working on it.

Ist: Is it already typed?

Irhab: [unclear]

Ist: Mehsud didn't get hit, did he?

Irhab: Furqon. Ya, he didn't get hit. Baitullah Mehsud, the western media says he's the most dangerous. I've met him. Before the first Bali bombing. Did he let the bearded one know.

Ist: I have a plan

Irhab: If I want to send an email there, I can arrange it. I have the AQ email. The other day I met Abu Bilal at-Turki, he's still young. In Waziristan, I'm going to meet either Shaikh Aiman or Shaikh Usama, or for as-sahab, Abu Turki.⁴²

While the reference to Jibril's meeting (if indeed it occurred) with Baitullah Mehsud, the leader of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, suggests it took place during Jibril's time in Pakistan as part of the Ghuraba cell (i.e. pre-2003), the chat hints at an ongoing association with the Pakistani Taliban. Although the extent of any cooperation

between Indonesian extremists and the Pakistani Taliban is unclear, what this underlines are the opportunities for Indonesians in Pakistan for developing such contacts, assuming they can get to Pakistan in the first place.

Conclusion

Pakistan is never likely to rival countries like Egypt (and as we shall see in the next chapter, Yemen) as a destination for Indonesian students. Even before September 11, the numbers of Indonesian students traveling to Pakistan to undertake higher study in Islamic institutions was a significant if still relatively small number. Small numbers also mean that the impact of any radicalisation of students, if it is occurring at all, is likely to be limited. The greater risk, based on our research, remains that Indonesian extremists will use the cover of students to forge connections with counterparts in South Asia.

After the events of September 11 2001 and the later arrest of the Ghuraba cell, visa restrictions have had some impact on Indonesian student numbers, although not at mainstream institutions such as the IIU. This raises a potential issue. As noted, in the past those Indonesian students with extremist connections have tended to go to those Pakistani institutions that reflect their ideological outlook. With these institutions, like Abu Bakr Islamic University, now under greater surveillance by the Pakistani state, there is a risk that extremists will seek cover as students in more mainstream institutions in an effort to build new ties with Pakistani extremists or al-Qaeda.

The report of an Indonesian extremist attending the IIU suggests this might already be occurring – although we would emphasise that we were not able to corroborate this report. That said, security authorities need to approach the issue with a degree of sensitivity. The IIU is an internationally respected state institution. A great many Indonesian students have studied there without being radicalised by its teachings. It would be both wrong and probably counter-productive from a counter-terrorism perspective simply to place limits on all study at this institution by Indonesian students. Sharing of intelligence between Pakistan and Indonesian authorities and careful vetting of individual students will continue to be the most effective means of ensuring that legitimate study is not compromised by those with more malign intent.

Indonesian students in Yemen

Introduction

In recent years Yemen has become a major focus of Western counter-terrorism efforts. A number of high-profile, but hitherto low-impact, terrorist conspiracies with origins in Yemen have underlined the revival – or perhaps more accurately, reincarnation – of al-Qaeda’s Yemeni branch, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP or in Arabic, al-Qaeda fi Jazeerat al-Arab). Meanwhile, the Yemeni state’s fitful willingness and ability to assist in Western efforts to nip al-Qaeda’s new Yemeni bud before it can flower are being further compromised by the country’s steadily worsening political and economic crises. It is not a foregone conclusion, however, and greater political chaos in Yemen could also serve to diminish AQAP’s traction.⁴³

Almost at the same time as Yemen has become a more urgent focus for the West’s counter-terrorism efforts, the country has developed into a key foreign destination for Indonesian students of Islam. Over a bit more than a decade, the Indonesian student population in Yemen has grown from token numbers to some 1500 to 2200 students today by our estimates. Yemen is now the second largest destination of Indonesian Islamic studies students in the Middle East behind Egypt (which hosted approximately 5200 students in 2010). Indonesian students are being drawn to Yemen by, variously, its low cost, its exoticism, but also familiarity in an Islamic cultural sense, as well as the Yemeni heritage that many Indonesian have.

As with Indonesian students traveling to Pakistan, this raises the question of whether Indonesian students might be either radicalised by their experience in Yemen or that study abroad will provide a cover for the building of extremist connections. The large number of students involved, combined with the uncertain security situation in Yemen, makes it perhaps even more important to get an accurate picture of where students are studying in the country and to understand what they are studying. As we noted at the outset of this paper, this is not just a question of addressing reasonable counter-terrorism concerns, but also of ensuring that those concerns do not unfairly blacken the image of those Indonesian students undertaking legitimate study in Yemen.

Why Yemen?

According to the Indonesian student association in Yemen (Persatuan Pelajar Indonesia – PPI) there were some 1500 Indonesian students in Yemen as of 2010.⁴⁴ In addition to these students formally registered with PPI we would estimate that there are potentially some 700 Indonesian students not registered with PPI. Our research indicates there were between 1517 and 2232 Indonesian students, based

on interviews with students and institutions in Indonesia and Yemen (and cross-referencing) at the end of 2010.

Our research indicates that Indonesian student numbers in Yemen have grown relatively quickly. According to a former head of the PPI in Yemen, before 2000 there were only some 2-300 Indonesian students in Yemen, with the majority going to *madaris* rather than universities (although the distinction between the two is not always clear). As contacts between Yemeni and Indonesian *ulema* and teaching institutions developed, visas became easier to obtain and scholarships were offered, the numbers grew rapidly.⁴⁵ Indeed, a number of Yemeni universities now have branches in Indonesia that help facilitate student travel to Yemen (including al-Ahqaf University, Rub at-Tarim and Dar al-Mustafa all of which are in Tarim in the governorate of the Hadhramaut).

There are a number of reasons why Yemen has found favour with Indonesian students. As with Pakistan, cost has been a factor. Yemen is a relatively cheap country in which to live. In addition, a number of institutions in Yemen provide in-kind scholarships, in which room and board (although not airfares) are provided for students. Yet despite the low cost, the quality of Islamic education in Yemen was seen by Indonesian students we spoke to as being very high. A number of interviewees noted, for example, the rigour of the study at al-Ahqaf University in Tarim. Students were ‘fined’ for repeatedly failing exams. The exams were also tough: in one account a former student claimed that an exam he sat ran for some 300 pages. As a result, according to this same former student, among the *pesantren* community in Indonesia, graduates of al-Ahqaf were seen as ‘stars’.

A number of Indonesian students interviewed noted that Yemen provided a comfortable mix of the familiar and the exotic. It was familiar in the sense that a majority of Yemenis, like most Indonesians, follow the Shafi’i school of Islamic jurisprudence and practised Islamic cultural traditions such as *ziyarah* (the practice of visiting the tombs of saints) that were forbidden in Saudi Arabia. Having said that, a number remarked on how Islam in Yemen was seen as very ‘pure’, presumably given its proximity to the religion’s birthplace (although a couple of interviewees contrasted Yemen to the strictness of religious study in Saudi Arabia). Yemen was, however, also seen as more exotic than other countries in the Middle East, such as Egypt, that were seen to have a similar religious or cultural outlook to Indonesia: in the words of one interviewee ‘Cairo was too much like Jakarta’.

