



cogitatio

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

Indonesian Heroes and Villains: National Identity, Politics, Law, and Security

Edited by Nathan Franklin and Hans Hägerdal

Volume 12

2024

Open Access Journal

ISSN: 2183-2463



Politics and Governance, 2024, Volume 12
Indonesian Heroes and Villains: National Identity, Politics, Law, and Security

Published by Cogitatio Press
Rua Fialho de Almeida 14, 2º Esq.,
1070-129 Lisbon
Portugal

Design by Typografia®
<http://www.typografia.pt/en/>

Cover image: © CTBTO Preparatory Commission from Flickr

Academic Editors
Nathan Franklin (Charles Darwin University)
Hans Hägerdal (Linnaeus University)

Available online at: www.cogitatiopress.com/politicsandgovernance

This issue is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY). Articles may be reproduced provided that credit is given to the original and *Politics and Governance* is acknowledged as the original venue of publication.

Table of Contents

Indonesian Heroes and Villains: National Identity, Politics, Law, and Security

Nathan Franklin and Hans Hägerdal

***Pahlawan, Pengkhianat, Atau Penjahat* (Hero, Traitor, or Villain): A Personal Journey Through Indonesian History**

Steven Farram

Gus Dur's Enduring Legacy: Accruing Religious Merit in the Afterlife

Nathan Franklin

Indonesian Women and Terrorism: An Analysis of Historical and Contemporary Trends

Kate Macfarlane

A "Maverick Salafi Political Jihadist" in a Turbulent Period: A Biographical Study of Dr Fauzi

Muhammad Najib Azca

From Villain to Hero: The Role of Disengaged Terrorists in Social Reintegration Initiatives

Haula Noor

The Pancasila Ideological Direction Bill (RUU-HIP): A Missed Opportunity?

Adam James Fenton

Political Revenge? Downgrading Indonesia's KPK From Hero to Villain

David Price

Nurturing Hero or Villain: BAKAMLA as the Indonesian Coast Guard

Arie Afriansyah, Christou Imanuel, and Aristyo Rizka Darmawan

"The Flower and the Wall": Poet-Activist Wiji Thukul and Progressive Martyrdom in Post-Suharto Indonesia

Stephen L. Miller and Rifka A. O. Sibarani

Indonesian Heroes and Villains: National Identity, Politics, Law, and Security

Nathan Franklin ¹  and Hans Hägerdal ² 

¹ Faculty of Arts and Society, Charles Darwin University, Australia

² Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Linnaeus University, Sweden

Correspondence: Nathan Franklin (nathan.franklin@cdu.edu.au)

Submitted: 27 March 2024 **Published:** 29 May 2024

Issue: This editorial is part of the issue “Indonesian Heroes and Villains: National Identity, Politics, Law, and Security” edited by Nathan Franklin (Charles Darwin University) and Hans Hägerdal (Linnaeus University), fully open access at <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i380>

Abstract

This thematic issue of *Politics and Governance* offers a collection of unique articles that debate Indonesian “heroes” and “villains,” providing an understanding of the country’s past and present. The importance of Indonesia in the world is ever-increasing geopolitically and economically, offering rich material for academic studies. It is one of the few Muslim-majority democracies, with a long and complex history of people and institutions that have shaped its national identity, politics, government, law, and security, which we examine under the central theme of agents of change and integration. The articles cover local histories prior to independence in 1945 to the present day, the legacy of President Abdurrahman Wahid (1999–2001), a biography of a prominent Muslim *jihad* (holy war) activist, women’s agency in terrorism, as well efforts to reform terrorists. Discussions on the problematic aspects of the Indonesian state ideology Pancasila and the downgrading of Indonesia’s Corruption Eradication Commission are also examined. Realpolitik is covered in the article concerning Indonesia’s maritime security and in the article discussing activists who died fighting for democratic freedoms, such as Indonesian poet-activist Wiji Thukul, as unofficial heroes of the reform movement (*reformasi*), which toppled the Soeharto “New Order” regime (1966–1998), leading to the democracy that Indonesia enjoys today.

Keywords

agency; heroes; history; Indonesia; law; national identity; politics; security; villains

1. Introduction

On 20 October 2024, Indonesia will inaugurate former army general Prabowo Subianto as its eighth president. This is exactly 25 years after Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) became Indonesia’s fourth president. The two

individuals could not be more different in terms of human rights records and attitudes towards progressive and social issues. Gus Dur's eventful and turbulent term as president was not without its detractors, but his personality evoked admiration from wide circles in Indonesian society as a proponent of Muslim humanism and inclusiveness. For many people inside and outside of Indonesia, he stands out as a "hero" who dared to speak out against aggressive populism and intolerance. In this regard, as Franklin (2017, 2024) has argued, no one has replaced Gus Dur since his death in 2009. On the other hand, Prabowo has often been construed as a "villain" in Indonesian politics; there are allegations of atrocities in East Timor and West Papua, and there is evidence of his involvement in actions against protestors demanding freedom in 1998. He has also been linked to the disappearance of the poet Wiji Thukul, a hero discussed by Miller and Sibarani (2024), which would place him in the antagonist category. For the outside world, he was often associated with cronyism, money politics, and murky practices. Nevertheless, this did not prevent his appeal in successive elections, eventually ushering in his victory in 2024. Through a rebranding of Prabowo's image, including a comical dance, cartoon posters, and a powerful alliance with President Joko Widodo's son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka running for vice president, Prabowo morphed into a "hero" for many Indonesians. All this evokes questions about Indonesian political culture and practices, and the agents of change and integration that have shaped the nation's destiny in the postcolonial era. To help understand Indonesia in this regard, the present theme of "heroes and villains" in *Politics and Governance*, deals with historical and contemporary issues of law, security, and political activism; which are the result of papers presented at a conference held on 18 February 2022, at Charles Darwin University in the Northern Territory of Australia.

The construction of heroes and villains forms a foundational part of Indonesian national self-perception. In fact, it has roots far back in time, to the old Javanese epics and the righteous warrior (*satria*) figure with a strong sense of personal duty, service to the "just king" (*ratu adil*), and contempt for death. Other sources of inspiration include the *jago*, the champion of Javanese rural society, and, later, the Muslim resistance against nonbelief and Western imperialism. Since the Nationalist Revolution of 1945–1949, a pantheon of official national heroes has evolved, as explained by Farram (2024). Here, a hero can be considered a projection of a particular society, reflecting its norms and values. When applied and ritualised in official contexts, as in Indonesia, the idolisation of heroes and castigation of villains may serve particular ruling groups and political agendas, and even help keep a multicultural nation together (Schreiner, 1995). Meanwhile, the rise of the internet and social media, concurrently with a (problem-ridden) democratic transition, has rapidly changed the political landscape. The global potential of the hero trope was demonstrated in 2003 when Saddam Hussein was idolised in the streets of Indonesian cities as an underdog fighter against the oppression of Western intervention, being proclaimed as "the hero of the world"—notwithstanding his poor track record with Muslims. With the same logic, George W. Bush was construed as the villain (Shubert, 2003). While this was perceived within a Muslim and non-Muslim spectrum, it also hearkened back to the hero/villain construction of Soekarno (1945–1966) and Soeharto eras (1966–1998); reflected in the nomenclature of Soeharto's "New Order," which vilified Soekarno's government as the "Old Order." Further to this, Soekarno is the undisputed founding father of the nation and is remembered for standing up to the colonialists and even the US. Nevertheless, he was deposed by Soeharto because of his association with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), but went down fighting for his principles and would not be a puppet to the in-coming Soeharto regime, stating that the PKI sacrificed more for the Nationalist Revolution than his own nationalist group (Hauswedell, 1973, p. 143).

Whether heroes or villains, the actors in modern Indonesian politics and governance have arisen from a political culture that has oscillated between Western and Indigenous influences. Culture can be defined as a

set of behavioral and representational elements which characterise one group as opposed to others, but is ever-shifting rather than static and dependent on power relations. Political culture may be understood as political behavior that is not just derived from institutions, but rather cultural dispositions, such as religious beliefs, ethical values, attitudes, etc. The well-known essay on power in Javanese culture by Anderson (1972) argues that preconceived Western models are insufficient to grasp Indonesian politics, and that “traditional,” especially Javanese, concepts of power must be accorded a great role. In this model, power was something homogenous and divine and not dependent on legitimacy in a Western sense. For some observers, and despite Anderson’s criticism of the New Order, this syndrome seemed to justify the illiberal and authoritarian characteristics of Soeharto’s rule. As Ricklefs (2008, 2012) explained, the sword, state-sponsored violence, and religious dogma were enough to silence the enemy, providing people with only one narrative of history.

In the 1990s, similar ideas propelled the Asian values debate as a way of legitimising authoritarian regimes via the claim that liberal Western democracy and freedom were unsuited to Asian traditions of collectively shaped rights. Such ideas may reflect an insufficient understanding of the cultural concept and were linked to the strong economic development of East and Southeast Asia in the late 20th century (Eklöf, 2003). After the outbreak of the Asian financial crisis in 1997–1998 and the fall of the New Order, Asian values lost attraction as society changed rapidly: Muslim parties and organisations gained a more vocal role in political and intellectual developments, concomitant with proponents of democratic and pluralist agendas. The old idea of New Order political culture, positing that lines of division in Indonesian society could be leveled out through deliberation and consensus (*musyawarah dan mufakat*) has been shattered. In the present, political culture is dependent on a multitude of Indigenous and external factors. Frustration with Western interventions in the Muslim world and China’s threatening posture have made many Indonesians susceptible to Muslim internationalism and Sinophobia. Internet and social media, particularly through access to mobile phones, can incite large numbers of citizens on issues that would have gone unnoticed in the old days, and thereby alter the political landscape literally in an instant. At the same time, the heritage from the Soekarno and Soeharto years lives on in different ways. The national Pancasila ideology, instrumental in the foundation of the nation, was derided by some as “dead” after 1998 but has continued to play a role, although not uncontroversially as shown by Fenton’s (2024) contribution.

2. Thematic Issue’s Contributions

The sometimes-volatile Indonesian political scene, and the possibilities and restraints that it offers to its actors, is amply highlighted by the articles that follow in this thematic issue. Conceptionally, as discussed above, defining who or what is a hero and villain can be a matter of perception and timing. Nevertheless, we try to provide robust analysis and balanced discussions in the nine articles of this issue, which revolve around the central theme of agents of change and integration that have shaped Indonesia’s identity, culture, government, law, security, and democracy in terms of geopolitics and internal stability.

The article by Farram (2024) concerns Indonesian heroes, traitors, and villains from different regions and eras, with examples of regional leaders who opposed or fought for the Dutch colonialists, individuals involved in post-1949 activities, as well as celebrities idolised by fans but who are also considered villains by others. The contribution by Franklin (2024) explains the living legacy of Gus Dur and his impact on Indonesia through the analysis of institutions he influenced in personal ways, placing him in the category of hero.

The contributions by Macfarlane (2024), Azca (2024), and Noor (2024) concern radical Islam and individual agency in the form of terrorism and *jihad* (holy war). Macfarlane's analysis, from a feminist perspective, and Azca's biographical article of a reformist Muhammadiyah individual who pursued a literalist interpretation of Islam, reflect how individuals become villains in the context of acceptable behavioral norms. Noor examines the effectiveness of institutions responsible for reforming and rehabilitating former terrorists. Contributions by Fenton (2024) and Price (2024) debate institutional problems that impact the state and society, with Fenton examining the issues of dogmatic attitudes to the state ideology of Pancasila and Price detailing the decline in power and prestige of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK). The contribution by Afriansyah et al. (2024) provides a summary of the problems of maritime security and the creation of an integrated single-agency coast guard. The article by Miller and Sibarani (2024) reminds us of the individuals, or unofficial heroes, who fought for freedom in the reformation movement (*reformasi*), which ended the Soeharto New Order regime, providing a voice to the victims that disappeared (but are not forgotten), such as the Indonesian poet-activist Wiji Thukul and others.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the blind reviewers for their expertise in providing helpful comments and suggestions on all the articles in this thematic issue. We also thank professor Dennis Shoemith, professor Brian Mooney, associate professor Steven Farram, Dr Stephen Miller, and Dr Kate Macfarlane, for helping to review and improve manuscripts of other authors prior to publication. We (Dr Nathan Franklin and professor Hans Hägerdal) have enjoyed working with each other, reviewing each article multiple times throughout the publication process, ultimately to improve the quality of this thematic issue.

Funding

This thematic issue in *Politics and Governance* was produced largely with monetary assistance from a Rainmaker Grant and funds from the Open Access Scheme at Charles Darwin University.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

References

- Afriansyah, A., Imanuel, C., & Darmawan, A. R. (2024). Nurturing hero or villain: BAKAMLA as the Indonesian coast guard. *Politics and Governance*, 12, Article 7806.
- Anderson, B. (1972). The idea of power in Javanese culture. In C. Holt (Ed.), *Culture and politics in Indonesia* (pp. 1–69). Cornell University Press.
- Azca, M. N. (2024). A “Maverick Salafi Political Jihadist” in a turbulent period: A biographical study of Dr. Fauzi. *Politics and Governance*, 12, Article 7984.
- Eklöf, S. (2003). *Power and political culture in Suharto's Indonesia: The Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) and decline of the New Order (1986-98)*. NIAS Press.
- Farram, S. (2024). Pahlawan, pengkhianat, atau penjahat (hero, traitor, or villain): A personal journey through Indonesian history. *Politics and Governance*, 12, Article 7804.
- Fenton, A. J. (2024). The Pancasila ideological direction bill (RUU-HIP): A missed opportunity? *Politics and Governance*, 12, Article 7672.
- Franklin, N. (2017). Islam in Indonesia: The contest for society, ideas and values. *Asian Studies Review*, 41(4), 685–687. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2017.1317621>

- Franklin, N. (2024). Gus Dur's enduring legacy: Accruing religious merit in the afterlife. *Politics and Governance*, 12, Article 7874.
- Hauswedell, P. C. (1973). Sukarno: Radical or conservative? Indonesian politics 1964–5. *Indonesia*, 15, 109–143. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3350794>
- Macfarlane, K. (2024). Indonesian women and terrorism: An analysis of historical and contemporary trends. *Politics and Governance*, 12, Article 7724.
- Miller, S., & Sibarani, R. A. O. (2024). “The Flower and the Wall”: Poet-activist Wiji Thukul and progressive martyrdom in post-Suharto Indonesia. *Politics and Governance*, 12, Article 7768.
- Noor, H. (2024). From villain to hero: The role of disengaged terrorists in social reintegration initiatives. *Politics and Governance*, 12, Article 7838.
- Price, D. (2024). Political revenge? Downgrading Indonesia's KPK from hero to villain. *Politics and Governance*, 12, Article 7907.
- Ricklefs, M. C. (2008). *A history of modern Indonesia since c.1200*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ricklefs, M. C. (2012). *Islamisation and its opponents in Java: A political, social, cultural and religious history, c. 1930 to the present*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Schreiner, K. H. (1995). *Politischer heldenkult in Indonesien: Tradition und moderne praxis*. Reimer.
- Shubert, A. (2003). Saddam underdog hero in Indonesia. *CNN International Edition*. <https://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/southeast/04/04/indo.saddam/index.html>

About the Authors



Nathan Franklin is a lecturer in Indonesian studies at Charles Darwin University. His research interests include Indonesian politics, history, society, political Islam, Indonesian language and culture, Southeast Asian politics and history, as well as East Asian politics. His PhD concerned Indonesia's two largest Islamic organisations, namely, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, and their respective political culture and educational systems, particularly Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). He has published peer-reviewed articles and book reviews on Indonesian politics, religion, and history.



Hans Hägerdal is a professor of history at Linnaeus University, Sweden. He specialises in East and Southeast Asian history, in particular, focusing on early-modern colonial encounters and contact zones, historiographical questions, and the history of slaving in Eastern Indonesia in the 17th–19th centuries. Among his most recent monographs are *Held's History of Sumbawa* (Amsterdam University Press, 2017), and *Savu: The History and Oral Tradition on an Island of Indonesia* (with Geneviève Duggan; NUS Press, 2018).

Pahlawan, Pengkhianat, Atau Penjahat (Hero, Traitor, or Villain): A Personal Journey Through Indonesian History

Steven Farram

Faculty of Arts and Society, Charles Darwin University, Australia

Correspondence: Steven Farram (steven.farram@cdu.edu.au)

Submitted: 2 November 2023 **Accepted:** 23 January 2024 **Published:** 8 March 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue “Indonesian Heroes and Villains: National Identity, Politics, Law, and Security” edited by Nathan Franklin (Charles Darwin University) and Hans Hägerdal (Linnaeus University), fully open access at <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i380>

Abstract

This article concerns Indonesian heroes, traitors, and villains from different regions and eras. The factors influencing the categorisation of individuals as heroes or villains are examined. Examples include regional leaders who opposed the Dutch East India Company or collaborated with it. Similar cases are examined from the period of the Netherlands Indies colonial state. Also discussed are nationalists who were members of the Indonesian Communist Party, and people now deemed heroes who collaborated with the Japanese during the Second World War. Next for consideration are individuals involved in Confrontation with Malaysia and the occupation of East Timor. The last cases come from the world of popular music and show how performers idolised by fans can be considered villains by others.

Keywords

colonialism; East Timor; heroes; Indonesia; Malaysia; popular music; Singapore; traitors; villains

1. Introduction

History offers many examples of individuals who have been considered by one group to be heroes, only to be relegated to the ranks of traitors or villains at a later stage, or by a different group. Indonesia is no different to other places in this respect. However, Indonesia also has an official category of Pahlawan Nasional (National Hero), a title awarded to people deemed to have made outstanding contributions to the independence struggle or to have otherwise helped in the development and advancement of the nation. When checked in July 2021, the webpages of the Indonesian Ministry of Social Affairs showed that the country had 191 official Pahlawan Nasional. A few more are added most years. Unfortunately, the webpages viewed in 2021 are no longer available online. References in the text to Pahlawan Nasional listings are based

on information downloaded in 2021. The official veneration of national heroes in Indonesia began in 1959 during the rule of President Soekarno. Various titles have been bestowed on those deemed to be heroes with many of the earliest recipients being named Pahlawan Kemerdekaan Nasional (National Independence Hero), which was appropriate, as most of the earliest official heroes were people who had been involved in the nationalist movement and independence struggle of the immediate past. During the rule of President Soeharto, the title Pahlawan Nasional became the standard term, but the timeframe was extended to include figures from far earlier periods whose activities were then declared to have been part of the national anti-colonial struggle. Some Indonesian commentators have argued that the resulting growing number of Pahlawan Nasional has devalued the title, especially when they perceive the award being granted to individuals connected to particular groups with their own vested interests (Schreiner, 1995, pp. 331–332, 1997, pp. 261–263, 266–267).

Several Pahlawan Nasional are discussed in the pages that follow, but also people who have been awarded “hero status” at a more regional level, ones who have been given other types of official awards, or just recognised unofficially for their contributions in various fields of endeavour. The cases discussed here are known to the author through his own teaching and research and are chosen mainly to demonstrate the concept that “one person’s hero is another person’s villain.” The diverse group to be considered here includes regional leaders who fought the European intruders during the time of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and others who cooperated with them. Also examined are similar cases from the period when the Netherlands Indies colonial state was expanding its control throughout the archipelago. Next for consideration are nationalists from the first half of the 20th century who also happened to be members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), and Second World War collaborators with the Japanese. Others discussed were involved in international ventures, including Indonesia’s Confrontation with Malaysia and the Indonesian occupation of East Timor. The last cases come from the world of popular music and show the way that some performers have been idolised by their fans but castigated by others, in one case even ending up in prison.

In addition to outlining the histories of these people, the article explores the factors that influence the categorisation of individuals as heroes or villains and the contradictions that often remain after such judgements are made. In a recent study of national heroes, the authors note that the “emergence of new political movements and the creation of new polities generate the creation of new heroes.” However, this “is not a straightforward process,” and even once recognised, “their heroic status remains contingent and contested” (Cothran et al., 2020, p. 1). Today’s hero may become tomorrow’s villain and vice versa, and it is possible for an individual to be a hero and a traitor simultaneously. Differences in time and place and changes in values can give rise to new heroes and villains or reappraisal of old ones. These observations are affirmed by several cases discussed in this article.

2. Enemies and Allies of the VOC

The first examples to be examined highlight the risks involved in applying modern political concepts such as nationalism to evaluate activities in the 17th century, a time before the nation-state of Indonesia existed or had even been imagined. Regional and personal loyalties were then of supreme importance and cooperation with the VOC or other outside forces was just a way to gain an advantage over local competitors. However, when viewed through the prism of modern Indonesian nationalism (which can often elicit emotional responses),

participants in some long-ago conflicts can appear as either heroes or traitors. It seems that it is often enough for a historical figure to have defied the VOC at some point to be awarded the status of hero, regardless of their other actions. That they may have also defied established local authorities or oppressed other “Indonesians” is conveniently ignored.

The first case is from South Sulawesi, home to two major ethnic groups, the Makassarese and the Bugis. The Makassarese of Gowa became overlords of all South Sulawesi in the early 17th century. At this time, the VOC set up its first post in South Sulawesi, but this was abandoned after a few years as Gowa continued trading freely with other Europeans and Asians and refused to support a Dutch monopoly. In 1666, Arung Palakka from Bone was involved in an unsuccessful Bugis rebellion against Sultan Hasanuddin of Gowa. Arung Palakka and other renegade Bugis warriors then left Sulawesi for Batavia (Jakarta) and became soldiers for the VOC. Disputes between Gowa and the VOC continued to grow, culminating in a December 1666 attack on Gowa by the VOC and the Bugis rebels. Once in Sulawesi, many more Bugis rallied to Arung Palakka to destroy Gowa. Finally, Hasanuddin capitulated and signed the Treaty of Bungaya in November 1667. Hasanuddin rose again the following year but was defeated decisively in mid-1669. Arung Palakka then became the undisputed ruler of South Sulawesi. His rule only ended with his death in 1696. However, in post-independence Indonesia, Arung Palakka was considered by some to be a traitor for allying with the VOC against “fellow Indonesians” (Andaya, 1981, pp. 2, 297–298; Ricklefs, 1990, pp. 61–63). Nevertheless, for people from Bone, Arung Palakka can be considered a hero for freeing his people from domination by Gowa (Palallo, 2020; Rismawidiawati, 2014). Meanwhile, Hasanuddin was declared a Pahlawan Nasional on 6 November 1973. Hasanuddin’s listing asserts that he united the kingdoms of South Sulawesi against the VOC, ignoring the fact that his rule was not accepted in all those kingdoms and some of them were willing to be allied to the VOC in opposition to him.

The second case is from Central Java. In February 1686, Captain Francois Tack of the VOC arrived at the court of Amangkurat II. Tack was charged with persuading Amangkurat to pay off his considerable debt to the VOC, but most importantly he was to capture Surapati, a rebel VOC soldier sheltering at the court with his supporters. Surapati was a Balinese slave who escaped from Batavia and became the leader of a group of bandits. He surrendered in 1683 and was accepted into the VOC army. The following year, however, he attacked a VOC force, killing several European troops. Although Amangkurat II owed his position to VOC support, he had grown resentful of the Europeans and assisted Surapati in killing Captain Tack. Surapati and his men then fled Eastwards, and he began to carve out his own domain. Surapati caused great problems for the VOC, but this is unlikely to have pleased Amangkurat II, as the area controlled by Surapati was part of his kingdom; however, he had no say there. In 1690, he even sent an army against Surapati, but it was defeated. VOC, Madurese, and Javanese forces campaigned against Surapati until he was finally killed in 1706 (Kumar, 1976, pp. 18–39; Ricklefs, 1990, pp. 79–82). Surapati was declared a Pahlawan Nasional on 4 November 1975. In his listing, it is claimed that he joined the VOC solely to learn European military tactics, but there is no basis for this assertion. It is also telling that the listing notes Surapati’s alliance with Amangkurat II against the Dutch but makes no mention of their later enmity.

3. “Indonesian” Heroes of the Early Colonial State

The VOC ceased operations on 31 December 1799 and its land holdings were then taken over by the Netherlands Indies colonial state. The VOC had established its headquarters at Batavia on Java, and this remained the capital of the Netherlands Indies as well. The Dutch initially had little direct control elsewhere

on the island and relied on treaties with local rulers to achieve their aims. However, over a long period, Central Java had been weakened by internal divisions and the creation of competing royal courts, which in varying degrees relied on European support for their continued existence. Many local rulers had alienated themselves from their people by adopting aspects of European lifestyles, including drinking alcohol, wearing European-style clothing, and decorating their homes with European furniture. In the early 19th century, the Dutch began demanding greater concessions from the Javanese rulers, annexing rich areas, and taking over profitable tollgates and markets. This resulted in lost wealth for the Javanese elite, who sought new income by leasing land for plantations to European and Chinese entrepreneurs. This caused rising resentment towards the Europeans, the Chinese, and the Javanese rulers from the local people, as they were the ones pushed off the land and forced to pay the new taxes and fees (Carey, 1976, pp. 58–60).

Prince Diponegoro of Yogyakarta was a major critic of the social and economic situation in Central Java. He rebelled in 1825 and soon had a large following which attacked European and Chinese plantation leaseholders and Yogyakarta officials. Known as the Java War, the conflict lasted for five years before Diponegoro was captured and sent into exile. He died at Makassar in South Sulawesi in 1855 (Carey, 2014). Because of his resistance to foreign influence and exploitation, Diponegoro became a source of inspiration to many early Indonesian nationalists. He was declared a Pahlawan Nasional on 6 November 1973. Diponegoro's listing concentrates on his antipathy to the Dutch, but Diponegoro was rebelling against the Yogyakarta court as much as against the Netherlands Indies government. It is often noted that half of the local princes and senior courtiers of Central and East Java sided with Diponegoro. This also means, however, that half of them did not. The royal courts of Yogyakarta, Surakarta, and Mangkunegara all provided troops for the anti-rebel cause (Ricklefs, 1990, pp. 111–113). While Diponegoro was later claimed to be a "progenitor of Indonesian nationalism" (van der Kroef, 1949), there were no such thoughts at the time, as the idea of an Indonesian nation had not yet been conceived. Instead, Diponegoro and his supporters would have thought only in terms of the Javanese territories where the fighting they participated in took place.

Major thoroughfares named after Diponegoro can be found throughout Indonesia. Other Indonesian heroes are memorialised on a more localised level. For example, in Kupang in West Timor, a large monument depicts one of the most prominent local heroes, a figure virtually unknown outside the region: Sobe Sonbai III. When Europeans first established themselves in Timor, they noted that the numerous petty principalities in Central Timor were subject to a great overlord named Sonbai. Because of his perceived preeminence, the Dutch designated him *keizer* (emperor). By the 19th century, Sonbai's power had greatly diminished. Following the death of the then most recent *keizer* in 1885, several principalities asserted their independence and no less than 17 pretenders vied for the Sonbai crown. The ultimate winner was Sobe Sonbai III. In August 1905, Sonbai's forces attacked two villages near Kupang occupied by settlers from nearby Rote Island, killing 32 residents and kidnapping another 62. The Dutch sent a large force to capture Sonbai and scores of his supporters were seized or killed. Sonbai was finally apprehended in February 1906 and died in Kupang in 1922. West Timor histories invariably portray Sonbai as a hero and his Kupang statue carries the inscription *monumen pahlawan* (hero's monument). However, as noted, many principalities subordinate to Sonbai sought independence, and Sobe Sonbai III had many competitors for the position of *keizer*. Some of the failed contestants helped the Dutch in their campaign against Sonbai, as did other rulers who had never supported the Sonbai claim of supremacy. This was not a unified Timorese stand against the Dutch led by Sonbai. Furthermore, although modern histories place Sonbai in the pantheon of Indonesian anti-colonial heroes, Sonbai himself could have had no sense of an Indonesian consciousness. His struggle

for preeminence was not merely against the Dutch but also against fellow Timorese and Rotenese (Farram, 2009, pp. 34, 38, 64–71).

4. Heroes or Villains? The Independence Struggle and the PKI

The defeat of Sobe Sonbai III coincided with the period known in Indonesia as the *Kebangkitan Nasional* (National Awakening), the time when people of the different islands first began to think of themselves as members of one nation. They then imagined overthrowing the Dutch and establishing an independent state. Indonesians involved in the independence struggle are usually categorised as heroes. The exceptions are those nationalists who were also members of the PKI. The PKI was an important force in the early nationalist movement but following the decimation of the party after the 1965 so-called communist coup attempt, its members and supporters were demonised by the anti-communist Soeharto regime until its demise in 1998. Despite this, Tan Malaka (an early PKI leader) and Alimin Prawirodirdjo (a member of various nationalist groups, including the PKI) both remained throughout Soeharto's rule on the list of *Pahlawan Nasional* where they had been placed by President Soekarno in 1963 and 1964, respectively. Tan Malaka split from the PKI in the late 1920s but was involved in various other leftist nationalist groups in the following years. During the independence revolution (1945–1949), he opposed those who sought freedom through diplomatic efforts and demanded direct action. This put him at odds with some in the independence movement who considered his stance treasonous, resulting in his execution on 19 February 1949. Tan Malaka's *Pahlawan Nasional* listing is silent on his cause of death. Soekarno recognised Tan Malaka's contribution to the achievement of independence, but otherwise, his association with the PKI and later split from the party left him "a figure castigated by both left and right." No serious Western-written history of Indonesia would omit Tan Malaka, but due to the decades of silence concerning him during the Soeharto years, he remains little known inside his own country. Alimin was a far less controversial figure and had played only a marginal role in the PKI by the time of his death in 1964 (Jarvis, 1987; Schreiner, 1997, pp. 267–269).

Harry Poeze affirms that the status of *Pahlawan Nasional* cannot be revoked (Rahadi, 2014). However, while Tan Malaka and Alimin remained on the list of official national heroes, they and other National Awakening era PKI figures were otherwise systematically removed from official histories during the Soeharto era. It is therefore surprising to discover that Christian Pandey, the first known member of the PKI from West Timor, is recognised in nearly all Indonesian histories of the Timor region for his contribution as a nationalist and at the same time acknowledged as a communist. There is even a cross erected in his memory at the official *Taman Makam Pahlawan* (Heroes' Cemetery) in Kupang (Farram, 2009, pp. 115–116). One researcher has categorised Pandey as "inimitable" (van Klinken, 2012, p. 176), and it is true that he must be one of the few acknowledged communists to have been so honoured in Indonesia (although it should be noted that Alimin is buried at the *Taman Makam Pahlawan* at Kalibata in Jakarta). In 1925, Pandey established an organisation called *Sarekat Rajat* (People's League) and attracted over 1,200 members. Pandey built up interest in the *Sarekat Rajat* by promising the abolition of taxes and an end to *corvee* labour. He also gained attention through his campaign against abuses practised by local *rajas* used by the Dutch in a system of indirect rule. After hundreds of *corvee* labourers refused to work, Pandey was arrested and sent to *gaol* in Batavia for three years. After his return to Kupang in 1928, Pandey steered clear of political movements, but in 1946 a certain Ch. Pandey was noted as vice-chairman in Kupang of a new workers' union. It seems likely this was the old PKI member Christian Pandey, but he was not heard of again after that. However, when the author was doing research in Kupang, a member of Pandey's family showed him a *surat tanda penghargaan* (certificate of appreciation) for services

to the nation that was issued in Christian Pandy's name by the regional government to commemorate Hari Pahlawan (Heroes' Day) on 10 November 1963 (Farram, 2009, pp. 116–117, 140, 224). It seems that 1963 was a good year for the recognition of old PKI nationalists.

5. Heroes, Traitors, and Villains in a Time of War

Any country that has been occupied by foreign forces will produce myriad heroes and traitors, the former generally being those involved in activities to undermine the rule of the occupying force, and the latter generally being those who collaborate with the occupiers. The occupation of Indonesia by Japanese forces during the Second World War did indeed produce many heroes, traitors, and villains. However, the situation was complicated by the fact that when the Japanese invaded Indonesia in 1942, the territory was a colony of the Netherlands and thus effectively already occupied by the Dutch. The Japanese presented themselves to the Indonesian people as fellow Asians and older brothers and made vague promises of independence to nationalist leaders, such as the future president, Soekarno, in return for their cooperation. When the Dutch re-occupied Indonesia following the Japanese defeat, they initially refused to have anything to do with Soekarno, whom they labelled a traitor and collaborator. However, although Japanese rule was often brutal and the people experienced many hardships, Soekarno was not perceived by most Indonesians as a traitor because that would have implied recognition of Dutch sovereignty. Instead, Soekarno was valued for his nationalist ideals and opposition to the Dutch. Support for Soekarno was by no means universal, but, in the eyes of many Indonesians, he was a hero (Legge, 1972).

According to the webpages of the Indonesian Ministry of Social Affairs, that status was made official on 23 October 1986 when he was declared a Pahlawan Nasional. The greatest of his achievements recorded in his listing was the proclamation, along with Mohammad Hatta, of the independence of the Republic of Indonesia on 17 August 1945. Hatta was declared a Pahlawan Nasional on the same day as Soekarno. Fatmawati, the wife of Soekarno, was declared a Pahlawan Nasional on 4 November 2000. Her listing highlights her own involvement in the independence declaration for sewing the Indonesia flag raised on the occasion. The heritage flag retains great symbolic importance. It should be noted here that in 1986, Soekarno and Hatta had actually both been given the unique title of Pahlawan Proklamator (Proclamation Hero). At the time of their listing, the two were honoured solely for their role in the independence proclamation. According to Schreiner (1997, pp. 271–272), this was part of a deliberate plan by Soeharto whereby he could acknowledge Soekarno as his predecessor but ignore his other contributions to the nationalist movement. Hatta was seen as a less controversial figure for the Soeharto regime but linking him and Soekarno with the same title served to limit the focus on the charismatic former president. Soekarno and Hatta were only recognised with the official title of Pahlawan Nasional in 2012, following a decision made by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (“Presiden SBY anugerahkan gelar Pahlawan Nasional,” 2012). In 2022, President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) took the highly unusual action of reconfirming Soekarno's Pahlawan Nasional status, stating that he had “fulfilled all the requirements of loyalty and had not betrayed the nation and state.” Jokowi's words were interpreted to mean that there was no basis for the accusations that Soekarno had been involved in any way in the 1965 so-called communist coup attempt. Instead, he should be acknowledged as “a true patriot” (“Tegaskan gelar Pahlawan Nasional Bung Karno,” 2022). Jokowi's statement can be seen as not only support for Soekarno but also for the sanctity of the award itself. The existence of the various Pahlawan Nasional has become an important part of official Indonesian national identity.

Meanwhile, in the islands of Eastern Indonesia, there were no promises of Indonesian independence until the very last days of the Second World War, but the Japanese still found many willing collaborators. Rufus Takoe (aka Rufus Taku Sanu), a spy during the war for the Kenpeitai (Japanese Military Police), was portrayed in a trial held in Kupang in October 1946 as the worst criminal and traitor that Timor had produced in living memory. He was found guilty of accepting cash rewards for information that led to the deaths of many of his compatriots, including those who had aided fugitive Allied servicemen. The announcement that Takoe was to be executed for his crimes was said to have been well-received by the people of Kupang (Farram, 2009, pp. 160–161, 201). However, according to the logic of some post-war Indonesian nationalist historians, Allied servicemen were friends of the Dutch colonialists and patriotic Indonesians in Timor should have prevented them from receiving support and surrendered them to the Japanese (Farram, 2009, p. 20; KoEhuan, 1995, p. 7). If one accepts this view, Takoe can be hailed as a hero, which indeed is what happened. Takoe is not listed as a Pahlawan Nasional on the webpages of the Ministry of Social Affairs, but it was reported in the local press that Rufus Taku Sanu had been declared a Pahlawan Perintis Kemerdekaan (Pioneer Hero of Independence) on 17 August 2005. It was claimed that all his actions were made in the interests of the Indonesian people, and he was only executed because of his opposition to the Dutch (Farram, 2009, p. 201; Gabriel, 2016, p. 1). Meanwhile, Raja Pius Rasi Wangge of Flores was sentenced to death on the same day as Rufus Takoe. He had been found guilty of “instigating opposition and collaboration in May 1942.” The people of Flores were said to have been satisfied and reassured by the verdict (Farram, 2009, p. 201). However, according to more recent local history, Wangge was a diligent raja who did what he could to advance and protect his people. He earned the enmity of some Dutch officials because of his opposition to their corrupt practices. Accused of murder (it is not discussed whether the charge was valid or not), he was imprisoned in Timor but was later released by the Japanese and sent back to rule his kingdom, where he remained until re-arrested in 1946. He was executed in 1947 and buried in Kupang. Following Indonesian independence, his remains were transferred to Flores where they were received with full military honours and the blessings of the church (Sunaryo et al., 2006, pp. 105–113). The picture painted in this account is that of a hero, not a traitor or a villain.

6. Indonesian Heroes, Singaporean Villains

In the cases examined so far, the action all took place on Indonesian soil, but Indonesian heroes have also been created through activities undertaken elsewhere. Indonesia's Confrontation with Malaysia was an undeclared war that lasted from 1963 to 1966. President Soekarno justified the campaign by declaring that the formation of Malaysia was a British neo-colonialist plot that threatened Indonesian sovereignty (Mackie, 1974). Indonesian military attacks mainly took place in North Borneo, but Singapore was subject to a wave of bombing incidents. The most serious of these occurred on 10 March 1965 when a large bomb exploded in MacDonald House, a commercial building housing a bank and other enterprises. The explosion killed three people and injured 33 others. Two Indonesian marine commandoes, Harun bin Said and Usman bin Haji Mohamed Ali, were arrested over the bombing. As they had carried out their attack disguised as civilians and carried no identification to indicate their military status, they were charged with murder. They were sentenced to death on 20 October 1965 and executed about one year later. In Jakarta, the Singapore Embassy was ransacked in retaliation. Bilateral relations started to improve after Singapore's prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, placed flowers on the graves of the two men at the Taman Makam Pahlawan Kalibata (Kalibata Heroes' Cemetery) during a visit to Jakarta in 1971. Usman and Harun had been declared Pahlawan Nasional on 17 October 1968 (Hamid & Saparudin, 2014). Taman Makam Pahlawan, in the meantime, can be found in each provincial capital in Indonesia and also other places. Official Pahlawan Nasional as well as

so-called Perintis Kemerdekaan (Independence Pioneers) are buried in these places, but as the Kalibata location has been designated as the national heroes' cemetery, it has assumed the top spot in the hierarchy of "holy sites" for hero veneration (Schreiner, 1995, pp. 331–332).

In early 2014, the case of Harun and Usman was revived in political circles and the media in Singapore when Indonesia announced plans to name a new navy frigate the Usman Harun in honour of the executed commandoes. Following an unsuccessful protest, Singapore responded by banning the vessel from entering Singaporean harbours and participating in exercises with the Singaporean armed forces. After a muted apology from Indonesia, the controversy subsided, but the ban on the Usman Harun remained (Hamid & Saparudin, 2014). That two members of the Indonesian military who carried out a deadly mission posing as civilians and were subsequently executed should be declared heroes is not too surprising. Regardless of the rights and wrongs of the case, the two men were obeying orders. What is striking in the Usman–Harun case is that the MacDonald House bombing took place only a few months before Singapore ceased to be part of Malaysia. Singapore was a sovereign nation at the time of Usman and Harun's executions, and even if it had still been part of Malaysia, the Confrontation campaign that Usman and Harun were part of had been officially abandoned two months prior to that. These circumstances make the civilian deaths at MacDonald House and the two executions seem particularly futile. The decision to give Usman and Harun hero burials in Jakarta and decades later the honour of having a warship named after them were political actions and are not necessarily proof of public feeling about the matter. The dedication of a memorial to Singaporean victims of Confrontation opposite MacDonald House in 2015 is possibly a more genuine reflection of public sentiment (Lim, 2015).