Another key factor relates to the ancestral connections between Yemen and Indonesia, including the existence of a small but significant Indonesian Yemeni community to this day. The ancestral connections date back to the first significant wave of migration from the Hadhramaut region of Yemen to the East Indies in the late 18th Century.⁴⁶ Mainly men, the Hadhrami migrants assimilated into East Asian

society rapidly through intermarriage, including to prominent families.⁴⁷ Today a small but significant number of Indonesians can trace their ancestry back to Yemen and there is still a self-consciously ‘Yemeni’ community in Indonesia. Families in this community have played a role in encouraging their children to study in Yemen, particularly in the Hadhramaut.⁴⁸ Some students reconnect with Yemeni relatives when they study in Yemen. However, a number of Indonesian interviewees noted that this was less important than the sense that they are preserving their Yemeni heritage by studying in the country. What this reflects is the historically strong feeling of nationalism within the Hadhrami diaspora (not just in Indonesia) and a desire to maintain the linguistic, cultural, and sectarian ties to the Hadhramaut and to protect what is seen as the Hadhrami version of Islam.

Mainstream institutions

Indonesian students are spread between a number of educational institutions in Yemen, ranging from simple *madaris* (often housed in mosques) to full-scale universities. The biggest concentration of students (potentially some 1500) is in the Hadhramaut governorate, particularly in the city of Tarim. Students in Tarim are spread between four large institutions: Dar al-Mustafa and its sister institute for women, Dar al-Zahra; al-Ahgaf University; and Rubat Tarim. All three institutions have branches or offices in Indonesia that facilitate the travel of students to Yemen. These three institutions might be termed mainstream in the sense that they largely teach from the Shafi’i school of Islamic jurisprudence (the school followed by most Muslims in Yemen and Indonesia). Indeed, in general, as noted above, Islam in the Hadhramaut region, particularly that part of it within which most Indonesians study, is characterised by a mix of Shafi’i and Sufi approaches that many Indonesians would find familiar. There are, nevertheless, pockets of extremism in the region (see box ‘Islam, extremism and the Hadhramaut’).

Islam, extremism and the Hadhramaut

While most media articles about Yemen reflexively parrot the fact that Yemen, specifically the Hadhramaut, is the ‘ancestral home of Osama bin Laden’, this association misrepresents the religious and political character of the region (but also of Yemen more broadly). The majority of Indonesian students who study Islam in Yemen study in the Hadhramaut, and much of the governorate has a distinctive blend of the Shafi’i school of jurisprudence and Sufi religious practices. This is not say, however, that there are no pockets of extremist views in the Hadhramaut.

Hadhramaut has two distinct areas: the interior Wadi and the coast: Tarim and Sayoun are in the Wadi (historically, the Kathiri sultanate), while Mukalla and al-Shihr (historically, al-Qa'aiti sultanate) are on the coast. Al-Qaeda's ideology is reportedly spreading in the coastal areas of Hadhramaut, but this is explicitly rejected at the major Islamic institutions in Wadi Hadhramaut that attract the largest numbers of Indonesian students.⁴⁹ Wahhabism (which is distinct from both Yemeni brands of Salafism and from al-Qaeda's ideology) has also spread much more successfully in the coastal areas than it has in the Wadi.

While bin Laden's ancestors were from the Wadi region, at the time of writing al-Qaeda appears to have no permanent physical presence. However, there have been a number of attacks by militants within the Wadi area, including the fatal shooting of four Belgian tourists in 2008 in Wadi Do'an, the perpetrators of which were never found. There have also been a number of AQAP attacks within the Wadi city of Sayoun, and a raid on an AQAP safe house in Tarim in 2008. These incidents suggest that AQAP has succeeded in gaining some, relatively localised, traction within the Wadi area and that the group has tried to recruit there.

For a number of years **Dar al-Mustafa** has had the largest concentration of Indonesian students of any institution in Yemen. Our research suggests, however, that this status might be changing – although the situation is far from clear. A number of former Indonesian students told us that since 2007 Dar al-Mustafa had been attempting to transform itself from essentially a *madrassa* into a more formal university. As a result, teaching and assessment had become more rigorous, which was in turn resulting in a decline in the number of Indonesian students going there. One source suggested that up until 2009 there were 3-400 Indonesian students at Dar al-Mustafa, but that this had now declined to about 100. At the same time another well-sourced estimate in mid-2010 put the figure as high as 600 Indonesian students at Dar al-Mustafa and another 100 at an associated institution for women (also in Tarim), Dar al-Zahra.

Apart from its largely Shafi'i outlook, there is a strong Sufi influence at Dar al-Mustafa and the institution has a reputation in Yemen for promoting tolerance and non-violence. According to one source, most of the Indonesian students at Dar al-Mustafa are of Hadhrami origin and are generally respected and well liked in Tarim. Indonesian students seeking entry to Dar al-Mustafa must be at least 17 years old and be able to at least read, if not speak, Arabic. Students begin their study at Dar al-Mustafa by spending at least two years memorising the *Qur'an* and reading some of the basic Sunni texts. Dar al-Mustafa also offers courses for students studying at other institutions. For example, Indonesian students studying

at al-Ahqaf University are able to do courses at al-Mustafa during vacation periods if they wish to for a fee of 5000 Yemeni Riyals (in 2010 approximately USD25) to cover board and food.

Students live at Dar al-Mustafa and pay 4000 Yemeni Riyals (approximately USD20) a month. Students at Dar al-Mustafa typically live with other Yemeni students. Free tuition is also available to those Indonesian students who request it through Dar al-Mustafa's branch office in Indonesia. Dar al-Mustafa raises money through charitable organisations in Hadhramaut to subsidise tuition, accommodation and food. Dar al-Mustafa also has connections with Sufi and Shafi'i organisations in the UAE, Oman, Kuwait and Qatar.

Another large concentration of Indonesian students is at **al-Ahqaf University**. In 2010 we estimated there were some 370 students studying at al-Ahqaf University's Tarim campus and another 130 at its campus in the coastal city of Mukalla. Al-Ahqaf has a reputation as a rigorous and comprehensive university. It provides a broad education, teaching all four schools of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence – although, according to one former Indonesian student, the emphasis is on the Shafi'i school, with the other three schools only being taught in the fourth year. Graduates from al-Ahqaf are considered sufficiently qualified to issue a *fatwa* or to become an Islamic judge (*qadi*).

Costs for Indonesian students are relatively low. The university provides in-kind scholarships, meeting food and accommodation costs. The university is strict, however, about academic progress. Scholarship students must pay their own airfare to Yemen and provide enough funds for a return airfare which is held in trust by the university until the student finishes their studies (or is expelled from the university or deported). There is also a system of fines for students who fail their courses, including the possibility of free board and food being withdrawn for a period.

According to one former student, al-Ahqaf also requires students to have a good knowledge of classical Arabic, including grammar, before they begin their studies. Students are not expected to have a high level of spoken (colloquial) Arabic which it is assumed they will pick up in Yemen. From 2003 all Indonesian students did a one-year preparatory course in Yemen before they began their formal studies that focused mainly on improving language skills. Since 2006/7 students have sat a language exam and only those with weak language skills now have to undertake the one-year preparatory course.

The third major centre for Indonesian students in Tarim is **Rubat Tarim**. The school dates back to the 1880s although it was closed for a period under the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen) and re-opened following

reunification. All students at Rabat Tarim must be over 17 years of age, speak Arabic, and be Hashemites (descendants of the Prophet Muhammad). In 2010 there were, by our estimate, between 250-300 Indonesian students studying at the institution. Like the other Tarim-based institutions mentioned above, Rubat Tarim teaches from the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence and there are strong Sufi influences present as well.

Most of the Indonesian students at Rubat Tarim can trace their origins back to Hadhramaut. Indonesian students pay USD360 per year for tuition, food and accommodation. All students live and eat at the institute and students can enrol from Rubat Tarim's office in Indonesia. Notwithstanding its mainstream religious outlook, one former PPI leader told us that Rubat Tarim had a reputation for being quite religiously strict in terms of the lifestyle of the students there, compared to al-Ahqaf where life for students outside classes was more relaxed.

Other mainstream institutions

Indonesian students also study at a number of other mainstream institutions outside the Hadhramaut. We estimate there were some 100 students studying at **Jamiat al-'Uloom al-Shari'a** in Hodeidah city in mid-2010. Students study for seven years, whether they are Yemeni or foreigners. The head of this university is Muhammad Ali Maray, who is a member of the ruling General People's Congress and was a member of parliament.

The institution has an office in Indonesia which tests prospective students for their Arabic language ability, their knowledge of the *Qur'an* and *fiqh*. Indonesian students pay \$US500 bond to the institution, which is returned after they finish studying. Students are required to deposit their passport with the institution which is returned once they have completed their studies. Students seeking to discontinue their studies are required to pay 200 Yemeni riyals (approx \$US1 in 2010) for each day of their degree they do not complete. Students from Jamiat al-'Uloom al-Shari'a are known to visit Dar al-Mustafa and Rubat Tarim to study during vacation periods.

Indonesians live and sleep inside the university compound as does the entire student body. Students can leave the compound between 12 and 3pm if they wish but after 3pm they are supposed to be back at the institution, where all students eat together. There are five to six students per dorm room and Yemeni and Indonesian students are mixed together.

There are also around 100 Indonesian students studying in Zabeed, also in Hodeidah governorate, at three institutions: **Rubat al-Batah**, **Rubat al-Idreesy**, and **Rubat Yahia**. Zabeed is an old Islamic city, and was once the capital of Yemen

(from the 13-15th Centuries). Students are taught from the Shafi'i and Hanafi schools, though not from Sufi texts (which distinguishes the institutes in Zabeed from those in Tarim). Most Indonesians study in Zabeed for two years.

Rubat al-Aidrous in Aden reflects a mix of Sufism and Shafi'i teachings. We estimate there were around 12 Indonesians studying there in 2010. The institution is actually a mosque in which the students also sleep and eat. Funding comes from charitable donations. Indonesian students at Rubat al-Aidrous interviewed by our research team said they chose the institution over Dar al-Mustafa in Tarim because the latter had more stringent entry requirements. (Students at Dar al-Mustafa had to have memorised the *Qur'an* and the book of Riyadh al-Salheen). They also preferred it to the institutions in Zabeed, because Zabeed was 'too hot and there is not electricity.'⁵⁰

Finally, some Indonesian students are studying at **Yemenia University** in Sana'a, although the total number is unclear: one 2010 estimate put it at around 100 students; another 2009 estimate had it around 15. Our research was not able to confirm which figure was more accurate. The institution is a private university run by the Yemeni branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Salafi institutions

One group of Indonesian students go to Yemen for something other than its combination of exotic location and familiar mix of Shafi'i and Sufi Islam. In Indonesia there is a small, but significant 'Yemeni-Salafi' community that sends students to a variety of *salafi* institutions in Yemen. These 'Yemeni-Salafis' are not necessarily of Yemeni descent, although many are. The term merely refers to those that follow the religious teachings of well-known *salafi* scholars of Yemeni nationality, such as the late Sheikh Mukbil bin Hadi al-Wad'i, Sheikh Yahya al-Hajuri, Sheikh Abdulrahman al-Adeni (as well as Saudi *ulema* that are close to Yemeni *salafi* sheikhs, most notably Sheikh Rabi al-Madkhali).

Currently Indonesians are spread among the following *salafi* institutions: al-Iman University in the capital, Sana'a; Dar al-Hadith, in Dammaj in the Sa'da governorate; Dar al-Hadith in Fiyoush in the Lahj governorate (al-Fiyoush); Dar al-Hadith in Shihr in the Mukalla governorate (al-Shihr); Dar al-Hadith in Marib in the Marib governorate; and Dar al-Hadith in Ma'abar in Dhammar governorate. The Indonesian *salafi* community is divided, however, and the line of division reflects (but also interacts with) a conflict within Yemen's *salafi* community between Sheikhs Yahya al-Hajuri and Abdul-Rahman al-Adeni (see 'Divided Salafis' box). This influences which Yemeni institutions members of the Indonesian *salafi* community attend.

Divided Salafis

Most of the *ustadz* (teachers) in the ‘Yemeni-Salafi’ community are graduates of Dar al-Hadith, in Dammaj, founded by the late Sheikh Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi’i. These included prominent salafi figures in Indonesia, Jafar Umar Thalib and Lukman Ba’abduh. Thalib was a key figure in the development of the ‘Yemeni-Salafi’ community. In 1993 he studied at Dar al-Hadith for three months, and when he returned to Indonesia he founded a *pesantren*, Ihya Assunah, in Yogyakarta, which emphasised the teaching of ‘Yemeni-Salafi’ sheikhs. According to an Indonesian who studied in Yemen, Thalib sent some of his students to Dar al-Hadith, including Lukman Ba’abduh, who studied there from 1994 to 2000.

The ‘Yemeni-Salafis’ in Indonesia rose to prominence in 2000 with the formation of Laskar Jihad, which took part in sectarian conflict in Maluku. Members of Laskar Jihad also used the opportunity to spread *salafi* teachings there, and many students from Maluku ended up at ‘Yemeni-Salafi’ *pesantren* in Indonesia. Some went on to study at Dar al-Hadith in Dammaj in Yemen. In October 2002, however, Laskar Jihad was dissolved after a *fatwa* from the Saudi Sheikh Rabi al-Madkhali criticised its activities. Thalib, who served as Laskar Jihad’s commander, argued that although the group had been dissolved it did not mean that the obligation to wage *jihad* in Maluku had ended. Most of the ‘Yemeni-Salafi’ *ustadz* in Indonesia regarded this, however, as an act of disobedience which proved a final blow for Thalib’s already faltering reputation in the *salafi* community. Those who broke with him included his former students who had become important figures in the ‘Yemeni-Salafi’ movement, such as Lukman Ba’abduh, Umar Sewed, and Qomar Suwaidi.⁵¹

A second split within the community was more directly connected to events in Yemen. The death of Sheikh Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wad’i caused a power struggle within Dar al-Hadith. Al-Wadi’i had designated Sheikh Yahya al-Hajuri as his successor, but this was contested by Sheikh Abdul-Rahman al-Adeni. In 2006 al-Adeni founded his own Dar al-Hadith school, al-Fiyoush, in the Lahj governorate. Hajuri accused al-Adeni of luring students with material inducements. The quarrel between the two eventually required the intervention of the Saudi Sheikh Rabi al-Madkhali, though without success.