7. Indonesian Hero, East Timorese Traitor

Indonesia invaded East Timor in December 1975. From July 1976 until October 1999, it was claimed as an Indonesian province, although this was not recognised by most members of the international community. Heroes, traitors, and villains abound in the case of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, but only one example will be examined here. On 17 April 1999, up to 5,000 people, including armed militia fighters from each of East Timor's 13 districts, gathered to hear fiery pro-Indonesian speeches outside the governor's office in Dili. Among the speakers was Eurico Guterres, leader of the Dili-based Aitarak (Thorn) militia who urged the crowd to "capture and kill" pro-independence supporters. Following the meeting, the militias paraded through the town, ransacking the offices of the *Suara Timor Timur* (Voice of East Timor) newspaper on the way. They then attacked the house of Manuel Carrascalao where over 140 victims of prior militia attacks were taking refuge; 12 people were killed, but no action was taken against Guterres or other militia members. The militias, which received arms, training, and money from the Indonesian army, had been formed to silence independence activists and to intimidate East Timorese to vote for continued integration with Indonesia at a plebiscite set to be held on 30 August 1999. In the end, the majority voted for independence leading to more killings, mass destruction of housing and infrastructure, and the forced evacuation of thousands of East Timorese to West Timor, where they languished in makeshift camps run by the militia (Hasibuan et al., 2002, p. 40).

With strong backing from senior military figures, the militias were able to operate beyond the law. In 1999, Guterres was prominent in pro-Indonesian rallies throughout East Timor and publicly threatened independence supporters with death and destruction on several occasions. Guterres's high profile led to him becoming a symbol of the violent Indonesian occupation of East Timor, but within Indonesia, many

establishment figures treated him and other militia leaders like heroes for fighting to defend Indonesian unity. In 2000, Vice President Megawati Soekarnoputri appointed him head of her political party's youth security group. In the same year, a branch of the party also awarded Guterres the Red and White Award, named after the colours of the Indonesian flag. Even decades after East Timor achieved independence, Guterres continues to be regarded by some in Indonesia as a hero. In 2020, he was given a major honour when he received the Patriot Bela Negara (National Defence Patriot) award and medal from Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto, and in 2021 he was awarded the prestigious Bintang Jasa Utama (Superior Service Star) medal by President Joko Widodo. Within Indonesia, Guterres is acknowledged by some commentators as "controversial" (Rachmawati, 2021), but outsiders view him far more critically. As an East Timorese who had previously worked for the resistance and whose parents had been killed by the Indonesian army, he is seen as little less than a traitor and street thug who sold out his country and his people for Indonesian money (Barrett & Rompies, 2021; van Klinken & Bourchier, 2002, pp. 164–167).

8. Heroes and Anti-Heroes of the Indonesian Music Industry

The protagonists in the cases examined so far have been mainly overtly political or militaristic in nature. Of course, heroes and villains are not confined to these fields. Many of the best-loved heroes of many countries are sports stars, for example. Musicians and singers are also often perceived to be heroes. The following two cases concern performing artists held in high esteem by their fans, but who, in the eyes of their detractors, transgressed certain moral or political guidelines, making them worthy of censure, vilification, and punishment. The first example is the rock and pop band Koes Bersaudara (Koes Brothers), which formed in Jakarta in early 1960. The band was influenced by other musical siblings, such as the Everly Brothers. They later added The Beatles songs to their repertoire, which consisted mainly of Indonesian-language originals based on Western-style love songs. The band's music proved to be popular but not everybody was a fan (Farram, 2007, pp. 258–259).

Unfortunately, the band's rise in popularity coincided with increasingly vociferous demands by President Soekarno for Indonesians to embrace traditional Indonesian culture and reject what he saw as inferior Western substitutes. In particular, Soekarno was vehemently opposed to The Beatles. With support from the PKI and its affiliated arts group, Lekra, Soekarno waged a campaign against all forms of Western "imperialist" culture. One result was a ban on "Beatles hairstyles," "Beatles boots," and "Beatles-style music," all of which were condemned as "destructive," "counter-revolutionary," and offensive to Indonesian values and ideals (Farram, 2007, pp. 258–260). The music of Koes Bersaudara was banned from the radio, condemned as "unpatriotic," and the group found it difficult to find venues to play (Farram, 2007, p. 260). In June 1965, the band performed at a party, but after singing only a few verses of The Beatles' song "I Saw Her Standing There," rocks were heard landing on the roof accompanied by angry shouting, which transpired to have come from a group of youths who demanded the band apologise for playing forbidden songs. The next day, the group found itself under arrest, and after a period of questioning, placed in gaol. The brothers were not sentenced in any court and were allowed no legal representation. After three months in gaol, the band was released on 29 September 1965. The following day, Jakarta and all of Indonesia were thrown into turmoil with the announcement of a so-called communist coup attempt. Within a short period, the PKI was destroyed by the army and Soekarno was replaced by General Soeharto who reversed the previous regime's anti-Western policies (Farram, 2007, pp. 261–263). Koes Bersaudara continued to record and perform after release from gaol, but in 1969, the band changed its name to Koes Plus when drummer

Nomo was replaced by Murry. This iteration of the band proved to be long-lasting and one of the most popular groups that Indonesia has ever produced.

At this point, I will acknowledge that few women have been mentioned in this study so far, although Indonesia does not have a shortage of female heroes or even villains. However, of the 191 official Pahlawan Nasional noted in 2021, only 15 are women. Some of the listed female heroes are well known, such as Raden Adjeng Kartini and Cut Nyak Dien, and some deserve to be better known, such as Malahayati of 16th-century Aceh, one of the world's first female admirals. Indonesia's second first lady, Tien Soeharto, was declared a Pahlawan Nasional shortly after her death in 1996. Her listing highlights her work in numerous social, benevolent, and other organisations and her role in establishing the National Library. The latter achievement is praiseworthy, but Tien Soeharto was otherwise a controversial figure in her lifetime due to the role she played in supporting the oppressive regime of her husband and allegations of rapacious corruption. Meanwhile, in a recent international study of female warriors who became national heroes (official or otherwise), the authors note that there are several works about this phenomenon, but they are overshadowed by the far more numerous studies about male heroes, most of which stress "the centrality of male virility in the development of national hero cults" (Cothran et al., 2020, p. 3). Female heroes are not lacking, but official recognition of their heroism is. This may be beginning to change. Nonetheless, one field in which women are recognised for their achievements is as performing artists.

It is not suggested here that singers or musicians admired by their fans should be considered equal in status to the various official Pahlawan Nasional already discussed, as they clearly belong to a different order. Nevertheless, they also play a role in the life of the nation, a fact underlined by the attempts, both official and unofficial, to silence and censor them, as occurred with Koes Bersaudara, and the other performing artist to be considered in this section, Inul Daratista. Inul, a popular dangdut singer from East Java, famous for her buttocks-wiggling *ngebong* (drilling) dance style was subject to intense criticism in 2003 from radical Islamic groups such as the Front Pembela Islam (Islam Defenders Front) and the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesian Council of Islamic Scholars), who tried to have her performances banned. Rhoma Irama, the "King of Dangdut," also called for a ban on Inul claiming her dancing was inappropriate and citing the case of a man who said he had raped a woman after watching a video of an Inul's performance. Such comments played a role in the framing of new legislation against pornography and "pornographic action." However, the authoritarian and patriarchal stance of Rhoma Irama and others did not garner much support outside fundamentalist Islamic circles and there were many people willing to speak out in Inul's defence, including the former president and former leader of Indonesia's largest Muslim political organisation (Nahdlatul Ulama), Abdurrahman Wahid, women's rights activists, intellectuals, and other performers. Inul's singing and dancing were erotic but unexceptional. Her high-profile television performances made her a target while more sexually provocative performers were ignored. Meanwhile, although it was argued that Inul's performances could "lead men astray," the case is that most of her fans are women, many of them lower class, who find inspiration in Inul's music and her rise from poor village singer to media celebrity. Some conservative Muslims depicted Inul Daratista as a villain, but others argued against her demonisation and the attempts to censor her performances. The controversy did not diminish her popularity and, for her fans, she has remained a hero (Farram, 2007, pp. 271–272; Weintraub, 2008, pp. 368, 381, 384–385).

9. Concluding Remarks

This article has considered various Indonesian heroes and villains. Indonesia's official Pahlawan Nasional are selected based on characteristics and contributions valued by the state. The state chooses who merits inclusion according to its own vision of an appropriate national history. The people examined here have been active in a range of endeavours with some recognised as Pahlawan Nasional, some given other national-level official awards, some celebrated officially only in their own regions, and others given unofficial recognition. Some have become Indonesian celebrities and some have achieved international notoriety. In each example, however, it has been demonstrated that there is never complete consensus on an individual's status. Political, moral, religious, and other judgements can lead to multiple understandings of any person's worth. One person's hero is another person's villain. A person can be considered a hero in one part of Indonesia and a traitor in a neighbouring district. People regarded as heroes in Indonesia could be villains or traitors elsewhere. It is also the case that such judgements are never final and those praised as heroes today could be vilified in a later era or simply forgotten. The opposite is also possible.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers and the editors for their helpful comments and suggestions.

Funding

This article was produced with the assistance of a Rainmaker Grant from Charles Darwin University.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

- Andaya, L. Y. (1981). *The heritage of Arung Palakka: A history of South Sulawesi (Celebes) in the seventeenth century*. Martinus Nijhoff.
- Barrett, C., & Rompies, K. (2021, August 16). Militia leader's honour slammed as insult to East Timor and Australia. *Sydney Morning Herald*. <https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/militia-leader-s-honour-slammed-as-insult-to-east-timor-and-australia-20210813-p58ioz.html>
- Carey, P. (1976). The origins of the Java War. *English Historical Review*, 39(358), 52–78.
- Carey, P. (2014). *Destiny: The life of Prince Diponegoro of Yogyakarta, 1785–1855*. Peter Lang.
- Cothran, B., Judge, J., & Shubert, A. (2020). Introduction. In B. Cothran, J. Judge, & A. Shubert (Eds.), *Woman warriors and national heroes: Global histories* (pp. 1–19). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Farram, S. (2007). Wage war against Beatle music! Censorship and music in Soekarno's Indonesia. *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, 41(2), 247–277.
- Farram, S. (2009). *A political history of West Timor, 1901–1967*. Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Gabriel, N. S. (2016). Resistance of Kapitan Yonas against the Dutch in Alor Archipelago, East Nusa Tenggara, 1916–1918. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 21(12), 1–6.
- Hamid, M. E. A., & Saparudin, K. (2014). *MacDonald House bomb explosion*. National Library Board. <https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuid=74869cd4-6dee-4f5d-8365-379484edd271>
- Hasibuan, A., Lubis, T. M., Nababan, A., Dillon, H. S., Irsan, K., Katjasungkana, N., Zoemrotin K. S., & Munir. (2002). The KPP-HAM Report. In H. McDonald, D. Ball, J. Dunn, G. van Klinken, D. Bouchier, D. Kammen, & R. Tanter (Eds.), *Masters of terror: Indonesia's military and violence in East Timor in 1999* (pp. 15–59). Strategic and Defence Studies Centre.

- Jarvis, H. (1987). Tan Malaka: Revolutionary or renegade? *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 19(1), 41–54.
- KoEhuan, M. M. (1995). *Peranan tokoh masyarakat saat pendaratan dan menjelang berakhirnya pendudukan Sekutu di Kupang, tahun 1941–1945*. Universitas Nusa Cendana.
- Kumar, A. (1976). *Surapati: Man and legend. A study of three babad traditions*. Brill.
- Legge, J. D. (1972). *Sukarno: A political biography*. Allen Lane.
- Lim, Y. L. (2015, March 10). Memorial to victims of Konfrontasi unveiled near MacDonald House. *Straits Times*.
<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/memorial-to-victims-of-konfrontasi-unveiled-near-macdonald-house>
- Mackie, J. A. C. (1974). *Konfrontasi: The Indonesia–Malaysia dispute, 1963–1966*. Oxford University Press.
- Palallo, H. M. N. (2020). Arung Palakka antara pahlawan dan pengkhianat: Perspektif pengajaran sejarah lokal di Sulawesi Selatan. *Attoriolog Jurnal Pemikiran Kesenjaraan dan Pendidikan Sejarah*, 18(1), 36–42.
- Presiden SBY anugerahkan gelar Pahlawan Nasional kepada Soekarno-Hatta. (2012, November 7). *Kementerian Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia*. https://www.setneg.go.id/baca/index/presiden_sby_anugerahkan_gelar_pahlawan_nasional_kepada_soekarno-hatta
- Rachmawati. (2021, August 19). Tuai kontroversi, ini sosok Eurico Guterres, penerima Jasa Bintang Jasa Utama, sempat ditahan Intel Militer. *Kompas.com*. <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2021/08/19/062600778/tuai-kontroversi-ini-sosok-eurico-guterres-penerima-jasa-bintang-jasa-utama%23>
- Rahadi, F. (2014, February 18). Poeze: Tan Malaka harus tetap jadi Pahlawan Nasional. *Republika*. <https://news.republika.co.id/berita/n15x6b/poeze-tan-malaka-harus-tetap-jadi-pahlawan-nasional>
- Ricklefs, M. C. (1990). *A history of modern Indonesia: C. 1300 to the present*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rismawidiawati. (2014). Arung Palakka: Pengkhianatkah dia? *Jnana Budaya*, 19(2), 227–234.
- Schreiner, K. H. (1995). *Politischer Heldenkult in Indonesien: Tradition und moderne Praxis*. Dietrich Reimer Verlag.
- Schreiner, K. H. (1997). The making of national heroes: Guided Democracy to New Order, 1959–1992. In H. Schulte Nordholt (Ed.), *Outward appearances: Dressing state and society in Indonesia* (pp. 259–290). KITLV Press.
- Sunaryo, F. X., Mbete, A. M., Deidhae, F., Banda, M. M., & Wake, P. (2006). *Sejarah kota Ende*. Dinas Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.
- Tegaskan gelar Pahlawan Nasional Bung Karno, Presiden: Bung Karno tidak pernah berkhianat. (2022, November 7). *Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia*. <https://setkab.go.id/tegaskan-gelar-pahlawan-nasional-bung-karno-presiden-bung-karno-tidak-pernah-berkhianat>
- van der Kroef, J. M. (1949). Prince Diponegoro: Progenitor of Indonesian nationalism. *Far Eastern Quarterly*, 8(4), 424–450.
- van Klinken, G. (2012). “Don’t write this”: Researching provincial biographies in Indonesia. In M. Perkins (Ed.), *Locating life stories: Beyond East–West binaries in (auto)biographical studies* (pp. 169–192). University of Hawai’i Press.
- van Klinken, G., & Bourchier, D. (2002). The key suspects. In H. McDonald, D. Ball, J. Dunn, G. van Klinken, D. Bourchier, D. Kammen, & R. Tanter (Eds.), *Masters of terror: Indonesia’s military and violence in East Timor in 1999* (pp. 112–223). Strategic and Defence Studies Centre.
- Weintraub, A. (2008). “Dance drills, faith spills”: Islam, body politics and popular music in post-Suharto Indonesia. *Popular Music*, 23(3), 367–393.

About the Author



Steven Farram is an associate professor of North Australian and Regional Studies (History) at Charles Darwin University. His main research interests are the history of the Northern Territory and Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

Gus Dur's Enduring Legacy: Accruing Religious Merit in the Afterlife

Nathan Franklin 

Faculty of Arts and Society, Charles Darwin University, Australia

Correspondence: Nathan Franklin (nathan.franklin@cdu.edu.au)

Submitted: 22 November 2023 **Accepted:** 31 January 2024 **Published:** 8 March 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue “Indonesian Heroes and Villains: National Identity, Politics, Law, and Security” edited by Nathan Franklin (Charles Darwin University) and Hans Hägerdal (Linnaeus University), fully open access at <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i380>

Abstract

Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), Indonesia's fourth president (1999–2001) and leader of the traditionalist Islamic organisation Nahdlatul Ulama (1984–1999), continues to influence Indonesia in positive and meaningful ways despite his death in 2009. He proved that Islam and a pluralistic political culture were compatible and that Indonesian Islam had a global role. His legacy continues through the Wahid Foundation, Nahdlatul Ulama, and the National Awakening Party. The Wahid Foundation operates under the directorship of his daughter, Yenny Wahid, and is dedicated to improving Islam and Indonesian society through documenting religious intolerance and injustice and by issuing recommendations. Following Nahdlatul Ulama's National Congress in December 2021, its leadership has been dominated by Gus Dur's allies, including his wife and four daughters, and his former presidential spokesperson Yahya Cholil Staquf, all of whom have a deep commitment to his values. Gus Dur's former political party, the National Awakening Party, remains another institution which supports pluralism and secular inclusiveness. However, the relationship between Gus Dur's allies and this party remains fractured, just as it was before he died. Despite an impeached presidency, a fallout with the National Awakening Party, and the considerable time that has passed since his death, he has produced an enduring legacy. Public deference to the late Gus Dur is reminiscent of the nine saints who Islamised Java half a millennia ago. This is because traditionalist Muslims believe that one's deeds which produce on-going benefits to society will, in the afterlife, continue to accrue religious merit, and millions visit Gus Dur's grave every year to demonstrate this.

Keywords

Abdurrahman Wahid; Gus Dur; Indonesia; Islam; Nahdlatul Ulama; National Awakening Party; Politics; Wahid Foundation

1. Introduction

The impact of Abdurrahman Wahid (1940–2009), affectionately known as Gus Dur, on Indonesian society continues in significant ways, despite an impeached presidency in 2001, expulsion from his own political party in 2008, and his death the following year. Throughout his life, his approach to the modern Indonesian state on political, religious, and social matters provided Indonesians with a rare type of open-minded and progressive leadership. Nonetheless, Gus Dur was polarising and far from the perfect leader in terms of compromise and maintaining cohesion, even as president. Yet, he remains a symbol of peaceful and intellectual Islam, as well as reform and social justice, which has influenced Indonesia's brand of political Islam and liberalism more than any other person. He is also one of the few mainstream political figures who stood up to the military and religious extremism and was part of the political reform movement (*reformasi*) that toppled President Soeharto and his New Order Regime (1966–1998). It should then come as no surprise that many Indonesians consider him a national hero (*pahlawan nasional*) and a statesman (*negarawan*). Followers (*nahdliyin*) from the traditionalist Islamic organisation, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), consider him a saint (*wali*). Regardless of the formalisation of these titles, millions of Indonesians behave in ways that indicate that for them he was all these things.

Gus Dur's actions were highly divisive, including failures in his presidency (1999–2001), but his pursuit of political reform and social justice provided Indonesians with a moral compass and a commendable legacy, which deserves examination. Gus Dur's life is already well documented, but how can we measure Gus Dur's lasting impact on Indonesian society? In what follows, this article explores why Gus Dur is remembered, by whom, and what he represented, reflecting an Indonesian understanding of his continuing legacy. For analysis, we will consider three institutions of Indonesian society that Gus Dur influenced in distinct and personal ways. First, the Wahid Foundation (WF) which continues under the guidance of his daughter, Yenny Wahid; second, NU and its leadership; and finally, the Muslim-inclusive National Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa; PKB). Respectively, they represent a research centre, an Islamic organisation, and a political party. Together, they form important layers of civil society, with common goals centred around pluralism, justice, and reform. They represent "group politics," providing a link between the government and the governed (Heywood, 1997, p. 252), which is part of Gus Dur's legacy. It should be noted that I personally met and spoke with Gus Dur on numerous occasions in 2007 and 2008, and I travelled with him through East Java. During this same period, I also met and interviewed the then-head of NU, Hasyim Muzadi, several times. I discussed politics and NU with both Gus Dur and Muzadi.

Acknowledging that there are some counter-discourses mostly in respect of Gus Dur's political weaknesses, these do not diminish what he represented. His example remains a foundation for social justice and progressive thinking on pluralism, tolerance, harmony, interfaith dialogue, as well as Indonesia's motto of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (unity in diversity) and the state ideology of Pancasila (five principles: religion, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice). He was not just philosophical about his principles and would command his people to defend churches and minorities (Fealy, 2010; Witoelar, 2001, p. 54). Gus Dur's legacy is a rich source of ideas and practices on the separation of Islam and the state, the interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence, as well as the political neutrality of NU. NU has never formally endorsed PKB, although it is the ideological embodiment of NU and the party that helped Gus Dur achieve the Indonesian presidency in 1999. His concept of Indigenising Islam (*Pribumisasi Islam*) influenced NU's Islam of the Indonesian Archipelago (*Islam Nusantara*) idea to fight religious radicalism from 2015 onwards. Gus Dur wanted to improve Indonesia's image as a responsible, democratic middle-world power, as do his allies and supporters

today. To this end, his WF monitors the role of both state and non-state actors on human rights issues, such as the ongoing persecution of Ahmadiyah followers (an Islamic group considered deviant because it recognises a prophet postdating Muhammad) and the dubious blasphemy charge against former Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) because of a doctored video clip in 2017. This article contends that Gus Dur is overwhelmingly remembered by ordinary Indonesians for his good deeds and his contributions to improving society, which *nahdliyin* believe produces religious merit (*pahala*), which continues to flow to him in the afterlife (*akhirah*).

2. Saint Abdurrahman Wahid

On 30 December 2009, Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) died at age sixty-nine. Gus Dur's funeral was attended by thousands of people, including President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), ministers, politicians, social activists, Chinese Indonesians, and former members of the Indonesian Communist Party (Parti Komunis Indonesia), which remains banned (Harsaputra, 2010). The diverse range of attendees reflected Gus Dur's prominence across Indonesian society; such disparate groups of people were probably never going to gather like this again. From this perspective alone, Gus Dur remains irreplaceable.

Gus Dur had long been regarded as a "living saint" by millions of Muslims across Indonesia (Barton, 2002, pp. 31–21). His grave is a place of pilgrimage and one of the most popular religious burial sites in the country, continuing to attract prominent people from the president down. Most years it receives over a million visitors, with a peak of 1.3 million in 2018 (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2019, p. 270). The religious pilgrimage (*ziarah*) to the holy burial grounds, particularly for the nine saints (*wali songo*) who supposedly Islamised Java in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is a fundamental part of NU culture. *Nahdliyin* believe that *ziarah* can bring religious merit (*pahala*), and even special powers (*ilmu*), to those who visit and recite prayers (*doa*), chant God's name, and other religious incantations (*wirid* or *zikir*), to demonstrate devotion and closeness to God (Franklin, 2014, pp. 113–114).

In 2022, the head of NU, Yahya Cholil Staquf (Gus Yahya), declared Gus Dur the "tenth saint," as "Sunan Abdurrahman Wahid," at the 13th Remembrance Ceremony (*Haul*) for Gus Dur (Triono, 2022a). The title *sunan* recognises him as a holy missionary, which honours his life as an example for other Muslims. The stories of the *wali songo* are legendary, including supernatural powers and missionary success. For *nahdliyin*, the spirits of deceased saints (*wali*) provide a vital communication link to God. Consequently, politicians, business people, and ordinary Indonesians seek blessing (*doa restu*) from both living Islamic clergy and the spirits of the *wali* (Franklin, 2014, pp. 146, 149). It should be noted reformist Muslims, like Muhammadiyah, acknowledge the deeds of *wali*, but they do not venerate or supplicate at their graves (Franklin, 2014, p. 224).

From birth, Gus Dur was effectively NU royalty. His maternal grandfather Kyai Bisri Syamsuri (1886–1980) and paternal grandfather Kyai Haji Hasyim Asy'ari (1875–1947) are held in high esteem as founders of NU (Munir, 2022, p. 51). Gus Dur's father, Abdul Wahid Hasyim (1914–1953) was a state minister without portfolio, an adviser to the Ministry of Religion in at least one of the early cabinets of 1945–1946, and finally Minister of Religious Affairs from 1949 to 1952 (Anderson, 1972, pp. 110–111; Feith, 1962, pp. 47, 150, 180; Finch & Lev, 1965, pp. 2, 8–9). In 1964, President Soekarno (1945–1966) granted national hero status to both Asy'ari and Hasyim (Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 1964a, 1964b). Gus Dur remains denied the national hero status by the agency responsible on the basis that his presidency was terminated, and he has not been

dead long enough, but if he had not been president, he may have been granted it already (“Dewan gelar soal status pahlawan Gus Dur,” 2019). Almost every year his name is put forward for the title of national hero by various politicians and public figures, including President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and twice by prominent female politician and NU member Khofifah Indar Parawansa (Khofifah Usulkan Gus Dur, 2019; Movanita, 2015; Wicaksono, 2017).

Of the seven Indonesian presidents to date, Gus Dur remains the most liberal and reformist. During his short presidency (20 October 1999 to 23 July 2001) he removed the 1967 law that restricted Chinese Indonesian traditions, tried to remove the ban on communism, and held conciliatory dialogues with Aceh and West Papua (Barton, 2002, pp. 292–293; O’Rourke, 2002, p. 362; Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 2000). Although he did not support East Timor’s independence because of the potential for bloodshed, he apologised on behalf of his nation for all the violence and killings related to the 30 August 1999 plebiscite on self-determination (Barton, 2002, pp. 261–262; O’Rourke, 2002, p. 267). He also succeeded in “taming” the military, separated the military from the police, pushed the military out of parliament, furthered regional autonomy initiated by his predecessor President Habibie, and tried to speed up the law on corruption by proposing for those charged with corruption to be considered guilty until proven innocent (Barton, 2002, p. 384; Ramstedt, 2009, p. 329; Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, 2000; O’Rourke, 2002, p. 393; Shoesmith et al., 2020, p. 361). There were of course failures in his presidency, most significant were his inability to stop the violence in Maluku, his sudden firing of ministers, and unpredictable actions causing alarm among allied parties which in turn led to his impeachment (Barton, 2002, pp. 334, 370). After his presidency, he defended those persecuted by hardline Muslims, most famously Inul Daratista, the dangdut singer who attracted scorn because of her provocative buttocks-shaking drill (*ngebora*) dance, and celebrity transwoman Dorce Gamalama (Ahmad, 2022; Ibrahim, 2021). In June 2008, Gus Dur clashed with Habib Rizieq, the leader of the vigilante Islamic Defenders’ Front (Front Pembela Islam; FPI), over freedom of religion, including the right of the Muslim minority group Ahmadiyah to exist, which played out publicly in the media (Franklin, 2009).

In his final years, Gus Dur spent much of his time travelling around Java. The reasons for this travel were a mixture of politics and religious events, NU conferences, and visiting people (*silaturahmi*), but he always attracted huge crowds. Gus Dur advocated the “free to be politically active” (*Bebas Politik Praktis*) concept so NU members could vote for, or join, any political party. In one of his final publications, *Ilusi Negara Islam (The Illusion of the Islamic State)* co-written with Ahmad Syafi’i Ma’arif former head (1998–2005) of the reformist Islamic organisation Muhammadiyah, Gus Dur’s central argument was the need to protect the Pancasila and the Unitary State of Indonesia (*Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*) against hardliners (*garis keras*), including the pan-Islamic Indonesian Party of Liberation (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia; HTI) and the Justice Prosperous Party (Partai Keadilan Indonesia), because they favoured an Islamic state (A. Wahid & Ma’arif, 2009). Gus Dur also invested agency in the establishment of WF, which focuses on the consequences of policies and laws on people’s lives and defends the idea that Indonesia’s pluralistic society must be protected. For two decades, the foundation has carried his name and continues his moral approach to calling out injustices.

3. Wahid Foundation

The Wahid Foundation was initially founded as the Wahid Institute, on 7 September 2004, in response to a changing world after the 9/11 attacks in the US, as well as Indonesia’s own experience of terrorism and

ethnic and religious violence (Wahid Institute, n.d.). Its broader objective was to support democracy and deepen *reformasi*, in a way that would respect electoral outcomes and avoid violence. Since 2005 it has documented religious violations, and in 2008 began producing yearly reports. In 2016, it was renamed the Wahid Foundation to enhance its international reputation and capacity as a philanthropic organisation, rather than just a research centre (Alamsyah M Djafar, personal communication, February 10, 2022). To date, it has produced dozens of reports and publications, as well as countless articles and press releases related to political, religious, and social issues, which are available on its website (www.wahidfoundation.org).

Since Gus Dur's death, his daughter, Yenny Wahid, has continued as director and used her high-profile image to further the work of WF through meetings with leaders and important people in Indonesia and from around the world. At both a regional and global level, WF facilitates dialogue and understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims. There are also partnerships with governments and institutions globally, including Australia, the US, France, the UN, and many others (WF, n.d.). Collaboration is wide-ranging, such as empowering women, poverty alleviation, and religious tolerance. Projects of late have included Peace Village (*Desa Damai*), a UN-sponsored program enhancing the role of women in achieving tolerance, social development, and expanding economic opportunities. Another is the Australian government-funded Peace School (*Sekolah Damai*) program, supporting the participation of youth on matters of peace, inclusion, and opposing violent extremism, and the capacity building of teachers (WF, n.d.).

Yenny is often involved in issues of national significance, such as Papua and women's role in terrorism. In 2021, she met with Papuan cultural figure Ondo George Awi who recalled meeting her father and valued his suggested solutions to the problems in Papua through education programmes (WF, 2021). President Wahid is remembered fondly there because he changed the province's name back to Papua from Irian Jaya and because of his willingness to engage in dialogue. In addition to promoting educational programs in Papua, Yenny has supported the right of Papuans to display the Morning Star flag, as it represents a cultural symbol, and not an act of treason (Halim & Galih, 2020). She has also pressed on the importance of women in preventing terrorism ("Empowerment prevents women," 2018). Survey data shows that women are less likely to engage in terrorism, and when they do, it is usually in supportive roles, and rarely as perpetrators (WF, 2018). As Yenny herself emphasised, the importance of this work was brought into sharp focus when women were involved in terrorist attacks in Surabaya in May 2018 ("Empowerment prevents women," 2018).

WF's ongoing task is to document intolerant incidents but also reports on positive stories of tolerant and harmonious acts. There are annual accounts of incidents, descriptions, and analyses of particular trends, such as hate speech and physical violence, which flare up because of the "politicization of religion," as in the case of the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election which coincided with blasphemy charges against Governor Ahok (Noor et al., 2018, pp. 2, 38). Common to WF publications are strategies and recommendations for improvement, directed at all levels of government, parliament, the president, ministers, the judiciary, the police and other state institutions, the media, and civil society groups, for them to strengthen their commitment to the protection of people's right to freedom of religion and belief. It is difficult to measure the extent to which these reports and recommendations affect government policies, but the foundation does command the attention of the government, particularly when Yenny is involved.

In 2020, WF published its most comprehensive report to date, *A Decade of Monitoring Freedom of Religion and Belief*, covering religious violations in Indonesia between 2009 and 2018. Its findings detailed

1,033 violations by the state and 1,420 violations by non-state actors (Djafar et al., 2020, pp. 133–136). The five most common infringements by non-state actors included intimidation and threats (205 violations), hate speech (195), physical attack (161), accusations of apostasy (136), and prohibited activities (132; Djafar et al., 2020, pp. 135–136). The FPI was responsible for the greatest amount with 153 violations (Djafar et al., 2020, p. 125). Violations by the state included restricting or closing places of worship (163), criminal punishment because of religion (155), non-intervention (121), restricting or closing religious activities (117), and discrimination (116; Djafar et al., 2020, p. 133). The significance of all this is that many of these violations go unpunished, and WF cites Indonesian laws that are used as justification for such actions, particularly Law 1/1965: Prevention of Abuse and/or Blasphemy of Religion, commonly referred to as the 1965 PNPS Law (Djafar, 2020, pp. 1, 7). In fact, Yenny stated in response to the blasphemy conviction of Ahok that this law has sent more than 100 people to jail since 2004 and it should be abolished (WF, 2017).

In its end-of-year report in 2015, WF reported a rise in hate speech in Jakarta, primarily directed at Governor Ahok, because of his religious and ethnic identity, Chinese Christian (Y. Z. Wahid et al., 2015, p. 43). In 2017, when he ran unsuccessfully for re-election, WF recorded ten separate actions directed at him and six to his supporters (Noor et al., 2018, p. 30). Notwithstanding, the government's tolerance for FPI ran out and went after its leader Habib Rizieq. In April 2017, he fled to Saudi Arabia to avoid charges relating to anti-pornography laws and disrespecting state symbols (Suryana & Taufek, 2020). Upon returning to Indonesia in November 2020, Rizieq was charged with Covid-19 protocol breaches, and, in early December, six of his bodyguards were killed in a shootout with police ("Indonesian Islamic cleric Rizieq Shihab arrested," 2020). By 30 December, FPI was banned (Indonesian Government, 2020). This followed the 2017 banning of HTI because it opposed the Pancasila state in favour of an Islamic state (Indonesian Government, 2017). Data sourced over fifty months at the end of SBY's presidency and fifty months at the beginning of Jokowi's presidency showed a decline in religious violations under Jokowi. The biggest reduction was in physical attacks, only 39, compared to 106 under SBY (Djafar, 2020, p. 5). In terms of state-sponsored violations, under SBY, regional governments were responsible for 272 violations and the police were blamed for 173 violations, whereas under Jokowi it fell to 157 and 28 violations respectively (Djafar et al., 2020, pp. 155–181). According to this data, Jokowi's crackdown on religious extremism and intolerance has shown success.

Four people are listed as founders of WF, namely Gus Dur, Greg Barton, Yenny Wahid, and Ahmad Suaedy. Of these, Yenny remains the most prominent. This has helped the profile of WF and has provided her a platform to remain in the public eye, given the fact that her political ambitions have been unsuccessful. Since 2008, Yenny's leadership of the National Sovereignty Party, which changed to the New Indonesia National Sovereignty Party (Partai Kedaulatan Bangsa Indonesia Baru), has achieved no major milestones, including no seats in parliament (Yenny Wahid, n.d.). She remains publicly critical of her former party, PKB, particularly its leader, Muhaimin Iskandar, who had her and her father expelled from the party in 2008, which she has openly stated was "a coup," and she frequently reiterated this during the led up to the 2024 elections ("Yenny ungkap wasiat Gus Dur," 2023). Her unofficial political stance of "anyone but Muhaimin" and his PKB, has seen her endorse politicians with questionable human rights records, such as Prabowo Subianto in 2009 and 2014 (Asri, 2014). However, it should be acknowledged that a contributing fact for her support was that her husband was a member of Prabowo's Gerindra party (Asri, 2014). In 2023, she pledged support for the Ganjar Pranowo (with vice presidential candidate Mohammad Mahfud Mahmodin) in the 2024 presidential election because their values aligned with her and her father's (Tim Redaksi, 2023). Like Gus

Dur, her political actions have not appeared to have negatively impacted the work or reputation of WF, and she usually relinquishes her position as WF director temporarily if she is involved in political campaigning.

4. National Awakening Party

PKB is one of Indonesia's most successful political parties. Since its creation on 23 July 1998, it has represented partisan and practical politics for NU. The party's symbols resemble those of NU, including the colour green and the world surrounded by nine stars. However, beyond these basic Muslim characteristics, and its foundational base in Pancasila, the party is moderate and pluralistic. Apart from a few religious terms, such as "inner self and outer world" (*lahir dan batin*) and "to have moral character" (*berakhlakul karimah*), PKB's "vision" and "mission" statements read like the larger, secular-nationalist parties, with a commitment to the 1945 Constitution, human rights, modernity through education, law, economic development, and democratic empowerment (*Visi dan Misi*, n.d.). PKB continues to reflect the values and ideas of its most prominent founder, Gus Dur, just as its original declaration a quarter of a century ago detailed, the party seeks to create a unified Indonesia that protects its people, provides prosperity, freedom, lasting peace, and social justice in the world (*Sejarah Pendirian*, n.d.).

The high point for PKB was in the early years of *reformasi*. At the June 1999 election, the party attracted one in eight votes (12.61%; *Komisi Pemilihan Umum*, 2009), making it the third most popular party, while its leader, Gus Dur, became president. But Gus Dur's presidency might never have happened. His association with certain people, including the current chairperson of NU, Yahya Cholil Staquf, was crucial because Yahya was a member of the Electoral Commission (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum*; KPU). KPU wanted to reject Gus Dur as a political candidate on medical grounds, but Yahya fought to have him passed so he could enter parliament (*Laksana & Staquf*, 2021, p. 36), which allowed him to win the presidency. In 2004, KPU denied Gus Dur's presidential candidacy when he tried to stand again for the position because he was considered medically unfit (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum*, 2004).

In the five elections PKB has contested from 1999 to 2019, it has been ranked in the top five most popular political parties, except in 2009 (declining to 4.94% from 10.57% of the vote in 2004; *Komisi Pemilihan Umum*, 2009), after an internal conflict saw Gus Dur's expulsion when his nephew, Muhaimin Iskandar, successfully wrested control of the party in 2008. Also, a rift within Gus Dur's PKB in 2006–2007 resulted in the creation of another NU-aligned party, the Ulama National Awakening Party (*Partai Kebangkitan Nasional Ulama*), which attracted 1.5% of the 2009 vote (*Franklin*, 2014, pp. 77, 184–185). Consequently, PKB dropped to seventh most popular but regained most of its support in the elections of 2014 and 2019, respectively, 9.04% and 9.69% (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum*, 2014, 2019). Its leader, Muhaimin, deserves credit for this, as well as the 2019 presidential victory after he convinced President Jokowi to choose a new running mate, namely Ma'ruf Amin, to represent the NU consistency (*Fealy*, 2018).

Strikingly, PKB has only had three chairpersons, namely Matori Abdul Djilil (1998–2001), Alwi Shihab (2001–2005), and Muhaimin Iskandar (since 2005). All three were removed by Gus Dur because they were accused of being co-opted by external forces and not towing the party line ("External interference blamed," 2008). To avoid the fate of his predecessors, Muhaimin held an extraordinary meeting with his faction of PKB. He took his case to the Supreme Court, which recognised him and his group as the legitimate leaders of PKB. Muhaimin then focused on improving relations with NU. This was most obvious when Helmy Faisal,

a member of PKB, became General Secretary of the NU Executive Board (*Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama*, PBNU) from 2015 to 2021, and Ma'ruf Amin as the Supreme Leader of PBNU became Indonesia's vice president in 2019. Helmy even pledged NU's support for the Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin victory ("NU satu suara," 2019). In 2020, PKB's secretary general, Hasanuddin Wahid, stated "Gus Dur's greatest legacy to this nation was PKB" ("Peninggalan terbesar Gus Dur," 2020). Although this was likely a public relations stunt, it does reflect how Gus Dur is still held in high esteem by PKB. However, generally the party avoids mentioning his name, because Yenny is quick to counter such things, to denounce PKB and her cousin, Muhaimin. In late 2023, PKB felt confident enough to support Muhaimin as vice-presidential candidate, pairing with presidential candidate Anies Baswedan, for the February 2024 election.