The dispute eventually reached the ‘Yemeni-Salafi’ community in Indonesia, mainly via students returning from Dar al-Hadith in Dammaj who were openly critical of al-Adeni. Critics of al-Adeni became known as the Turobiyah group, a reference to a leader of the group, Abu Turob Saif bin Hadlor al-Jawi. Abu Turob was a former member of Laskar Jihad who went to study at Dar al-

Hadith, Dammaj in 2002 and who became a trusted follower of al-Hajuri (and continues to live in Dammaj). Other members of the ‘Yemeni-Salafi’ community sided with al-Adeni, including Lukman Ba’abduh, Umar Sewed and Qomar Suaidi. Indeed this group wrote to al-Hajuri complaining about Turob’s criticism of al-Adeni which incited al-Hajuri to issue a list of all Indonesian *salafi* scholars who he considered had left the true path. According to an Indonesian student who studied in Yemen, the pro-Adeni group now boycotts Dar al-Hadith Dammaj, sending its students instead to al-Fiyoush and al-Shihir in the Mukalla governorate which is headed by al-Adeni’s brother.

Al-Iman University in Sana’a has long been a key destination for Indonesian ‘Yemeni-Salafis’. According to one well-placed source there were between 70 and 100 Indonesian students there in 2010, although another source claimed there were between 160 and 200 Indonesian students there in 2009. The University is very sensitive on the topic of foreign students (including numbers) and instructs students not to speak with outsiders on this or other issues relating to the way the university is run. This reflects the notoriety the university has gained since 2001 as a some-time home for a number of high-profile terrorists and terrorist suspects, perhaps most famously the American extremist John Walker Lindh. The university was closed down temporarily after 9/11 and a large number of foreign students were expelled. Since 2001 there have continued to be arrests of students and former students on terrorism-related charges (typically the university denies that any of those arrested were students).⁵² In terms of connections with Indonesian extremism, Abu Bakr Ba’asyir’s son Abdul Rahim studied at al-Iman University, possibly around 1995. Also at the university at this time was Syaifudin Zuhri, who was killed by Indonesian police in the aftermath of the 2009 Ritz-Carlton and Marriott Hotel bombings in Jakarta. The younger Ba’asyir reputedly introduced Zuhri to members of al-Qaeda in Yemen.⁵³

Despite the infamy of some of its alumni, the university’s relationship with extremism and with al-Qaeda specifically is a complex one (see box ‘Salafism and extremism’ below). The university’s founder, Abd al-Majid al-Zindani, was a confidant of Osama bin Laden in the 1980s and is listed by the United States as a ‘specially designated global terrorist’. He has also been a prominent figure in Yemeni politics and an ally of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has publicly defended al-Zindani on a number of occasions.

Zindani founded the university in 1993 on land donated by the Yemeni government and with the financial support of international Islamic donors, particularly from Saudi Arabia. The university accepts students after high school but will also accept students after elementary school if they have memorised at least half of the Qur’an.

Arab students study for seven years, while foreign students study for eight, because of the additional time spent studying the Arabic language. All students must live on the university campus and eat there as well. Textbooks were once provided free for the entire seven years of study. Since 2001 the university has lost a considerable amount of its income from Gulf charities, so now all students must purchase their own books.

The university has four main colleges: Humanities; Faith; Da'wa and Media; and Shari'a. Foreign students are only admitted into the College for Shari'a. All al-Iman students (foreigners and Yemenis) travel annually around the country to visit 'scientific institutes' (*mahad 'ilmiyya*) with similar ideological leanings to al-Iman. The students stay in the village that they are sent to for about one month, during which time they live and teach in local mosques.

While clearly associated with *salafi* ideas, there is also a strong Muslim Brotherhood trend on the campus of al-Iman University. This has led to rivalries and disputes between *salafi* and Brotherhood-affiliated students on campus. According to one Indonesian source, Indonesian students have taken sides in this dispute as well.⁵⁴ Reputedly the dispute became so bad that the university disbanded the student union several years ago, although the dispute is said to persist.

Salafism and extremism in Yemen

Salafism as a religious movement is not easily defined and often misdefined.⁵⁵ Most simply it refers to a movement seeking to reform and purify Muslim society. For salafis the model for this reform is the religious and social practices (including dress and behaviour) of the 'pious predecessors' (*'as-salaf as-salib'* hence Salafism or in Arabic *'al-Salafiyya'*), the first three generations of Muslims. Beyond this, the American scholar Bernard Haykel provides a number of characteristics that define Salafism, including: a belief in the unity of God (*tawhid*); an active rejection of any association of other beings or things with God (*shirk*) and of innovations in Islamic belief and practice (*bid'a*); and a strict literalist reliance on key Islamic texts, specifically the Qur'an, the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad and the consensus of his companions; and a belief that these key texts provide all the guidance needed by Muslims for all time and in all situations.⁵⁶

According to Haykel, salafis tend to agree on matters of creed and have some disagreements on matters of law and interpretation, but the real divisions emerge over matters of politics and political activism. Haykel defines three broad categories: salafi-jihadis who call for violent action against the existing political order, both in Muslim countries and globally; activist salafis who have

adopted Muslim Brotherhood ideas about non-violent political activism; and quietist or apolitical salafis that focus exclusively on promoting purification and reform of Islam, eschew political activism (to the point of being totally obedient to existing political authority) and will take up arms only in the cause of Islam if ordered to do so by the legally recognised leader or guardian.⁵⁷

Because all three trends within Salafism share agreement on matters of theology and mostly on law (and as a consequence dress and behave similarly), salafism's violent manifestations are often confused with its non-violent ones. Nevertheless, it is also true that *salafi* scholars or institutions with a quietist outlook have produced students that adopt the violent ideas of the *jihadi* trend. This has certainly occurred in Yemen. For example, the AQAP leader who was killed in an air strike in Shabwa on 24 December 2009, Muhammad Saleh Omair al-Kalawi, probably studied at Dar al-Hadith Dammaj under Muqbil al-Wadi'i. Al-Kalawi also studied and taught at Dar al-Hadith in Marib under Abu al-Hassan al-Maribi. Yet al-Kalawi also made a clear distinction between al-Qaeda and his former teachers and fellow students. In a treatise published posthumously, ('Why I Chose al-Qaeda') al-Kalawi said that he found his fellow students ungenerous and unbrotherly.⁵⁸ He argued that the opposite traits are characteristic of al-Qaeda and that there is a great sense of trust between the 'brothers'.⁵⁹