Still, Muhaimin's political career was started by Gus Dur, and, eventually, he was able to re-create himself after he was made minister of labour and transmigration in President SBY's cabinet in October 2009. Under Muhaimin's leadership, PKB has been stable, been given ministries, and supported most of the government's key policies, including the Omnibus Bill, moving the country's capital city, energy transition, and changes to the Corruption Eradication Commission (*Bijak Memilih*, n.d.). PKB was rated the party that was most pro-equity in economic policy, the third most committed to *reformasi*, and, on other indices, it lies between the Islamic parties and secular-nationalist parties on issues like status as progressive or conservative, the role of Islam in politics, and women in politics (Aspinall et al., 2018).

In October 2023, for the first time since 1999, PKB successfully registered a candidate for the presidential team. It is unlikely that the Anies-Muhaimin pair will win according to the polls, but the experience and the high-profile nature of the presidential race could propel Muhaimin into the small circle of the political elite. Like other failed candidates, we will likely see him try again. PKB and Muhaimin will not be able to rely on the support of PBNU since its current leadership reiterated its commitment to political neutrality and has been stacked by Gus Dur's allies and immediate family members. If Muhaimin wishes to increase his popularity, he will have to reconcile with NU, including Gus Dur's family and supporters. This seems unlikely, given that Yenny has said that her father's dying wish was to remove Muhaimin as PKB leader ("Yenny ungkap wasiat Gus Dur," 2023).

5. Nahdlatul Ulama

NU was formed in 1926 to formalise traditionalist Islam, which had developed in Indonesia over many centuries. This was during the Dutch colonial era when competing Islamic movements were advancing their interests (Franklin, 2020), like Muhammadiyah—which focuses on reforming and purifying Islam—formed in 1912. NU emphasises the concept that Indonesia was peacefully Islamised by the nine saints (*wali songo*), which has recently been extended to include contributions by Gus Dur. Today, NU is the largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia and is part of the socio-religious fabric of national identity and cultural life. It boasts that some 80 to 90 million people acknowledge some form of religious or cultural identity to NU (Triono, 2021a). Taking this number at face value, it represents over a third of the country's 270.2 million people (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020, p. 12). This identity is loose and does not compel them to vote for NU-aligned parties but is an important demographic because of its size and dominance in Indonesia's main island of Java. NU maintains political neutrality in a doctrine known as *Kembali ke Khittah* (Return to Origin), as declared by Gus Dur when he became head in 1984 (Franklin, 2014, p. 21). For fifteen years Gus Dur led NU making it both moderate and relevant in national life, while surviving Soeharto's

New Order Regime, which empowered him as a key figure in the *reformasi* movement which achieved democratisation in 1998.

PBNU has had three leaders since Gus Dur vacated the position in 1999, namely Hasyim Muzadi (1999–2010), Said Aqil Siradj (2010–2021), and Yahya Cholil Staquf (since late 2021). Muzadi was stable but conservative in his leadership (Fealy, 2017). He managed his relationship with Gus Dur well by avoiding public disagreements and maintaining respectful relations, particularly at NU events where the former president would attract more attention. I personally observed their relationship at the NU East Java Regional Conference (Konferensi Wilayah; Konferwil) on 2–4 November 2007 in Probolinggo, when Ali Maschan Moesa was elected NU head of East Java. Siradj was progressive and more charismatic than Muzadi, and he did not have to manage Gus Dur who passed away three months before he became leader. Siradj made his mark in 2015 when he directed NU to combat Islamic extremism and terrorism because of the growing threat of Islamic State (IS). Although Islamic preachers like Abu Bakar Ba'asyir had been pushing Islamic extremism for years (Franklin, 2008), pledges of allegiance to IS, and Indonesians in Syria urging their fellow country folk to join (Lloyd & Dredge, 2014), prompted a national response, which included help from NU. Consequently, NU created *Islam Nusantara* (Islam of the Indonesian Archipelago) to advance moderate Islam and counter Wahabism and violent *jihad* (holy war).

Islam Nusantara is the most comprehensive theological NU program designed since Gus Dur's reforms of the 1980s, namely *Kembali ke Khittah* and *Pribumisasi Islam* (Indigenising Islam). Fundamentalist and radical groups, like HTI and FPI (both now defunct), opposed *Islam Nusantara*, arguing that it represented a deviant stream and was tantamount to secularisation and Westernisation (Njoto-Feillard, 2015; Putra, 2020). The doctrine of *Islam Nusantara* is underpinned by jurisprudential debate initially promoted by Gus Dur and continued by his successors and other NU intellectuals (Njoto-Feillard, 2015). Reflective of NU's loose nature, NU's former head, Muzadi, did not support *Islam Nusantara* because it was too exclusive and Indonesia-centric, arguing that it needed to promote universal values for the common good (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*; Akbar, 2015). Muzadi was often critical of Siradj, particularly Siradj's political actions like his personal support for Jokowi's for president, arguing there should be no relationship with politics while head of NU (Hermawan, 2014). This was ironic since Muzadi ran for vice-president in 2004, pairing with Megawati, but they were defeated by SBY and his running mate Jusuf Kalla. To date, Siradj has never been directly involved in politics. However, under Siradj's leadership, there was creeping politicisation of NU from PKB, which ended when Yahya became head. Siradj was an ally of Muhaimin, and before the 2019 election, he stated he would personally support Muhaimin if President Jokowi picked him as the candidate for vice president (Florentin, 2018). Although this did not happen in 2019, Muhaimin hoped that Siradj would retain the leadership and provide support for his political aspirations in the February 2024 election (Syechbubakr, 2022).

Yahya comes from an eminent NU family. His younger brother, Yaqut Cholil Qoumas, is the minister of religious affairs (appointed on 23 December 2020), and his uncle is prominent NU figure Mustofa Bisri (Sari, 2021). Yahya has pledged to revive the ways of Gus Dur (Triono, 2021b). Gus Yahya, as he is known, is humorous and entertaining, like Gus Dur was, but at the same time soft and can listen, which is essential in running a massive organisation like NU. Gus Yahya continues to support *Islam Nusantara*, and his priorities are, as NU approaches 100 years old, world peace and action on climate change (Hasyim & Yew-Foong, 2022; Maknunah, 2023). Gus Yahya details his history with Gus Dur in the book *Menghidupkan Gus Dur (Bringing Gus Dur to Life)*; Laksana & Staquf, 2021). Interestingly, he puts Gus Dur's political failures down to him being a statesman and prioritising

humanity over political engineering (Laksana & Staquf, 2021, p. 32). Yahya acknowledges disappointment in Gus Dur's presidency, but he was convinced that Gus Dur had a grand plan.

In the PBNU organisational structure of 2022–2027, Gus Dur's camp has returned to fill key positions, including his wife and four daughters. The former first lady, Shinta Nuriyah, and eldest daughter, Alissa Wahid, are chairpersons on the Religious Advisory Board, while Yenny Wahid is chairperson of Strategic Innovation Development, Anita Wahid is deputy chairperson of the Ma'arif Education Institute, and Inayah Wulandari Wahid is secretary of the Indonesian Muslim Cultural Arts Institute (Susunan lengkap, 2022; Triono, 2022b). This is unprecedented and sends a clear signal to PKB that NU no longer tolerates politicisation, at least from Muhaimin. In late 2022, Yahya stated, that "NU would not be involved in practical politics" and that NU was not to be "used as a tool by PKB or co-opted by PKB" ("Yahya Staquf tak mau," 2021). He reiterated, with Yenny by his side, that "there will not be a presidential or vice-presidential candidate representing NU" (Syechbubakr, 2022).

Total depoliticisation of NU seems impossible. PBNU's membership includes people who are or have been, directly involved in politics. These include Gus Dur's nephew Saifullah Yusuf of PKB and former Gus Dur cabinet minister and current East Java governor, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, who has been allied with various parties. Others, not necessarily associated with Gus Dur include, Amin Said Husni of PKB, Choirul Sholeh Rasyid and Taj Yasin Maimoen from the United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan), Naszirul Falah Amru from the Democratic Party of Struggle (Partai Demokrat Indonesia Perjuangan), and Nusron Wahid (no relation to Gus Dur) of Golkar. The current PBNU treasurer is Gudfan Arif, who was once very active with Gerindra and is the oldest son of the Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) Sunan Drajat headmaster Kyai Abdul Ghofur; Ghofur is also politically active in East Java and has direct links to Prabowo (Franklin, 2014, pp. 177–178). The challenge for Yahya, like all PBNU leaders, remains keeping NU executive positions politically neutral, as well as the cohesion of the organisation, including managing the regions where the neutrality of NU at the district and provincial level becomes blurred and difficult to enforce. During Yahya's leadership, we will likely hear frequent references to his old boss and mentor Abdurrahman Wahid in terms of moral guidance, particularly as the country prepares for a new president in 2024; of the three candidates, namely Anies, Ganjar, and Prabowo, there is a likelihood that the latter will win, according to the polls, because of his pairing with President Jokowi's son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka for vice president, substantially boosted Prabowo's popularity.

6. Conclusion

Gus Dur left an active moral and political legacy, which remains alive in the consciousness of mainstream Indonesian society. Just as the *wali songo* legends are retold and romanticised, Gus Dur's legacy offers much for Indonesia's political and religious culture, so much so that his supporters do not have to compete with memories of the problematic aspects of Gus Dur, as president or otherwise. Although his presidency changed Indonesia in profound ways, this is only part of the Gus Dur narrative. His actions outside the presidency have ongoing effects, and his long-term structural and ideological legacy continues in the autonomy and vibrancy of the three institutions discussed in this article. Gus Dur found unique methods to fight for justice and improve society, which are advocated in different forms through WF, PKB, and NU. In everyday life, Indonesians continue to remember Gus Dur in unique and meaningful ways. Recognition includes popular symbolism, such as his appearance in cartoons and memes, internet articles and social

media posts, T-shirts, and party and institutional advertising paraphernalia. A simple search of social media, particularly in Facebook and Instagram accounts of NU and WF, shows frequent references to Gus Dur. Even the West Papuans have adopted him; for example, a book concerning Gus Dur's role in Papua features a cover showing an edited photograph of him wearing a bird of paradise headdress like a tribal chief (Pekei, 2013).

Today, millions of Indonesians and many institutions view Gus Dur as a source of national pride and an exemplary model on matters of national consciousness, morality, justice, equality, pluralism, and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* and Pancasila. Thousands praise him daily at his grave, to honour his legacy and draw power in their lives. In terms of the political dynasties that have emerged, Gus Dur was not against them, so long as they used their privileged positions for the benefit of all. He, apparently, even said that he would oppose his own children if they did not act in the best interests of society (Mohamad, 2023). Arguably Yenny Wahid is the unofficial representative of Gus Dur. She is constantly referred to in the Indonesian media as the “daughter of the fourth President of the Republic of Indonesia (RI) Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur)” (Ramadhan, 2023) or “the second daughter of the late Gus Dur” (Puspitalova, 2023). However, it is unlikely that she will become a serious political player, at least while Muhaimin leads PKB. That said, NU appears to be in the firm grip of Gus Dur's allies, which will probably continue into the 2030s. How they use the organisation to improve Indonesian society and politics will become clearer in the fullness of time, as will the temptation to join politics, which will inevitably arise for some. PKB, NU, and WF continue to provide Indonesians, and the Muslim world, an example of institutions of moderate and progressive Islam that can help strengthen important layers of a modern civil society. Gus Dur's contribution is more than just a legacy in this life, as the ongoing benefits to society provide him with religious merit (*pahala*) in the afterlife, which will accrue further in his sainthood. Given all this, it seems only a matter of time before Gus Dur's supporters are successful in gaining recognition for him as a “national hero,” and his moral status would fully justify that recognition as a national figure.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers and Hans Hägerdal for his helpful comments and suggestions.

Funding

This article was produced with the assistance of a Rainmaker Grant from Charles Darwin University.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

- Ahmad, F. (2022, February 16). Saat dorce gamalama bertanya status perempuannya kepada Gus Dur. *NU Online*. <https://www.nu.or.id/fragmen/saat-dorce-gamalama-bertanya-status-perempuannya-kepada-gus-dur-3S7TH>
- Akbar, C. (2015, November 26). KH. Hasyim Muzadi: Yang Benar Islam di Nusantara bukan Islam Nusantara. *Hidayatullah.com*. <https://hidayatullah.com/berita/nasional/2015/11/26/83966/kh-hasyim-muzadi-yang-benar-islam-di-nusantara-bukan-islam-nusantara.html>
- Anderson, B. R. O. G. (1972). *Java in a time of revolution: Occupation and resistance, 1944-1946*. Cornell University Press.

- Aspinall, E., Fossati, D., Muhtadi, B., & Warburton, E. (2018). *Mapping the Indonesian political spectrum*. New Mandala. <https://www.newmandala.org/mapping-indonesian-political-spectrum>
- Asri, S. (2014, May 23). Gerindra: Yenny Wahid dukung Prabowo-Hatta. *Kompas.com*. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2014/05/23/0937422/Gerindra.Yenny.Wahid.Dukung.Prabowo-Hatta>
- Badan Pusat Statistik. (2019). *Kabupaten Jombang dalam angka 2019*. <https://jombangkab.bps.go.id/publication/2019/08/16/13ed62a0f2f7470798e508f1/kabupaten-jombang-dalam-angka-2019.html>
- Badan Pusat Statistik. (2020). *Hasil sensus penduduk 2020*. <https://www.bps.go.id/pressrelease/2021/01/21/1854/hasil-sensus-penduduk-2020.html>
- Barton, G. (2002). *Abdurrahman Wahid: Muslim democrat, Indonesian president*. UNSW Press.
- Bijak Memilih. (n.d.). *Kenali track record partai*. <https://www.bijakmemilih.id/en/partai>
- Dewan gelar soal status pahlawan Gus Dur: Kuburan masih basah. (2019, November 8). *CNN Indonesia*. <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20191108172658-20-446730/dewan-gelar-soal-status-pahlawan-gus-dur-kuburan-masih-basah>
- Djafar, A. M. (2020). *Ringkasan eksekutif. Tawar-menawar kebebasan: Satu dekade pemantauan kemerdekaan beragama berkeyakinan (KBB)*. Wahid Foundation. https://wahidfoundation.org/source/laporantahunan/Ringkasan_Eksekutif_Tawar_Menawar_Kebebasan.pdf
- Djafar, A. M., Trisnawati, E., Jauharoh, F. U., & Putri, M. A. (2020). *Tawar-menawar kebebasan: Satu dekade pemantauan kemerdekaan beragama berkeyakinan (KBB)*. Wahid Foundation. https://www.academia.edu/44160275/Tawar_Menawar_Kebebasan_Satu_Dekade_Pemantauan_Kemerdekaan_Beragama_Berkeyakinan_Wahid_Foundation
- Empowerment prevents women from radicalism: Yenny Wahid. (2018, September 17). *NU Online*. <https://www.nu.or.id/national/empowerment-prevents-women-from-radicalism-yenny-wahid-DbCP2>
- External interference blamed for PKB split. (2008, May 29). *NU Online*. <https://www.nu.or.id/news/external-interference-blamed-for-pkb-split-i11fA>
- Fealy, G. (2010). Gus Dur's 100 days. *Inside Indonesia*. <https://www.insideindonesia.org/archive/articles/gus-dur-s-100-days>
- Fealy, G. (2017). *Greg Fealy on former NU leader Hasyim Muzadi (1944-2017)*. University of Melbourne. <https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/greg-fealy-on-former-nu-leader-hasyim-muzadi-1944-2017>
- Fealy, G. (2018, August 26). Ma'ruf Amin: Jokowi's Islamic defender or deadweight? *New Mandala*. <https://www.newmandala.org/maruf-amin-jokowis-islamic-defender-deadweight>
- Feith, H. (1962). *The decline of constitutional democracy in Indonesia*. Cornell University Press.
- Finch, S., & Lev, D. S. (1965). *Republic of Indonesia cabinets, 1945-1965*. Cornell Modern Indonesia Project.
- Florentin, V. (2018, May 1). Said Aqil akan dukung Muhaimin Iskandar dengan satu syarat. *Tempo.com*. <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1084805/said-aqil-akan-dukung-muhaimin-iskandar-dengan-satu-syarat>
- Franklin, N. (2008). *An evening with Abu Bakar Ba'asyir*. Inside Indonesia. <https://www.insideindonesia.org/archive/articles/an-evening-with-abu-bakar-ba-asyir>
- Franklin, N. (2009). *Ahmadiyah dispute intensifies*. Inside Indonesia. <https://www.insideindonesia.org/archive/articles/ahmadiyah-dispute-intensifies>
- Franklin, N. (2014). *Reproducing political Islam in Java: The role of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah pesantren in the political socialisation of the umat* [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. Charles Darwin University. <https://doi.org/10.25913/5ea918c506765>
- Franklin, N. J. (2020). Islam and the Dutch in the East Indies: Oppression or opportunity? *The European Legacy*, 25(5), 572-587. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2020.1760467>

- Halim, D., & Galih, B. (2020, June 26). Yenny Wahid nilai pengibaran bendera bintang kejora bukan aksi makar. *Kompas.com*. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2020/06/26/10045481/yenny-wahid-nilai-pengibaran-bendera-bintang-kejora-bukan-aksi-makar?page=all>
- Harsaputra, I. (2010, January 2). Thousands flock to Gus Dur's grave to pay homage. *Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/01/02/thousands-flock-gus-dur039s-grave-pay-homage.html>
- Hasyim, S., & Yew-Foong, H. (2022). *Nahdlatul Ulama's muktamar 2021 and its implications: Some field observations*. ISEAS: Yusof Ishak Institute. https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/ISEAS_Perspective_2022_64.pdf
- Hermawan. (2014, June 12). Ikut dukung capres, Hasyim kritik Said Aqil. *KBR: Kantor Berita Radio*. https://kbr.id/berita/06-2014/ikut_dukung_capres__hasyim_kritik_said_aqil/4472.html
- Heywood, A. (1997). *Politics*. Macmillan Press.
- Ibrahim, R. (2021, March 27). [Indonesian Icons] Inul Daratista—Part II: Living the “Indonesian dream.” *Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2021/03/26/indonesian-icons-inul-daratista-part-ii-living-the-indonesian-dream.html>
- Indonesian Government. (2017). *Perubahan atas undang-undang nomor 17 tahun 2013 tentang organisasi kemasyarakatan. Peraturan pemerintah pengganti undang-undang (Perpu) (2/2017)*. <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/53279/perpu-no-2-tahun-2017>
- Indonesian Government. (2020). *Surat keputusan bersama (SKB): Larangan kegiatan, penggunaan simbol dan atribut serta penghentian kegiatan Front Pembela Islam*. <https://web.kominfo.go.id/sites/default/files/SKB%20ORMAS%20FPI.pdf>
- Indonesian Islamic cleric Rizieq Shihab arrested in Jakarta over Covid-19 breaches. (2020, December 13). *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-13/indonesian-islamic-cleric-rizieq-shihab-arrested-covid-19/12978540>
- Khofifah usulkan Gus Dur jadi pahlawan nasional. (2019, November 10). *CNN Indonesia*. <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20191110173011-20-447096/khofifah-usulkan-gus-dur-jadi-pahlawan-nasional>
- Komisi Pemilihan Umum. (2004). *Pemilu 2004*. <https://www.kpu.go.id/page/read/1114/pemilu-2004>
- Komisi Pemilihan Umum. (2009). *Bab V hasil pemilu*. https://www.kpu.go.id/dmdocuments/modul_1d.pdf
- Komisi Pemilihan Umum. (2014). *Pemilu anggota DPR RI & DPD RI 2014*. <https://www.kpu.go.id/page/read/1116/pemilu-2014>
- Komisi Pemilihan Umum. (2019). *KPU RI tetapkan perolehan kursi parpol dan calon terpilih DPR-DPD 2019–2024*. <https://www.kpu.go.id/berita/baca/7675/Usai-berakhirnya-sidang-PHPU-Legislatif-2019-di-MK--KPU-RI-langsung-merespon-dengan-menggelar-Rapat-Pleno-Penetapan-Terbuka-Penetapan-Kursi-dan-Calon-Terpilih-Anggota-DPR-dan-DPD-hasil-Pemilu-2019--Sabtu--31-8-2019>
- Laksana, A. S., & Staquf, Y. C. (2021). *Menghidupkan Gus Dur: Catatan kenangan Yahya Cholil Staquf*. LBBBooks.
- Lloyd, P., & Dredge, S. (2014, July 28). ISIS recruitment video join the ranks urges Indonesian Muslims to migrate to the Islamic State. *ABC News*. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-28/isis-releases-recruitment-video-target-indonesian-muslims/5629960>
- Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat. (2000). *Peran tentara nasional Indonesia dan peran kepolisian negara republik Indonesia*. Republik Indonesia. <https://uu.vlsm.org/MPR/2000/TAP-MPR-2000-007-PERAN-TENTARA-NASIONAL-INDONESIA-DAN-PERAN-KEPOLISIAN-NEGARA-REPUBLIK-INDONESIA.pdf>
- Maknunah, H. (2023, January 10). Gus Yahya: Islam Nusantara representasi moderasi beragama. *NU Online Jatim*. <https://jatim.nu.or.id/tapal-kuda/gus-yahya-islam-nusantara-representasi-moderasi-beragama-ihTip>

- Mohamad, G. [@gm_gm]. (2023, October 24). *Saya dapat pesan WA dari Yenny Wahid: Yenny Wahid mengenang apa yg dikatakan ayahnya, Gus Dur, ketika masih memimpin PKB* [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/gm_gm/status/1716729591224779073
- Movanita, A. N. K. (2015, November 7). Mensos: Gelar pahlawan nasional untuk Gus Dur tunggu pertimbangan presiden. *Kompas.com*. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2015/11/07/21055341/Mensos.Gelar.Pahlawan.Nasional.untuk.Gus.Dur.Tunggu.Pertimbangan.Presiden>
- Munir, M. M. (2022). Pribumization: The epistemology of Abdurrahman Wahid's thought (Gus Dur). *Asian Journal of Social and Humanities*, 1(02), 41–49. <https://doi.org/10.59888/ajosh.v1i02.10>
- Njoto-Feillard, G. (2015). *Ripples from the Middle East: The ideological battle for the identity of Islam in Indonesia* (Working Paper No. 42/2015). ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/ISEAS_Perspective_2015_42.pdf
- Noor, F., Ferdhi, G., & Azhari, S. (2018). *Annual report: Freedom of religion and belief in Indonesia 2017; Eradicating political hatred*. Wahid Foundation. <https://wahidfoundation.org/index.php/publication/detail/Annual-Report-Freedom-of-Religion-and-Belief-in-Indonesia-2017-Eradicating-Political-Hatred>
- NU satu suara untuk menangkan Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin. (2019, March 30). *Antara*. <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/818037/nu-satu-suara-untuk-menangkan-jokowi-maruf-amin>
- O'Rourke, K. (2002). *Reformasi: The struggle for power in post-Soeharto Indonesia*. Allen & Unwin.
- Pekei, T. (2013). *Gus Dur guru dan masa depan Papua, hidup damai lewat dialog*. Pustaka Sinar Harapan.
- Peninggalan terbesar Gus Dur untuk bangsa ini adalah PKB. (2020, September 1). *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa*. <https://pkb.id/read/11516/peninggalan-terbesar-gus-dur-untuk-bangsa-ini-adalah-pkb>
- Puspitalova, A. T. (2023, October 29). Umumkan arah dukungan keluarga besar Gus Dur, ini profil Yenny Wahid putri ke-2 mendiang Gus Dur. *Tempo.com*. <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1790098/umumkan-arah-dukungan-keluarga-besar-gus-dur-ini-profil-yenny-wahid-putri-ke-2-mendiang-gus-dur>
- Putra, R. A. (2020). *Pandangan Front Pembela Islam (FPI) terhadap Islam Nusantara* [Unpublished bachelor thesis]. Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. <http://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/53626>
- Ramadhan, A. (2023, August 17). Yenny Wahid tak keberatan bakal capres rebutan sowan ke keluarga Gus Dur. *Kompas.com*. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2023/08/17/18542381/yenny-wahid-tak-keberatan-bakal-capres-rebutan-sowan-ke-keluarga-gus-dur>
- Ramstedt, M. (2009) Regional autonomy and its discontents: The case of post-New Order Bali. In C. J. Holtzappel & M. Ramstedt (Eds.), *Decentralization and regional autonomy in Indonesia: Implementation and challenges*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Sari, S. R. (2021, December 24). Mengenal lebih dekat Gus Yahya, ketum PBNU periode 2021–2026. *NU Online Jombang*. <https://jombang.nu.or.id/nasional/mengenal-lebih-dekat-gus-yahya-ketum-pbnu-periode-2021-2026-1PyiD>
- Sejarah Pendirian. (n.d.). *Sejarah pendirian*. Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa.
- Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia. (1964a). *Keputusan presiden (Keppres) tentang penetapan K.H. Abdul Wahid Hasjim sebagai pahlawan kemerdekaan nasional*. <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Download/248889/Keppres%20No%20206%20Tahun%201964.pdf>
- Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia. (1964b). *Keputusan Presiden (Keppres) tentang penetapan pahlawan kemerdekaan nasional*. <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Download/148338/Keppres%20No%20294%20Tahun%201964.pdf>
- Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia. (2000). *Keputusan presiden republik Indonesia nomor 6 tahun 2000: pencabutan instruksi presiden nomor 14 tahun 1967 tentang agama, kepercayaan, dan adat istiadat*

- Cina (Keppres no. 6/2000). https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Download/47177/Keputusan_Presiden_no_6%20Tahun%202000.pdf
- Shoesmith, D., Franklin, N., & Hidayat, R. (2020). Decentralised governance in Indonesia's disadvantaged regions: A critique of the underperforming model of local governance in Eastern Indonesia. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 39(3), 359–380. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103420963140>
- Suryana, A. a., & Taufek, N. S. M. (2020). *A firebrand cleric's return boosts Islamist politics*. Lowy Institute. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/firebrand-cleric-s-return-boosts-islamist-politics>
- Susunan Lengkap. (2022, January 12). Susunan lengkap kepengurusan PBNU 2022–2027. *NU Online*. <https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/susunan-lengkap-kepengurusan-pbnu-2022-2027-NnLZc>
- Syechbubakr, A. S. (2022, March 8). Rifts within NU and PKB complicate road to 2024. *Indonesia at Melbourne*. <https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/rifts-within-nu-and-pkb-complicate-road-to-2024>
- Tim Redaksi. (2023, October 28). Yenny Wahid ungkap alasan dukung Ganjar-Mahfud di pilpres. *CNBC Indonesia*. <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20231028060818-4-484407/yenny-wahid-ungkap-alasan-dukung-ganjar-mahfud-di-pilpres>
- Triono, A. L. (2021a, December 17). Survei: Jumlah besar Nahdliyin punya bobot politik strategis. *NU Online*. <https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/survei-jumlah-besar-nahdliyin-punya-bobot-politik-strategis-WyiQO>
- Triono, A. L. (2021b, December 30). Gus Yahya ajak masyarakat bangun gerakan menghidupkan Gus Dur. *NU Online*. <https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/gus-yahya-ajak-masyarakat-bangun-gerakan-menghidupkan-gus-dur-mfrvw>
- Triono, A. L. (2022a, December 18). Tahun 2000 Gus Yahya sebut Gus Dur wali ke-10, kini jadi kenyataan. *NU Online*. <https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/tahun-2000-gus-yahya-sebut-gus-dur-wali-ke-10-kini-jadi-kenyataan-zs3R0>
- Triono, A. L. (2022b, March 25). Susunan lengkap pengurus badan pengembangan inovasi strategis PBNU 2022–2027. *NU Online*. <https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/susunan-lengkap-pengurus-badan-pengembangan-inovasi-strategis-pbnu-2022-2027-8P1TE>
- Visi dan Misi. (n.d.). *Visi dan misi*. Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa.
- Wahid, A., & Ma'arif, A. S. (2009). *Ilusi negara Islam: Ekspansi gerakan transnasional di Indonesia*. Gerakan BhinnekaTunggal Ika, the Wahid Institute, and Maarif Institute.
- Wahid, Y. Z., Visna, V., Mohammed Subhi, A., Gamal, F., Alamsyah, D. f., Andi, I., & Nurun, N. (2015). *Year-end report on freedom of religion in Indonesia 2015*. Wahid Foundation. <https://wahidfoundation.org/index.php/publication/detail/Year-End-Report-on-Freedom-of-Religion-of-2015>
- WF. (n.d.). *Wahid Foundation*. <https://wahidfoundation.org>
- WF. (2017, May 12). *Press release Wahid Foundation statement on the verdict against Basuki Tjahaja Purnama* [Press Release]. <https://wahidfoundation.org/index.php/news/detail/press-release-wahid-foundation-statement-on-the-verdict-against-basuki-tjahaja-purnama>
- WF. (2018). *National survey report of the potential of social-religious tolerance among Muslim women in Indonesia*. [https://wahidfoundation.org/source/publication/Survey%20National%20Launching%20English%20\(1\).pdf](https://wahidfoundation.org/source/publication/Survey%20National%20Launching%20English%20(1).pdf)
- WF. (2021). *Meeting with Indigenous leaders, Yenny Wahid emphasized solution education for Papua's future*. <https://wahidfoundation.org/index.php/news/detail/Bertemu-Dengan-Tokoh-Adat-Yenny-Wahid-Tekankan-Pendidikan-Solusi-Bagi-Masa-Depan-Papua>
- Wahid Institute. (n.d.). *Wahid Institute*. <https://wahidinstitute.org/wi-id>
- Wicaksono, K. A. (2017, October 19). Gus Dur diusung jadi pahlawan nasional, Khofifah: Ini usulan masyarakat. *Kabar24*. <https://kabar24.bisnis.com/read/20171019/15/701081/gus-dur-diusung-jadi-pahlawan-nasional-khofifah-ini-usulan-masyarakat>

Witoelar, W. (2001). *The impact of Gus Dur: Australia, Indonesia and the media* (No 4, November 2001). The Asia-Australia Institute.

Yahya Staquf tak mau PBNU jadi alat politik PKB. (2021, December 29). *CNN Indonesia*. <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20211229181233-32-740245/yahya-staquf-tak-mau-pbnu-jadi-alat-politik-pkb>

Yenny ungkap wasiat Gus Dur sebelum wafat: Cak Imin harus diganti. (2023, September 5). *CNN Indonesia*. <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20230905180218-617-995157/yenny-ungkap-wasiat-gus-dur-sebelum-wafat-cak-imin-harus-diganti>

Yenny Wahid. (n.d.). *Tentang Yenny Wahid*. <https://yennywahid.id>

About the Author



Nathan Franklin is a lecturer in Indonesian studies at Charles Darwin University. His research interests include Indonesian politics, history, society, political Islam, Indonesian language and culture, Southeast Asian politics and history, as well as East Asian politics. His PhD concerned Indonesia's two largest Islamic organisations, namely, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, and their respective political culture and educational systems, particularly Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). He has published several peer-reviewed articles on Indonesian politics, religion, and history, as well as written book reviews related to Indonesian politics and history.

Indonesian Women and Terrorism: An Analysis of Historical and Contemporary Trends

Kate Macfarlane 

Faculty of Arts and Society, Charles Darwin University, Australia

Correspondence: Kate Macfarlane (kate.macfarlane@cdu.edu.au)

Submitted: 25 October 2023 **Accepted:** 23 February 2024 **Published:** 17 April 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue “Indonesian Heroes and Villains: National Identity, Politics, Law, and Security” edited by Nathan Franklin (Charles Darwin University) and Hans Hägerdal (Linnaeus University), fully open access at <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i380>

Abstract

From 2016 to 2021, women attempted to or perpetrated suicide attacks in Indonesia. These attacks were committed by them as individuals or in family units, who were affiliated to the Islamic State. These incidents marked the first occurrence of suicide attacks carried out by women in Indonesia. Current scholarship and policy analysis of female terrorism attributed to the Islamic State or proxy groups is still catching up with the implications of trends emerging from women’s actions as suicide attackers in Indonesia and worldwide. Primarily, scholarly and policy analyses of female terrorism focus on the individual woman engaged in violence, whereas women who support terrorist groups—as ideologues, wives, and online activists—are given a secondary analytical focus. This creates conceptual limitations in understanding women’s pathways to violence, which can encompass violent and supportive roles within the social world in which they operate. Using Indonesia as a case study, this article advances a framework to account for the mobilisation of different identities to commit violence across personal and political linkages. In examining historical and current developments in Indonesia, this article illustrates that women as supporters or actors of violence, while largely conforming to traditional gender ideology and roles, are driven by both personal and political considerations.

Keywords

female terrorism; gender; Indonesia; Islamic State; suicide attacks; terrorism

1. Introduction

From 2016 onwards, Indonesia witnessed a series of attempted or perpetrated suicide attacks carried out by individual female terrorists or in family units. This included Zakiah Aini, who on 31 March 2021, entered

Indonesia's National Police headquarters in Jakarta with a gun that she fired several times. She was killed without injuring any law enforcement officials. The National Police Chief General Listyo Sigit Prabowo described her as a "lone wolf." According to officials, Aini's social media activity indicated her allegiance to the Islamic State (IS), and evidence obtained by law enforcement indicates that she was radicalised through social media. In her *wasiat* (Islamic will) left for her family, she justified her actions by stating:

I love you mama so much. But Allah loves his servant more, so Zakiah has entered this path as per the example of the messenger of Allah to save Zakiah and with the permission of Allah to make intercession for you and our family in the afterlife. (Oktavia, 2021)

The *wasiat* Aini left is one of few clues that give insight into her motivation and reasoning for committing violent jihad. It signifies her conviction that these actions will bring rewards to both herself and her family in the afterlife. However, Aini's case stands apart from typical patterns of female terrorism in Indonesia. She acted as an isolated actor, who operated outside of any social connection, including wedlock, and independently committed a suicide attack.

Suicide attacks are terrorist acts where an individual intentionally carries out a destructive act, often resulting in their death with the primary aim of causing harm to others to achieve a political and ideological objective. The rise of female suicide attackers in Indonesia and globally is attributed to the IS's policy to allow women to commit violence in front-line roles (Gan et al., 2019; Munasinghe et al., 2017). This hypothesis goes some way in explaining Indonesia's experience of female suicide attacks; however, there are limitations to it given that, between 2016 and 2021, only five suicide attacks have occurred, and one was attempted. Indonesian women have long supported extremist groups, both before the rise of the IS and after. They are at the forefront of efforts to radicalise online and in strategic marriages that are vital to the renewal of jihadi networks. Current scholarship and policy analysis of female terrorism attributed to IS or proxy groups is still catching up with the implications of trends emerging from women's actions as suicide attackers in Indonesia and worldwide. Mostly, research and policy analysis of female terrorism is limited by a narrow conceptual focus on the individual woman, who perpetrates the act of violence (Bloom, 2005; Munasinghe et al., 2017). In effect, this creates a distinction between women who commit violence and women who support it, as ideologues, wives, and online activists. Women in support roles are often assumed to lack political affiliation with the extremist group.

Focusing exclusively on the women who engage in violent acts imposes conceptual limitations in understanding a woman's pathways to violence, which often encompasses supportive and violent roles within the social world in which they operate. In Indonesia, the example of suicide attacks is important but represents a minority of cases within a broader context of female involvement in violent jihadi groups, in both historical and contemporary times. The evidence suggests that women's involvement in either violent or supportive roles will persist, to some extent, in aligning with a traditional gender division of labour, in accordance with jihadi ideology. However, this does not mean that women's lives are separate from the political workings of the ideology and aims of their movement. To account for this political possibility, this article advances a framework to account for women's involvement in violence across a spectrum of roles, as supporters, enablers, and perpetrators. This world of violence is structured by both personal and political factors in which women can mobilise different social identities as mothers, daughters, and wives.

This article proceeds in the following way. Section 2 introduces the theoretical and conceptual framework. Section 3 provides a brief overview of key extremist groups and developments in Indonesia. Sections 4 outlines and analyses historical and contemporary trends and linkages. Section 5 focuses on IS driven activity and the implications of female suicide attacks.

2. Conceptualising Women in Violence

This article defines terrorism as the actions taken by an individual or group to create fear and violence within a community, by intentionally using violence to achieve the political aim of intimidating civilians and the government (Davis, 2017; Jackson, 2007).

Scholarship on female terrorism gained momentum in the 1980s as female-led suicide attacks occurred in places like Israel–Palestine, Lebanon, and Sri Lanka (Bloom, 2005; Davis, 2017). From 1985 to 2010, women committed 257 suicide attacks (Bloom, 2005). However, attempts to integrate the female terrorist within mainstream studies on terrorism and political violence and in popular media accounts frequently lack a nuanced examination of their actions and identity within a socio-political context. In analysis of women's participation in political violence, commonly gendered stereotypes are mobilised to emphasise women's personal reasons for committing violence, such as being raped or avenging their dead husband (Bloom, 2005, 2011). The effect of this as Brunner (2007, p. 963) explains is: “[A focus on] personal grievance depoliticizes suicide bombing and separates it from political contexts such as occupation or civil war in which families and individuals are affected by personal tragedies that do not occur in peacetime.”

The focus on women's personal decision-making has theoretical and empirical consequences to position them as “non-agents,” without the ability to make rational choices (as observed in Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007). A gendered analytical distinction is made between men and women who commit violence. While a man's participation in conflict or political violence is linked to political objectives, a woman who commits violence is seen to transgress normal feminine roles. Thus, their violent behaviour is considered exceptional and/or deviant (see Banks, 2019; Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007).

The study of female terrorism is linked in important ways to a broader feminist academic project of locating women as significant actors in political violence and conflict, whose identity and agency challenge simplistic stereotypes of their victimhood (Allison, 2009; Macfarlane, 2023; Moser & Clark, 2001). This approach seeks to understand gendered norms and roles in shaping opportunities, resources, and identities in conflict and political violence (Phelan, 2021; True & Eddyono, 2021). An important theoretical insight is women as actors, who make choices to support and perpetrate violence through “deliberate participation” (Gowrinathan, 2021, p. 10) and who can be guided by political affiliation and aspirations within a group (Allison, 2009). Thus, women's political agency is attached to their identity as a combatant or a fighter in challenging gendered norms through their role in a group committing conflict or political violence (Manchanda, 2004). However, there exist analytical limitations when addressing the “political” of women's actions in supportive roles. As Parashar (2009, pp. 250–252) suggests, analysis of women's actions as supporters or participants in violence needs to account for an interconnection between personal and political worlds. In other words, the measurement of a woman's political engagement should not solely be measured by her overt, tangible political participation or violent action. Women's political engagement and affiliation with a movement is possible even as mothers, wives, and/or daughters.

This perspective is important when examining the role of women in violent jihadi groups. Women's supportive roles in jihadi groups is highly regarded and respected in historical Islamic warfare practices that go back through history (Lahoud, 2014). Historically, some women, who are known as *mujahidaat* (female fighters), fought key battles, but, more importantly, records demonstrate that jihadi groups attached significant value to women's roles as mothers, propagandists, messengers, and wives. These roles are crucial to the survival and sustenance of such organisations. It is crucial to avoid romanticising or implying that women can attain gender equality by supporting terrorist groups. However, simplistic narratives, such as those portraying women solely as manipulated as illustrated in the Western media's depiction of IS brides (Sjoberg, 2018), overlook the nuanced nature of women's actions and agency in such contexts.

A way forward is to incorporate a broader understanding of the "political" that accounts for everyday acts in different political and social fields and across the private and public realm of women's lives. Through this connection emerges different political possibilities and forms of agency. There exists scalability in their potential to exercise agency, which ranges from being limited to more overt forms, like committing violence. Forms of violence and the participation of individuals in violence are enmeshed in people's everyday existence—a "descent into the ordinary" (Das, 2006). Thus, across this personal/political divide exists a more fluid understanding of violence, where the potential for women to support and/or commit violence can occur from different standpoints, as supporters, enablers, and/or perpetrators.

3. Background to Indonesian Terrorism

To contextualise women's involvement in terrorism, this section provides a brief overview of different phases of militant jihadism. Indonesia's history of militant jihadism (for an overview see Feillard & Madinier, 2011) commenced with Darul Islam (DI), which emerged during the National Revolution (1945–1949) to expel the Dutch colonisers. Led by Sekarmadji Kartosoewirjo, the movement aimed to establish an Islamic state in opposition to the newly democratic, secular nation. The Islamic State of Indonesia (Negara Islam Indonesia) was proclaimed on 7 August 1949 in West Java, and a series of rebellions occurred in South Sulawesi and Aceh (van Dijk, 1981). The DI insurgency was defeated by the state in 1962, but clashes between activists and the Indonesian state occurred with the revival of DI throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Solahudin, 2013; Temby, 2010). While not a terrorist organisation per se, the aims of the movement in establishing an Islamic state and the networks built provided an important platform for the emergence of contemporary terrorist movements. DI is, therefore, credited with giving rise to "a homegrown concept of jihadism" (Osman, 2010, p. 160) that "constitutes the core of militant Islam" (Jones, 2010). DI's jihadi ideology shared common features with Salafi jihadism (which would not arrive in Indonesia until many years after DI). DI's ideology included designating a government apostate for not implementing Islamic law, and enforcing Sharia law by force, if necessary (Solahudin, 2013).

The emergence of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), led by Abdullah Sungkar from the 1980s onwards, led to the establishment of a terror network connected to the global Salafi jihadist movement. Indonesian fighters travelled to Afghanistan at the call of Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, the Palestinian theologian, who in the 1980s, issued a fatwa for defensive jihad during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979–1989). Sungkar, who founded JI with Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, aimed to create a movement that could bridge traditional and radical Islam (Temby, 2010). Ba'asyir preached a literalist interpretation of the Quran and publicly denounced liberalism and the Pancasila state model (Franklin, 2014). He capitalised on the 1980s revival of DI to

leverage its institutional and ideological foundation to create JI. JI sought to establish a pan-Islamic state in Southeast Asia and became the main organisation responsible for terrorist activities throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Operating as a loose regional network, JI is linked to dozens of deadly attacks across Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia from 1999 to the early 2000s (International Crisis Group, 2002).

Indonesia's third wave of terrorism commenced in 2014 when Ba'asyir pledged allegiance to IS. As an organisation that espouses a violent Salafi religious-political ideology to establish a global Islamic caliphate, IS significantly drove terrorist activity worldwide from 2014 to 2019 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2022), including in Indonesia. Some of these groups affiliated with IS in Indonesia include Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), which is one of the largest terrorist networks that established itself by using old networks and structures from groups like Jemaah Ansharut Tauhid (Satria, 2022, p. 12). Another example is the East Indonesia Mujahideen (MIT) in Poso, Sulawesi. The creation of MIT, led by Abu Wardah (alias Santoso) was framed by grievances stemming from inter-communal violence between Christians and Muslims between 1997 and 2001 (McRae, 2013). In time, the group's agenda coalesced into an IS affiliate jihadi agenda, where MIT became the military wing of Jemaah Ansharut Tauhid. The influence of IS has significantly impacted the national security landscape and law enforcement responses. Overall, terrorism threats are driven by factors like the return of foreign fighters and the ongoing threat of radicalisation that is supported by social media and other digital forums (Duriesmith, 2018; Johnston et al., 2020). Authorities, therefore, deal with a shifting security landscape, which is complicated by terrorist actors that have different sub-motivations and agendas (Jones, 2011).

4. Historical and Contemporary Linkages

Indonesian women's role in terrorism, particularly in earlier iterations of militant activity and terrorism, is largely marginalised in academic scholarship. In historical examples like DI and JI, this is partly explained by the secretive nature of the organisations, resulting from a strict gendered ideological adherence to women's roles in the private world of the family, where women were not permitted to commit violence. As Blackburn (2008, p. 92) explains, this is consistent with a "scripturalist" approach to radical Islam that clearly places men into the "public" sphere and women in the "private," based on a gendered division of labour. However, although women were forbidden from committing violence, they were actively involved in supporting group ideology and propagation through support of the home life and education efforts.

From the 1980s onwards, women were recruited to DI as it shifted into a new form of Muslim activism that was more secretive and "less overtly confrontational towards the secular state" (Temby, 2010, p. 27). DI's engagement with women was distinct from earlier practices evident throughout the 1950s and 1960s. As noted in Robinson's (1983) research, rebel fighters in DI/Tentara Islam in South Sulawesi subjected local women to forced marriages with rebel fighters. During DI's second iteration and revival, women became the backbone of ideological and religious teaching within the family and were active in cultural campaigns around dress standards (like the *jilbabisation* campaign, a type of religious headscarf), education, and charity work. This included setting up small study circles known as *usroh* that were inspired by the organisational approach of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Key female leaders infiltrated other Islamic study groups in schools and universities to promote religious ideological efforts (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2017, p. 4). These activities carried out by women provided the social foundation for supporting the broader political goal of creating an IS. As Nuraniyah (2018, p. 893) explains: "DI believed that [the] Islamic

revolution should start from the family unit, by instilling Islamic values early on, then Islamising the society, and finally the state.”

Similarly, in JI women’s domestic roles were reinforced. This was specifically outlined in the *Handbook of Womanhood* produced by the Al-Mukmin School, which explicitly prohibited women from fighting. In it, women’s roles were defined as “a daughter who has to obey her father, as a wife who has to obey her husband, and as a mother who is responsible for her children’s well-being and education” (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2017, p. 5). Despite an emphasis on women’s domestic roles, women were permitted to teach throughout JI’s network of schools and act as propagandists (Nasir, 2019). Strategic marriages between JI fighters and women were used to consolidate relations that strengthened networks and loyalty (Osman, 2010). Women, who underwent these marriages, typically received religious training at the hands of their husbands and were heavily indoctrinated (Abas, 2005). As White (2009) suggests, analysis of these marriages needs to account for different levels of agency exercised by wives, including knowledge of their husband’s actions, and varying degrees of political commitment and affiliation. In some cases, women actively sought out marriage with a fighter (*mujahid*). One example is Munfiatun Al Fitri, who as Noordin Top’s second wife, allegedly told a friend that she wanted to marry a *mujahid*. She became his second wife while he was on the run (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2020, p. 16). She was given a 27 month sentence for the crime of hiding her husband’s whereabouts from authorities, by illegally changing his name on wedding documents. Similarly, Putri Munawaroh, who lost her first husband in her efforts to help hide Top, re-married another extremist in Ambon (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2020, p. 16). This is a pattern that is observable in the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict’s (2020) report where women convicted of terrorist offences often colluded with their husbands and/or re-married an extremist in the event of their first husband’s death (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2020, pp. 16–21).

In contrast, Paridah Abas, the third wife of Mukhlas (Ali Ghufron), the mastermind of the Bali bombing, declared her ignorance of her husband’s intent to commit violence. In her memoir, she recalls being shocked about his involvement. Their oldest child, Asma’a penned the following poem:

Father, now you aren’t by my side, but you will always be in my heart, your name I will remember, your smile I will always imagine in my eyes, your face I will always imagine in my memory, father, I am proud to be your child. (Abas, 2005, as cited in Saputro, 2010, p. 2013)

The family’s love of Mukhlas is a common theme in Abas’ memoir, *Orang Bilang, Ayah Teroris*. But while, she explains that she was ignorant of the extent of violence planned by her husband, she subsequently indicated her belief in the religious rewards of her husband being martyred (Abas, 2005).

More recently, Azca and Putri’s research on MIT wives demonstrates that women’s decision to marry MIT fighters over time was motivated by ideological reasoning to support the organisation. Thus, while marriage served a more practical purpose in the initial recruitment of women to MIT, over time, some women actively sought out marriage to support the violent, political agenda of MIT (Azca & Putri, 2024, p. 6). The narratives of the wives profiled by Azca and Putri illustrate that women’s lives exist fluidly between non-violence and violence. One of their research participants explained that while most women were dedicated to wifely duties to MIT fighters, sometimes these boundaries were challenged, as illustrated by one women’s description of an Indonesian police and military operation against MIT:

I wore a bomb vest. We stayed almost a year in Napu [a mountainous area in the western part of Poso regency], and more than five thousand [Operation] Tinombala troops raided us. At night, when we thought the condition had been safe; we were preparing for dinner and Maghrib prayer. But suddenly, the Tinombala troops came. We were in a shootout. (Azca & Putri, 2024, p. 8)

5. IS and Female Terrorism

Contemporary female involvement in terrorist activity demonstrates a continuation of previous patterns of support that are evident in DI and JI. Women's support role for IS or affiliate groups remains consistent in education and ideological efforts but via a different medium of online technology, including social media. Indonesian women are at the helm of efforts to radicalise others and to provide continual moral support to the men who are fighting (Arianti & Yasin, 2016; Johnston et al., 2020). This is demonstrated through their social media activity, including chat rooms, Facebook, Telegram, and other applications, which provide a means for women to not only more efficiently send out messages to relevant networks, but to extensively reach audiences as targets for radicalisation (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2017). Women continue to actively support IS goals through the online space through proselytising (*dakwa*) activities and rallying other women to provide ideological and emotional sustenance to male relatives, particularly husbands (Johnston et al., 2020; Lahoud, 2014).

In Indonesia, the most significant change is the advent of female suicide attacks, which occurred from 2016 onwards and is evidenced in Table 1 below.

Before this, no woman had committed or attempted to commit a suicide attack in Indonesia. Indeed, analysis of Indonesian women in local IS based groups notes that, increasingly, women are more involved in traditional "men's" roles, like bomb-making, and suicide attacks (Marcoes, 2018; Rahmah, 2020). The examples of female suicide attacks can partly be attributed to the influence of IS, as is reflected in worldwide trends. In 2017, the report *Global Extremist Monitor* reported that 181 female militants conducted 100 suicide assaults, which represents a fundamental change in women's roles in Islamic extremist groups, with most of this activity occurring in sub-Saharan Africa (Munasinghe et al., 2017, p. 15). While IS has never outright stated that women should commit suicide attacks, their position appears to support or bless the actions of female terrorists (Lahoud, 2014, p. 783). However, in examples worldwide, there are important variations in terms of women being forced to undertake a suicide attack or exercising some agency and choice. For example, human rights groups have documented Boko Haram's (an Islamist jihadist organisation based in northeastern Nigeria) forceful recruitment of women and children to commit suicide attacks (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2015).

In Indonesia, it appears that women were more active in making the decision to commit violence. In 2016, one female operative attempted to blow herself up. She was a former migrant worker turned IS operative. Nuraniyah (2018) explains that the attempted and planned attacks represented a turning point as it was the first time that women had acted towards committing violence. Further, four women were arrested by the counter-terrorism agency Detachment 88 in 2016 because of evidence that they planned to commit a suicide attack, which surprised the general public (Hanifah, 2016). Nuraniyah's (2018) study on 25 Indonesian migrant women turned IS operatives found that their radicalisation process was prompted by a religious-seeking journey and a failure to find religious congruence with other Islamic religious groups. She states they were:

Table 1. List of perpetrated or attempted suicide attacks committed by women in Indonesia from 2016–2021.

Date of attack	Name of perpetrator	Organisation	Details of attack	Outcome
11/12/2016	Dian Yulia Novi	IS	(Attempted) to blow up presidential guards with a rice cooker; arrested prior to the attack	Sentenced to a 7.5-year prison sentence
	Ika Puspita Sari	IS	A few days after Dian Yuli Novi's arrest, she was arrested for planning a suicide attack in Bali	Arrested by Densus 88 on 15/12/2016; sentenced to 4.5 years imprisonment
13/05/2018	Puji Kuswati (42 years old), husband Dita Oepriarto (46 years old), and four children aged eight, 12, 15, and 17	JAD	Father, mother, two teenage sons, 12-year-old and nine-year-old daughters involved in the suicide bombing of three churches in Surabaya	N/A, perpetrators killed in the attack
13/05/2018	Puspitasari (47 years old), husband (Anton Febrianto), and four children aged 10, 11, 15, and 17	JAD	The bomb exploded prematurely killing the two parents and four children in their apartment; this bomb was also planned to be used in coordinated attacks with the Kuswati family on the same day	N/A, perpetrators killed in the attack
14/05/2018	Parents and three children (no names available)	JAD	Attacked the police station in Surabaya in a suicide bombing on motorbikes; the eight-year-old daughter survived the blast; co-ordinated with the Kuswati family attack the day prior	N/A, all killed except an eight-year-old child
31/01/2021	Zakiah Aini	IS	Opened fire on Indonesian National Police headquarters in Jakarta	Shot dead in attack
28/03/2021	Husband and wife (no names available)	JAD	Church bombings in Makassar, South Sulawesi; no deaths apart from the two perpetrators	N/A, killed during the attack

Prompted by a mix of personal crises and political grievances, the women in this study embark on a religious seeking, actively experimenting with different Islamic interpretations and groups—both online and face to face—before making a conscious decision to join IS. (Nuraniyah, 2018, p. 891)

Importantly, Nuraniyah's study demonstrates that women's path to committing violence culminated at the end of their religious seeking journey, which was a journey shaped by both personal and political grievances.

The female IS operatives profiled in Nuraniyah's research ostensibly fit with international analysis of women as individual actors, to the extent that they pursued individual religious-seeking journeys. However, the decision to commit to violence was framed within a social context of networks and marriage, in line with

jihadi ideology. Indeed, Schulze and Liow's (2019) study found that Indonesian terrorist actors are embedded in networks of social kinship. Similarly, Resnyansky et al. (2022) argue that a communal analytical framework helps to elucidate the social connections that frame women's actions. Therefore, while IS has influenced new pathways of violence, female suicide attackers largely conform to gendered expectations via marriage, and seeking permission from a male contact to commit violence.

This is illustrated by Dian Yulia Novia, who attempted to blow up the Presidential Palace in 2016. As a migrant worker in Taiwan, she became radicalised through online teachings on Facebook. During an interview with tvOneNews (2016), she revealed that her initial curiosity about jihadist content online eventually transformed into a conviction to commit violent jihad. Her future husband, Nur Solihin, an IS supporter from Bahrin Naim's network, drove efforts to radicalise her. She believed that conducting a suicide operation would guarantee her ill father access to heaven. Her interview provides further insight:

Interviewer: When did you develop the conviction to transport and detonate a bomb that would injure yourself and other people?

Dian: Since the time of my marriage, three months ago.

Interviewer: What did your husband tell you about the plan?

Dian: He told me that he would take care of everything [and instructed me] to focus on understanding the steps needed to complete [the operation].

Interviewer: Who gave the oath of allegiance?

Dian: My husband.

Interviewer: What was the method for taking the oath, if you can tell me?

Dian: It was a verbal method, [while] holding the hand of a *mahram* [close male relative]. My *mahram* was my husband. There, I gave the oath, and the text of the oath was dictated to me, like that. (tvOneNews, 2016)

Therefore, her marriage arrangement complied with the IS fatwa by obtaining permission from her husband to conduct any violent operation outside the home (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2020). This reflects a conformity to social practices centred on her role as a wife in jihadi ideology.

6. Family Suicide Attacks

The occurrence of three whole-family suicide attacks represents a variation in female suicide attacks, as a communal act of violence. In 2018, three coordinated family suicide attacks in Surabaya took place, which were linked to JAD (see Table 1). One family bombed three churches, a second family attacked the police station using suicide vests, and a third family's bomb prematurely exploded in their apartment ("Indonesia: ISIS suicide bombers," 2018; Lamb, 2018). A separate suicide attack was carried out by a married couple, who were also affiliated with JAD. They detonated themselves at a cathedral in Makassar, South Sulawesi.

The involvement of family members in suicide attacks can be partly attributed to IS's recruitment focus on families in Iraq and Syria. As Jones explains, IS is a "family affair" (Jones, 2018). Although the initial aim of recruiting women and children along with male fighters was to build the family and social structures needed to establish a caliphate in Syria and Iraq, violence inevitably infiltrated the lives of women and children living there. For example, IS recruited and trained male children as "cubs of the caliphate," who were subjected to violent initiation processes (Anderson, 2016). IS family focus contrasts with the recruitment of individual male fighters from the 1980s onwards, when Indonesian men would typically travel to training grounds in Afghanistan and Pakistan set up by Al Qaeda without women and children. The pattern of IS's family recruitment is illustrated by an Indonesian schoolgirl named Nur Dhanita, who convinced her family to move to Syria. She convinced them that the move was an opportunity to live in a utopian IS. A total of 25 family members moved over with her, but they soon realised that life was full of hardships under IS rule (Barker, 2019). As of 2024, it is estimated that around 689 Indonesian foreign fighters, including women and children, remain in limbo as the government refuses to repatriate them (Hussein & Intan, 2020).

The occurrence of a family suicide attack illustrates a transference from an individual to a collective commitment to violence. Indeed, analysts have observed the rise of family suicide attacks across the region for some time (Jones, 2011). This includes several Indonesian women who committed suicide attacks in the Philippines for the Abu Sayyaf Group, an IS affiliate militant group. This included Rezy Fantasia Rullie (Cici), the widow of a killed Abu Sayyaf Group member (Yaoren, 2021, pp. 4–5). The role of women in the Indonesian attacks warrants further attention, specifically the mothers, who were involved in the family suicide attacks. Existing research already outlines the gatekeeping roles of mothers in either supporting or hindering radicalisation of children in Islamic jihadi families. Mothers can help children move away from a pathway of radicalisation, or can provide an important conduit to family-based efforts to radicalise (Noor, 2018, 2022; Solomon, 2023). However, in general, there is a lack of scholarly attention to women's potential to commit violence as mothers, given that social norms concerning women's role to protect and nurture as mothers remain powerful across different social and policy contexts (Charlesworth, 2008). The examples of family suicide attacks suggest that the family became a site of politics that was intermingled with kinship, love, and care, where women acted in their capacity as wives and mothers to facilitate this commitment. Further, it is reported that the families who committed these attacks were radicalised in Islamic study groups (Lamb, 2018). Families were motivated by the reward for their sacrifice and did not want to leave each other and be stigmatised as a "terrorist family" (Noor, 2018).

However, it is worth qualifying that in the Indonesian example, these attacks were coordinated by the three families. It is hard to know if it is just a unique case or a trend that will develop. Analysis of JAD terrorist activities highlights that the role of a decentralised structure is used to facilitate new pathways of violence, which includes family suicide attacks (Yaoren, 2021). The chief ideologue of JAD, Aman Abdurrahman, who is on death row for his role in IS-inspired attacks, chastised members of JAD for using children in a series of suicide attacks from 2016 to 2018 (Ayuningtyas, 2022). He stated in a memorandum of defence at the South Jakarta District Court: "The incident (suicide bombing) of a mother leading her child in the churchyard cannot possibly arise from a person who understands Islamic teachings. It cannot possibly arise from a person who has a sound mind" ("Aman Abdurrahman sebut," 2018).

7. Conclusion

There remain a lot of hypothetical aspects in understanding future female terrorism trends in Indonesia. However, this article argues in the Indonesian context analytical consideration should be given both to suicide attacks and women's support roles. Focusing exclusively on the women who engage in violent acts imposes conceptual limitations in understanding a woman's pathways to violence, particularly in the context of Islamic jihadi groups. This requires tweaking theoretical approaches to women in violence to account for personal and political factors shaping their actions. Greater analytical attention should be given to the political possibility of women's engagement in violence, even if they are mothers, wives, and/or daughters.

The suicide attacks committed by women in Indonesia, as either individual actors or in family units, illustrate both continuities and important developments in terrorism. Some of these developments are seen worldwide, but other examples like whole-family suicide attacks are more concentrated in Indonesia and the Southeast Asia region. In an analysis of suicide attacks, while ostensibly women committed to an individual path of violence, their actions were framed within the social context of being a wife. They legitimised their actions through their marriage to conform to traditional gendered norms in Islamic jihadi practice. Similarly, family suicide attacks illustrate the potential for women to mobilise social identities as wives and mothers to commit the family to a pathway of violence. Thus, the identity of a female terrorist is multilayered and complex, which is shaped by her social surroundings and political affiliation.

The examples used in this article illustrate that different possibilities exist regarding agency, political expression, and ideological commitment. More studies in this area are required to understand the causes and motivations of this type of terrorism that accounts for women's complex affiliation to violence, through both a personal and political lens.

Acknowledgments

I acknowledge and thank the anonymous reviewers and co-editors for their thoughtful and careful feedback. I am grateful to Stephen Miller for his helpful comments, and Peter Lilly for his research assistance and translation work.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

- Abas, P. (2005). *Orang bilang, ayah teroris*. Solo Jazera.
- Allison, M. (2009). *Women and political violence: Female combatants in ethno-national conflict*. Routledge.
- Aman Abdurrahman sebut pelaku teror bom Surabaya sakit jiwa. (2018, May 25). *CNN Indonesia*. <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20180525132540-12-301234/aman-abdurrahman-sebut-pelaku-teror-bom-surabaya-sakit-jiwa>
- Anderson, K. (2016). *Cubs of the Caliphate: The systematic recruitment, training, and use of children in the Islamic State*. Unpublished manuscript. <https://www.drake.edu/media/departmentsoffices/international/nelson/2016%20paper,%20Children%20in%20ISIS,%20K.%20Anderson.pdf>
- Arianti, V., & Yasin, N. A. (2016). Women's proactive roles in Jihadism in Southeast Asia. *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, 8(5), 9–15.

- Ayuningtyas, K. (2022, April 4). Indonesian militant chief on death row for terror attacks now condemns them. *Benar News*. <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/indonesian/indonesia-jad-abdurrahman-terror-04042022113028.html>
- Azca, N., & Putri, R. D. (2024). The women “behind” the Mujahidin Eastern Indonesia: Negotiating agency and gender dynamics. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2023.2296241>
- Banks, C. (2019). Introduction. Women, gender, and terrorism: Gendering terrorism. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 29(4/5), 181–187. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2019.1633612>
- Barker, A. (2019, March 23). Meet the Indonesian girl who led her family to move to Syria to join Islamic State. *ABC News*. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-03-23/the-girl-who-led-her-family-to-join-islamic-state/10850294>
- Blackburn, S. (2008). Indonesian women and political Islam. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 39(1), 83–105.
- Bloom, M. (2005). Mother. Daughter. Sister. Bomber. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 61(6), 54–62. <https://doi.org/10.2968/061006015>
- Bloom, M. (2011). *Bombshell: Women and terrorism*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Brunner, C. (2007). Occidentalism meets the female suicide bomber: A critical reflection on recent terrorism debates; a review essay. *Signs*, 32(4), 957–971. <https://doi.org/10.1086/512490>
- Charlesworth, H. (2008). Are women peaceful? Reflections on the role of women in peace-building. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 16, 347–361.
- Das, V. (2006). *Life and words: Violence and the descent into the ordinary*. University of California Press.
- Davis, J. (2017). *Women in modern terrorism: From liberation wars to global jihad and the Islamic State*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Duriesmith, D. (2018). Hybrid warriors and the formation of new war masculinities: A case study of Indonesian foreign fighters. *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, 7(1), Article 16. <https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.633>
- Feillard, A., & Madinier, R. (2011). *The end of innocence? Indonesian Islam and the temptations of radicalism*. NUS Press.
- Franklin, N. (2014). *Reproducing political Islam in Java: The role of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah Pesantren in the political socialisation of the Umat* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Charles Darwin University.
- Gan, R., Neo, L. S., Chin, J., & Khader, M. (2019). Change is the only constant: The evolving role of women in the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). *Women & Criminal Justice*, 29(4/5), 204–220. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2018.1547674>
- Gowrinathan, N. (2021). *Radicalizing her: Why women choose violence*. Beacon Press.
- Hanifah, H. (2016, December 30). Gendering terrorism in RI. *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/12/30/gendering-terrorism-ri.html>
- Hussein, R., & Intan, G. (2020, November 24). Hundreds of Indonesian former members and families could become stateless. *VOA News*. https://www.voanews.com/a/extremism-watch_hundreds-indonesian-former-members-families-could-become-stateless/6185021.html
- Indonesia: ISIS suicide bombers use children in 4 attacks. (2018, May 15). *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/05/16/indonesia-isis-suicide-bombers-use-children-4-attacks>
- Institute for Economics and Peace. (2022). *Global peace index institute 2022: Measuring peace in a complex world*. <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/GPI-2022-web.pdf>
- Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict. (2017). *Mothers to bombers: The evolution of Indonesian women extremists* (IPAC Report No. 35). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep07796.1.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A5361b1ce73522a958b3a4b286870f2f7>

- Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict. (2020). *Extremist women behind bars*. <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/gdc/gdcovop/2021307272/2021307272.pdf>
- International Crisis Group. (2002). *Indonesia backgrounder: How the Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist network operates*. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/indonesia-backgrounder-how-jemaah-islamiyah-terrorist-network-operates>
- Jackson, R. D. W. (2007). The core commitments of critical terrorism studies. *European Political Science*, 6, 244–251. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.eps.2210141>
- Johnston, M. F., Iqbal, M., & True, J. (2020). The lure of (violent) extremism: Gender constructs in online recruitment and messaging in Indonesia. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 46(4), 470–488. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1759267>
- Jones, S. (2010, August 18). Darul Islam's ongoing appeal. *International Crisis Group*. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/darul-islam-s-ongoing-appeal>
- Jones, S. (2011). The ongoing extremist threat in Indonesia. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2011, 91–104. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41418639>
- Jones, S. (2018, May 15). Surabaya and the ISIS family. *The Interpreter*. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/surabaya-isis-family>
- Lahoud, N. (2014). The neglected sex: The jihadis' exclusion of women from jihad, terrorism and political violence. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 26(5), 780–802. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2013.772511>
- Lamb, K. (2018, May 19). The bombers next door: How an Indonesian family turned into suicide attackers. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/19/indonesia-blasts-surabaya-family-from-good-neighbours-suicide-bombers>
- Macfarlane, K. (2023). Child soldiers in Nepal: Re-conceptualizing reintegration and identity. *International Affairs*, 99(3), 1211–1230. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaad106>
- Manchanda, R. (2004). Maoist insurgency in Nepal. *Cultural Dynamics*, 16(2/3), 237–258. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0921374004047750>
- Marcoes, L. (2018, May 16). Feminisasi gerakan radikal. *KOMPAS.id*. <https://www.kompas.id/baca/opini/2018/05/16/feminisasi-gerakan-radikal>
- McRae, D. (2013). *A few poorly organized men: Interreligious violence in Poso*. Brill.
- Moser, C. O., & Clark, D. F. (Eds.). (2001). *Victims, perpetrators or actors? Gender, armed conflict and political violence*. Zed Books.
- Munasinghe, S., Garner, R., Heery, J., James, G., & Rey, D. (2017). *Global extremism monitor: Islamist violence after ISS*. Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. <https://www.icct.nl/sites/default/files/import/publication/Global-Extremism-Monitor-Islamist-Violence-after-ISIS.pdf>
- Nasir, A. A. (2019). Women in terrorism: Evolution from Jemaah Islamiyah to Islamic State in Indonesia and Malaysia. *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, 11(2). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26627977>
- Noor, H. (2018, May 15). When parents take their children to die in jihadist suicide bombings, what can be done? *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/when-parents-take-their-children-to-die-in-jihadist-suicide-bombings-what-can-be-done-96512>
- Noor, H. (2022). Perpetuating loyalty: Parental influence on early radicalization in Indonesian. *Asian Studies: Journal of Critical Perspectives on Asia*, 58(2), 101–139.
- Nuraniyah, N. (2018). Not just brainwashed: Understanding the radicalization of Indonesian female supporters of the Islamic State. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 30(6), 890–910. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2018.1481269>

- Oktavia, M. (2021, April 3). Zakiah Aini, the lone wolf attacker of the National Indonesian Police. *GoKompas*. <https://go.kompas.com/read/2021/04/03/025502074/zakiah-aini-the-lone-wolf-attacker-of-the-national-indonesian-police?page=all>
- Osman, S. (2010). Jemaah Islamiyah: Of kin and kind. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 29(2), 157–175.
- Parashar, S. (2009). Feminist international relations and women militants: Case studies from Sri Lanka and Kashmir. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 22(2), 235–256. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557570902877968>
- Phelan, A. (Ed.). (2021). *Terrorism, gender and women: Toward an integrated research agenda* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Rahmah, U. (2020). Women in jihad: An Indonesian context. *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, 12(4), 21–26.
- Resnyansky, L., Smith, C., Taylor, C., Sulistiyanto, P., Merryman, G., & Mujahiduddin. (2022). Reasons behind reasons: A communitarian reading of women's radicalization and family bombings in Southeast Asia. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2022.2034229>
- Robinson, K. (1983). Living in the Hutan: Jungle village life under the Darul Islam. *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*, 17, 208–229.
- Saputro, M. E. (2010). Probabilitas teroris perempuan di Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik*, 14, 211–228.
- Satria, A. (2022). Two decades of counterterrorism in Indonesia: Successful developments and future challenges. *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, 14(5), 7–16. <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/CTTA-September-2022.pdf>
- Schulze, K., & Liow, J. (2019). Making jihadis, waging jihad: Transnational and local dimensions of the ISIS phenomenon in Indonesia and Malaysia. *Asian Security*, 15(2), 122–139. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2018.1424710>
- Sjoberg, L. (2018). Jihadi brides and female volunteers: Reading the Islamic State's war to see gender and agency in conflict dynamics. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 35(3), 296–311. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894217695050>
- Sjoberg, L., & Gentry, C. (2007). *Mothers, monsters, whores: Women's violence in global politics*. Zed Books.
- Solahudin. (2013). *The roots of terrorism in Indonesia: From Darul Islam to Jema'ah Islamiyah*. Cornell University Press.
- Solomon, B. (2023). *Where is the mother?: The securitization of mothers in preventing and countering violent extremism*. TSAS. https://www.tsas.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Solomon_TSAS-Research-Brief_2023.pdf
- Temby, Q. (2010). Imagining an Islamic State in Indonesia: From Darul Islam to Jemaah Islamiyah. *Indonesia*, 89, 1–36.
- True, J., & Eddyono, S. (2021). Preventing violent extremism—What has gender got to do with it? Gendered perceptions and roles in Indonesia. *European Psychologist*, 26(1), 55–67. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000434>
- tvOneNews. (2016, December 13). *Wawancara eksklusif tvOne: Pengakuan "Pengantin" bom Istana* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OVvkjd1be0&t=17s
- United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (2015). *Violations and abuses committed by Boko Haram and the impact on human rights in the countries affected: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/30/67)*. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/819031>
- van Dijk, C. (1981). *Rebellion under the banner of Islam: The Darul Islam in Indonesia*. Brill.
- White, S. (2009, November 8). The wives of Noordin Top. *Inside Indonesia*. <https://www.insideindonesia.org/archive/articles/the-wives-of-noordin-top>

Yaoren, K. K. (2021, May 24). Family martyrdom: Examining suicide terrorism trends in Southeast Asia. *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/05/family-martyrdom-examining-suicide-terrorism-trends-in-southeast-asia>

About the Author



Kate Macfarlane is the senior lecturer in international relations at the Faculty of Arts and Society at Charles Darwin University, Australia. She is an international relations and political science scholar, who focuses on children and armed conflict, peacebuilding, human security, gender, and South Asia. Recently, her research has focused on the reintegration experiences of former child soldiers in Sri Lanka and Nepal. She was awarded the prestigious 2018–2019 Fox Fellowship (Yale University) and is the recipient of several awards, including the Australian Government Endeavour Fellowship (2018). Currently, she is the Charles Darwin University program lead and coordinator for the Pathways to Politics Program for Women, Northern Territory. Her most recent article is “Child Soldiers in Nepal: Reconceptualizing Reintegration And Identity” (*International Affairs*, 2023).

A “Maverick Salafi Political Jihadist” in a Turbulent Period: A Biographical Study of Dr Fauzi

Muhammad Najib Azca

Department of Sociology, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

Correspondence: Muhammad Najib Azca (najibazca@ugm.ac.id)

Submitted: 13 December 2023 **Accepted:** 27 March 2024 **Published:** 29 May 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue “Indonesian Heroes and Villains: National Identity, Politics, Law, and Security” edited by Nathan Franklin (Charles Darwin University) and Hans Hägerdal (Linnaeus University), fully open access at <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i380>

Abstract

A biographical study through the lens of Mills’ sociological imagination and Erikson’s identity crisis provides a unique understanding of Dr Fauzi AR, a dedicated Islamist. Fauzi grew up in a devout Muslim family in Kauman, Yogyakarta, the heartland of the modernist Islamic organisation Muhammadiyah. He was educated in Muhammadiyah schools and eventually became a qualified medical doctor. He was politically active in the Islamic United Development Party and joined Laskar Jihad, a Salafi-Wahabi paramilitary group, during the inter-religious conflict in Maluku in 2000. This article argues that the political turbulence during the democratic transition in 1998–1999 led Fauzi to have an identity crisis, which spurred his desire to participate in jihad (holy war). Afterwards, Fauzi became a reformed “maverick post-jihadist,” in that he was unpredictable yet competent. He was unorthodox in his methods, remaining active in mainstream political Islam through the United Development Party while also engaging in physical jihad, which is contradictory because participation in partisan politics is forbidden by the Salafi doctrine. He also remained a heavy smoker although smoking is forbidden by Salafi religious decree. He further defied Salafism by supporting his wife in an unsuccessful bid for a seat in the national parliament as a member of the secular-nationalist party Gerindra in the 2009 election. This case study of Fauzi AR reflects the complex and multifaceted nature of political Islam and Islamic movements in the post-Soeharto era, including those who resorted to extremism and violence to achieve greater Islamisation of society.

Keywords

democratic transition; Indonesia; jihad; political Islam; Salafi

1. Introduction

The two quotes below reflect the nature of the man Dr Fauzi AR:

I wish my life will end in an undisputed land of jihad, either in the holy land or in the holy war, either in Moro [the Philippines] or in Afghanistan... (Azca, 2011, p. 145)

Sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society....No social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history and of their intersection within a society has completed its intellectual journey. (Mills, 1959, p. 6)

Dr Fauzi was both a religious and political phenomenon in Indonesian history because he was a prominent mainstream Muslim who became a jihadist (Muslim holy war fighter). To help understand his biography, I apply Mills' (1959, p. 6) concept of "sociological imagination," as it "enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society." Using this theoretical framework, I examine how this Muslim activist transformed himself in the early period of the political reform movement (Reformasi) in 1998, from initially being a proponent of peaceful forms of political Islam into a supporter of radical and jihad (holy war) interpretations. The behaviour of Fauzi is inexorably linked to changes in Indonesian society and how he responded to them based on his personal values. Erikson's (1968) concept of "identity crisis" provides a useful method for understanding Fauzi's dramatic shift to become a jihadist during the turbulent period of Indonesia's democratic transition. When such a crisis happens, people experiment with other roles and identities, which can eventually lead to a new identity or it can exacerbate identity confusion. Fauzi is an example of an Islamist who keenly and bravely struggled for democracy and political reform when Indonesia was under the authoritarian rule of Soeharto's New Order Regime (1966–1998) but suffered personal and moral anguish when Indonesia did not adopt a more Islamic political culture. His mentor, Amien Rais, established an inclusive pluralist political party, the National Mandate Party (Partai Amanat Nasional; PAN), instead of an Islamist one. Fauzi felt that Rais had betrayed the idea of Islamic revival and reform, which seeks to renew Islam as the principal governing authority according to shariah (Islamic law) and purify Islam of innovations (*bida*). Fauzi's behaviour in later life was a paradox: He was the son of the famous, moderate leader of Muhammadiyah, who chose not to follow his father's example, instead becoming an activist of the Salafi-Wahabi movement and joining jihad. However, towards the end of his life, he engaged with the secular-nationalist party Gerindra (Gerakan Indonesia Raya, or Greater Indonesia Movement) to support the political career of his wife.

To properly develop an analysis of Fauzi, we must understand the use of the term "Salafi political jihadist," as applied here. To this end, Fauzi was an Islamic political activist who later engaged in Salafi activism and participated in the jihad mobilisation in Maluku. However, his jihad participation in Maluku extended to the Salafi-Wahabi network, which rivalled the Salafi jihadist one in the field. Therefore, although having personal sympathy for some jihadist activists, he was not one among them because, from official doctrinal arguments, Salafism and Salafi jihadism are not compatible (International Crisis Group, 2004).

2. Background

Dr Fauzi AR (1956–2021) was born and raised in a devout Muhammadiyah family and communal village (*kampung*) milieu, but later in life, he abandoned mainstream Islam to become a radical Salafi jihadist. Because of his upbringing, he was naturally a “Muhammadiyah Muslim.” Muhammadiyah is a modernist and reformist Islamic organisation, first established in Indonesia in 1912, and today is the country’s second-largest mass Islamic organisation after Nahdlatul Ulama (NU; Franklin, 2020). In 2013, Muhammadiyah had about 21.5 million followers, or 7.9% of the total national population of 270 million (Bush, 2014, p. 7; Statistics Indonesia, 2020). Fauzi later became politically active in the United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan; PPP), the only Islamic political party permitted during the New Order era. Towards the end of the New Order, he became a strong believer in the democratic movement under the leadership of Amien Rais, the chairman of Muhammadiyah from 1995 to 1998, who became a leading figure in the Reformasi movement. However, Fauzi was disappointed when Rais established a new pluralist and inclusive party instead of an Islamist one, like the PPP, which held Islam as its ideological base (*asas*) when it was allowed to do so following Reformasi, rather than the state ideology of Pancasila (five pillars: religion, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice), which PAN chose to adhere to. Between 1985 and 1998, the New Order regime forced all political parties to hold Pancasila as their sole ideological platform, but Reformasi ended this obligation. The Islamic parties performed poorly in the 1999 national election, which was dominated by the secular-nationalist parties, leading Fauzi to doubt mainstream political Islam, so he joined the conservative Salafi movement. His activism and beliefs extended to participation in the jihad in Maluku, where deadly inter-communal violence occurred from 1999 to 2002.