The al-Kalawi case highlights the difficulty of making judgements about *salafi* institutions in Yemen and their relationship to extremism. These institutions teach from the same classical Islamic texts that al-Qaeda use to justify their violent extremism – although they do not utilise more modern specifically jihadist texts often used by al-Qaeda (for example, those by Abdullah Azzam or Sayyid Qutb). In this regard the aspects of *salafi* theology, especially those that are intolerant or emphasise the need to purify the religion from deviation, might provide a basis for a future course of violent extremism. There are also grey areas between ostensibly quietist, apolitical salafism and jihadist salafism. For example, the founder of Dar al-Hadith Dammaj, the late Sheikh Muqbil al-Wadi'i, in his outline of the institution's beliefs, states that while Dar al-Hadith respects the government, challenging it is acceptable if the leader is not a Muslim and 'if we are able'.⁶⁰ Indeed, given the Yemeni state's ambivalent record towards jihadists in general, a *salafi* institution's preaching of respect for the authority of the Yemeni government may not mean much in terms of its willingness to preach a more extreme and violent message against outsiders and the West.

Nevertheless, the al-Kalawi case also underlines that when a crossover from quietist to salafi-jihadism does occur, it probably takes place outside of the *salafi* institutions. For example, many of al-Iman University's most notorious

students, such as John Walker Lindh, never completed its seven-year-long degree. Moreover, whether the point of difference between *salafi* institutions and AQAP is theological or more pragmatic, it does have real consequences. For example, al-Qaeda affiliates have tried and failed to secure endorsements from a number of prominent figures at al-Imam University, including Muhammad Isma'il al-Amrani, Muhammad al-Sadiq al-Muqalis, and 'Omar Mahfoodh.⁶¹ To some degree, quietist salafis also see themselves in competition with AQAP.

This seems to be the case with al-Iman University, which has struggled with AQAP for control over the mosques in the areas surrounding the university.

Dar al-Hadith divided

Nominally, the other major *salafi* institutions attended by Indonesian students are part of the Dar al-Hadith Institute: that is, the original school in Dammaj and its nominal branches in Fiyoush, Shihir, Marib and Ma'abar. In reality there are serious divisions among a number of the institutes. In particular, al-Fiyoush and al-Shihir and possibly Dar al-Hadith in Ma'abar seem to operate independently and even in competition with Dar al-Hadith, Dammaj (see 'Divided Salafis' box above). Like al-Iman, the other *salafi* institutes are very cautious about talking about their foreign student numbers; according to a former PPI official, even Indonesian Embassy or Indonesian student association officials find it difficult to access these students. And as will be explored further below, students at *salafi* institutes are more likely than students at mainstream institutions to have irregularities surrounding their visas.

Dar al-Hadith Dammaj was established by the late Sheikh Mukbil bin Hadi al-Wadi'i in 1979 and currently has more than 6000 students. The majority are Yemeni, but there are also some students from other Islamic countries. The main institute is located in a large mosque in the village of al-Dammaj, which is about 1.5 hours outside the centre of Sa'da.

By our estimate there were approximately 100 Indonesian students at Dar al-Hadith in mid-2010, although a 2009 estimate puts the figure higher at 200 students. Some of the Indonesian students have been in Dammaj for more than eight, or even ten years. Unlike most of the Indonesians studying in Hadhramaut, the Indonesian students in Dammaj usually have little Arabic, and so language is included in their studies. According to former students, there is no concept of an academic year or registration, so people enter and leave as they please. There is no tuition fee, and the *madrassa* offers free lodging as well as three meals a day. Students are allowed to bring their families, with room and board provided for them as well. Admission requirements are reasonably straightforward: usually all

that is required is a recommendation from a 'Yemeni-Salafi' *ustadz* in Indonesia or other Indonesian students already studying at Dar al-Hadith.⁶²

According to a number of sources, students, including Indonesian students, have received weapons training. However, it is important to place this in context: Dammaj is situated in the midst of the ongoing Sa'da wars between the al-Houthi family and the government (as well as other surrounding tribes and, more recently, Saudi Arabia). In 2009 the al-Houthis (Zaydis) launched an attack on Dar al-Hadith and about 20 students (including some foreigners) were killed. Weapons training was provided to students at least partly as a means of self-defence and according to one source the weapons were provided by the Yemeni government.⁶³ Nevertheless, Indonesian authorities are probably not grateful to the institute for teaching students these new skills.

As noted above, the **Fiyoush branch of Dar al-Hadith** in Lahj governorate was established as a result of the divisions at al-Dammaj following the death of Muqbil al-Wadi'i (see box 'Divided Salafis' above) between two of his putative successors, Sheikh Yahya al-Hajuri and Sheikh Abdul-Rahman al-Adeni. While al-Hajuri heads Dar al-Hadith in Dammaj, al-Adeni has established a new branch of Dar al-Hadith at Fiyoush, about 20 kilometres outside of Lahj city. Teaching has only been underway 'al-Fiyoush' for a few years and the *madrassa* is still under construction. According to a former student, teaching takes place in a large mosque at the site, while other facilities such as the library and student dormitory are being built. Al-Adeni has reportedly asked students to contribute to the building of the institute and to buy plots of land in Fiyoush. Al-Fiyoush's basic facilities and unsettled educational program have led some 'Yemeni-Salafis' still loyal to Dar al-Hadith in Dammaj to label Indonesian students at al-Fiyoush as tourists rather than students.⁶⁴

Based on limited information, we estimate there are about 80 Indonesian students studying at al-Fiyoush out of a total student body of around 500. According to one report, the mother of Sheikh Abdul-Rahman al-Adeni, the head of the institution, is Javanese, which may explain the relatively high proportion of Indonesian students. One confidential source also claimed that most of the Indonesian students at al-Fiyoush are young and do not speak Arabic very well.

There seems to be an association between al-Fiyoush and another nominally **Dar al-Hadith branch in Shihr** in the Mukalla governorate. According to one source, 'al-Shihr' is run by al-Adeni's brother, although another source said that the institution is managed by Sheikh Abu Abdurrahman Abdullah bin Umar bin Mar'i, a former student of the late Sheikh Muqbil (it was not clear to us if the two are the same person). Certainly in the minds of 'Yemeni-Salafis' in Indonesia, al-Shihr falls into the al-Adeni camp. Al-Shihr was, however, established in 1998, before the split between al-Adeni and al-Hajuri. According to a number of sources

there are between 50 and 100 Indonesians at al-Shihr. Several Indonesian students work at al-Shihr as teaching assistants.

Dar al-Hadith in Ma'abar is also seen by 'Yemeni-Salafis' in Indonesia to fall into the al-Adeni camp. According to one source there are only about 20 Indonesian students in Ma'abar out of a total student population of 2000. The institution is about 70 kilometres south of Sana'a in Dhammar governorate. It was built in 1986 by Muhammad al-Imam, who still runs it. The basement and the second storey of the mosque are allocated as accommodation for students who do not have families. The institution has about 40 houses which can be used by students who do have families. It also assists students with paying rent in other local houses. The institution receives and distributes charity to help pay for food for the students. Students with families also receive about 5000 Yemeni riyals per month as a stipend and some very basic uncooked food ingredients, like wheat and sugar. All students must have memorised at least half of the Qur'an, must speak Arabic, and must be over 18 years of age.