It is also important to situate Fauzi’s position in the nexus of Muhammadiyah, PAN, PPP, and Laskar Jihad. Muhammadiyah is one of the largest Muslim organisations in Indonesia, and indeed the world, with approximately 21.5 million followers (using data from Bush, 2014). Founded on 18 November 1912 in Yogyakarta by Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan, Muhammadiyah aims to advance society in terms of modern education as well as social, economic and political development that is compatible according to verified interpretations (*ijtihad*) of Islam (Franklin, 2014, p. 20). It does this in two main ways. Firstly, by conducting Islamic propagation for *amar ma’ruf nahi munkar* (commanding the right and forbidding the wrong) and Islamic reform (*tajdid*; Franklin, 2014, pp. 275–276). Secondly, through establishing social welfare agencies, programmes, and modern educational institutions and activities under the direction of policies and responsibilities of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah, 2010). In the landscape of Indonesian Islam, Muhammadiyah is commonly seen as a modernist Islamic organisation, as opposed to the larger NU, the main representative of traditionalist Islam. While this may at times lead to differing perspectives, these two mass religious organisations are not in conflict, except in exceptional circumstances, for example, when Muhammadiyah members joined radical groups like the Islamic Defenders’ Front (Front Pembela Islam) which clashed with NU (Franklin, 2009; see also Franklin, 2014, pp. 274–276). Indeed, Latif (2015) contends that Muhammadiyah and NU together have been the anchor of the public ethics that are the main reference point and the moral development of the nation. They reflect the Islam that has developed in Indonesia over the past half a millennium (Franklin, 2020).

Muhammadiyah was once part of Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia (Masyumi), which started as an Islamic organisation in October 1943, and became a mass Muslim political party on 7 November 1945 (Reid, 1974, p. 84; Ricklefs, 2001, p. 255), spurred on by the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies from March

1942 to August 1945. Initially, Muhammadiyah and NU cooperated in this party, but NU left to form its own party in 1952. While NU continued to maintain a political party throughout the Soekarno presidency (1945–1966), Masyumi was disbanded by presidential decree in 1960 (Siregar, 2013). Muhammadiyah remained largely independent of party politics from this time until 1998. As Rais (1995) argued at one time, organisations should concern themselves with “high politics,” that is, the politics of values, instead of “low politics,” involving practical, electoral politics, which is less prestigious because of money politics, horse-trading, and so on. However, when Rais was Muhammadiyah’s chairman, he chose to enter “low political” competition, to reference Rais’ own argument, by establishing PAN. Although PAN presented and promoted itself as an inclusive and pluralist party, it was, nevertheless, based mainly on Muhammadiyah communities and is still a representative of Muhammadiyah in the political realm (“PAN masih representasi Muhammadiyah,” 2023).

In contrast to PAN, PPP is an Islamic party established in 1973. PPP was the forced amalgamation of four main Islamic political parties, namely NU, Parmusi (Partai Muslimin Indonesia, or Indonesian Muslim Party), PSII (Partai Syarikat Islam Indonesia, or Islamic Union Party of Indonesia), and Perti (Partai Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah, or Union of Islamic Education), by the Soeharto regime. Parmusi was established as the new face of Masyumi after the latter was banned by President Soekarno in 1960 for its involvement in regional rebellions. Parmusi was founded by Islamic leaders from various organisations, including Muhammadiyah, Al Irsyad, Jamiatul Washliyah, and Mathlaul Anwar. In another historical connection, Fauzi’s father, AR Fachruddin, was one of the Islamic leaders who signed the charter of Parmusi’s establishment. Its first chairman was H. Djarnawi Hadikusumo, a leader of Muhammadiyah. The strong historical bond between Muhammadiyah, Parmusi, and PPP attracted Fauzi to the only Islamic party allowed in Indonesia from 1973 to 1998 (Hakim, 2021, pp. 248–249).

Unlike Muhammadiyah and PAN, Laskar Jihad, roughly translated as “warrior of jihad,” was a paramilitary wing of the Salafi movement that emerged in Indonesia in the mid-1980s. According to Hasan (2005, p. 161), Laskar Jihad can be seen as a religious sect that is a “strict religious organization, demanding complete loyalty, unwavering belief, and rigid adherence to the distinctive lifestyle of its members.” Laskar Jihad is an example of pious Islamic activism, with its main concern being to safeguard Muslim identity, Islamic faith, and moral order against the forces of non-Muslims, and its lack of interest in gaining formal political power (Azca, 2011). Fauzi’s move towards Laskar Jihad could be viewed as a clear move away from mainstream politics and the Islamic political establishment. However, such an interpretation is problematic, as he continued activities with mainstream parties, including PPP, until at least August 2003, and again when he supported Gerindra in 2009.

To understand Fauzi’s unpredictable and transformative life and to build an argument as to why and how Fauzi had an identity crisis which eventually resulted in his joining jihad in Maluku, some background mapping is required. This will be divided into several parts. Firstly, I will briefly cover Indonesia’s democratic transition, during which Fauzi experienced an identity crisis and adopted jihad as part of his identity and his moral obligation to Islam. Secondly, there will be an examination of his life from childhood to middle age, when he joined the jihad. Thirdly, the theoretical framework of “sociological imagination” will help us to understand and discuss him as a political jihadist. Fourthly, in the broader context, I examine the link between the biography of Fauzi and the historical dynamics of Indonesia.

Most of the information on Fauzi used in this article is based on field research conducted in 2008 for my doctoral research through a series of life history interviews with him and participatory observation in Yogyakarta and Surakarta, both located in Central Java. Information was complemented with data collected from news media, especially after his passing on 11 July 2021, and interviews with Islamist activists and politicians who were close to Fauzi from the time they were young activists.

3. Democratic Transition: A Turbulent Political Era

Indonesia had a turbulent and uncertain democratic transition in 1998 and 1999, which witnessed the rise of collective violence and the emergence of Islamist movements in some parts of Indonesia. It is within this context that Fauzi had an identity crisis that eventually led him to undergo a change of identity and allegiance by joining Laskar Jihad, a paramilitary wing of the Wahabi-Salafi movement.

Ethier (1990, p. 4) defines a democratic transition as “an interval between an authoritarian and a democratic regime.” After the resignation of authoritarian President Soeharto on 21 May 1998, a rocky transition towards electoral democracy followed, which saw the mushrooming of collective violence in several parts of the archipelago during the preliminary stages of Reformasi (Tadjoeddin, 2002; Varshney et al., 2004). According to O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986, p. 6), each transitional period is characterised by uncertainty, in which:

Transitions are delimited, on the one hand, by the launching of the process of dissolution of an authoritarian regime and, on the other hand, by the installation of some form of democracy, the return to some form of authoritarian rule, or the emergence of a revolutionary alternative.

A transitional period is commonly characterised by the dramatic decline of the government's ability to deal with problems that arise in the context of the collapse of an established authority. Snyder (2000, p. 310) argues that the risk of an outbreak of communal conflict increases in the early stages of democratisation. Tadjoeddin (2002) and Varshney et al. (2004) confirm this hypothesis in the case of Indonesia following the fall of the Soeharto regime (see Figure 1 below).

Two of the largest, bloody, and protracted cases of communal violence in Indonesia were the religious conflicts in Ambon, Maluku, and Poso, Central Sulawesi. In Maluku, between 5,000 and 10,000 people were killed, and as many as 700,000, or nearly a third of the population, were displaced (International Crisis Group, 2002). In Central Sulawesi, at least 1,000 people were killed, with many more injured, and at least 100,000 displaced (Human Rights Watch, 2002, p. 2). Both conflicts also attracted thousands of non-local jihadists, joining what they perceived as a “religious war” (Hasan, 2005, 2006). Thus, it became an arena of jihad for Muslim holy fighters (*mujahidin*) from different parts of the archipelago. It was during this period that Fauzi became interested in joining jihad in Maluku. This was a “critical juncture” in history when a political system comes under tension and thus political institutions and the principles of national models are renegotiated by individuals and groups (Bertrand, 2004, p. 20).

Regarding causes that led to the outbreak of religious communal violence in Maluku, in my previous work (Azca, 2003, pp. 26–27), I argued that it was a combination of both national and local factors: (a) authoritarianism ending and the inability of the national government to deal with extensive problems arising from a change

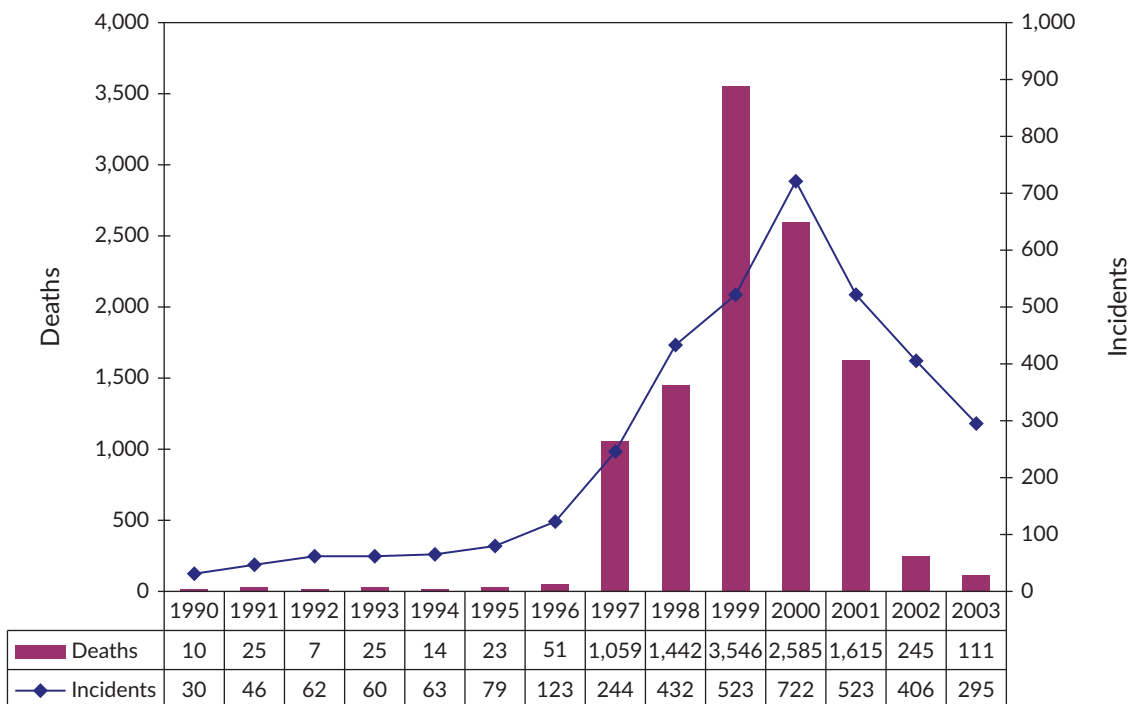


Figure 1. Death and incidents of non-secessionist collective violence in Indonesia 1990–2003. Source: Varshney et al. (2004, p. 23).

in the system, (b) resistance towards political reforms by some elements of the New Order regime, (c) the re-emergence of the politics of *aliran* (streams) from the late Soeharto era onwards, (d) deteriorating economic situation following the Asian monetary crisis (or *krismon*) in 1997–1998, and (e) timing of the general elections in June 1999. At the local level factors included: (a) the inability of the local government to deal with social unrest in the aftermath of the toppling of the New Order regime, (b) the changed composition of the Ambonese population due to Soeharto’s transmigration policy that brought thousands of Javanese and Sumatran Muslims to the area, (c) worsening economic situation as a consequence of *krismon*, (d) increased tensions between Muslims and Christians, and (e) politicisation of religion prior to the general elections in June 1999.

Fears of the break up of Indonesia, exemplified by East Timor’s independence, ideological threats from “liberalism,” regional autonomy, together with simmering local inter-ethnic tensions (with the tacit involvement of hostile elements of the military) were the conditions at the time the Christian–Muslim conflict erupted.

4. Dr Fauzi’s Early Life: 1968–1990

Fauzi was the sixth of seven children of Haji Abdul Razak Fachruddin (Pak AR, or Mister AR), the longest-serving national chairman of Muhammadiyah from 1968 to 1990. Fauzi grew up in the Muslim area of Kauman, Yogyakarta, the proverbial home of the Muhammadiyah movement. All of his schooling was completed in the Muhammadiyah educational system. Thus, his personal identity and social practices as a Muslim, and simultaneously a Muhammadiyah follower, developed from his early childhood. Fauzi portrayed himself as a rebel by trying to emulate his grandfather, Kyai Fachruddin, who was removed from his position as a religious patron in the Pakualaman Palace, Yogyakarta, because of his protest against the palace’s

collaboration with the Dutch colonialists. Fauzi was also known as a fighter (*tukang kelahi*) with strong anti-Chinese feelings (Azca, 2011, p. 164).

After graduating from a prestigious Muhammadiyah high school, Fauzi studied medicine at Gadjah Mada University, which has one of the best medical programmes in Indonesia. Later he entered specialist study as an anaesthetist at the same university. During this time, his maverick tendencies became apparent. Instead of becoming an activist in the Muhammadiyah-aligned youth wing, namely the Muhammadiyah Association of University Students (Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah; IMM), he chose to become involved in the National Movement of Indonesian Students (Gerakan Mahasiswa Nasional Indonesia; GMNI; Azca, 2011, p. 164). IMM and GMNI are in "ideological opposition" and this conflict often played out on university campuses across Indonesia.

So, why did Fauzi make such an extraordinary move? When asked, he said that it was a way to protest against the "bossy" attitudes of some senior activists of the Association of Muslim Students whom he knew well. Some of them even stayed in rented rooms in his house. Following his graduation from Gadjah Mada University in 1995, he became an activist and was elected chairman of the Islamic political party PPP for the province of Yogyakarta, a position which he held from 1997 to 2003. This was a transformative period, particularly because of Indonesia's Reformasi movement, which ended the New Order regime and saw four presidents: Soeharto, Habibie, Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), and Megawati. It was also a time when devolution began to transfer executive power and authority to the districts and provinces through "big bang" decentralisation, and local elections became more important (Shoosmith et al., 2020). However, the PPP failed to become a significant party in Yogyakarta. In successive elections since 1999, the secular-nationalist Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan) has been the dominant party. In 1997, PPP had 14 out of 39 seats in the Yogyakarta provincial parliament, which was supposed to be a five-year term but ended prematurely in 1999 because of Reformasi (Limardi, 2006, p. 82). PPP's seats were reduced to just two out of 40 at the 1999 election, and in 2004 it further reduced to only one (Limardi, 2006, pp. 92–93; Mahdi, 2018, pp. 57, 102). Although, it must be noted that in the elections of 1977, 1982, 1987, and 1992, PDI had more seats than PPP (Al-Hamdi, 2017, p. 210). However, in July 1996, due to Soeharto's interference causing a rift in the party's leadership, including a physical attack on PDI's headquarters resulting in two deaths, 181 injured, and 124 arrests, the party was in disarray and suffered heavy losses at the 1997 election (O'Rourke, 2002, pp. 10–15) to the benefit of PPP. The situation in Yogyakarta was reflected nationally; in the parliament of 1997–1999, PPP had 89 out of 425 seats but fell to 58 in 1999–2004 (Adryamarthanino & Ningsih, 2021; Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia, 2015). In recent years it has been reduced to the smallest party in the national parliament, barely passing the 4% threshold to be awarded seats. In the last five-year period of 2019–2024, it had just 19 out of 575 seats in the national parliament, while in the Yogyakarta provincial parliament it was only one out of 55 seats; ironically, two newly elected members were Amien Rais sons, namely Hanum Salsabiela Rais and Ahmad Baihaqy, representing their father's old party PAN ("575 anggota DPR," 2019; Kuntadi, 2019).

5. Abandoning Amien Rais

The final year of Soeharto's New Order regime presented challenges for Fauzi. When Amien Rais, then the chairman of the Muhammadiyah National Board (1995–1998), launched a political campaign against the Soeharto regime, he took the risk of becoming a special aide to Rais. As it turned out, this potentially

dangerous move for Fauzi had no real negative consequences, as the Soeharto regime collapsed, allowing a new political system and civil society to emerge. The direction of political reforms led Fauzi to take a different path to Rais. Instead of establishing or leading a purely Islamic party as demanded by Fauzi, Rais established PAN, a Pancasila-based party, in 1998. After receiving support from various political groups during his efforts to achieve democratic reform, including from nationalist and secular groups, Rais took the view that an Islamic party would be “too small and narrow for his great political ambitions” to win the Indonesian presidency (Hidayaturrahman, 2023). At the time, Gus Dur, national chairman of NU (1984–1999) and leader of the secular inclusive National Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa), was championing moderate forms of Islam, and he became president from 1999 to 2001. This demonstrated that moderate forms of political Islam were more popular than strictly Islamist political parties. Despite the fact that Gus Dur was impeached because he was erratic and unpredictable as president, we should not underestimate his popularity, even in death, and acknowledge the fact that no one has replaced him (Franklin, 2017, 2024). Despite Rais’ initial image as the face of reform, even achieving the country’s third highest political position, after the president and vice president, as speaker of the People’s Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat), he quickly became unpopular. His presidential ambitions ended in failure, for all to see in his poor performance in the 2004 presidential election, coming fourth out of five candidates, achieving less than 15% of the vote (IFES, 2004). Prior to this, he had long fallen out with both Gus Dur and Megawati, and after 2004, Rais gradually disappeared from the public eye.

For Fauzi, Rais’ political pivot towards pluralism was a betrayal of the Islamic struggle to deepen Islamisation through Islamic revival (*tajdid*) and following the traditions of Muslim society (*sunnah*). Moreover, rule by an Islamic party was the only way to achieve not just Islamic modernity and renewal (*pembaruan*), but also a state governed by *shariah* (Islamic) law. Fauzi was deeply disappointed and deserted Rais. Ironically, in April 2021, Rais was formally appointed the chairman of the Advisory Council for the Islamic Community Party (Partai Ummat), a party that explicitly holds Islam, rather than Pancasila, as its ideological foundation. So, Fauzi’s disappointment in Rais’ political decisions was not entirely misguided, and perhaps he knew something about Rais that has only recently come out publicly, that Rais was an Islamist at heart. However, Fauzi could not wait and resolved his identity crisis by taking a new pathway and engaging directly with a Salafi movement (Azca, 2011, p. 172).

6. Departure to Laskar Jihad (Late 2000)

The loss of Rais as a role model disoriented Fauzi. In search of a new direction and purpose, Fauzi found strong and charismatic leadership in Ja’far Umar Thalib, a young Salafi preacher who later became the commander of Laskar Jihad, the radical Islamic militia linked to sectarian violence in Central Sulawesi and Maluku (Hasan, 2005, 2006). Fauzi had invited Thalib, a veteran of the Soviet-Afghan War (1979–1989), who fought against the Soviet Union, to give sermons at weekly sessions held at his home in Yogyakarta from 1998 to 2000. His relationship with Thalib as a cleric and religious teacher became closer when the Maluku conflict erupted in January 1999 and Laskar Jihad was established in early 2000. Fauzi provided crucial financial and political support, before officially joining the movement in late 2000 (Azca, 2011).

Laskar Jihad was the paramilitary wing of the Communication Forum of the Salafis (Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama’ah). After the establishment of the Communication Forum of the Salafis, which was facilitated by the Salafi predication (*da’wah*) network that had spread since the 1980s, the Salafis began to

launch a massive jihad to attract support, and enlist members, train *mujadin*, and raise funds from donors (Hasan, 2005, p. 112). Under the leadership of Thalib, the Communication Forum of the Salafis attempted to convince civilian and military elites to provide support and held public rallies in several Indonesian cities to raise awareness and attract community support. Furthermore, the Salafis also mobilised their transnational networks by requesting a fatwa (religious decree) from religious authorities in the Middle East, especially those linked to Syeikh Abdul Aziz Abdullah Bin Baz, the former head of the Saudi Arabian Council of Senior Ulama, to provide religious blessing for their cause.

7. Discussion

7.1. Sociological Imagination of a Political Jihadist

To discuss the link between the biography of Fauzi and the historical dynamics of Indonesian society in political transition, I employ the distinction of two concepts of “personal troubles of milieu” and “the public issues of social structure” (Mills, 1959, p. 8). According to Mills (1959, p. 8):

Troubles occur within the character of the individual and within the range of his immediate relations with others...[therefore] the statement and the resolution of troubles properly lie within the individual as a biographical entity and within the scope of his immediate milieu—the social setting that is directly open to his personal experience and to some extent his willful activity.

Trouble is defined as a private matter, where “values cherished by an individual are felt by him to be threatened,” whereas an issue is a public matter, when “some values cherished by the public are felt to be threatened” (Mills, 1959, p. 8). Therefore, issues:

Have to do with the organization of many such milieux into the institutions of a historical society as a whole, with the ways in which various milieux overlap and interpenetrate to form the larger structure of social and historical life. (Mills, 1959, p. 8)

Fauzi’s personal trouble was reflected in his narrative of deep disappointment toward a role-model Islamist leader which he found and admired in the figure of Amien Rais, his mentor both as a Muhammadiyah activist and as a pious Muslim individual. His long-time commitment and dedication to become a sort of personal assistant and “bodyguard” to his hero suddenly collapsed, which caused him disillusionment when Rais unexpectedly abandoned the ideal of an Islamic political party. Such personal troubles occurred in the context of public issues concerning the future of political Islam, which culminated in Fauzi questioning his personal values and experiencing an identity crisis at the age of 43.

To analyse Fauzi’s personal troubles I borrow the concept of identity crisis contended by Erikson (1968, pp. 16–17) as “a necessary turning point, a crucial moment, when development must move one way or another, marshalling resources of growth, recovery, and further differentiation.” Although it is usually applied to adolescents and young adults, but adapted here, Erikson (1968) argued that personal growth and societal change, and simultaneously identity crisis in individual biography and present-day crises in historical transformation, cannot be divorced since the two help to explain each other. Thus, identity crises may happen at different stages of the life cycle, as in the case of Fauzi. His identity crisis occurred during a

dramatic political transition, especially following the bewildering turn of his role model leader Amien Rais, abandoning pure Islamism and favouring the Islamic-inclusive Pancasila state. Adapting the theories of Erikson (1968) and Mills (1959), this article argues that Fauzi experienced a crisis in identity, which was compounded by uncertainty and failure in the political upheaval of 1998–1999, which was a “critical juncture” in modern Indonesian history (Bertrand, 2004). He endeavoured to solve his moral dilemmas through physical jihad, which we can describe as a kind of “act of identity” (Marranci, 2009).

7.2. Fauzi’s Jihad as an Act of Identity

Fauzi’s engagement with Salafism, especially through weekly sessions with Ja’far Umar Thalib over a two-year period, was a kind of indoctrination, which eventually led him to engage in jihad in September 2000. His close relationship with Thalib kept him informed about the objectives and activities of Laskar Jihad from the very beginning. As the leader of the political party PPP, Fauzi claimed to endorse Laskar Jihad’s establishment, both politically and financially. But this was not enough for a highly committed man of action like Fauzi, especially after he learned from the media that a massacre had taken place in Tobelo, North Maluku, resulting in the killing of several hundred Muslims. As a consequence, he decided to join the jihad in Maluku, stating “I had to retaliate!” (Azca, 2011, p. 174).

Marranci (2006, 2009, p. 20) defines an act of identity as a “self-correcting mechanism in response to drastic changes in environment, producing a deep crisis between the autobiographical self and identity.” Jihad as an expression of identity was also reflected in Fauzi’s explanation of his decision to join the jihad, where he made a distinction between the politician (*politikus*) and the religious person (*agamawan*). He said, “A politician talks a lot about jihad but never takes any action; a man of religion talks about jihad and simultaneously takes action” (Azca, 2011, p. 174). By engaging in jihad, he took charge and moved from being a “politician” to becoming a “man of religion.”

The term jihad is an important concept that should be explained. Jihad is one of the most prominent Arabic terms in the contemporary world and has highly contested meanings from “holy war” (jihad of the sword) to “*da’wa*” (jihad of the pen/tongue) to “inner struggle” (jihad of the self). Although, in the current context, the word jihad is more widely associated with acts of violence and terror, this interpretation was originally called “the smaller jihad,” in contrast to the peaceful form that is “the greater jihad,” meaning personal struggle to rid one’s soul of greed, hatred, and egotism (Azca, 2018). In the context of this article, the term mainly refers to participation in religious violence, as in the case of Maluku, a clash between Muslim and Christian groups which was perceived by Fauzi and many Muslim activists as a holy war (see Hasan, 2005, 2006).

7.3. Fauzi: The “Maverick” Post-Jihadist

Fauzi joined jihad in Maluku for only about one month, from September to October 2000. Afterwards, he returned to his “normal life” in Yogyakarta, working as a medical specialist and returning to his position as the chairman of PPP in Yogyakarta. Although it was a relatively short period, Fauzi had a dramatic experience in a battle on the island of Saparua. He was shot and sustained a minor injury to his buttocks. It was unusual for educated clergy who joined the jihad to be injured in such a way (Hasan, 2005, 2006). Moreover, he also had the experience of simultaneously giving a sermon in the middle of the battle when the fighting spirit of the Muslim soldiers had drastically declined, as both a religious obligation and to boost the morale of

jihadists (Azca, 2011). Religious obligations during religious wars are often spoken about in Muhammadiyah sermons, citing the Quran and Hadith (verified stories of the Prophet Muhammad), where Muslims maintain a commitment to prayers and sermons while fighting, where half pray while the other half stand guard (Franklin, 2014, p. 236).

Fauzi's status as a "maverick" post-jihadist is further reflected in his life trajectory as a Salafi activist after the Maluku jihad. This was unusual from a Salafi-Wahabi perspective since participation in partisan politics (*hizbiyya*) is considered unlawful. Propagating politics known as *da'wa hizbiyya* is defined by Hasan (2005, p. 143) as "Islamic movements that are perceived to prioritize politics over the purification of the individual Muslim's religious beliefs and practices." Following his experience in Maluku, Fauzi continued to be active in politics until August 2003 when he was eventually dismissed from PPP. On the other hand, Fauzi continued to be involved in Salafi activism, including holding weekly Salafi sermons at his house. Despite his continued contact with and support for Salafi leaders and groups, he maintained elements of his lifestyle that were not consistent with Salafi beliefs. For example, Fauzi was a heavy smoker, a habit that is forbidden (*haram*) by a fatwa made by leading Salafi clerics because smoking may cause physical damage and produces bad odours. It is also seen as a form of suicide, which is *haram* in Islam. Despite his commitment to Salafism, Fauzi admitted openly that he could not stop smoking.

He was also unorthodox in his response to internal disputes and fragmentation among Salafis following the disbanding of the Laskar Jihad in October 2002, because it was no longer needed, as the conflict in Maluku had ended (Hasan, 2005, p. 225). In contrast to most of the Salafi activists and Islamic teachers (*ustadz*) who left or dismissed Ja'far Umar Thalib from their network, Fauzi maintained a good relationship with him. Thalib was like Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, a firebrand Muslim cleric involved in terrorism but who attracted media attention and would talk to almost anyone who would listen to him, including non-Muslims, particularly foreigners (Franklin, 2008; see also Franklin, 2014, pp. 279–280). Fauzi also invited an *ustadz* to preach regularly at his home from the Al-Turats Salafi network, a Kuwaiti-funded Salafi movement that surprisingly opposed the call for jihad and the establishment of Laskar Jihad. When asked about differences and internal disputes among the Salafis, Fauzi replied jokingly that it was part of the rivalry among people of Arab descent. Although he claimed that he would not get personally involved in religious arguments, he had sympathy for Ja'far Umar Thalib, including Thalib's engagement in collective public chanting of "the names of Allah" (*dhikr akbar*), a Sufi (Muslim mystic) activity held in a mass gatherings led by the renowned public preacher, Muhammad Arifin Ilham, which showed a level of tolerance. Thalib's participation in this practice was criticised by many Salafi leaders as a deviation from the Salafi method (*manhaj*; Hasan, 2005, p. 227).

Fauzi's relationship with the Salafi core network was reflected in his support for jihadist activism. While the majority of Salafis tend to view and respond to jihad activists with hostility, Fauzi did not. Although he did not accept their doctrine concerning jihad, he expressed his appreciation of the "spirit" behind their actions. This was reflected in his opinion concerning the 2002 Bali bomber Imam Samudra, when he said, "I admire Imam Samudra for his ability not to fall in love with the worldly life." Further, while most people run to grab the "world," he had the courage to take a different direction (interview with Fauzi, in Solo, January 15 2008). Fauzi also said that he twice visited Imam Samudra and other jihadists when they were in the maximum-security prison at Nusakambangan, Central Java. On his second visit, he brought his wife with him to teach her to be ready if someday he made the decision to "abandon the worldly life" and die as a martyr (*mati syahid*). For Fauzi, prison and politics looked like two rooms with a connecting door.

By his own admission, Fauzi continued to play “backroom” deals in politics. This included facilitating former PPP activists being recruited as functionaries of the new political party Hanura (Hati Nurani Rakyat, or People’s Conscience), led by the retired general Wiranto, as well as Gerindra, led by the retired general Prabowo Subianto. Fauzi also supported other religious figures, joining the leadership of these parties, but refrained from taking such a role himself (interview with Subagya, in Yogyakarta, 9 September 2021). He even took the step of endorsing his first wife, Uun Ilmiyatin, as a candidate for parliament in the 2009 elections, representing Gerindra for the electorate of Yogyakarta (Prabowo akan “getarkan,” 2009). Fauzi engaged in campaigning and mobilised his networks, including former supporters of PPP. Despite these efforts, however, his wife was not elected. Nevertheless, this activity marked him out among the Salafis because it was clearly direct involvement in a political election and endorsement of a female figure as a political candidate for parliament, both of which are contrary to Salafism. Further, it shows that to a certain degree, he endorsed the politics of Prabowo Subianto, who was the former head of Indonesia’s special forces (Kopassus) as well as the son-in-law of President Soeharto when he was married to Titiek Soeharto from 1983 to 1998.

Fauzi was able to lead such an unconventional way of life as a Salafi post-jihadist because of the interlinkage of two main factors: his individual agency underpinned by his strong position and elite level in the networks of political Islam in Indonesia and his maintenance of relations with the diverse leadership of Salafi networks in the post-jihad period. Fauzi was a relatively prominent public figure and robust political leader with extensive social networks before his engagement with Salafism and his participation in the jihad movement in Maluku. So rather than submitting himself to the Salafi core network, he utilised it as a patronage network. While continuing his social and political roles, Fauzi maintained his engagement with a variety of Salafi networks and continued identifying himself as a Salafi follower. This manifested in his personal lifestyle and appearance, such as growing a long beard and wearing a long white gown in his daily life. He also continued to hold weekly sermons at his house, which were conducted by invited Salafi clerics. Despite his unorthodox ways, he was accepted by some Salafi groups, including the At-Turats Salafi network. To support his life choices, he possessed significant social and economic resources that helped him pursue and realise his unconventional approaches to Islam.

Despite Fauzi’s unorthodoxy, clearly, Salafi beliefs were important to him. He said that he had no doubt that “jihad is the ultimate worship to God.” Further, he expressed a personal wish to end his life in jihad: As mentioned above, he was content to die as a martyr in the “holy land or in the holy war” (Azca, 2011, p. 145). He was attracted to the idea of a martyr’s death which guarantees reward, including entry into heaven, as supported in the Quranic verse Surah Ali ‘Imran (169–171), as well as numerous strong (*sahih*) Hadith. However, on 11 July 2021, during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, Fauzi died at the age of 65 years, with few details about his death, except that it was sudden and without warning. Media outlets were referring to him as “Laskar Jihad Muhammadiyah” (Azca, 2021) and claiming that “Muhammadiyah had lost its best cadre” (Sihaloho, 2021). Even Muhammadiyah on its website acknowledged the passing of “Dr Fauzi the son of the former head of Muhammadiyah AR Fachruddin,” but it was notably light on details about his life with no reference to his politics or jihad activities (Syifa, 2021).

8. Conclusion

Dr Fauzi AR represents a unique individual who was a political activist from a Muhammadiyah family and network who became a Salafi activist. Through the lens of Mills’ (1959) “sociological imagination” and Erikson’s

(1968) “identity crisis,” it has been shown how the complex biographic trajectory of Fauzi has strong links to the historical dynamics of Indonesia, especially during its political transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. During Reformasi in 1998, Fauzi experienced a sort of identity crisis when his Islamic political mentor, Amien Rais, adopted a secular approach to Indonesian politics and founded a secular party, PAN. The outbreak of religious communal war in Maluku, when many Muslims were killed, awakened his Islamic identity and passion to become a jihadist. For Fauzi, jihad provided him the opportunity for self-calibration when his understanding of self and identity was unstable, shifting from being a “politician” to a “man of religion.” In the case of Fauzi, personal troubles through an identity crisis were exacerbated by emotionally charged public issues, particularly in the trajectory of political Islam and the broader Islamic struggle, which includes the physical defence of Islam through active jihad.

The life story of Fauzi has shown us that political Islam and Islamic movements in post-Soeharto Indonesia are multifaceted and complex. Reformasi resulted in religious communal violence and the emergence of conservative Islamic movements in many parts of the archipelago, including the Salafi movements. However, as demonstrated by Fauzi as a maverick post-jihadist, political Islam is fragmented by a variety of streams including those who follow peaceful or violent pathways. This post-jihad activist continued to play a role in electoral politics through a secular-nationalist political party by supporting his wife in a political election while simultaneously committed to Salafi activism. Thus, the future of Indonesian democracy in terms of the empowerment of Muslim society and its engagement within is constantly evolving. The case of Fauzi shows that political Islam can manifest in many ways, including through politics, violence, and the mainstream of Islamic movements like Muhammadiyah and NU. The inconsistencies in Fauzi’s life may also reflect the type of person he was: a person who opposed authority and the status quo. It also shows that he cannot be defined by simple definitions or a single taxonomy. Another view might be that he was a loose cannon or a “maverick,” or perhaps a hero or villain, depending on one’s perspective. However, these anomalies only add to the religious and political phenomenon of this late Salafi activist and medical doctor.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers, as well as Dr Nathan Franklin, Professor Hans Hägerdal, Associate Professor Steven Farram, and Dr Stephen Miller for their helpful comments and suggestions.

Funding

This article was produced with the assistance of a Rainmaker Grant from Charles Darwin University.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

- 575 anggota DPR RI periode 2019–2024 resmi dilantik. (2019, October 1). *CNN Indonesia*. <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20191001083709-32-435557/575-anggota-dpr-ri-periode-2019-2024-resmi-dilantik>
- Adryamarthanino, V., & Ningsih, W. L. (2021, December 27). Pemilu rahun 1997: Peserta, pelaksanaan, dan pemenang. *KOMPAS.com*. <https://www.kompas.com/stori/read/2021/12/27/130000679/pemilu-tahun-1997--peserta-pelaksanaan-dan-pemenang>
- Al-Hamdi, R. (2017). *Indonesian political ideology political parties and local governance in Yogyakarta municipality 1998–2015*. Tectum. <http://repository.umy.ac.id/handle/123456789/15587>

- Azca, M. N. (2003). *The role of the security forces in communal conflict: The case of Ambon* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Australian National University.
- Azca, M. N. (2011). *After Jihad: A biographical approach to passionate politics in Indonesia* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Amsterdam.
- Azca, M. N. (2018). Jihad. In G. Ritzer & C. Rojek (Eds.), *The Blackwell encyclopedia of sociology*. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeosj010.pub2>
- Azca, M. N. (2021, July 12). Selamat jalan dokter Fauzi, Laskar Jihad Muhammadiyah. *Republika*. <https://khazanah.republika.co.id/berita/qw40xd385/selamat-jalan-dokter-fauzi-laskar-jihad-muhammadiyah>
- Bertrand, J. (2004). *Nationalism and ethnic conflict in Indonesia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bush, R. (2014). *A snapshot of Muhammadiyah social change and shifting markers of identity and values* (Working Paper No. 221). Asia Research Institute.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. Faber & Faber.
- Ethier, D. (1990). Processes of transition and democratic consolidation: Theoretical indicators. In D. Ethier (Ed.), *Democratic transition and consolidation in Southern Europe, Latin America and Southeast Asia* (pp. 3–21). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Franklin, N. (2008, May 18). An evening with Abu Bakar Ba'asyir. *Inside Indonesia*.
- Franklin, N. (2009, March 8). Ahmadiyah dispute intensifies. *Inside Indonesia*. <https://www.insideindonesia.org/archive/articles/ahmadiyah-dispute-intensifies>
- Franklin, N. (2014). *Reproducing political Islam in Java: The role of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah Pesantren in the political socialisation of the Umat* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Charles Darwin University. <https://doi.org/10.25913/5ea918c506765>
- Franklin, N. (2017). Islam in Indonesia: The contest for society, ideas and values. *Asian Studies Review*, 41(4), 685–687. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2017.1317621>
- Franklin, N. (2020). Islam and the Dutch in the East Indies: Oppression or opportunity? *The European Legacy*, 25(5), 572–587.
- Franklin, N. (2024). Gus Dur's enduring legacy: Accruing religious merit in the afterlife. *Politics and Governance*, 12, Article 7874. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.7874>
- Hakim, L. (2021). *Utang Republik pada Islam: Perjuangan para tokoh Islam dalam menjaga NKRI*. Pustaka Al-Kautsar.
- Hasan, N. (2005). *Laskar Jihad: Islam, militancy and the quest for identity in post-New Order Indonesia* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Utrecht University.
- Hasan, N. (2006). *Laskar Jihad: Islam, militancy, and the quest for identity in post-New Order Indonesia*. Cornell University Press.
- Hidayatullah, M. (2023, March 9). "Baju" Amien Rais dan Anis Matta. *detikNews*. <https://news.detik.com/kolom/d-6607258/baju-amien-rais-dan-anis-matta>
- Human Rights Watch. (2002). *Breakdown: Four years of communal violence in Central Sulawesi*. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2002/12/04/breakdown/four-years-communal-violence-central-sulawesi>
- IFES. (2004). *Elections: Indonesian presidency 2004 general*. ElectionGuide. <https://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/1936>
- International Crisis Group. (2002). *Indonesia: The search for peace in Maluku*. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/indonesia-search-peace-maluku>
- International Crisis Group. (2004). *Indonesia backgrounder: Why Salafism and terrorism mostly don't mix*.
- Kuntadi. (2019, September 2). 55 anggota DPRD DIY dilantik, 2 di antaranya anak Amien Rais. *iNews Yogyakarta*. <https://yogya.inews.id/berita/55-anggota-dprd-diy-dilantik-2-di-antaranya-anak-amien-rais>

- Latif, Y. (2015, August 4). NU-Muhammadiyah sebagai jangkar etika. *KOMPAS*, 6.
- Limardi, A. (2006). *Perkembangan pelaksanaan hak-hak Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah kota Yogyakarta tahun 1992-2004* [Unpublished bachelor's thesis]. Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. <http://repository.umy.ac.id/handle/123456789/8376>
- Mahdi, R. (2018). *Marketing politik DPC PDIP kota Yogyakarta pada pemilihan legislatif tahun 2014* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. <http://repository.umy.ac.id/handle/123456789/25169>
- Marranci, G. (2006). *Jihad beyond Islam*. Berg.
- Marranci, G. (2009). *Understanding Muslim identity: Rethinking fundamentalism*. Palgrave Macmillan
- Mills, C. W. (1959). *The sociological imagination*. Oxford University Press.
- Muhammadiyah. (2010). *Anggaran Dasar dan Anggaran Rumah Tangga*. Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah
- O'Donnell, G., & Schmitter, P. C. (1986). *Transition fom authoritarian rule: Tentative conclusions about uncertain democracies*. John Hopkins University Press.
- O'Rourke, K. (2002). *Reformasi: The struggle for power in post-Soeharto Indonesia*. Allen & Unwin
- PAN masih representasi Muhammadiyah. (2023, June 3). *Liputan6*. <https://www.liputan6.com/news/read/5305987/pan-masih-representasi-muhammadiyah>
- Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia. (2015). *Pemilihan Umum Tahun 1999*. https://kepuustakaan-presiden.perpusnas.go.id/election/directory/election/?box=detail&id=27&from_box=list&hlm=1&search_ruas=&search_keyword=&activation_status=
- Prabowo akan "getarkan" alun-alun utara Jogja. (2009, March 17). *Detik.com*. <https://news.detik.com/adv-nhl-detikcom/d-1100993/prabowo-akan-getarkan-alun-alun-utara-jogja>
- Rais, A. (1995). *Moralitas politik Muhammadiyah*. Penerbit dinamika.
- Reid, A. (1974). *The Indonesian national revolution, 1945-1950*. Longman.
- Ricklefs, M. C. (2001). *A history of modern Indonesia since c. 1200* (3rd ed.). Standford University Press.
- Shoesmith, D., Franklin, N., & Hidayat, R. (2020). Decentralised governance in Indonesia's disadvantaged regions: A critique of the underperforming model of local governance in Eastern Indonesia. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 39(3), 359-380. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103420963140>
- Sihaloho, M. R. (2021, July 15). Muhammadiyah kehilangan kader terbaik, dr Fauzi putra KH AR Fachruddin meninggal dunia. *TAJDIR.ID*. <https://tajdir.id/2021/07/15/muhammadiyah-kehilangan-kader-terbaik-dr-fauzi-putra-kh-ar-fachruddin-meninggal-dunia>
- Siregar, I. F. (2013). Sejarah pertumbuhan dan perkembangan partai Masyumi (1945-1960). *Thaqafiyat: Jurnal Bahasa, Peradaban dan Informasi Islam*, 14(1), 88-103. <https://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/adab/thaqafiyat/article/view/614/552>
- Snyder, J. (2000). *From voting to violence, democratization and nationalist conflict*. W.W. Norton & Company.
- Statistics Indonesia. (2020). *Hasil sensus penduduk 2020*. <https://www.bps.go.id/pressrelease/2021/01/21/1854/hasil-sensus-penduduk-2020.html>
- Syifa. (2021, July 15). Dr. Fauzi meninggalkan keteladanan bagi warga Muhammadiyah. *Muhammadiyah*. <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/2021/07/dr-fauzi-meninggalkan-keteladanan-bagi-warga-muhammadiyah>
- Tadjoeddin, M. Z. (2002). *Anatomy of social violence in the context of transition: The case of Indonesian 1990-2001*. United Nations Support Facility for Indonesian Recovery.
- Varshney, A., Panggabean, R., & Tadjoeddin, M. Z. (2004). *Patterns of collective violence in Indonesia (1990-2003)* (Working Paper No. 04/03). United Nations Support Facility for Indonesian Recovery.

About the Author



Muhammad Najib Azca is an associate professor of sociology at Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia. Graduated from Universitas Gadjah Mada (BA, 1996), Australian National University (MA, 2003), and the University of Amsterdam (PhD, 2011), he was head of the Center for Security and Peace Studies (CSPS) at Universitas Gadjah Mada in 2017–2022. He published several articles in international publications, including *Journal of Contemporary Asia*; *Conflict, Security & Development*; *Youth Studies Journal*; and *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*.

From Villain to Hero: The Role of Disengaged Terrorists in Social Reintegration Initiatives

Haula Noor 

Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia, Indonesia

Correspondence: Haula Noor (haula.noor@uuii.ac.id)

Submitted: 11 November 2023 **Accepted:** 1 March 2024 **Published:** 9 May 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue “Indonesian Heroes and Villains: National Identity, Politics, Law, and Security” edited by Nathan Franklin (Charles Darwin University) and Hans Hägerdal (Linnaeus University), fully open access at <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i380>

Abstract

Convicted terrorists released from prison often experience social stigma, exclusion, and difficulties reintegrating into society. Authorities have identified the utility of using formerly convicted and released terrorists or disengaged terrorists as an intermediary to help and support terrorist inmates as they go through social reintegration processes. This article explores their role as an intermediary who advocates for fair treatment and rights for their fellow ex-inmates, assisting families and helping them undergo the reintegration process. This research involved interviews with members of three foundations: Yayasan Persadani, Hubbul Wathon Indonesia 19, and DeBintal. By analysing the narrative of the participants, this study found that social reintegration efforts led by disengaged terrorists fostered a sense of social belonging and connectedness among ex-inmates. In addition, these foundations offer valuable assistance to terrorist inmates while ensuring community safety. They serve as a reliable support system during times of need and act as a communication bridge between them and the government. This framework positions these foundations as integral components in addressing concerns about the effectiveness of government-led integration initiatives. The approach adopted by these foundations has positive effects on preventing the re-engagement of released inmates with extremist networks. Despite the need to measure the effectiveness of these initiatives comprehensively, efforts made by these foundations provide potential for societal resilience against terrorism.

Keywords

advocacy; disengaged terrorists; former terrorist inmates; Indonesia; social reintegration; terrorism

1. Introduction

Indonesia is a country where ethnic and religious violence takes place, from separatist movements to religious rivalry, which includes violence, extremism, or terrorism (Davidson, 2008; Sidel, 2006; van Klinken, 2007). Individuals convicted of these acts, particularly terrorism, are regarded as terrorists based on Indonesia's 2003 and 2018 counter-terrorism laws. The 2018 law, Article 1(2), defines terrorism as any act that uses "violence or threat of violence to create a widespread atmosphere of terror or fear, resulting in mass casualties and/or causing destruction or damage to vital strategic objects, the environment, public facilities, or an international facility" (Pemerintah Pusat, 2018). Referring to the broad definition of terrorism above, the rates of arrest and imprisonment for individuals who commit terrorism offenses are high and persistent in Indonesia. The head of the National Counter Terrorism Agency (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme [BNPT]), Boy Rafli Amar, confirmed that the total number of terrorist prisoners in Indonesia is 1,031 in 2022 with a further 1,362 individuals who were released from prison from 2015–2021 (Fadjarudin, 2022). Some 370 terrorist suspects were arrested by Detachment 88 (Detasemen Khusus 88, or Densus 88) of the Indonesian National Police in 2021 ("Throughout 2021," 2021). The number was higher compared to the previous year, in which 232 terrorist suspects were arrested. In 2019, 275 people were detained for eight terrorism cases, and 396 from 19 terrorism cases in 2018 ("257 orang dicap," 2019).

The government has responded by issuing several regulations to counter terrorism. One of these is the President Regulation No 7/2021 on National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violent Extremism That Leads to Terrorism (*Rencana Aksi Nasional Pencegahan dan Penanggulangan Ekstremisme Berbasis Kekerasan Yang Mengarah Pada Terorisme*). This action plan contains 130 coordinated programs on preventing and tackling terrorism, which various ministries and institutions implement, along with community participation. Several government institutions, such as the BNPT, the Densus 88, and the Directorate General of Corrections (Direktorat Jenderal Pemasyarakatan), are involved in deradicalisation programs. To date, hundreds of terrorist inmates have been deradicalised, and their allegiance to the Republic of Indonesia marks the program's success and compliance with the law (Maulana et al., 2022).

The recidivism cases are only 11.39% out of 825 cases between 2002 and 2020 (Institute for Policy Analysis and Conflict, 2020, p. 3). Generally speaking, a relatively low rate is not of great concern for BNPT. Nevertheless, observers have questioned the effectiveness of Indonesia's prison rehabilitation program in preventing inmates from continuing their patronage of old networks (Osman, 2014). Observers are particularly sceptical about its efficacy due to several reasons, such as the absence of coordination between stakeholders (Anindya, 2018), excess prison capacity and a lack of competence among prison officers in deradicalisation efforts (Widya, 2020), prison corruption (Schulze, 2008), and inside prison radicalisation (Suratman, 2017). To address these concerns, the government involves individuals outside the government institutions to be their deradicalisation partners, including foundations established by several former convicted and released terrorists (hereafter, I refer to them as disengaged terrorists; Wildan, 2022). Since 2020, some disengaged terrorists have formed foundations as their responses to the need for actual participation in the reintegration initiatives and their active contribution to society. Their involvement in this program is considered effective in helping and supporting their fellow inmates' re-engagement in the community (Widya et al., 2020).

Meanwhile, the government has claimed a success rate of 95% for their prison deradicalisation efforts (Dajani, 2016). However, this success rate is not based on calculating recidivism cases, but on the number of those

who attended the deradicalisation program and declared their oath of loyalty to the Indonesian state (Ilham, 2022). In fact, the program is voluntary, yet numerous inmates show little interest in participating. Moreover, the emphasis lies heavily on fostering allegiance to the Indonesian state rather than equipping detainees, both during their incarceration and post-release, with fresh objectives, employable skills, or avenues for new connections (Institute for Policy Analysis and Conflict, 2020). Most detainees who attended the program were disengaged based on their own decisions. Thus, the programs are largely ineffective. Publicised claims of success have overlooked the role of these foundations in the deradicalisation program, which according to some former inmates assisted them through the reintegration process.

Even though studies on the reintegration of these individuals are essential in both academic research and terrorism prevention projects, the process of social reintegration of these people remains under-studied. Therefore, this article asks: How do former convicted terrorists contribute to and support the social reintegration process for individuals released from prison? And, as part of their concerns toward the government's reintegration program effectiveness, in what ways can their contribution and support prevent extremist networks from approaching and discouraging individuals from returning to terrorism? This article presents an empirical study involving 12 members of the three foundations, namely Yayasan Persadani, Hubbul Wathon Indonesia 19 (HWI-19), and DeBintal, to understand various factors influencing the efforts of these organisations in the social reintegration of their fellow former inmates, and their experiences of rebranding their image from previously known as a villain (terrorist) to a hero of social reintegration.

The present study suggests that providing opportunities for disengaged terrorists who were previously involved in terrorism to contribute to the social reintegration process of their fellow inmates can be a response to concerns about the effectiveness of deradicalisation programs run by the government. Under the membership of the foundations, they can form meaningful connections with one another, which the government cannot facilitate. These social connections play a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance, greatly benefiting their transition to civilian life after prison. The foundations involved in this process play two roles. Firstly, they serve as a support system for their fellow ex-inmates, aiding their reintegration. The assistance they provide not only supports the individuals but also helps convince the community that these individuals can make valuable contributions. Secondly, these foundations can serve as a communication bridge between former inmates, society, and the government, facilitating communication where there is a lack of effective communication and prevailing prejudices among them.

The next section of this article reviews the literature on social reintegration within the context of terrorism offenses and the deradicalisation program conducted in Indonesia. It also explains the method and covers a brief background on these foundations. The last two sections explain and discuss the findings and conclusions.

2. Social Reintegration in a Deradicalisation Program by Disengaged Terrorists

Several studies have discussed the social reintegration of released inmates re-entering society who were jailed for sexual offenses (McAlinden, 2010), mental illness (Dalgaard et al., 2022), and drug addiction (Maruna et al., 2013), and the likelihood of ex-inmates reoffending. Findings have suggested that comprehensive intervention through various stakeholders' collaboration is critical to lowering the possibility of recidivism. The partnership involves multiple agencies, the inmate's family, and community-based organisations (Griffiths et al., 2007,

p. 1). Engaging these various stakeholders can address the complex challenges ex-inmates face and provide the support and resources necessary for their successful reintegration into society.

The social reintegration of former combatants is one aspect of the disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration process (Munive & Stepputat, 2015; Özerdem, 2002; Steenken, 2017). Özerdem (2012) argues that an inclusive approach to social reintegration is the most effective model for ex-combatant reintegration by focusing on three dimensions, namely “family and community,” “sustainable employment,” and “civic responsibilities” (Özerdem, 2012, p. 53). This model emphasises the role of the community by implementing the concept of “community-based reintegration,” where communities with former combatants act as active agents in the planning and implementation of reintegration programs (Özerdem, 2012, p. 61). However, this concept is more suitable for application in war-to-peace scenarios, where community acceptance is more pronounced than counter-terrorism strategy (Horgan & Braddock, 2010; Van Der Heide & Geenen, 2017). Although some former terrorists were combatants in the Syrian war, the nature of their involvement is considered a violation of Indonesian law. From the context above, social reintegration can be defined as a strategy or a critical aspect of post-release programs that aim to assist individuals in their smooth transition back into society and prevent them from returning to unlawful activities. Further, social reintegration as an ideal intends to move past simple, quantifiable measurements of success.

Previous studies have largely overlooked the role of disengaged terrorists who actively serve as intermediaries between their fellow ex-inmates and the broader community (Anindya, 2018; Gitaningrum & Ahnaf, 2021; Horgan et al., 2020; Mubaraq et al., 2022; Sumpter et al., 2021). In previous research on deradicalisation strategies, the involvement of disengaged terrorist prisoners in these initiatives has been seen as significant. They are considered a credible voice to their fellow terrorist inmates who are struggling to return to their after-prison life (Nasution et al., 2021), a key factor in the program’s success (Wildan, 2022), and instrumental in forming new peace communities (Widya et al., 2020). Moreover, the reintegration process should be tailored to the individual’s needs, focusing on equipping them with the capabilities to become agents of positive change (Macfarlane, 2023).

However, what is missing from the literature is the perspective and role of disengaged terrorists who can offer firsthand insights into transitioning from ex-terrorists to making meaningful, non-violent contributions to society. Their role in optimising the involvement of various stakeholders, including ex-prisoners, family members, the community, and others, in the social reintegration process has received limited attention in prior studies. This study explores how these foundations have transformed the lives of former inmates facing social reintegration challenges, promoting their engagement. Understanding the social inclusion experiences of former convicted terrorists is crucial for shaping future social interventions to support their networks and social relationships.

3. The Deradicalisation Program in Indonesia

Since 2010, the BNPT has been responsible for the deradicalisation program in Indonesia. Densus 88, through its special unit, Identification and Socialisation (Identifikasi dan Sosialisasi, or Idensos), joined the responsibility in 2016. Following the Bali bombing in 2002 and 2005, the program shifted its focus to counter extremist Islamic ideologies, which primarily operates in prisons (Suarda, 2020), offering discussions on Islam with moderate religious preachers, psychological consultations, and entrepreneurship training (Chernov

Hwang, 2017; Febrica, 2010). In conducting these activities, the BNPT and Densus 88 collaborated with the Correctional Bureau (Lembaga Pemasyarakatan) to facilitate the program. The program invited preachers and officials to initiate dialogue and open discussions with the prisoners about radical views of Islam. The program aims to influence radicals through dialogue with like-minded individuals and to change the perception that government officials are inherently anti-Islamic by displaying genuine care and building trust (Schulze, 2008).

However, not all programs have been effective. Success rates vary from prison to prison, with some successfully facilitating the program while others were less so. Issues that hindered success included corruption and inadequate communication among stakeholders. Inviting moderate Islamic preachers to discuss Islam with radicalised prisoners proved counterproductive, as it often led to rejection. The rejection is often fuelled by famous, or infamous, Islamic preachers, like Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, who publicly advocate for an Islamic state and Islamic law (shariah), and warn people not to blindly follow the government, even when they are in prison (Franklin, 2008). Additionally, early deradicalisation program arrangements were poorly structured, with terrorist prisoners mixed with other inmates, fostering the transmission of radical views and hindering deradicalisation efforts (Sumpter, 2017).

In 2018, through the Ministry of Law and Human Rights Regulation, the government created a prison classification to maximise prison management. The category comprises super maximum-security (one man, one cell principal), maximum-security, medium-security, and minimum-security prisons (Maulana et al., 2022). This classification is not only intended for terrorism cases but also for other crimes involving high-risk inmates. Due to this classification, individuals with high-level extremism can be housed in a super-maximum-security prison. The rehabilitation process for these inmates uses an individualised approach by engaging religious preachers and experts (Salas & Anwar, 2021; Yuliyanto et al., 2021). For other classifications, the program uses a communal approach, where the religious experts gather all inmates in one room to preach or engage in dialogue (Salas & Anwar, 2021). Apart from ideological rehabilitation, the Correctional Bureau also provides training in life skills for inmates, such as welding, livestock farming, agriculture, and more. The deradicalisation program includes this training within the prison, preparing individual inmates for reintegration upon release (Syauqillah & Hanita, 2021).

While the government remains focused on implementing the deradicalisation program within prisons, it also continues the program after terrorism inmates are released from prison as part of the social reintegration programs. This program is carried out through skill development and entrepreneurship training, aiming to empower them economically and foster self-sufficiency. Many former inmates receive financial assistance to start a business as part of the mentoring and monitoring process. This assistance is provided on an individual basis, tailored to their own needs. Unfortunately, this approach is considered ineffective because success cannot be guaranteed, as not all former inmates choose to start a business. Starting a business requires thorough preparation, including searching for a location, determining the type of business, identifying the target market, assessing potential competitors, and acquiring business knowledge. Additionally, the lack of skills these former inmates possess that are relevant to the available job fields is another significant obstacle they face (Samsono & Sholehah, 2022; Sumpter et al., 2021). Further, the government's lack of evaluation and monitoring also contributes to the short-lived nature of such programs.

Initiatives from a group of disengaged terrorists who have established a foundation have emerged to address these gaps, including the government's inadequacy in evaluation and monitoring. With the full resources

provided by the government and the intention to support their fellow ex-inmates, the foundation has become a partner of the government in facilitating social reintegration and assisting in implementing the deradicalisation program inside and outside prisons. They collaborate with the Correctional Bureau by conducting visits to prisons to engage in dialogue with terrorist prisoners and preach on religious moderation. What distinguishes the program offered by the foundation is the involvement of preachers, who are former inmates with a historical background in terrorist activities. Additionally, the economic support provided by the foundation creates job opportunities, fosters skills appropriate to available fields, and, most importantly, cultivates a sense of brotherhood reminiscent of their previous networks. This support facilitates their reintegration into society, allowing them to resume their roles as productive members. Thus, focusing on ideological transformation becomes a prerequisite for being open and interacting with the community. However, equipping them with skills, opportunities, and, most importantly, a suitable support system is even more important to facilitate the reintegration process into the community.

4. Method

This study aims to explore and understand the role of the three foundations, namely Yayasan Putra Persadani, Yayasan HWI-19, and Yayasan DeBintal, in advocating for inmates during imprisonment, assisting the families, helping terrorist inmates through the process of rehabilitation, and reintegrating them into the society. I conducted interviews with 12 disengaged terrorists who were members of these three foundations. I interviewed the participants online and in face-to-face meetings. I successfully interviewed two members of Yayasan Putra Persadani online while I was still in Canberra in November 2021. I continued interviewing the other two members by traveling to Semarang, Central Java, where the Yayasan Persadani is located, in early January 2022. On 15 January 2022, I was invited by Yayasan HWI-19 to deliver a speech to the wives of mostly ex-terrorist inmates. I used that opportunity to make an appointment to interview four organisation members on 22–23 January 2022. Finally, I interviewed the four members of DeBintal through Zoom meetings on 4–5 February as Covid-19 cases spread in Indonesia and government restrictions limited travel for everyone. Participants were asked questions related to the motivations that prompted their decision to join the foundation, their experiences with the foundation, and how they managed to sustain their roles within the foundation and tried to support their fellow ex-inmates in reintegrating socially. To maintain anonymity and confidentiality, this study utilises initials to represent the interviewed respondent.

5. Profile of the Foundations

Currently, more than 13 foundations or organisations in Indonesia perform similar roles in social reintegration. Among these 13, the oldest foundation is Gema Salam, which was formed in 2018 in Solo, Central Java, under the supervision of BNPT. The number of foundations then increased significantly after Densus 88, through Idensos, joined the handling of deradicalisation programs. Consequently, the primary sources of funding came from BNPT and Idensos (Densus 88). Although BNPT was primarily responsible for handling rehabilitation and all deradicalisation processes, Densus's involvement in this initiative was unavoidable, creating overlapping roles and responsibilities. The strategy offered by Densus was different and, somehow, preferable among the ex-inmates. The strategy of direct assistance to foundations is one of the reasons why foundations under Densus are more numerous than those under BNPT. Moreover, the issue of disappointment spread out and was felt among the ex-inmates, contributing to the decreased number of foundations under BNPT. The peak of

disappointment toward BNPT occurred in 2021 when 51 former inmates filed and signed a petition to disband BNPT (Pembela NKRI, 2021). The petition contains the inadequacy of BNPT's performance in overseeing the deradicalisation program, encompassing allegations of program success erroneously attributed to BNPT, when in fact they stem from the efforts of Densus 88. However, the petition failed to gain significant traction within the community, particularly the government, due to the ongoing importance of BNPT's role in national security efforts.

Apart from this disappointment, the selection of these foundations is based on the representations of their funding source. Yayasan Putra Persaudaraan Anak Negeri (Persadani) receives financial support mainly from BNPT, with minor contributions from the local police department in Central Java and other donations from the community. The other two are funded by Densus 88, with HWI-19 supervised directly under the head of Densus and DeBintal under Idensos. The nature of the supervision remains unclear, whether due to the close personal relationship of the prominent figure of the foundation with the government institutions or genuinely part of the government reintegration program. Along with the changing strategy of the government toward the deradicalisation program, the involvement of these foundations became an asset and meaningful partnership for the government in the initiatives. Additionally, the benefit of this partnership is evident in the streamlined recruitment process of inmates into these foundations. The easy access given by the authorities benefited the foundations in recruiting potential members since the beginning of the program by approaching them through providing dialogue done by the foundations, fulfilling their needs related to family matters, and providing options for employment. The sub-sections below summarise the brief profile of the selected foundations.

5.1. Yayasan Putra Persaudaraan Anak Negeri (Persadani)

Founded on 20 February 2020, Yayasan Putra Persadani or Persaudaraan Anak Negeri (The Unity of the Children of the National Foundation) pioneered the social reintegration of terrorist inmates. Some of the members of Persadani were former members of Gema Salam in Solo, Central Java, who separated due to disappointment with the foundation management. Since its declaration, Putra Persadani started reaching out to ex-terrorist inmates by regularly visiting them in prison and becoming an informal courier for the inmates' families who wanted to send food and daily necessities. On 2 March 2020, the Ministry of Law and Human Rights granted the organisation formal status. Under the leadership of Machmudi Hariono, a disengaged terrorist who went to the Philippines to engage in holy war (*jihadi*) from 2000–2002, the organisation now has approximately 33 members spread over the North Coast Road of Java (Jalur Pantai Utara). The foundation actively provides services for picking up released inmates from prison, accompanying families to visit their relatives in prison, bringing essential items and basic necessities for inmates, and assisting village officials and neighbours where the released inmates reside.

5.2. Yayasan HWI-19

Founded on 23 November 2019, Yayasan HWI-19, or Hubbul Wathon Indonesia 19, was established by disengaged terrorist inmates as an organisation providing economic support for their members. The adviser, Haris Amir Falah, and the leader of the organisation, Hendi Suhartono, are the main figures of the organisation. They established PT DenS or PT Modern Sentul, located on 35 ha of land lent by the Sentul City company in Sentul, West Java. The key figure behind the formation of this company was the head of Densus 88, Marthinus Hukom, who successfully lobbied a big company, like Sentul City, to lend some of

their lands to the organisation for 20 years. Since the agreement began in 2019, over 5 ha have been used for business. The company owns several industries, such as agriculture, farming, and agrotourism, namely Leuwi Pangaduan, which brings the most profit to the organisation, approximately three billion rupiah (A\$300,000) per year. The organisation has 22 members around Bogor, West Java, but only 10 oversee daily business activities.

5.3. Yayasan DeBintal

Yayasan DeBintal, also known as Yayasan Dekat Bintang dan Langit (Close to the Star and Sky Foundation), was established and managed by disengaged terrorists residing in Jakarta, Bekasi, Depok, and Tangerang. The organisation was founded in February 2021 and inaugurated by Idensos of Densus 88. Like the two previous organisations, the organisation's primary purpose is to help former terrorist inmates integrate socially and economically independently by managing a quail farm and selling quail eggs. Yayasan DeBintal uses social media like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram under "debintal_media" to promote their activities to the mostly younger, tech-savvy generation. Yayasan DeBintal is managed by eight people and led by a former Jamaah Ansharud Daulah member. The organisation has 25 members who actively run programs, including economic empowerment, literacy support, bureaucracy support, and social support.

6. Findings and Discussion

6.1. What Does a Loyalty Pledge to the Indonesian State Mean to the Inmates?

Before discussing the findings, it is helpful to examine how former terrorist inmates view pledging allegiance to the state that they previously considered idolatrous (*taghut*). During the pledge, the terrorist inmates must declare an oath (*ikrar*) indicating their loyalty to the state political ideology of Pancasila (the Five Principles) as Indonesian citizens. Each participant concludes the oath by kissing the flag and singing the Indonesian national anthem. Historically, under the New Order government of Soeharto, riots occurred accompanying the implementation of Pancasila as the sole political ideology of Indonesia in 1982. All social-political organisations and institutions were forced to accept Pancasila over Islam, or other principles as their organisational ideology (Morfit, 1981; Prawiranegara, 1984). The two largest Islamic groups in Indonesia, namely the traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama and the reformist-modernist Muhammadiyah, were among the Muslim organisations that accepted Pancasila as the organisational ideology. Although they have not been fully involved in the deradicalisation program (Arifah, 2018), both have since become organisations that preach peaceful forms of Islam and accept the Pancasila state model, which allows for accommodating religion in state affairs (Franklin, 2020).

From the point of view of terrorist inmates, pledging allegiance to the Indonesian state is something they must avoid. The first consequence is that they will cancel their oath (*bai'at*) to the network leader and nullify their faith or *nawaqidul iman*. Those who do this will be considered apostates (*murtad*). Those who took the oath have shifted their loyalty from the network to the *taghut* state and will be labelled as infidels (*kafir*). Therefore, their blood and all their belongings are considered lawful (*halal*) to be shed. Apart from that, being in the community (*jama'ah*) is essential in Islam; they also believe that those who remain within the *jama'ah* will receive assistance from God. God's guidance helps them to stay in Islamic consciousness, brotherhood, commitment, and dedication and achieve the objectives of the Islamic faith.

The second consequence of recognising Pancasila as the state-sole ideology is that it creates an internal division within their former networks, not to mention the friendship and collegiality among the network members. While being in the *jama'ah* is fundamental, the reality that their people and brothers have terminated their membership and opposed them ideologically can severely affect the safety of disengaged individuals. Some receive death threats from other loyal members and are labeled as traitors and disloyal individuals (Chalmers, 2017, p. 342). The feeling of being monitored and watched is also common among the released inmates. Due to this, many of them moved from their previous residences in search of safety.

Despite the government's perspective on the significance of the "Ikrar NKRI" in marking the culmination of the deradicalisation program, the pledge often fails to truly reflect the genuine intention of the inmates to be loyal to the Indonesian state. This discrepancy arises from several factors. Firstly, the voluntary nature of the deradicalisation program attendance among inmates diminishes the mandatory aspect of the pledge. Sermons or dialogues with terrorist inmates are often conducted casually and without strict enforcement. Secondly, many inmates opt for personal reflection on their past misdeeds, facilitated by reading books provided by Densus and engaging in discussions among themselves. Rather than the formal pledge, this self-examination process seems to hold more significance for the inmates. Thirdly, rumours circulate within the prison environment, suggesting that agreeing to the pledge could lead to conditional release from incarceration. These rumours further blur the true motivation behind the pledges made by the inmates, casting doubt on the authenticity and sincerity of their allegiance to the Indonesian state. This doubt and scepticism toward the ceremonial pledge provoked former terrorist inmates to submit the petition against BNPT. Some members of these foundations were among those who signed the petition. According to them, all transformations in the mindset observed among former inmates are attributable to the endeavours of the roaming proselytising (*safari da'wah*) team of the Densus 88, rather than those of the BNPT. Despite this setback, it underscored growing dissatisfaction and calls for reform within Indonesia's deradicalisation and rehabilitation framework.

6.2. Rebuilding Lives After Release

Many former inmates experienced social and economic uncertainty when facing life after prison (Western et al., 2015). Being released from prison is not about resuming the life that has been postponed for some years. Rather, it is transitioning from being socially excluded to being self-included in the family and community (Visher & Travis, 2003). For most former terrorist inmates, the first step of social reintegration is rebuilding family relationships. Almost all former inmates experienced difficulties in this process. This research found that some prisoners decided to re-pledge their allegiance to the state of Indonesia while their family members, especially their wives, remained loyal to the terrorist network. Their allegiance created problems in their personal lives.

One respondent told me:

One of our members experienced a tough situation when he pledged his loyalty to Indonesia. His wife, who lived in the area where the majority are ISIS supporters, received a request from the network demanding her separation from her husband. According to the network doctrine, the husband's allegiance aborts their marriage agreement. In other words, the husband has automatically divorced the wife. Due to this, the wife may marry another man without necessarily

waiting for the period of waiting (*iddah*) to complete or without permission from the husband. (HD, 22 January 2022)

The interview above indicates that those who state their loyalty to Indonesia are considered apostates (*murtad*) by disengaging from their network. Consequently, a marriage can become invalid, in accordance with their Islamic understanding. This situation is further compounded in some cases when the divorced wife is married off by the head of the network (*amir*).

Such instances of divorce and shunning, which former inmates are aware of, are common if they state their support for the Pancasila state. In these situations, the organisation becomes the mediator between the former inmate and his family. Communication between household members is vital to avoid family dysfunction through separation. In addition, finding a place to stay is another important step to successful social integration. Often, former prisoners move to different communities away from where they originated (Simes, 2019; Warner, 2015). Obtaining income is another prerequisite to reintegrating and connecting with mainstream society and the state.

The next step that is also challenging in the reintegration process is returning their social life to the community. The transition has not always been successful. A respondent from Semarang, for example, experienced loneliness and exclusion. He told me:

After being released from prison, my only wish was to return to my family in Semarang. My psychological condition was unstable. When I was released from prison and was home for two days, no one from my extended family or neighbours visited me. I was aware that they were probably scared and worried about my presence. The next day, someone with a motorcycle visited me. Apparently, he was one of the leaders of a terrorist network in Lamongan, East Java. His visit was extraordinary. He offered me financial security and asked me to return to the network. He gave me two weeks to think about it. (MH, 16 November 2021)

From the above interview, it is evident that newly released individuals experience social, economic, and psychological instability. These factors can lead to alienation from family and community, and cause income security, which marginalise former prisoners from mainstream society with limited access to opportunities. In terms of livelihood, one of the most reliable jobs is often being a motorcycle taxi driver or working in construction. However, the average earnings of these jobs are extremely low. Ex-prisoners, despite being employed, were often unable to fulfill their basic needs, especially when they had a family to care for. Such vulnerability made released prisoners easy targets by former terrorism connections to coerce them into returning to old networks. Indeed, terrorist networks are aware of ex-inmates social and economic difficulties in returning to mainstream society. Consequently, their former networks make offers, including food, basic needs, and housing, to create a sense of inclusion and security. For example, a member of DeBintal foundation told me that radical networks usually have significant financial support from their members and supporters, which enables them to maintain their influence inside and outside the prison.

Members of all foundations are aware of the threat posed by comparatively well-funded terrorist organisations. Therefore, the foundations created an economic assistance program to provide inmates with employment opportunities. The foundations believe that fulfilling basic needs is a precondition for disengagement from

the network. The HWI-19, for instance, started their financial and economic assistance program by opening an agrotourism project, namely Leuwi Pangaduan, and a livestock farming business, which has included cows, ducks, and fish. They believe that financial empowerment can enhance family and social security.

Having a criminal history creates difficulties in securing a job, as some employers may interpret it as a sign of unreliability and unsuitability (Harding et al., 2014, p. 5). Consequently, employment opportunities are key to addressing economic and social independence challenges. To enhance the skills and employability of these ex-inmates, the foundations provide training programs that cover various areas, such as farming, animal breeding, and managerial skills, designed to support their work in the foundation itself. Additionally, the foundation arranges for experts and business professionals to impart knowledge to these individuals, further empowering them with valuable skills and insights.

In addition, community support is undeniably crucial in aiding individuals who have been through incarceration, providing them with a sense of belonging and resources for reintegration (Cherney, 2021; Smith, 2021). The community plays a role in the supervisory process. Although not formalised, their involvement is integrated into the formal social monitoring conducted by Correctional Agency officials, where released inmates under probation and parole must regularly report to the Correctional Agency office. This monitoring aims to facilitate engagement and reduce recidivism by overseeing former inmates' employment status and activities. Throughout this process, the agency collaborates with the local village authorities where the released inmates reside.

However, in a practical sense, supervision does not involve the community. The released prisoners are usually in contact with people they feel comfortable with, or those with a similar background in terrorism offenses. In this regard, the significance of support from the foundations cannot be understated. Their support holds unique credibility, as it comes from individuals who have experienced the same challenges, from opposing the government to accepting its program. This shared understanding fosters a deeper level of trust and empathy, enabling the foundations to offer invaluable guidance and resources that address the specific needs of those transitioning from prison to society.

6.3. Support From Within

The credibility of people who shared similar experiences of imprisonment due to their involvement in terrorism has been commendable because of its honest and personal nature (Nasution et al., 2021; Wildan, 2022). Their firsthand insights into ideological transformation and ways of coping with life after prison offer invaluable contributions to providing other former terrorist inmates with a support system. The comprehensive support provided to inmates begins from the initial court trial process until release from prison. The support includes prison visits with the inmates' families, picking up released inmates and marriage matchmakers, assisting with identity cards, health and medicine issues, as well as providing employment-related training and helping to find a job.

The nature of the membership is voluntary, which creates “no guarantee” that they will join and remain members of the foundations. Nevertheless, assisting terrorist prisoners aims to give inmates the understanding that there are other entities, like the foundation, capable of providing support and care outside terrorist networks. In this regard, the foundations have become places where former inmates can

develop new skills and friendships they have never had previously. Upon the former inmates' agreement to join the foundation, they are asked to attend regular meetings and training sessions to acquire the necessary job skills required for operating the foundation's business. Members are encouraged to run the foundation's business independently. While joining a foundation is relatively simple, ensuring that former inmates remain in the foundation long-term is much more difficult. Like many other voluntary-based organisations, members choose to leave and establish their own businesses. Differences in opinion and perceptions often influence their decision to leave, particularly in management practices, including concerns that a foundation may lack autonomy due to its affiliation with the government.

Some foundations offer other types of support, including owning or renting guest houses (*rumah singgah*) where wives and families of the inmates can visit and stay temporarily. I had the opportunity to visit the guest house managed by DeBintal in Bekasi, West Java. DeBintal has rented the house since 2021 to provide a place for families of inmates who wish to visit their relatives in prison. The guest house also serves as a venue for social gatherings and Islamic discussions, as well as a basecamp for the foundation management. According to one of the members of DeBintal, the objective of the *rumah singgah* is to provide real support for potential inmates who are targeted for recruitment to the foundation, demonstrating the seriousness of the foundation to both potential members and radical networks. One respondent said to me:

If we compare our *rumah singgah* to the one owned by the radical network, ours pales in comparison. The financial support they receive from the network is substantial and continuous, resulting in facilities and support for families far superior to ours. This enables them to persuade inmates and their families to remain loyal to the network. However, having this *rumah singgah* is a step forward for us, at least demonstrating our seriousness to potential members. (HF, 4 February 2022)

DeBintal admitted that their income from the foundation's business is inadequate to cover all expenses. They still need to solicit individual donations and send personalised messages to donors through WhatsApp. HWI-19 appears to be more independent in terms of its financial situation. The personal connection between the advisor of the foundation and the head of the Densus seems to be one of the factors contributing to this privileged situation. This connection has facilitated access to resources and support, which DeBintal may not have had otherwise. As a result, HWI-19 faces fewer financial challenges and can sustain its operations without relying heavily on donations or external funding.

Although close connections with the government might not occur in every foundation, the foundation's becoming a partner of the government in the reintegration process highlights the importance of DeBintal's role. This role is crucial in addressing the coordination problems between the government, former terrorist inmates, and the community, a concern that has been emphasised by some scholars (Abubakar, 2016; Braddock, 2014). The primary goal is to foster communication, understanding, and cooperation among these three stakeholders, facilitating a balanced approach to rehabilitation, reintegration, and community safety. For instance, the foundations will accompany the released terrorist inmates to their home village or another location where they will stay after prison. The foundations will communicate with the head of the village to provide basic information about the released inmates and to foster an understanding of how to integrate them socially. This method ensures cohesive knowledge among all stakeholders. Additionally, the community benefits from a sense of security, knowing that the foundation becomes a designated avenue to address any concerns or issues that may arise.

In addition to fostering connections among stakeholders, the foundations also take on responsibilities related to the legal process. This is particularly evident in its function as a bail guarantor for prisoners upon their release on parole. According to the Regulation of the Minister of Law and Human Rights of the Republic of Indonesia No. 18/2019, the guarantors have responsibilities: first, ensuring inmates do not engage in unlawful activities and, second, assisting in guiding and supervising inmates during their participation in the assimilation program (Kementerian Hukum dan HAM, 2019). While the expectation is that family members of the released prisoners would step in as guarantors, a complex situation arises in cases where family members, especially spouses, refuse to be bail guarantors due to ideological differences. This ideological divide becomes the prevailing cause behind such refusals, highlighting the intricate socio-political landscape within these bail arrangements.

In general, the foundations' multifaceted role aligns with its purpose to address the limited social networks of many former terrorist inmates beyond their terrorist affiliations. Believing that being part of a network is paramount, the foundations were meant to be formed as a social network that can provide them with a sense of sacredness (Atran & Sheikh, 2015, p. 3), secrecy, and efficiency (Will et al., 2010, p. 228). This is similar to what was previously offered by radical networks, all while aiding the government's efforts to rehabilitate released inmates. While the supervision of released inmates is the responsibility of the BNPT or Densus 88, comprehensive intervention to limit the risk of former terrorists returning to their old networks can be achieved by involving these foundations in the program.

7. Conclusion

This article found that the three foundations, namely Persadani, HWI-19, and DeBintal, which disengaged terrorist inmates lead, have proven effective in building a sense of social belonging and connectedness among other former terrorist inmates in Indonesia. The accessibility to financial support given by the government to these foundations creates a distinctive capital for them to support fellow ex-inmates. Through this approach, the foundations provide former inmates with comprehensive support for employment opportunities, such as business skills training, legal and social assistance, and family support. The combination of accessibility to the government's financial support and the foundations' commitment is likely to be the most effective in supporting the successful reintegration of individuals with a history of terrorism offenses. This combination addresses multiple aspects of individuals' needs—economic, social, and psychological. This provides a comprehensive approach that maximises the chances of long-term success to reduce the risk of recidivism.

This article echoes social integration literature, highlighting effective interventions involving former terrorists as credible voices. Optimising the role of these people helps to change the image of a terrorist from that of a villain to that of a hero on a redemptive journey. This shift in perspective is pivotal not only for the reintegration of these individuals but also for challenging deep-rooted stereotypes and misconceptions about the belief that individual terrorists are impossible to transform ideologically and socially. Most have undergone deep introspection, critical thinking, and a willingness to examine and potentially revise deeply held beliefs. Their transformation result goes well beyond disengagement. The reassessment and re-evaluation of their ethical values and beliefs lead them to a deeper understanding of their authentic selves, aligning with new beliefs and social frameworks. This transformation also signifies individuals having agency over their terrorist network and factors influencing their previous choices.