Finally, there are a number of Indonesian students at **Dar al-Hadith in Marib**. According to one source there are around 20 Indonesian students there. The Marib institution was not, however, seen as part of the Hajuri-Adeni schism. In fact, Indonesian Yemeni-Salafis are critical of the institution's head, Sheikh Abu al-Hasan al-Maribi, whom they have accused of being too focused on 'worldly issues', particularly partisan politics and elections.⁶⁵

Radicalisation

As in Pakistan, Indonesian students might be radicalised by their experience in Yemen or Indonesian extremists could use the cover of students to travel to Yemen, to establish connections with counterparts there. It is again difficult for us to assess whether Indonesian students are being radicalised by their study in Yemen. It was not possible to interview a sufficiently large sampling of students to make such a judgement; but even if we had it would be very difficult to conclude whether their views were more (or less radical) before they left for Yemen. It is also our view that, as with Pakistan, a student's choice of Islamic educational institution in Yemen seemed to reflect their existing religious (or political) outlook in Indonesia. For example, as discussed above, those students with a mainstream Islamic outlook have gone to mainstream institutions. Likewise, those from the Indonesian *salafi* community have gone to *salafi* institutions.

It is tempting, therefore, with regard to the prospects for radicalisation, to make a similar judgement to the one we made in the Pakistani case: namely, that Indonesian students are less likely to be radicalised in Yemen than they are to go there with extreme or radical views already formed. However, in our view there are some

key differences in the Yemeni case that makes the possibility of radicalisation marginally more likely than in Pakistan.

First, as outlined above, a significant proportion of the total Indonesian student population in Yemen – possibly 4-500 – attend *salafi* institutions. While the main institutions like al-Iman University and Dar al-Hadith Dammaj appear officially to fall in the quietist or apolitical camp of salafism, insofar as they preach obedience to *wali al-amr* (see box ‘Salafism and Extremism in Yemen’), less is known about the position of some of the smaller institutions such as al-Fiyoush and al-Shihr. Indeed, the high level of suspicion toward outsiders made it difficult for us to make a detailed assessment of what ideas are taught at these institutions and they would therefore benefit from further study.

Second, even the larger institutions have a history of their students going on to become salafi-jihadis, even if it is unclear that their militancy was a product solely of their education in these institutions. The possibility exists therefore that an Indonesian *salafi* with an ostensibly quietist outlook might also proceed down a more militant path as a result of their experiences in Yemen. Certainly there is some evidence this has happened in the past. Syaifudin Zuhri, who was involved in the 2009 Jakarta Hotel bombings, wrote in a private letter to his family that he began to understand *jihad* after he became acquainted and studied with people he claimed were al-Qaeda in Yemen in the mid to late 1990s.⁶⁶ According to a 2009 International Crisis Group Report, Zuhri was in Yemen from 1999 to 2000 and appears to have made contact with JI only once he returned from Yemen.⁶⁷ The report notes, however, that he may also have been in contact with Ghuraba Cell members in Pakistan during his final year in Yemen. That connection may have been forged by Abu Bakr Ba’asyir’s son Abdul Rahim who also studied at al-Iman University for a short period in the 1990s and helped to establish the Ghuraba Cell in Pakistan.

Since 2001, and certainly in recent years, some of the larger well-known *salafi* institutions have been keeping their distance from the latest incarnation of al-Qaeda in Yemen, not least because they are conscious of attracting the attention of Western counter-terrorism agencies. These institutions also claim that students are allowed only limited opportunities to leave the campus individually and efforts are reportedly made to prevent AQAP sympathisers from infiltrating the campus. But even if this is true about the larger, well-known *salafi* institutions, it is less clear what efforts a smaller, more isolated, institution like al-Fiyoush (which seems to be populated by younger students with poor levels of Arabic) is making to prevent AQAP infiltration.

Third, as the preceding discussion makes clear, it is easier to gain admission to *salafi* institutions than it is to most of the larger mainstream institutions. In a couple

of the cases above the difficulty of gaining admission has reduced the willingness and ability of Indonesians to go to mainstream institutions. In the case of Dar al-Mustafa, for example, the institution's efforts to make itself more rigorous may be leading to a decline in the number of Indonesians attending it. There is a possibility, therefore, that students, especially those who are keen to study in Yemen because of the ancestral connection, may look for other options, possibly one of the *salafi* institutions. Of course, simply attending a *salafi* institution does not, by definition, make a student a violent extremist. And again, we would caution that our judgement that students might attend a *salafi* institution because it is easier to gain admission is speculative. We are not aware of any example of it actually having occurred.

Student cover for extremists and visa issues

Given AQAP's growing international profile, and the difficulty of travelling to Pakistan/Afghanistan, it would not be surprising if Indonesian extremists were attempting to forge connections with their Yemeni counterparts (see box 'Yemen and al-Qaeda'). In this regard, student travel could provide a plausible cover for the movement of extremists from Indonesia to Yemen. Of concern in this regard is the ease with which Indonesian students have been able to gain visas for study in Yemen – although this seems to have become more difficult in the last two years. Similarly, the fact that a number of Indonesian students at *salafi* institutions are not even on student visas suggest that further close supervision by Yemeni and Indonesian authorities is required.

al-Qaeda and Yemen

Since Omar Farouq Abdul-Mutallab tried to bomb a flight to Detroit on Christmas Day 2009, Yemen's local al-Qaeda franchise, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has been the focus of major international attention. Yemen was also the site of one of al-Qaeda's earlier pre-9/11 terrorist attacks on the American warship the *USS Cole* in October 2000. Osama bin Laden's Yemeni heritage is also repeatedly raised by terrorism commentators, although such allusions exaggerate both his connections to Yemen and Yemen's role in the gestation of al-Qaeda.

Militant jihadis have had a long, and quite open, relationship with the Yemeni state. Many Yemenis went to Afghanistan to fight the Soviet occupation. The government went to considerable effort to reincorporate the returnees into civilian life once they returned and the government maintained a broadly conciliatory stance towards them, under the tacit understanding that they would not target the regime. That understanding extended to what could be

termed the earlier generation of al-Qaeda in Yemen, for the most part those that had been associated with bin Laden in Afghanistan in the 1980s and 1990s. The broad tenets of this understanding have been redrawn over the past few years, however, as a new generation of al-Qaeda militants in Yemen emerged. This newer generation has explicitly targeted the regime and the institutions of the Yemeni state; however it is almost certain that President Ali Abdullah Saleh could have done more to capture (and keep imprisoned) certain figures in the organisation. Even after AQAP announced its official establishment in January 2009, President Saleh maintained his proclivity for playing both sides by releasing members of the organisation from prison; in the words of one source close to the president, his strategy is to ‘sell al-Qaeda to the highest bidder.’⁶⁸