Nevertheless, despite the comprehensive role of foundations in the social reintegration program, a notable institutional rivalry between BNPT and Densus 88 reveals to be the unseen dynamics within Indonesia's counter-terrorism landscape. This rivalry, often obscured from public view, stems from a complex interplay of jurisdictional disputes and competition for resources and influence. Within this competitive environment, efforts to eradicate terrorism can become imbalanced, as the agencies' priorities and strategies may differ. Consequently, negative impacts emerge, such as overlapping roles and responsibilities, which can undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of counter-terrorism initiatives. Moreover, the agencies' financial support might create reliance on commercial ventures and economic dependencies. This reliance on government funding sources raises questions about the financial independence of some foundations and the neutrality of the government, as it creates potential conflicts of interest that could compromise their counter-terrorism efforts. Thus, while these agencies work tirelessly to combat terrorism, the unseen dynamics of institutional rivalry and financial dependencies underscore the need for greater transparency, coordination, and accountability within Indonesia's counter-terrorism framework.

In conclusion, the efforts of foundations like Persadani, HWI-19, and DeBintal are commendable in facilitating the reintegration of former terrorists into society. Despite the challenges posed by reliance on government funding and institutional rivalries, there is an opportunity for positive transformation. With a commitment to transparency, coordination, and accountability, these obstacles can be overcome, ensuring that counter-terrorism efforts done by those foundations remain effective and sustainable. Moreover, the remarkable journey of disengaged terrorists who have embraced ideological changes underscores the potential for profound societal impact. By harnessing their experiences and fostering a culture of inclusivity, Indonesia can be more resilient against the threat of terrorism.

Acknowledgments

The author is grateful to the reviewers and the issue editors, Nathan Franklin (Charles Darwin University) and Hans Hägerdal (Linnaeus University), for their constructive feedback and important comments. I am grateful to my research participants, who generously shared their reflections.

Funding

This publication is funded by Charles Darwin University for the author's participation at the conference on Understanding Indonesia: Movers and Shakers held on 18 February 2022.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

- 257 orang dicap tersangka teroris sepanjang 2019. (2019, November 20). *CNN Indonesia*. <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20191120114933-12-449923/257-orang-dicap-tersangka-teroris-sepanjang-2019>
- Abubakar, I. (2016). *Effective strategic communication in countering radicalism in Indonesia*. Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies.
- Anindya, C. R. (2018). *Reintegrating former terrorist inmates: Role of local government* (RSIS Commentary 29). RSIS. <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/reintegrating-former-terrorist-inmates-role-of-local-government>

- Arifah, I. N. (2018, April 20). NU dan Muhammadiyah belum dilibatkan maksimal di program deradikalisasi di Indonesia. *ABC News*. https://www.abc.net.au/indonesian/2018-04-20/nu-dan-muhammadiyah-dan-deradikalisasi/9678858?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web
- Atran, S., & Sheikh, H. (2015). Dangerous terrorists as devoted actors. In V. Zeigler-Hill, L. L. M. Welling, & T. K. Shackelford (Eds.), *Evolutionary perspectives on social psychology* (pp. 401–416). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-12697-5_31
- Braddock, K. (2014). The talking cure?: Communication and psychological impact in prison deradicalisation programmes. In A. Silke (Ed.), *Prisons, terrorism and extremism* (pp. 60–74). Routledge.
- Chalmers, I. (2017). Countering violent extremism in Indonesia: Bringing back the jihadists. *Asian Studies Review*, 41(3), 331–351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2017.1323848>
- Cherney, A. (2021). The release and community supervision of radicalised offenders: Issues and challenges that can influence reintegration. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 33(1), 119–137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2018.1530661>
- Chernov Hwang, J. (2017). The disengagement of Indonesian jihadists: Understanding the pathways. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 29(2), 277–295. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2015.1034855>
- Dajani, H. (2016, March 6). Indonesia's prison deradicalisation scheme has 95 percent success rate. *The National*. <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/indonesias-prison-deradicalisation-scheme-has-95-percent-success-rate-1.204357>
- Dalgaard, N. T., Flensburg Jensen, M. C., Bengtson, E., Krassel, K. F., & Vembye, M. H. (2022). PROTOCOL: Group-based community interventions to support the social reintegration of marginalised adults with mental illness. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 18(3), Article e1254. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1254>
- Davidson, J. S. (2008). *From rebellion to riots: Collective violence on Indonesian Borneo*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Fadjarudin, M. (2022, January 2022). BNPT: Total tahanan dan napi terorisme sebanyak 1.031 orang. *Suara Surabaya*. <https://www.suarasurabaya.net/kelanakota/2022/bnpt-total-tahanan-dan-napi-terorisme-sebanyak-1-031-orang>
- Febrica, S. (2010). Securitizing terrorism in Southeast Asia: Accounting for the varying responses of Singapore and Indonesia. *Asian Survey*, 50(3), 569–590. <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2010.50.3.569>
- Franklin, N. J. (2008). An evening with Abu Bakar Ba'asyir. *Inside Indonesia*. <https://www.insideindonesia.org/archive/articles/an-evening-with-abu-bakar-ba-asyir>
- Franklin, N. J. (2020). Islam and the Dutch in the East Indies: Oppression or opportunity? *The European Legacy*, 25(5), 572–587. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2020.1760467>
- Gitaningrum, I., & Ahnaf, M. I. (2021). The reintegration of former jihadist detainees in Solo region: Changing a way of life in a new life. *Analisa: Journal of Social Science and Religion*, 6(2), 217–234. <https://journal.blasemarang.id/index.php/analisa/article/view/1421>
- Griffiths, C. T., Dandurand, Y., & Murdoch, D. (2007). *The social reintegration of offenders and crime prevention* (Report No. 2007-2). National Crime Prevention Centre. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/scl-rntgrtn/scl-rntgrtn-eng.pdf>
- Harding, D. J., Wyse, J. J., Dobson, C., & Morenoff, J. D. (2014). Making ends meet after prison. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 33(2), 440–470. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.21741>
- Horgan, J., & Braddock, K. (2010). Rehabilitating the terrorists?: Challenges in assessing the effectiveness of de-radicalization programs. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 22(2), 267–291. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546551003594748>

- Horgan, J., Meredith, K., & Papatheodorou, K. (2020). Does deradicalisation work? In D. M. D. Silva & M. Deflem (Eds.), *Radicalization and counter-radicalisation* (pp. 9–20). Emerald Publishing.
- Ilham. (2022, December 28). Kepala BNPT: 475 Narapidana terorisme dideradikalisasi sepanjang 2022. *detikNews*. <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-6486004/kepala-bnpt-475-narapidana-terorisme-dideradikalisasi-sepanjang-2022>
- Institute for Policy Analysis and Conflict. (2020). *Terrorism, recidivism and planned releases in Indonesia*. <https://understandingconflict.org/en/publications/Terrorism-Recidivism-and-Planned-Releases-in-Indonesia>
- Kementerian Hukum dan HAM. (2019). *Peraturan Menteri Hukum dan HAM Nomor 18 Tahun 2019 tentang Perubahan atas Peraturan Menteri Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia Nomor 3 Tahun 2018 tentang Syarat dan Tata Cara Pemberian Remisi, Asimilasi, Cuti Mengunjungi Keluarga, Pembebasan Bersyarat, Cuti Menjelang Bebas, dan Cuti Bersyarat*. <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/135712/permenkumham-no-18-tahun-2019>
- Macfarlane, K. (2023). Child soldiers in Nepal: Re-conceptualizing reintegration and identity. *International Affairs*, 99(3), 1211–1230. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iad106>
- Maruna, S., Immarigeon, R., & LeBel, T. P. (2013). Ex-offender reintegration: Theory and practice. In S. Maruna & R. Immarigeon (Eds.), *After crime and punishment* (pp. 3–26). Routledge.
- Maulana, I., Indriana, D., & Goei, G. (2022). The relevance of high-risk prisons to Indonesia's preventing violent extremism policy. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 16(3), 22–36.
- McAlinden, A. M. (2010). The reintegration of sexual offenders: From a “risks-“ to a “strengths-based” model of offender resettlement. In S. Farrall, M. Hough, S. Maruna, & R. Sparks (Eds.), *Escape routes: contemporary perspectives on life after punishment* (pp. 158–181). Routledge.
- Morfit, M. (1981). Pancasila: The Indonesian state ideology according to the New Order government. *Asian Survey*, 21(8), 838–851. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2643886>
- Mubaraq, Z., Arifin, S., Abdullah, I., Jubba, H., & Indiyanto, A. (2022). Return of the lost son: Disengagement and social reintegration of former terrorists in Indonesia. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8(1), Article 2135235. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2135235>
- Munive, J., & Stepputat, F. (2015). Rethinking disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 4(1), Article 48. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.go>
- Nasution, S., Sukabdi, Z., & Priyanto, S. (2021). Credible voice of Sofyan Tsauri as the deradicalisation strategy for former terrorism prisoners. *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, 25(1), 675–686. <https://techniumscience.com/index.php/socialsciences/article/view/4970>
- Osman, S. (2014). Radicalisation, recidivism and rehabilitation: Convicted terrorists and Indonesian prisons. In A. Silke (Ed.), *Prisons, terrorism and extremism* (pp. 214–229). Routledge.
- Özerdem, A. (2002). Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants in Afghanistan: Lessons learned from a cross-cultural perspective. *Third World Quarterly*, 23(5), 961–975. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0143659022000028558>
- Özerdem, A. (2012). A re-conceptualisation of ex-combatant reintegration: “Social reintegration” approach. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 12(1), 51–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2012.667661>
- Pembela NKRI. (2021). *Bubarkan BNPT karena tidak ada kinerjanya dalam menanggulangi aksi terorisme* [Petition]. <https://www.change.org/p/bnpt-bubarkan-bnpt-karena-tidak-ada-kinerja-nya-dalam-menanggulangi-aksi-terorisme>
- Pemerintah Pusat. (2018). *Perubahan atas Undang-Undang nomor 15 tahun 2003 tentang penetapan peraturan pemerintah pengganti Undang Undang nomor 1 tahun 2002 tentang pemberantasan tindak pidana terorisme menjadi Undang-Undang*. <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/82689/uu-no-5-tahun-2018>

- Prawiranegara, S. (1984). Pancasila as the sole foundation. *Indonesia*, 38, 74–83.
- Salas, A. Y., & Anwar, U. (2021). Pembinaan narapidana terorisme dalam upaya deradikalisasi di lembagaasyarakatan super maximum security. *Journal of Correctional Issues*, 4(1), 33–45.
- Samsono, A., & Sholehah, M. (2022). The response of former terrorism prisoners to the assistance of the Insan Cita Foundation through the technical guidance program in Makassar City. *Jurnal Bina Ummat: Membina dan Membentengi Ummat*, 5(1), 95–114. <https://doi.org/10.38214/jurnalbinaummat.v5i1>
- Schulze, K. (2008). Indonesia's approach to jihadist deradicalization. *CTC Sentinel*, 1(8). <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Vol1Iss8-Art3.pdf>
- Sidel, J. T. (2006). *Riots, pogroms, jihad: Religious violence in Indonesia*. Cornell University Press.
- Simes, J. T. (2019). Place after prison: Neighborhood attainment and attachment during reentry. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 41(4), 443–463. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2018.1495041>
- Smith, J. M. (2021). The formerly incarcerated, advocacy, activism, and community reintegration. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 24(1), 43–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580.2020.1755846>
- Steenken, C. (2017). *Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR): A practical overview*. Peace Operations Training Institute. https://cdn.peaceopstraining.org/course_promos/DDR/DDR_english.pdf
- Suarda, I. G. W. (2020). Challenges of implementing deradicalisation programs for terrorist prisoners: An examination of Indonesian prison officers' experiences. *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences*, 15(2), 173–190.
- Sumpter, C. (2017). Countering violent extremism in Indonesia: Priorities, practice, and the role of civil society. *Journal for Deradicalization*, 11, 112–146. <https://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/103/86>
- Sumpter, C., Wardhani, Y. K., & Priyanto, S. (2021). Testing transitions: Extremist prisoners re-entering Indonesian society. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 44(6), 473–494. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1560666>
- Suratman, Y. P. (2017). The effectiveness of de-radicalization program in Southeast Asia: Does it work? The case of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 5(2), 135–156. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21512/jas.v5i2.4302>
- Syauqillah, M., & Hanita, M. (2021). Deradicalization program in Indonesia. *Journal of Terrorism Studies*, 3(2), Article 6. <https://doi.org/10.7454/jts.v3i2.1040>
- Throughout 2021, the Indonesian National Police successfully secured 370 terrorist suspects. (2021, December 27). *Indonesian National Police*. <https://inp.polri.go.id/2021/12/27/throughout-2021-the-indonesian-national-police-successfully-secured-370-terrorist-suspects>
- Van Der Heide, L., & Geenen, J. (2017, August). *Children of the caliphate: Young IS returnees and the reintegration challenge*. The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism. <https://www.icct.nl/sites/default/files/import/publication/ICCT-vanderHeide-Geenen-Children-of-the-Caliphate-2.pdf>
- van Klinken, G. (2007). *Communal violence and democratisation in Indonesia: Small town wars*. Routledge.
- Visher, C. A., & Travis, J. (2003). Transitions from prison to community: Understanding individual pathways. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 29(1), 89–113. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30036962>
- Warner, C. (2015). On the move: Incarceration, race, and residential mobility. *Social Science Research*, 52, 451–464. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2015.03.009>
- Western, B., Braga, A. A., Davis, J., & Sirois, C. (2015). Stress and hardship after prison. *American Journal of Sociology*, 120(5), 1512–1547. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/681301>
- Widya, B. (2020). Deradicalization in Indonesia: Implementation and challenge. *Journal of Terrorism Studies*, 2(1), Article 3. <https://doi.org/10.7454/jts.v2i1.1016>
- Widya, B., Syauqillah, M., & Yunanto, S. (2020). The involvement of ex-terrorist inmates and combatants in

the disengagement from violence strategy in Indonesia. *Journal of Terrorism Studies*, 2(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.7454/jts.v2i2.1022>

Wiil, U. K., Gniadek, J., & Memon, N. (2010). Measuring link importance in terrorist networks. In N. Memon & R. Alhaji (Eds.), *2010 International Conference on Advances in Social Networks Analysis and Mining* (pp. 225–232). IEEE.

Wildan, M. (2022). Countering violent extremism in Indonesia: The role of former terrorists and civil society organisations. In G. Barton, M. Vergani, & Y. Wahid (Eds.), *Countering violent and hateful extremism in Indonesia: Islam, gender and civil society* (pp. 195–214). Palgrave Macmillan.

Yuliyanto, Y., Michael, D., & Utami, P. N. (2021). Deradikalisasi narapidana teroris melalui individual treatment. *Jurnal HAM*, 12(2), 193–208. <https://doi.org/10.30641/ham.2021.12.193-208>

About the Author



Haula Noor is a lecturer in the Faculty of Islamic Studies at the Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia. She received her PhD in 2021 from the Department of Social and Political Change at the Australian National University, Australia. Her doctoral dissertation examined the role of family context in influencing individuals' decision to become jihadists. Her research interests include family and terrorism, Islam and politics, family psychology, and Islamic studies.

The Pancasila Ideological Direction Bill (RUU-HIP): A Missed Opportunity?

Adam James Fenton 

Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University, UK

Correspondence: Adam James Fenton (adam.fenton@coventry.ac.uk)

Submitted: 16 October 2023 **Accepted:** 12 March 2024 **Published:** 30 April 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue “Indonesian Heroes and Villains: National Identity, Politics, Law, and Security” edited by Nathan Franklin (Charles Darwin University) and Hans Hägerdal (Linnaeus University), fully open access at <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i380>

Abstract

Indonesia faces a number of acute developmental challenges, hence, there is a need for evidence-based policies to address a range of socio-political issues. This article examines the rise and fall of an ill-fated bill introduced into parliament in 2020 (the “RUU-HIP”) which sought to reshape the nation’s understanding of the state philosophy, Pancasila, while promoting “policy based on national science and technology.” The article argues that Pancasila, which mandates “Belief in the One and Only God” as its first tenet, has a number of unintended and damaging consequences; it limits freedom of religion and thought; bolsters the position of powerful mainstream religious organisations; contributes to extremist, marginalising religious stances; and acts as a potent and pervasive barrier to innovation at all levels of social and political life. As a lens through which to view Indonesia’s national ideology, the article examines the RUU-HIP and takes account of the historical roots of the state ideology and the pivotal role of its main progenitor, Soekarno. It examines some of the deleterious effects of Pancasila outlined above and concludes that the first *silā*, along with a controversial Blasphemy Law, ought to be amended and repealed respectively, to allow for greater freedom of religion and thought. The article concludes that while amending Pancasila may, contrary to prevailing legal thought, be theoretically possible, in the current socio-political climate this would be unthinkable for most Indonesians.

Keywords

blasphemy; constitutional law; freedom of religion; Indonesia; national ideology; Pancasila

1. Introduction

Indonesia is a highly religious society and home to the world’s largest population of Muslims (Lindsey & Pausacker, 2016). It is not, as sometimes inaccurately reported, the “world’s largest Muslim country”

(Tharoor, 2014) because it is not a “Muslim country.” The national ideology is not Islam, it is Pancasila—a uniquely Indonesian state philosophy comprised of five (*panca*) principles (*sila*). The first *sila*, as any Indonesian can tell you, is *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*, or Belief in the One and Only God. This article argues that the first *sila*, which occupies the prime position in the order of principles, is of key importance to understanding Indonesian society and politics. The article examines the rise and fall of an ill-fated bill which sought to reshape the nation’s understanding of Pancasila while promoting “policy based on national science and technology” (Setjen, 2019). Introduced into parliament in 2020 the Pancasila Ideological Direction Bill (RUU-HIP) sought to build a more open and educated Indonesian society, stem intolerance, and “develop policy in all fields of life...based on national science and technology” (Setjen, 2019). The bill’s swift demise was due to a short but controversial reference to Soekarno’s original thoughts on the national ideology. Perceived as a threat to conservative religious groups, intense debate and disagreement led to mass street protests and opposition resulting in the bill being removed from the legislative agenda in January 2021.

The article’s methodology uses a transdisciplinary, qualitative, legal doctrinal examination of key legal texts—Indonesia’s Constitution, legislation such as Law No. 1 of 1965 on the Prevention of the Abuse of Religion and/or Blasphemy (hereinafter “the Blasphemy Law”), and the RUU-HIP bill—combined with analysis of historical documents, media and academic commentary, interview data, and the author’s socio-cultural observations from over 20 years living in Indonesian society. The article examines the historical roots of Indonesia’s Pancasila with a particular focus on the first *sila* (*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*) and the role of its main progenitor, Soekarno, who went on to become Indonesia’s first president. Examining the historical record of Soekarno’s seminal speech of 1 June 1945 (Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia [BPUPKI], 1945), it argues that *Ketuhanan* was not of primary significance to Soekarno, for two main reasons: Soekarno offered two alternatives to Pancasila, including Trisila and Ekasila, which contains no reference to God, and because in his original iteration of Pancasila, *Ketuhanan* was not placed in the first position, rather in the fifth and last position. It was in subsequent discussions of the “Committee of Nine” that *Ketuhanan* was moved up the list to the first position with the addition of the words “*Yang Maha Esa*” (“One and Only”). The precise meaning and translation of the phrase *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* is idiomatic and contested with various translations including “One Almighty,” “One and Only,” and “the oneness of God denoting belief in God” among others (Ropi, 2017). Where this article uses an English translation it adopts the Certified Translation of the 1945 Indonesian Constitution from the International Commission of Jurists (2002) “Belief in the One and Only God.”

Moving forward from 1945 to 2020, the article examines the primary text of the RUU-HIP and argues that it was an ambitious, expansive bill aimed at promoting “science and technology” and “efficient, transparent, planned, measured, responsible” policy and governance. Further, the brief reference to Trisila and Ekasila in Article 7 of the bill, was not only the source of the bill’s defeat but also a public relations failure of the government to explain the benefits and need for the bill to create a space for a rational public discussion about the national ideology. This failure allowed religious groups to create a dominant counter-narrative, resurrecting the twin straw-man threats of communism and atheism. This strategy was successful and the president removed the bill from the legislative agenda in January 2021. The article argues that the defeat of the RUU-HIP was a missed opportunity to shift the national trajectory away from its current drift towards religious ethnocentrism and intolerance towards a public policy agenda emphasising education, innovation, technology, critical thinking, and development. The bill’s objective was to emphasise the inclusive, secular aspects of Pancasila, promote clean governance, evidence-based policy, and ultimately greater prosperity for

the Indonesian people. It was the short, incongruous reference to Trisila and Ekasila which catalysed intense opposition from Indonesia's religious conservative establishment.

The article concludes by examining important questions raised by the RUU-HIP and its demise. Rather than acting as a panacea for all of Indonesia's ills, does the first *sila* create or contribute to them, and in what ways? Should the first *sila* be revised or amended, and is this even possible given its near "sacred" status? The article concludes that the first *sila* unduly limits freedom of religion and thought; bolsters the position of powerful mainstream religious organisations; contributes to extremist, marginalising religious stances; and acts as a potent and pervasive barrier to innovation at all levels of social and political life. For those reasons, Indonesian society ought to consider amending the first *sila* (and simultaneously repealing the controversial Blasphemy Law), and that a precedent for doing so exists. The article concludes that, in reality, the thought of revising or amending the Pancasila would be unthinkable for most Indonesians at this time.

2. Pancasila in the Past

2.1. Soekarno's Original Thoughts on National Ideology

The word "Pancasila" was created around Indonesia's independence in 1945 by fusing two Sanskrit words; *panca* and *sila*, hence the "five principles," the first of which is *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* ("Belief in the One and Only God"). What younger Indonesians and non-Indonesians may not know is that when Soekarno first formulated and presented his version of Pancasila to a pre-independence committee on 1 June 1945 (BPUPKI, 1945), belief in God was not the first *sila*, it was the fifth—behind other values such as nationalism, internationalism, democracy, and social prosperity. After presenting his thoughts on Pancasila, Soekarno went on to present two alternatives: the Trisila and Ekasila, the three principles and the one principle (BPUPKI, 1945, pp. 74–75).

Soekarno dedicated an entire speech to how he created the *philosophische grondslag* (philosophical basis) or *weltanschauung* (worldview) of the nascent Republic of Indonesia. The word *weltanschauung* appears over 20 times as Soekarno describes the philosophical foundations of other countries, including Hitler's Nazi Germany, Lenin's Soviet Russia, Ibn Saud's Arabia based on Islam, the Three Principles of Sun Yat-sen in China, and Imperial Japan's *Tennoo Koodoo Seishin*. He acknowledged that Sun Yat-sen's ideology of nationalism particularly impacted him (BPUPKI, 1945).

After explaining the contents of his proposed Pancasila, Soekarno continued:

Or perhaps there are those of you who do not like the number five? I can squeeze them until there are just three...socio-nationalism, socio-democracy, and divinity. If you like the symbolism of three, then take these three. But perhaps not all of you gentlemen are happy with this *tri sila*, and ask for one, just one basic principle? Very well, I will gather all into one. What is that one?...If I squeeze the five into three, and the three into one, I arrive at a genuine Indonesian word: *gotong royong*. The nation of Indonesia that we build must be a nation of *gotong-royong*! How great that is! A *gotong-royong* nation!...This, gentlemen is what I propose to you. *Panca sila* became *tri sila*, *tri sila* became *eka sila*. But it is up to you gentlemen which one to choose: *tri sila*, *eka sila* or *panca sila*? I have already explained the content. (BPUPKI, 1945, p. 75)

When Soekarno squeezed the five into three and the three into one, he arrived at a “truly Indonesian word” *gotong-royong*—teamwork, pulling together, community spirit, effort, contribution, especially in the face of adversity and regardless of ethnic or religious differences. *Gotong-royong* in a sense encapsulates the ideal of unity despite diversity. If Soekarno, a founding father and first president, was forced to crystallise the essence of Indonesian-ness into one idea, this is the one he espoused. There is no reference to God in the Ekasila. It is a deeply humanistic ideal which encompasses harmony, shared prosperity, fairness, community, consensus, and collectivism.

To say that belief in God was not the first *sila* of Soekarno’s Pancasila, or that it was not contained in the Ekasila, does not mean that religion and belief in God were not important to Soekarno. There are several passages in his 1 June 1945 speech that clearly indicate the opposite. “If you opened my chest, and saw I had a heart, gentlemen, you would find none other than a heart of Islam” (BPUPKI, 1945, p. 70), he said. However, he also said, “A thousand apologies if my practice of Islam is far from perfect” (BPUPKI, 1945, p. 70). Soekarno’s religious tendencies, as expressed in this speech, were not superior, or self-righteous, they were conciliatory, inclusive, respectful, and tolerant—“We must advance toward world unity, a world of brotherhood,” he implored. Religion and God were not the defining elements of his worldview, they supported it. When he revealed his fifth *sila*, *Ketuhanan*, he quickly emphasised that different religions worship in different ways, and that “religious egoism” and “chauvinism” must be avoided (BPUPKI, 1945, p. 73). He underlined the civilising aspects of religion and that religious traditions teach mutual respect. Despite Soekarno’s later tendency toward authoritarianism, in this speech, his version of *Ketuhanan* was one based on tolerance, pluralism, inclusiveness, civility, and mutual respect.

2.2. Evolving Pancasila by Committee: The Jakarta Charter

The story of the Pancasila does not end with Soekarno’s 1 June speech. Sometime between 1 June and 22 June when the BPUPKI convened again, a smaller, informal committee, the “Committee of Nine” (of which Soekarno was part) had met, deliberated, and redrafted the national ideology (BPUPKI, 1945, pp. 331–403). It is difficult to ascertain a detailed account of the deliberations of the Committee of Nine; however, certain things are clear. Firstly, Soekarno’s suggestions for the Trisila and Ekasila were not adopted. The reformulated ideology still consisted of five principles and Soekarno’s suggested name of Pancasila was retained. Secondly, *Ketuhanan* had been moved from the fifth *sila* position to the first, and seven words had been added: “The nation shall be based on *Ketuhanan* with the obligation for Muslims to follow Shariah” (Galih, 2016). Much academic and non-academic discourse has been devoted to the addition, and subsequent deletion, of these “seven words” in the “Jakarta Charter” (a term specifically used to describe the first draft of the Constitution with the seven words obligating Muslims to follow Shari’a included in the preamble). Much less has been given to the symbolic significance of the move from fifth position to the top of the list. Abdoelgani, in the Konstituante discussions of the 1950s, rejected the idea that because *Ketuhanan* was fifth in Soekarno’s original formulation it meant that it was of less importance (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, 2020). However, reading Soekarno’s speech in its entirety, its emphasis is on nationalism, humanitarianism, deliberations, consensus, and prosperity, as well as tolerance, inclusiveness, and civility in his discussion about religion. If we apply the definition of “Islamist” provided by Fealy and Borgu (2005), that is, someone who views the world “through the prism” of Islam; in other words, that Islam as an ideology should be applied to and influence all aspects of human relations including political, economic, social, and legal systems. Soekarno was clearly a Muslim but not an Islamist.

Moving *Ketuhanan* to the first position had profound consequences on generations of Indonesians who came after independence. As noted above, *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* is a contested concept. As Ropi (2017, p. 73) explains, it is an idiomatic phrase that was likely suggested by Hatta as a replacement for “the seven words” on 18 August 1945. While nuances of the meaning of *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* may be debated, i.e., whether it accommodates monotheism or polytheism, this article posits that there is no interpretation offered by any source in which it accommodates a rejection of belief in God, that is atheism, or even a position that acknowledges a lack of knowledge such as agnosticism. While it was invented as a compromise between “the nationalists” and “the Muslims,” its ambiguity led to ideological battles to claim its meaning, and ultimately, “within a certain time of the formative period of the Indonesian nation-state, the government embraced the interpretation of the Muslims and this led to partisan government policies and neglectful policies towards other religious groupings” (Ropi, 2017, p. 90). Ropi (2017, p. 90) notes:

Among the earliest Indonesian Muslims to “interpret” *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* was Hamka, a prominent activist and scholar....Hamka argued in detail how *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* was the very backbone (*urat tunggang*) of the wider principles of the Pancasila. For Hamka and other Muslim intellectuals, like Agus Salim, *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* was nothing other than the translation of the concept of *tawhid*, or monotheism, which is the central tenet of all Islamic teaching.

Thus, rather than being a supporting element of an essentially moderate, democratic, inclusive philosophy, the first *sila* became the central, dominant tenet of the state philosophy. It is the one that all Indonesians can easily recite and is deeply embedded as a condition of being Indonesian—reciting the tenets of Pancasila is mandatory for all students attending state elementary schools (Kholisah & Dewi, 2022; Rahmani et al., 2021; Wardani et al., 2023). In theoretical terms, taken from the field of intercultural communication, cultural norms learned at an early age, known as “basic assumptions,” are among the deepest and most influential shapers of how individuals perceive the world around them, and in most cases, individuals themselves are “unaware of their influence” (Nunez et al., 2014, p. 15). Hence, generations of Indonesian children since independence have been inculcated in Indonesian schools “to accept the existence of God as a fundamental belief, and a quality of their Indonesian-ness” (Fenton, 2016, p. 195). The Constitutional Court made this explicit in a 2009 decision (Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia, 2009, para 3.34.10), where it emphasised that Indonesia is a “religious state” declaring Indonesia “positions ‘Almighty God’ as the primary principle, and...religious values underlie the life of the nation and the state. It is not a state that separates religion and state.” This article therefore posits that belief in God is not negotiable in Indonesia—it is the first, defining characteristic of what it means to *be* Indonesian.

3. Pancasila in the Present

A growing body of literature has documented Indonesia’s slide towards pietism and religious intolerance (Fealy, 2016; Lindsey & Pausacker, 2016; Mackey & Dolven, 2021; Menchik, 2014; B. Prasetyo et al., 2020; Ricklefs, 2012; Sebastian & Arifianto, 2020; Sidel, 2007). Religious piety alone is not necessarily problematic; however, reports have documented how recruiters for violent extremist groups in Indonesia often begin by seeking out the most eager and pious members of religious study groups (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2018). Ricklefs (2012) noted that most Javanese were previously nominal Muslims, seemingly resistant to Islam’s calls for greater piety, but in recent years “that society has changed profoundly to become an extraordinary example of the rising religiosity that marks the modern age” (p. 600). For example,

in *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java*, Ricklefs (2012, pp. 274–275) notes that in the 1970s, academic seminars began with a simple “*selamat pagi* or *selamat sore*” (good morning or good afternoon) but by the turn of the 21st century, “a seminar must begin with *assalaamu’alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh* (peace be with you, and God’s mercy and blessing) or a similar pious phrase.” Academic theses once began with thanks to family and supervisors, now they universally begin with thanks to God (Ricklefs, 2012). In the late 1970s, Smith-Hefner reported that “less than 3 percent of female students wore the *jilbab*” on the Gadjah Mada University campus; by 2002, that number was above 60% (Ricklefs, 2012, p. 293). Lindsey and Pausacker (2016) have devoted an entire edited book to *Religion, Law and Intolerance in Indonesia*. Prosecutions using the Blasphemy Law have dramatically increased since *reformasi*, with some notable cases including Meiliana, the woman who was gaoled because she complained about the volume of her local mosque (Monza & Chairunnisa, 2018), Alexander Aan gaoled for stating on his Facebook page that he embraced atheism (“Atheist Alexander Aan gets prison,” 2014), and most famously, Jakarta’s former governor, Ahok, who was gaoled (Atriana, 2017) for essentially urging voters to think for themselves (Fenton, 2016). These are just a few examples from the hundreds of prosecutions under the Blasphemy Law (Lindsey & Pausacker, 2016) since the fall of Soeharto.

This article submits that the greatest foundational principle which supports the rising religiosity and intolerance in Indonesia is Pancasila and the first *sila* in particular. By providing absolute state endorsement for the principle of “Belief in the One and Only God,” it bolsters the position of the religious establishment by validating its most fundamental premise, the existence of a monotheistic deity. A substantial literature on the interpretation of the first *sila* to valorise monotheism, deny pluralism, and the reinterpretation of major religions to reframe them as monotheistic exists (see, for example, Coppel, 2012; Makin, 2016; Morfit, 1981). This article submits that the first *sila* not only bolsters mainstream institutions—such as the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), a quasi-governmental council of Islamic scholars which has gained considerable political and social influence over the decades since *reformasi* (Hasyim, 2020)—but also the narratives offered by more extremist religious groups such as terrorist groups and Islamist organisations like the Islamic Defenders’ Front (Nurhajati & Fenton, 2021). Makin (2012, p. 3) similarly notes “the dilemma between religious freedom and the growing pressure of Islamic orthodoxy which often shows muscle to control political and social dimensions.” Where a conservative religious establishment is able to exert political pressure of this kind, this article argues that it compromises efforts to bring about an evolution in approaches to public policy. The swift demise of the RUU-HIP bill is offered as evidence of this phenomenon.

3.1. Faith Versus Reason

The advent of a global pandemic underlined more than ever the need for public policy which is unequivocally based on solid science and data (Situmorang, 2021). For some Indonesians, including those at the highest levels of government, unscientific and superstitious statements and beliefs are not uncommon. Himawan (2014, p. 4), discussing pervasive levels of “magical thinking” within various levels of Indonesian society stated: “Paranormal beliefs, for example, still exist among the Indonesian parliamentary representatives, which manage, organize and are responsible for the country...the existing evidence also shows how individuals of higher socio-economic status are still influenced by magical thinking practices.” Belief in the existence of supernatural beings such as “demons” and “jinn” is highly prevalent in Indonesia and “embedded” in cultural beliefs and practices (Ahmad, 2018; Leong, 2022; van Dijk, 2010). Bruce (2003, p. 131) notes: “Question almost any Javanese person on their supernatural beliefs and their response will be

in the affirmative....A belief in ghosts is an unwavering constant on this Indonesian island.” In over two decades of living in Indonesia, teaching and lecturing Indonesian students, and informally questioning them about their supernatural beliefs, the author cannot recall a student, or indeed any Indonesian, ever saying that they did not believe in “ghosts” or “spirits.”

To be clear, this article does not claim that religious believers or believers in the supernatural are incapable of critical thinking. Rather that, at a societal level, a state philosophy which mandates an irrational belief in an almighty deity, and leaves no room for debate in the public sphere about reasonable alternatives such as atheism (which is the current socio-political-legal reality in Indonesia) has a powerful dampening effect on critical reasoning, challenging of received wisdom, innovation, and rational inquiry that is the essence of scientific knowledge. Further, the first *sila* is a robust strut, among others, upon which the weight of this societal dimension rests. As discussed above, Pancasila is “the source of all sources of law,” according to a majority of legal scholars. Its teachings are intentionally permeated into every level of social, political, educational, and legal thinking.

Alongside this socio-political reality, Indonesia records some of the highest rates of climate change denial in the world (Renaldi, 2019), low literacy rates which contribute to radicalism (“Low literacy rate leads to fanaticism,” 2016), widespread corruption (Transparency International, 2021), dangerous levels of pollution in the air (Walton, 2019) and waterways (van Emmerik, 2020), and is sliding towards illiberalism and abandonment of democratic values (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019).

This article posits that a multi-dimensional, cross-sectoral approach is needed which emphasises science and research, critical thinking, evidence, and data in the formation of the new policies and law reform needed to tackle major environmental and socio-political issues faced by Indonesia. Further, the article argues that such an approach was at the core of the RUU-HIP bill which was defeated by Indonesia’s powerful religious establishment—the same religious establishment which is greatly empowered by the first tenet of the national ideology.

In an interview, a political observer and lecturer in politics and economics at Trisakti University, Koramen Hausian Sirait, explained the background of the RUU-HIP:

Why did we need the RUU-HIP? Because over recent years there have been many movements that are not nationalistic, that are not “Pancasilaistic.” In many regions, we see acts of intolerance. This was an attempt to make Pancasila a “way of life.” To become a truly multicultural society like what was intended in the Pancasila. That was the thinking behind this bill. (K. H. Sirait, personal communication, 15 March 2021)

Commenting on the emphasis on public policy based on science and technology in the bill, Sirait stated:

Another goal is to create an open-minded society. We can build it with education. Education is very important to build a new paradigm in our society, in our country. That’s why in the bill there is an emphasis on science and technology. So that, as the Indonesian nation becomes more educated, it is hoped that the mindset will not be intolerant any more and society will become more open overall. And a more open mindset about a shared future together will develop. (K. H. Sirait, personal communication, 15 March 2021)

3.2. The RUU-HIP: A Communist Trojan Horse?

In a sweeping piece of legislative drafting, the drafters emphasised a unified, sovereign Indonesia, with clean government, justice, prosperity, democracy, and “national development policies in all fields of life...based on national science and technology, guided by the Pancasila ideology” (Setjen, 2019). The bill certainly reaffirmed the position of the Pancasila as the basis of the national ideology by repeated references to it. However, it also placed great emphasis on research and policies based on “science and technology.” The phrase “science and technology” appeared over 20 times in the bill.

The bill emphasised a number of urgent policy areas, including gender equality (Article 28b), environmental protections (Article 29) sustainability (Articles 28e and 29h), ecological recovery (Article 29b), the rights of future generations (Article 29g), eco-friendly industry (Article 30e), and access to advanced telecommunications (Article 32). To implement these plans the bill proposed the formation of a National Research and Innovation Body to ensure innovative, evidence-based policies.

However, the bill’s repeated references to science, technology and policy priorities were not its undoing. The focus of the backlash was centred on a seemingly innocuous reference to Soekarno’s Trisila and Ekasila in Article 7: “7(2) The main features of Pancasila are formed in the Trisila, that is: socio-nationalism, social democracy, and cultured belief in God. 7(3) Trisila as set out in sub-section (2) is crystallised in the Ekasila, that is *gotong-royong*” (Setjen, 2019).

The articles are vague and brief and do not explain how they ought to be integrated into the overall interpretation of the legislation. The Trisila and Ekasila were, after all, proposed by Soekarno as alternatives to the Pancasila, not as supplemental to it.

Certain political figures, religious leaders, and religious groups immediately mobilised to oppose and reject this attempt to “resurrect communism in Indonesia” (“RUU-HIP dan akar trauma umat Islam terhadap komunisme,” 2020). Mass protests took place outside the national parliament in June 2020 expressing vehement opposition to the bill with the support of the nation’s two largest Islamic organisations (the traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama and reformist Muhammadiyah), the MUI and Islamist parties, and groups such as the 212 movement, the PKS, and the Islamic Defenders’ Front (Aida, 2020). Amid fears of the imminent rise of communism and atheism, the president reaffirmed that communism is banned and the RUU-HIP bill would be dropped (Aprianto, 2020) from the legislative agenda which occurred in January 2021 (Putri, 2021).

Hence, a progressive bill intended to steer Indonesia away from intolerance and towards improved educational and policy outcomes was defeated by a paranoid, reactionary response from Indonesia’s religious conservatives. However, according to Sirait the fight for the bill is not over.

It will definitely go back into the national legislative agenda at some point because this issue about tolerance is still not clear in law. These days if we talk about religion it’s immediately called blasphemy, there must be a limit, there must be rules. The other alternative is that the laws that allow or encourage intolerance must be repealed. There are hundreds of laws, particularly regional regulations that encourage intolerance. (K. H. Sirait, personal communication, 15 March 2021)

Constitutional Court decision 137/PUU-XIII/2015 removed the central government's power to repeal local laws and now only the Supreme Court may repeal local laws (Yuswanto & Arif, 2019). The debate about the RUU-HIP and intolerance in Indonesia is clearly not over. However, whether the RUU-HIP bill will ever re-enter parliament is far from certain.