The differences between these two generations and their attitudes toward the Yemeni government were crystallised by the July 2007 killings of nine people, including seven Spanish tourists, in a suicide bombing in Marib. Nasser al-Bahri, one of Osama bin Laden’s bodyguards between 1997 and 2000, gave a number of media interviews in which he claimed to speak for the al-Qaeda ‘old guard.’⁶⁹ Al-Bahri described a ‘new generation’ of more dogmatic radical jihadists, and implied that this generation bore no relationship to the real al-Qaeda (by which he seemed to mean the associates of bin Laden, although some of the new leadership, such as Nasser al-Wahayshi, were also affiliated with bin Laden during his time in Afghanistan). Al-Bahri said that the differences between the two groups were so pronounced that the younger jihadists had threatened him personally on a number of occasions for betraying the cause.⁷⁰

In the audio statement by one of the newer generation’s leaders before the Marib attack in July 2007, Qassim al-Raymi argued that bargaining with the government to secure the release of prisoners was contrary to their mission: ‘If they are killed, they end up as martyrs. Then, how can the *jihad* stop today for the sake of prisoners? [Come] to your senses.’⁷¹ Al-Raymi was not only threatening the government but also sending a message that the deal brokered by the old generation of al-Qaeda in Yemen was off the table, and that the old generation should make way for the new. This message was not lost on al-Bahri, who noted his concerns for the failure of dialogue with the government. Al-Bahri warned that the groups associated with this new generation want ‘more local crises and conflicts because they found themselves unable to face the key enemy “America” [because] they could not go to Iraq and Afghanistan.’⁷²

In theory, all Indonesian students must gain a student visa for study in Yemen. For those studying at mainstream institutions with branches in Indonesia (al-Ahqaf, Rubat Tarim, Dar al-Mustafa) this seems to be relatively straightforward, usually facilitated by the institution in question. By contrast, obtaining visas for study at *salafi* institutions has been more difficult since 2001. As a result, students at *salafi*

institutions seem to have taken a number of irregular routes to gaining visas. Some obtain student visas for other mainstream institutions, but then either attend or transfer to a *salafi* institution. This seems to have been the practice for Indonesians attending al-Iman University, for example, at least up until mid-2009. That is, students would register at a different university and, once they obtained residence, transfer to al-Iman in their second year. Some of the Indonesians spoken to at al-Fiyoush in Lahj are officially students in private universities, like al-Watania University in Aden, for which they obtained appropriate student visas. However, they live in Lahj and just go to al-Wataniah University only when they are required to sit examinations.

Other methods are also used. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some of the Indonesian students at Dar al-Hadith Dammaj have entered Yemen by way of a third country, such as Saudi Arabia, crossing into Yemen illegally. Others have simply travelled on tourist visas and expect to pay a fine or bribe to an official once it is time to leave the country (with their visa having long since expired).

In the past there have been major arrests of Indonesian students on visa grounds. In February 2002, 44 Indonesian students were arrested, accused of overstaying their visas or being illegal residents.⁷³ In March 2002 another five Indonesian students were arrested crossing into Yemen from Saudi Arabia, although eventually all were released.⁷⁴ More recently, in February 2010 Yemeni police arrested two Indonesian students in al-Rayma, in northwestern Yemen, whom they suspected of being members of al-Qaeda, although they were eventually only charged with visa offences (see more below).⁷⁵

It should be emphasised that none of the foregoing is meant to suggest that all students going to *salafi* institutions necessarily have extremist connections or intentions. For the most part these irregular visa practices reflect the difficulty in gaining visas for these institutions – admittedly because they, more than other Islamic educational institutions in Yemen, have been under the spotlight since 9/11. Nevertheless, these visa irregularities also underline how difficult it is for either the Yemeni state or Indonesian authorities to keep track of the whereabouts and activities of students.

There have been some efforts in the last two years to tighten controls and regulations since the Marriott-Ritz Carlton hotel bombings in Jakarta in mid-2009. Even before obtaining a student visa, Indonesian students must now obtain a *muwafaqqoh* or agreement letter from the Ministry of Religion in Jakarta. The Indonesian Embassy in Yemen has also advised students that they are no longer permitted to change institutions without permission.⁷⁶ Those students who have finished their studies and want to pursue further study at a different university now have to return to Indonesia and apply for permission from the Ministry of Religious Affairs.⁷⁷

From our research, however, it does not appear that these new regulations have had much of an impact on students at *salafi* institutions – although much of our research on these institutions was done only 12 months after the new regulations seem to have come into effect, so it may be too early to judge. It seems to us, however, that these new regulations are more likely to affect students who are already following correct procedures and not those who are attempting to work around the system.

Future risks?

Against this background, our research did not identify significant evidence of direct contacts between Indonesian and Yemeni extremists – at least via student channels. Our researchers heard unconfirmed rumours that an Indonesian group at the more militant end of the *salafi* spectrum, Harokah Suniyah Untuk Masyarakat Islam (HASMI), has established an office in Yemen. Perhaps the strongest suggestion of any ties between Indonesian extremists and AQAP was the 2010 arrest referred to above in al-Rayma of two Indonesian students (and a third individual) on suspicion of being members of al-Qaeda. No evidence was eventually found linking the two to AQAP, and the students were ultimately charged with visa offences and deported; both were students at al-Iman University. According to one source, however, one of the students had studied at JI's famous Ngruki *pesantren*. This followed the arrest in Yemen in 2006 of the sons of Abdul Rohim Ayoub, the former head of JI in Australia, on charges of smuggling light arms for al-Qaeda from Somalia. The sons were in Yemen with their mother, Rabiah Hutchinson, an Australian convert to Islam (although Hutchinson had divorced Ayoub before she travelled to Yemen).

Interestingly, Indonesia does not appear to be on AQAP's radar – at least not so far. Sada al-Malahim, AQAP's Arabic language journal, has never mentioned Indonesia or al-Qaeda in Indonesia in any significant way though it often refers to al-Qaeda in Morocco and in Algeria, and appears to have a relationship with both. Nor did a review of AQAP's new English-language magazine *Inspire* uncover significant mention of Indonesia, despite the fact that the magazine is directed at an audience outside the Middle East. A review of Yemeni extremist websites also did not reveal any significant mention of Indonesia or Indonesian extremists.

Nevertheless, if Indonesia is not on AQAP's radar the same cannot be said for the attitude of Indonesian extremists toward Yemen. The sermons of the increasingly infamous American/Yemeni Sheikh Anwar al-Awlaki are, for example, easily available in Indonesia. That interest in Yemen is only likely to grow, particularly if growing political instability in the country provides new opportunities for travel and training unmolested by Yemeni or international security agencies.

Conclusion

Over the last decade Yemen has become a major destination for Indonesian students. Over the same period, but especially in the last three to four years, Yemen has also become a major focus for Western counter-terrorism agencies as a result of AQAP's increasingly vigorous efforts to mount attacks internationally. Given the size of the Indonesian student population in Yemen there should be concern in the West and in Jakarta about the possibility that such ostensibly educational connections will facilitate extremist ones. But the approach to this issue needs to be informed by a more detailed understanding of where Indonesians go to study in Yemen and what they are being taught.

The foregoing provides an initial view of the situation based on research in both Yemen and Indonesia. The picture is reassuring in many respects. Most Indonesian students are going to educational institutions where they are unlikely to be exposed to the ideas or entreaties of local extremists, including those of AQAP. Less reassuringly, a significant number of Indonesians are attending *salafi* institutions, often on illegal or irregular visas. Some are young with poor levels of Arabic, while some of the institutions they attend are in isolated parts of the country. Indonesians who attend these institutions are not necessarily going to be radicalised, even if the type of Islam being taught at these schools is not particularly tolerant or open-minded. Nor does it necessarily follow that these students will become recruits or conduits for Yemeni and Indonesian extremists. Nevertheless, given the likely interest of the Indonesian extremist community in Yemen, further research on these institutions and their curricula should be a priority. This will require a level of openness from these institutions (but also from the Yemeni government) to outside researchers and observers that so far they have largely been unwilling to provide.

Epilogue

The aim of this study has been to shed greater light on the subject of Indonesian students who study at Islamic institutions in Pakistan and Yemen and what this potentially means for extremist connections between Indonesia and these countries. There have been obvious limits to our research. It was not possible to survey a significantly large sampling of Indonesian students to provide a comprehensive understanding of what motivates them to go to Pakistan and Yemen and what impact study in these two countries has on them. Nor have we been able to delve too deeply into the curriculum and teaching environment of many of the institutions mentioned in the report. Related to this, the sensitivity of the topic and the unsettled security environment in Yemen in particular (even before the political unrest experienced by the country in the first half of 2011), has made it more difficult to obtain a comprehensive picture.

Notwithstanding these limitations we believe that the report provides a useful amount of new information on the topic, most of it obtained through on-the-ground fieldwork that can now be discussed, debated, challenged if necessary and, we very much hope, added to by other researchers and scholars. In relation to Pakistan, the report points to the fact that a small number of Indonesian students continue to travel there to study, most notably at the International Islamic University (IIU) in Islamabad and at the institutions of the Jama'at at-Tabligh movement. There has, however, been a dramatic decline in Indonesian student numbers at institutions associated with more extremist teachings, specifically the notorious Abu Bakr Islamic University in Karachi.

This seems in large part to have been the result of more stringent visa requirements and supervision of institutions with well-known extremist leanings or connections by the Pakistani authorities. Nevertheless, in part because of this focus on more extreme institutions, there is still a risk that Indonesian extremists will seek entry into more mainstream institutions as a cover for their activities. Our research uncovered one rumoured, but unconfirmed, report of an individual Indonesian extremist attending the IIU in an effort to build connections with the Pakistani extremist movement, Jama'at ud-Da'wa. The apparent ease by which an extremist could join the Jama'at at-Tabligh in Indonesia and travel to Pakistan as part of a Tablighi group was also a concern, even though we found no conclusive evidence of this having occurred. As the visit of Muhammed Jibril to Pakistan, even after he was deported as a member of the JI-linked Ghuraba Cell in 2003, demonstrates, some Indonesian extremists remain keen to maintain or re-establish direct connections with their counterparts in Pakistan. This was underlined by the arrest in Pakistan in 2011 of Umar Patek, one of Indonesia's most wanted extremists.

As we have noted in relation to both Pakistan and Yemen, it was not possible for us to make a conclusive judgement about the extent to which students were being radicalised by their experience in Pakistan and Yemen. What we can point to, however, is strong anecdotal evidence that students go to institutions that are closely aligned with their existing religious or ideological outlook. This was especially evident in the case of Yemen, illustrated by the way that divisions within the Indonesian ‘Yemeni-Salafi’ community affected which institutions students would attend.

Nevertheless, the significant number of students attending *salafi* institutions in Yemen – about a quarter of the total Indonesian student body in the country – raises a number of risks in terms of potential extremist connections. This was less a function of the *salafi* religious outlook being taught at these institutions, even given its proximity to some of al-Qaeda’s more extreme ideas, than of other factors, in particular: the relative isolation of many of these institutions; the fact that many Indonesian students at these institutions had poor levels of Arabic and had often breached their visa conditions, both of which potentially left them in a vulnerable situation; the fact that some institutions were in conflict areas as a result of which students were being provided with weapons training; and the fact that a number of Yemeni and international extremists had either been graduates or one-time students of these institutions.

Nevertheless, there are also some clear tensions and divisions between the *salafi* communities in Yemen and the Yemeni branch of al-Qaeda (AQAP) that made it difficult for the latter to recruit in *salafi* institutions. Moreover, we were not able to find any evidence of AQAP recruitment among the Indonesian student body or even much interest in Indonesia itself (at least as reflected in AQAP’s propaganda). There is more interest in Yemen among Indonesian extremists and this may well grow if AQAP is able to sustain its current prominent international profile – and especially if it is able to mount successful terrorist spectacles in coming years.

It is not yet clear whether Yemen’s uncertain political future will prove either a boon or an obstacle to the development of direct contacts between Indonesian and Yemeni extremists. There is an understandable concern among Western governments that AQAP might be able to use any new ungoverned spaces to expand its presence in the country. Equally, though, the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh has been at best an ambivalent ally in the war against al-Qaeda in Yemen. It is by no means certain, however, that AQAP will find ready acceptance everywhere in Yemen, even if the central government’s remit is curtailed by prolonged instability. Obviously the situation will need to be watched closely.

The fact that in little more than a decade Indonesian student numbers in Yemen have grown from perhaps a few hundred to some 2000 might ostensibly be a cause for concern among counter-terrorism authorities. Yet what we have been able to show in this report is that the bulk of the Indonesian student population attends well-established Islamic educational institutions with a mainstream religious outlook. Indeed, it was noteworthy that a common theme among the Indonesian students interviewed was how Yemen reflected an attractive mix of exotic locale but culturally familiar Islam. Whether Yemen will continue to be an attractive destination for Indonesian students following the political unrest of the first half of 2011 is an open question.

In short, therefore, while this paper provides a starting-point for an analysis of the Indonesian student presence in Pakistan, and especially in Yemen, more research and study is required. This will also mean encouraging greater transparency from a number of institutions in both countries about their curricula and student populations. These institutions, particularly *salafi* institutions in Yemen, would be within their rights to protest about any poorly informed judgements about their connections with extremist activism or ideas. But equally, by being more open about what and who they teach, they will help to ensure that such judgements, where they are poorly informed, are less likely to be made.

The same might be said of the attitude of the Pakistani and Yemeni governments towards research on this and other related topics. In Yemen, in particular, there has been a great deal of sensitivity toward international researchers that has seen a number expelled from the country over the last two years. One would hope that whatever new political dispensation takes shape in Sana'a in coming months and years, it takes a more open-minded attitude toward such research. The International Crisis Group's work on extremism in Indonesia is a great example of what can be achieved by a government cooperating with international researchers not only to advance their counter-terrorism objectives, but also to reduce the misperceptions and misunderstandings of outside observers.

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- 59 *ibid.* pp. 20-22.
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