4. Pancasila in the Future

It is the opinion of political observers such as Sirait, and likely the majority of Indonesian policy and lawmakers, that the references to Trisila and Ekasila in the RUU-HIP were a mistake, and that any attempt to reformulate, revise, or revisit the Pancasila should not be attempted. There is ample academic literature supporting the position that Pancasila is the “*sumber dari segala sumber hukum*,” the “source of all sources of law,” and cannot be replaced or revised by any means (Arfa'i et al., 2020; Bo'a, 2018; Wauran, 2020; Wijayanthi, 2021). Basarah (2016, p. 12), for example, asserts that “there is no legal mechanism to change Pancasila, except carrying out a revolution and dissolving the state or by treason against the state ideology of Pancasila.” This article submits, on the contrary, that the RUU-HIP was justified in its attempt to redirect Indonesian ideological thinking and that the Pancasila, specifically the first *sila*, ought to be amended to remove the state-mandated Belief in the One and Only God and replaced with “freedom of religion and belief.” The rest of the article will set out the reasons for this and suggest ways in which it could be achieved. The article will conclude that while such a revision to the national ideology is theoretically possible (and necessary in the long-term) such a revision is impossible in the current socio-political reality and would be met with enormous social and political resistance. However, with a new generation of Indonesians educated in ethical, critical enquiry, rapid cultural change is possible.

4.1. Reasons for Amending the First Sila: Human Rights

The first principle of Indonesia's Pancasila—Belief in One and Only God—mandates an unquestionable, irrational belief in divinity or deity as the first tenet of national ideology. Meanwhile, Article 28I of the Constitution guarantees “freedom of thought and conscience, [and] freedom of religion” as “human rights that cannot be limited under any circumstances.” Therein lies an enormous conflict of ideological principles.

The Pancasila and the Constitution, when read in conjunction with Indonesia's controversial (Amnesty International, 2014) Blasphemy Law (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 1965), mandate that Indonesians believe in God, yet simultaneously enjoy the right to complete freedom of thought and religion; that Indonesians are guaranteed freedom of religion, even though their belief is limited by those recognised by the state; that Indonesians have freedom of thought and expression, even though speaking out against the first *sila*, or the recognised religions, could constitute blasphemy, an imprisonable offence; and that, while one cannot be compelled to believe in any *particular* one of the recognised religions, one of them must be chosen, and opting out of religious belief completely is not an option. It is submitted that each of these positions entails a logical paradox, whilst simultaneously denying basic civil rights as set out in the Constitution itself.

Since Constitutional Court Decision No. 97/PUU-XIV/2016, it is theoretically possible for citizens to list “another faith” (*kepercayaan*) on their identity cards. However, while this may be a legally available option, it does not take into account the social stigma and consequences that may attach to that choice. Lindsey and Pausacker (2016, p. 10) note:

In theory, a citizen could argue membership of a “*kepercayaan*” sect to justify state protection for beliefs that conservative groups such as the Indonesian Council of Ulama label “deviant.” In practice, however, these “beliefs” have almost no political weight and attract little protection from the state. The state’s lingering vestigial formal recognition of unorthodox mystical beliefs has not prevented increasing use of a mixture of gang violence from Muslim vigilantes, condemnatory *fatawa* from ulama organisations and prosecution under the Indonesian Criminal Code to close down unorthodox religious groups.

In a 2009 Constitutional Court challenge to the Blasphemy Law, the court acknowledged the contradiction between universal rights and the Indonesian way, essentially making a relativist, exceptionalist case. In its judgement, the court stated:

Indonesia’s recognition of international law, including human rights, must still be based on the philosophy and Constitution of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia. As such, Indonesia’s administrative law does not have to equate with *rechstaat*, the rule of law, individualism or communalism. (Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia, 2009, para 3.34.9-3.34.10)

The essence of the Constitutional Court’s approach here could fairly be paraphrased thus: “Notions of universal human rights exist in international law, but this is Indonesia and we do things differently here.” The court’s main justification for upholding this logical and legal contradiction was that it was in the interests of social cohesion. The basis of this argument derives from Article 28J(2) of the Constitution which allows restrictions on freedoms for the purposes of “public order.” This approach argues that allowing divergent interpretations of established faiths or allowing people to publicly espouse views that are incompatible with Pancasila, such as atheism, will lead to disagreements and conflict which must be avoided. It is a strategy frequently invoked by authoritarian governments to avoid social discord, i.e., “we must all be on the same page, dissent cannot be allowed for the sake of social harmony and avoiding conflict.” It is acknowledged that many countries limit religious freedom on public order grounds. However, the curtailment of free thought and speech deriving from both the Blasphemy Law in conjunction with the pervasive socio-political-legal presence of the first *sila* unduly limits legitimate free speech on essential issues of public importance. To borrow an idea from Kaldor (War and Peace Talk, 2013), “Violence is the opposite of conflict.” Conflict of ideas is natural in a democracy. As long as the conflict is managed well, discussed, and resolved in peaceful ways there is no problem; indeed, it is essential to a healthy democracy. It is when conflicts are not managed that they degenerate into violence.

Indonesia’s Ahmadi community can attest to this grim reality. There is very little space for Ahmadis to discuss their “heretical” beliefs within Indonesia’s mainstream Muslim community. Instead, when the MUI published its fatwa on the “deviant” Ahmadiyah sect it was taken as a “green light” for radical groups such as the Islamic Defenders’ Front to “persecute the minority sect which had been officially outed” leading to attacks and killings on multiple occasions (Platzdasch, 2011). While the MUI fatwa is not legally enforceable, a crucial Joint Ministerial Decree on Ahmadiyah that banned the public expression of Ahmadi beliefs is legally enforceable (Marshall, 2018).

It is therefore a significant contravention of universal human rights that Indonesia’s national ideology leaves no room to question the existence of God, and further that the Blasphemy Law entrenches that approach by

criminalising any public criticism of Pancasila (including public statements of support for atheism or “deviant” ideologies) or the recognised religions.

Any further challenges to the Blasphemy Law ought to consider that the sections limiting religious practice to the “six recognised religions” are found in the “elucidation” and may therefore contravene Article 176 of Appendix I of Law No. 12 of 2011 on the Formulation of Legislation, which disallows the introduction of substantive or normative meaning in the elucidation that is not contained in the body of the law (Fenton, 2016, pp. 198–200).

4.2. *Reasons for Amending the First Sila: Sustainability*

A future where vast socio-political, public health, and environmental challenges are tackled and overcome will require enormous reserves of innovation and critical thinking. Such an approach does not sit well beside an unquestioning acceptance of the status quo. Significant research in the social sciences has established that religiosity correlates inversely with critical thinking (Daws & Hampshire, 2017). This is evident when we consider the nature of religious faith. Faith, particularly *conservative approaches* to faith, while recognising the personal struggles and doubts that individuals may experience, will not allow the revision, reinterpretation, or challenge to the infallibility, or any revision of, sacred texts or tenets. Looking toward a future based increasingly on computer-based technology, logic, space exploration, and scientific methods, religiously inclined approaches to important environmental and socio-political challenges will be increasingly inadequate and should be separated from public and political discourse. Studies have shown a “remarkably sharp trend away from religion” on a global scale (Inglehart, 2020). Singleton (2017, p. 23) notes “an appreciable and ongoing drift away from Christianity” in countries like the UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand since the 1950s. This global trend has one major exception: “The populations of the 18 Muslim-majority countries for which data are available in the World Values Survey have stayed far below the tipping point, remaining strongly religious and committed to preserving traditional norms” (Inglehart, 2020, p. 19). On this point, Himawan (2014, p. 3) stresses, in the Indonesian context, that: “Globally, transformation in society moves from magical beliefs to more rational ones....The effort to minimise magical beliefs and to promote those that are rational and scientifically based has made a significant contribution to the country’s development.”

To those who would argue that science is a *belief* in the same way as religion, it must be emphasised that science is not a belief, but rather a methodology. True science does not require a person to believe a set of ideas without proof. Instead, science encourages individuals to test those ideas and prove them for themselves through replication and transparency (Gauch, 2003). Looking to a future of progress in technology and science, this article argues that a national ideology which leaves no room to question such a fundamental idea as the existence of God is unsustainable, in the sense that it will impede, or dampen, the progress that could otherwise be achieved by allowing the intellectual freedom to openly discuss ideas that challenge entrenched religious interests, and could be perceived as offensive.

4.3. *Is Amending Pancasila Even Possible?*

Given the near-sacred status of the Pancasila in Indonesian socio-political discourse it is reasonable to ask whether amending it is even possible. The current administration (at the time of writing) has shown support for the sanctity of Pancasila; for example on 1 October 2021, President Joko Widodo attended the Hari

Kesaktian Pancasila ceremony at the Lubang Buaya Pancasila Monument (Nugraheny, 2021). Translated in English as “Pancasila Sanctity Day” (“President Jokowi chairs Pancasila Sanctity Day ceremony,” 2023), the word “*kesaktian*” has connotations of both the “sacred” and the “magical.” While this article does not have space to discuss this in-depth, Indonesia’s second president Soeharto played an integral role in the sacralisation of Pancasila (Ichwan, 2012).

The introduction of the RUU-HIP to the legislative agenda sparked a number of debates around the legal status of Pancasila. While the tenets of Pancasila are contained in the Constitution, the word itself is not. What then is its status in law, and can it be revised or amended? The predominant legal opinion coalesces around the theme that Pancasila is “the source of all sources of laws,” and sits apart from the Constitution making it impossible to amend or replace (Arfa’i et al., 2020; Auliana, 2019; Bo’a, 2018; T. Prasetyo, 2016; Triyanti, 2019; Wauran, 2020; Wijayanthi, 2021). This question usually arises in the context of Islamist demands to create an Islamic State of Indonesia (“Negara Islam ditolak mayoritas Muslim di Indonesia,” 2019). The counterargument that Pancasila cannot be changed by any means is summarised succinctly by Nurdin and Marta (2016):

Pancasila as the philosophical foundation of the nation cannot be changed by any means. Pancasila cannot even be changed by constitution-forming institutions such as the People’s Consultative Assembly. There is no legal mechanism by which to change Pancasila, except by revolution or the dismantling of the state or by treason against the state ideology of Pancasila.

The dangers inherent in any such approach to the complete immutability of any doctrine or ideology ought to be of concern to any critical thinker.

Contrary to contemporary opinion on this topic, a historical precedent for amending Indonesia’s national ideology, other than replacing it with Islam, does exist. During the Constituent Assemblies of 1953 and 1956–1959, revisions to the Pancasila were debated and three alternatives were put forward (Ichwan, 2012).

As Ichwan (2012, p. 19) has noted, “debate on the basis of the state during the Soekarno era was conducted in the Constituent Assembly (*Sidang Konstituante*), held between 1956 and 1959.” A coalition of Islamic parties with 230 representatives proposed Islam as the ideological foundation of the state. Meanwhile, the National Party (PNI) and the Communist Party (PKI) along with the Christian, Catholic, Socialist, “and many other small parties, with a total of 273 representatives, supported Pancasila as the basis for the state” (Ichwan, 2012, p. 19). What has been forgotten by many is that a third option was on the table. The Buruh (Labour) and Murba (Socialist) parties proposed a “social economy” as a third alternative. Ichwan (2012, p. 19) goes on to note that:

Despite the fact that there were three alternatives for the basis of the state, the debates concentrated on Pancasila and Islam. The relative unimportance of “social economy” was due to the fact it was endorsed only by two small parties, Buruh and Murba.

Those who hold up Pancasila as a sacred immutable *given* should recall that, within living memory, there were constitutional debates around whether to amend or replace Pancasila that did not involve treason, rebellion, or revolution.

Further, there is precedent to suggest that not only replacing Pancasila but amending it ought to be possible. Again referring to Ichwan's (2012, p. 20) discussion of the Constituent Assembly debates he notes:

Like the PNI, the PKI proposed using Pancasila as the basis of the state, but they demanded that the first pillar "Belief in One Almighty God" should be replaced with "freedom of religion and belief." One of the communist leaders, Njoto, argued that freedom of religion and belief is wiser than the old formulation, because polytheism existed before monotheism, and that monotheism is not the only religious orientation.

For the generations of Indonesians raised with an unquestioning hatred of communism, reinforced through decades of Hari Kesaktian Pancasila spectacles, official rhetoric, education, the fact that communism remains illegal (MPRS, 1966) and the celebration of the 1965–1956 killings of communist and "leftists," it may be a surprise that the Indonesian Communist Party once argued *in favour* of Pancasila as the state ideology—albeit with a small but critically important revision to the first *sila*.

The process for amending the Constitution is set out in Article 37 (Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, 1945) and requires a majority vote of the People's Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat). Two references to the first *sila* are contained in the body of the Constitution (one in the Preamble and one in Article 29). Theoretically, they could be amended by a majority vote of the People's Consultative Assembly. While predominant current Indonesian legal scholarship supports the principle that revising or amending Pancasila is impossible, as set out above, Indonesians ought to remember that it has been debated several times in the past, at the formation of the nation, and several times in the 1950s, and therefore ought not to be unthinkable.

Considering the backlash to the RUU-HIP, which sought only to remind people of the Trisila and Ekasila, it is a certainty that a proposed revision to Pancasila, particularly to the first *sila*, would be met with massive social and political resistance and would likely cause riots and civil strife.

There are few Indonesian scholars who have commented along these lines. However, of the very few scholars to offer an opinion are Mu'ti and Burhani (2019). Correctly identifying the first *sila* as the source of religious intolerance rather than the solution, they convincingly argue that the wording of the first *sila*, particularly "*Yang Maha Esa*" which, as noted above is contested but is commonly perceived to "denote monotheism" (Ropi, 2017, p. 89) creates a bias towards the monotheistic religion of the majority, that is Islam, to the detriment of other religions such as Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism (Mu'ti & Burhani, 2019, p. 126):

Although Pancasila has been hailed as one of the main foundations for guaranteeing religious freedom, the wording of its first pillar contains elements that go against the principles of religious freedom or, to be more precise, limit the scope of religious freedom in Indonesia. (Mu'ti & Burhani, 2019, p. 120)

In Soekarno's draft of Pancasila, instead of becoming the first pillar, "belief in God" was the fifth pillar. The wording also did not incline to endorse monotheistic religion. It was only *Ketuhanan* (belief in God), without any inclination towards monotheistic, non-theistic, or polytheistic religions:

The root of religious intolerance can be found in Indonesian Constitution and its ideology of the state, Pancasila. The discriminative treatment towards religious minorities has embedded there since the establishment of this country. The first pillar of Pancasila *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*, stated two times in the Constitution, in the preamble and in the Article 29, defines Indonesia as a religiously monotheistic state, not a secular or Islamic state. (Mu'ti & Burhani, 2019, p. 116)

However, changing the first pillar of Pancasila is something difficult even to imagine it. Changing Pancasila is like changing the state in total. The existence of the holes in Pancasila, perhaps for now, just for the awareness of people, particularly in academic discourse [sic]. (Mu'ti & Burhani, 2019, p. 128)

Mu'ti and Burhani (2019, p. 112) argue that the first *sila* has created a strong bias in favour of monotheistic religions and that followers of alternative religious approaches have had “to modify their theological beliefs in order to be accepted as recognized or official religions. Pancasila also justifies the existence of favouritism to certain religions deemed fit to this ideology.”

5. Conclusion

Rather than acting as a panacea which guarantees social harmony and security, as often claimed by its supporters, the first *sila* may in fact constitute a threat to security through the tensions it creates between recognised universal freedoms, and a national philosophy dominated by an ambiguous, but powerful, state-mandated belief in God. By demanding its citizens abide by an unquestionable religious belief system, enforced through the threat of criminal sanctions, the state effectively stifles rational or philosophical reflection or enquiry, and as a by-product facilitates the spread of religious conservatism and intolerance by empowering religious establishments, in particular that of the majority religion of Islam. Indonesia's vast social challenges such as violent extremism, corruption, and environmental damage, among others, will ultimately benefit from a revolution in thinking that would be brought about by allowing the citizenry the intellectual space to question and challenge accepted wisdom and religious dogma. This would unquestionably involve an extraordinary level of social upheaval. However, this reckoning must occur sooner or later. An educational agenda that de-emphasises religion and emphasises ethical behaviour and critical enquiry should accompany a peaceful, rational debate about the advantages and disadvantages of Indonesia's current restrictive approach to religion and ideology. The introduction of the RUU-HIP to the national parliament was therefore a missed opportunity to create a pivotal moment of national reflection and debate on this supremely important issue. However, the 2020 protests against the bill are proof that it was viewed as a serious threat to the entrenched religious establishment which wasted no time in mobilising to ensure that it was crushed. Perhaps the greatest risk of opening up the national debate about revising or replacing Pancasila is that the proponents of Islam would succeed in installing it as the replacement for the basis of the state.

The first *sila* and its mirror reference in the Preamble of the Constitution which creates Indonesia as “a sovereign state based on a Belief in the One and Only God” embed the concept of God so deeply into the ideological framework of the state that Indonesia cannot coherently be claimed to implement the freedom of religion, thought and conscience guaranteed in Article 28(1) of the Constitution. Indonesia's long-term future would be served well by reconsidering revisions to the national ideology and by abolishing the controversial Blasphemy Law.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

- Ahmad, H. (2018). The belief in the existence of supernatural beings in the community of Moslem Sundanese. *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 7(4), 11–21.
- Aida, N. (2020, June 17). Apa Itu RUU-HIP yang dipersoalkan NU dan Muhammadiyah? *KOMPAS.com*. <https://www.kompas.com/tren/read/2020/06/17/062559765/apa-itu-ruu-hip-yang-dipersoalkan-nu-dan-muhammadiyah>
- Amnesty International. (2014). *Prosecuting beliefs: Indonesia's blasphemy laws*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa21/018/2014/en/#:~:text=In%20this%20report%2C%20Amnesty%20International,law%20and%20freedom%20from%20discrimination>
- Aprianto, A. (2020, June 22). Di balik penundaan RUU-HIP, ada ketakutan komunis muncul lagi. *TEMPO*. <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1356189/di-balik-penundaan-ruu-hip-ada-ketakutan-komunis-muncul-lagi>
- Arfa'i, Nasution, B. J., & Febrian. (2020). Aktualisasi Pancasila sebagai sumber hukum dalam pembentukan undang-undang. *Undang: Jurnal Hukum*, 3(2), 377–407. <https://doi.org/10.22437/ujh.3.2.377-407>
- Aspinall, E., & Mietzner, M. (2019). Southeast Asia's troubling elections. *Journal of Democracy*, 30(4), 104–118.
- Atheist Alexander Aan gets prison. (2014, January 31). *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/01/31/atheist-alexander-aan-gets-prison.html>
- Atriana, R. (2017, May 9). Ahok divonis 2 tahun penjara. *detikNews*. <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-3496185/ahok-divonis-2-tahun-penjara>
- Auliana, P. A. (2019, July 15). Mengapa Pancasila tidak bisa diganti? *KOMPAS.com*. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2019/07/15/06515391/mengapa-pancasila-tidak-bisa-diganti>
- Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia. (1945). *Himpunan Risalah Sidang-sidang dari Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (BPUPKI) (Tanggal 29 Mei 1945–16 Juli 1945) dan Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (PPKI) (Tanggal 18 dan 19 Agustus 1945) Yang Berhubungan dengan Penyusunan Undang-undang Dasar 1945*. Sekretariat Jenderal MPR RI. <https://luk.staff.ugm.ac.id/atur/RisalahSidangBPUPKI-PPKU-UUD1945.pdf>
- Basarah, A. (2016, December 10). Pancasila hanya dapat diubah dengan cara makar. *Sekretariat Jenderal MPR RI*. <https://www.mpr.go.id/berita/pancasila-hanya-dapat-diubah-dengan-cara-makar>
- Bo'a, F. (2018). Pancasila as the source of law in the national legal system. *Jurnal Konstitusi*, 15(1), 27–49.
- Bruce, S. (2003). Supernatural belief in Javanese culture: Inevitable and erroneous. *Celt: A Journal of Culture*, 3(2), 131–143. <https://journal.unika.ac.id/index.php/celt/article/download/1091/745>
- Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia. (2009). *Putusan Mahkamah Konstitusi Indonesia Nomor 140/PUU-VII/2009*. https://www.mkri.id/public/content/persidangan/putusan/putusan_sidang_Putusan%20PUU%20140_Senin%2019%20April%202010.pdf
- Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, 1945. https://en.mkri.id/download/constitution/constitution_1_1625426222_4c1e13f466840d7ed721.pdf
- Coppel, C. (2012). China and the shaping of Indonesia, 1949–1965. *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 85(2), 120–121.
- Daws, R. E., & Hampshire, A. (2017). The negative relationship between reasoning and religiosity is underpinned by a bias for intuitive responses specifically when intuition and logic are in conflict. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, Article 2191. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02191>

- Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat. (2020). *Naskah Akademik Rancangan Undang-Undang tentang Haluan Ideologi Pancasila*. <https://www.dpr.go.id/dokakd/dokumen/BALEG-RJ-20200528-033949-4586.pdf>
- Fealy, G. (2016). The politics of religious intolerance in Indonesia: Mainstream-ism trumps extremism? In T. Lindsey & H. Pausacker (Eds.), *Religion, law and intolerance in Indonesia* (pp. 115–131). Routledge.
- Fealy, G., & Borgu, A. (2005). *Local Jihad: Radical Islam and terrorism in Indonesia*. Australian Strategic Policy Institute. <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/local-jihad-radical-islam-and-terrorism-indonesia>
- Fenton, A. J. (2016). Faith, intolerance, violence and bigotry: Legal and constitutional issues of freedom of religion in Indonesia. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 10(2), 181–212.
- Galih, B. (2016, June 1). Perubahan urutan Pancasila dan perdebatan “Syariat Islam.” *KOMPAS.com*. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/xml/2016/06/01/09210021/perubahan.urutan.pancasila.dan.perdebatan.syariat.islam.di.piagam.jakarta>
- Gauch, H. (2003). *Scientific method in practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hasyim, S. (2020). Fatwas and democracy: Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI, Indonesian Ulema Council) and rising conservatism in Indonesian Islam. *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia*, 8(1), 21–35. <https://doi.org/10.1017/trn.2019.13>
- Himawan, K. (2014). Magical thinking in Jakarta. *Asia Pacific Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, 5(1), 3–9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21507686.2013.872158>
- Ichwan, M. N. (2012). *The making of a Pancasila state: Political debates on secularism, Islam and the state in Indonesia*. Institute of Asian Cultures. <https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/16227>
- Inglehart, R. (2020, August 11). Giving up on God: The global decline of religion. *Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2020-08-11/religion-giving-god>
- Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict. (2018). *Recent and planned releases of Indonesian extremists: An update* (IPAC Report No. 49). http://file.understandingconflict.org/file/2018/08/IPAC_Report_49.pdf
- International Commission of Jurists. (2002). *1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (1945, 2002)*. <https://www.icj.org/se-asia-security-law/1945-constitution-of-the-republic-of-indonesia-1945-2002>
- Kaldor, M. (1999). *New and old wars: Organized violence in a global era*. Stanford University Press.
- Kholisah, N., & Dewi, D. (2022). Peranan Pancasila dalam membentuk karakter. *Jurnal Kewarganegaraan*, 6(1), 1726–1731.
- Leong, K. (2022). Keepers of the grave: Ritual guides, ghosts, and hidden narratives in Indonesian history. *Space and Culture*, 25(2), 295–308. <https://doi.org/10.1177/12063312211063087>
- Lindsey, T., & Pausacker, H. (Eds.). (2016). *Religion, law and intolerance in Indonesia*. Routledge.
- Low literacy rate leads to fanaticism, experts say. (2016, May 20). *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/05/20/low-literacy-rate-leads-to-fanaticism-experts-say.html>
- Mackey, W., & Dolven, B. (2021). Religious intolerance In Indonesia. *Current Politics and Economics of South, Southeastern, and Central Asia*, 30(2/3), 299–304.
- Makin, A. (2012, November 5–6). *Plurality denied: The defeat of pluralism advocates in Indonesia* [Paper presentation]. Negotiating Diversity in Indonesia, Singapore, Singapore. https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/14139/1/plurality_denied_paper_conference_AI_Makin-libre.pdf
- Makin, A. (2016). *Challenging Islamic orthodoxy*. Springer.
- Marshall, P. (2018). The ambiguities of religious freedom in Indonesia. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 16(1), 85–96.
- Menchik, J. (2014). Productive intolerance: Godly nationalism in Indonesia. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 56(3), 591–621. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417514000267>
- Monza, I., & Chairunnisa, N. (2018). Ini kronologi kasus penistaan agama Meiliana di tanjung balai. *TEMPO*.

- <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1119663/ini-kronologi-kasus-penistaan-agama-meiliana-di-tanjung-balai>
- Morfit, M. (1981). Pancasila: The Indonesian state ideology according to the new order government. *Asian Survey*, 21(8), 838–851. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2643886>
- MPRS. (1966). *Ketetapan MPRS Nomor (XXV/MPRS/1966 Tahun 1966)*. <https://www.hukumonline.com/pusatdata/detail/lt50768a41ad5ab/ketetapan-mprs-nomor-xxv-mprs-1966-tahun-1966/document>
- Mu'ti, A., & Burhani, A. (2019). The limits of religious freedom in Indonesia: With reference to the first pillar Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 9, 111–134. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v9i1.111-134>
- Negara Islam ditolak mayoritas Muslim di Indonesia, tapi mengapa impian itu tak pernah pudar? (2019, April 13). *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-49341812>
- Nugraheny, D. (2021, October 1). Presiden Jokowi pimpin upacara peringatan Hari Kesaktian Pancasila. *KOMPAS.com*. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2021/10/01/08180581/presiden-jokowi-pimpin-upacara-peringatan-hari-kesaktian-pancasila>
- Nunez, C., Mahdi, R., & Popma, L. (2014). *Intercultural sensitivity: From denial to intercultural competence*. Koninklijke Van Gorcum.
- Nurdin, N., & Marta, M. (2016, December 10). Pancasila tidak bisa diubah dengan cara apa pun. *KOMPAS.com*. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/xml/2016/12/10/13060181/.pancasila.tidak.bisa.diubah.dengan.cara.apa.pun>
- Nurhajati, L., & Fenton, A. (2021). Islamist newspeak. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 14(2), 287–308. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2020.14.2.287-308>
- Platzdasch, B. (2011). *Religious freedom in Indonesia: The case of the Ahmadiyah*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Prasetyo, B., Rahadiantino, L., Nuswantara, K., & Kamalia, M. (2020). Pancasila and intolerance among students in universities. In Y. Sunesti & A. K. Putri (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Social and Political Sciences (ICOSAPS 2020)* (pp. 289–294). Atlantis Press.
- Prasetyo, T. (2016). Pancasila the ultimate of all the sources of laws. *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization*, 54, 103–109.
- President Jokowi chairs Pancasila Sanctity Day ceremony in Jakarta. (2023, October 1). *Antara News*. <https://en.antaranews.com/news/294921/president-jokowi-chairs-pancasila-sanctity-day-ceremony-in-jakarta>
- President of the Republic of Indonesia. (1965). *Law No. 1 of 1965 on the prevention of the abuse of religion and/or blasphemy* (Presidential Decree No. 1/PNPS/1965 Stat). <https://peraturan.go.id/files/uu1pnps-1965.pdf>
- Ricklefs, M. C. (2012). *Islamisation and its opponents in Java*. NUS Press.
- Ropi, I. (2017). Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa: Contests of meaning and interpretation. In I. Ropi (Ed.), *Religion and regulation in Indonesia* (pp. 89–99). Springer.
- RUU-HIP dan akar trauma umat Islam terhadap komunisme. (2020, July 8). *CNN Indonesia*. <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20200707174743-32-521933/ruu-hip-dan-akar-trauma-umat-islam-terhadap-komunisme>
- Sebastian, L. C., & Arifianto, A. R. (2020). TRaNS special section on “Growing Religious Intolerance in Indonesia.” *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia*, 8(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1017/trn.2020.1>
- Setjen. (2019, 17 December). RUU tentang pembinaan haluan ideologi Pancasila. *Undang-Undang dan RUU*. <https://www.dpr.go.id/uu/detail/id/248>

- Sidel, J. (2007). *Riots, pogroms, jihad: Religious violence in Indonesia*. NUS Press.
- Singleton, A. (2017). Beyond faith? Recent trends in religion and spirituality among teenagers. In M. de Souza & A. Halafoff (Eds.), *Re-enchanting education and spiritual wellbeing* (pp. 23–35). Routledge.
- Situmorang, D. (2021). “Herd stupidity” as a result of “irrational beliefs”: The mental health issues in the Covid-19 outbreak. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 65, Article 102851. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2021.102851>
- Tharoor, I. (2014, August 7). The world's largest Muslim country bans support for the Islamic State. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/08/07/the-worlds-largest-muslim-country-bans-support-for-the-islamic-state>
- Transparency International. (2021). *Indonesia*. <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/indonesia>
- Triyanti, N. (2019). Re-actualization of Pancasila values on law establishment in the economic globalization era. *Jurnal Pembaharuan Hukum*, VI(2), 214–225.
- van Dijk, K. (2010). Religious authority and the supernatural. In A. Azra, K. van Dijk, & N. J G Kaptein (Eds.), *Varieties of religious authority: Changes and challenges in 20th century Indonesian Islam* (pp. 177–202). Institute of Southeast Asian Studies; International Institute for Asian Studies.
- van Emmerik, T. (2020, February 20). Research: Indonesia's Ciliwung among the world's most polluted rivers. *The Conversation*. <http://theconversation.com/research-indonesias-ciliwung-among-the-worlds-most-polluted-rivers-131207>
- Walton, K. (2019, July 1). Jakarta's air quality kills its residents—And it's getting worse. *The Interpreter*. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/jakarta-s-air-quality-kills-its-residents-and-it-s-getting-worse>
- War and Peace Talk. (2013, June 13). *Mary Kaldor on new and old wars* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGhI58kjmB0>
- Wardani, K., Nadziroh, & Pratomo, W. (2023). Penanaman nilai-nilai Pancasila untuk pembentukan sikap cinta Tanah Air melalui pembelajaran. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan Profesi Guru*, 2(1), 1472–1482.
- Wauran, I. (2020). Pancasila sebagai sumber dari segala sumber hukum: Haruskah dituangkan dalam pasal-pasal UUD 1945? *Jurnal Majelis Media Aspirasi Konstitusi*, 3, 1–27.
- Wijyanthi, F. (2021). Pancasila sebagai sumber dari segala sumber hukum. *Jurnal Ilmu Hukum “THE JURIS,”* V(1), 133–145. <https://ejournal.stih-awanglong.ac.id/index.php/juris/article/download/200/167>
- Yuswanto, Y., & Arif, M. Y. A. (2019). Diskursus pembatalan peraturan daerah pasca putusan MK No. 137/PUU-XIII/2015 dan No. 56/PUU-XIV/2016. *Jurnal Konstitusi*, 15(4), 710–731. <https://doi.org/10.31078/jk1542>

About the Author



Adam James Fenton is an assistant professor at the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University, UK. He previously lived in Indonesia for over two decades working as a teacher, journalist, and lecturer. His PhD research focussed on Indonesia's legislative and law enforcement responses to terrorism. He is a former Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow and his research interests include counter-terrorism, constitutional law, freedom of religion, maritime security, cybersecurity, and law and policy of emerging technology, such as artificial intelligence and autonomous vehicles.

Political Revenge? Downgrading Indonesia's KPK From Hero to Villain

David Price 

Faculty of Arts and Society, Charles Darwin University, Australia

Correspondence: David Price (david.price@cdu.edu.au)

Submitted: 29 November 2023 **Accepted:** 2 February 2024 **Published:** 27 March 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue “Indonesian Heroes and Villains: National Identity, Politics, Law, and Security” edited by Nathan Franklin (Charles Darwin University) and Hans Hägerdal (Linnaeus University), fully open access at <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i380>

Abstract

The importance of Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi [KPK]), has once again been brought into focus during the 2024 presidential election campaign period when politics and corruption collide. This article suggests that legislative and political actions since 2019 to the KPK's purpose and structure severely limit its capacity and independence making it susceptible to greater political interference and coercion. The KPK was established by Law 30/2002, as a response to and recognition of rampant corruption throughout the governmental, political and public sectors, business communities, and society in general, which became common practice during President Suharto's New Order Regime. The KPK's commission encompasses conducting investigations, indictments, and prosecutions. However, in late 2019, the People's Representative Council enacted amending legislation to weaken its authority and ability to operate independently. Crucial legislative changes included creating a government-appointed supervisory body overseeing the KPK's internal operations and changing KPK employee status from independent agents to public servants. These two provisions alone seriously weaken the KPK's autonomy and create the risk of turning it into a politically controlled auxiliary state agency. In some respects, KPK has become a victim of its own successes, having achieved convictions of senior ministers, politicians, government officials, and business leaders, which in turn has produced enemies. Without political protection, the KPK faces the prospect of not only becoming, in essence, a nonentity but also facing further deterioration of its credibility and authority.

Keywords

corruption; criminal investigations; Indonesia; KPK; presidential candidates; presidential elections

1. Introduction

In the context of this issue of *Politics and Governance* on the theme of “Indonesian Heroes and Villains: National Identity, Politics, Law, and Security,” this article examines two related events in the fairly short history of Indonesia’s Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi [KPK]), which are in the process of changing the generally perceived status of the KPK. The two events are the introduction of amending legislation in 2019, which significantly curtailed the KPK’s independence of operation in combatting corruption, and the 2024 Presidential and general elections, in which the “new” KPK has been accused of political interference. These two events are instrumental in deconstructing the reputation the KPK established in the first decade of its existence as somewhat of a fearless and successful campaigner against entrenched corruption. The KPK faces the prospect, as already being heralded in the local media, of not only becoming, in essence, a nonentity but also the loss of its former high standing both domestically and internationally—thereby declining from something of hero status to minor villain status.

Indonesia’s KPK was established by Law 30/2002 as a response to and recognition of rampant corruption throughout governmental, political, business communities, and society in general during former President Suharto’s 32-year New Order Regime (1966–1998).

Law 30/2002 for the Establishment of a Commission for the Eradication of Criminal Acts of Corruption (hereinafter Law 30/2002) was enacted in December 2002 during the presidency of Megawati Soekarnoputri. The law provided the KPK with a commission encompassing virtually unparalleled independence in conducting investigations, indictments, and prosecutions of alleged corruption. The opening articles of the law were both succinct yet emphatic in establishing this authority and independence. Article 3 stipulated that the KPK would be a state agency that would perform its duties and authority independently and free from any and all influence. The Law’s Explanatory Memorandum clarified the reach of “powers and influence” as:

Any power that could affect the tasks and authority of the KPK or members of the Commissioners of the KPK individually, from any executive, judiciary, legislative, and any other entities connected to a corruption case, or any other circumstances and situation, for any reason. (Law 30/2002, Explanatory Memorandum, Section II, Article 3)

The Explanatory Memorandum was forthright in its acknowledgement of entrenched corruption, declaring that:

Corruption in Indonesia has become a culture that has successfully proliferated itself in the community, and corrupt acts have been on the increase over the years, both in terms of the number of uncovered cases and the losses to society, as well as in terms of how corrupt acts have become more methodical and systemic, as they bore into every aspect of everyday life in Indonesia.

The effort to eradicate corruption must no longer be just acting against a criminal act, corruption must be prosecuted against by extraordinary means....We must enhance law enforcement methods by forming a special agency that will be allowed a wide authority that is independent as well as free from the influence of notorious powers in the effort to combat graft in a coordinated effort that is

implemented optimally, intensively, effectively, professionally, and continuously. (Law 30/2002, Explanatory Memorandum, Section II, Article 3)

Since commencing operations in late 2003, the KPK has generated a strong reputation within Indonesian society and abroad. It has been described as “Indonesia’s most trusted public institution” (Coca, 2016) and as “one of the world’s most effective anti-corruption agencies” (Kuris, 2012, p. 2). From 2003 to 2009, the organisation reportedly conducted more than 40 prosecutions against governors, ministers, judges, members of parliament, and other high-ranking officials and achieved a 100% conviction rate. It also recovered more than Rp350 billion (US\$37 million) in state assets (Kuris, 2012). According to its performance snapshots from its *Annual Report* for 2018, the KPK recorded that over the last three years it had initiated 383 investigations and continued with a further 419 investigations, achieving 259 convictions (KPK, 2019). High-ranking officials were amongst those convicted, including ministers, heads of institutions, commissioners, and corporation CEOs, involved in corruption, and two ministers of national parliament (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat [DPR]) and regional parliament (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah [DPRD]). The KPK returned to the state Rp489,25 billion in asset recovery (KPK, 2019, pp. 63–75).

This performance record prompted the international anti-corruption watchdog body Transparency International to declare in its 2020 Global Corruption Barometer that the KPK was one of the best-known anti-corruption agencies in the (Asian) region (Transparency International, 2023).

Some of the higher-profile arrests and successful prosecutions of that period included:

- 2008: Central Bank Governor Burhanuddin Abdullah, sentenced to 5.5 years;
- 2009: Central Bank Deputy Governor Aulia Pohan, 4.5 years;
- 2013: Police Inspector-General Djoko Susilo, 10 years plus a Rp500 million fine;
- 2013: Youth and Sports Minister Andi Alfian Mallarangeng, four years plus a Rp200 million fine;
- 2014: Constitutional Court Chief Justice Akil Mochtar, life imprisonment;
- 2017: Mayor of Batu, East Java, Eddy Rumpoko, 5.5 years;
- 2017: House Speaker and Golkar Party Chairman Setya Novanto, 15 years plus a Rp500 million fine.

By the same token, it is therefore not surprising that political moves would emerge to endeavour to curb or even remove the KPK’s very broad and investigative powers. As early as 2015, the State Ministry of National Development Planning was reportedly beginning to draft amending legislation of Law 30/2002, to refocus the KPK mission towards prevention through education instead of the current enforcement and prosecution (Johnson, 2015). However, President Joko Widodo (“Jokowi”) did not proceed with the plans, as opposition to the proposed changes arose, reportedly focussing instead on the politically safer national economic issues. Momentum again gathered in 2019 amongst political leaders in the DPR to debate and develop a bill to amend Law 30/2002. Proponents of the amendments claimed that the main purpose of the amendments was to refocus the KPK’s primary paradigm from enforcement and prosecution to prevention through education.

Although the bill to amend Law 30/2002 had been severely criticised by various stakeholders, including the KPK itself, the DPR considered and passed the bill in just six days in September 2019. The speed at which the bill was passed into law generated claims of political interference to curb the powers of the KPK, as well as claims of undue haste, improper process, and even invalidity. The bill was forwarded to President Jokowi

for signature, which he declined, partly as a response to the mass popular protests that were developing, as well as personal criticism of bowing to political elites. However, the bill became law pursuant to Article 20(5) of the Indonesian Constitution, which provides that a bill presented to the president for signature but remains unsigned for a period of 30 days automatically becomes law at the end of that 30-day period. Accordingly, Law 19/2019 on the Second Amendment to Law 30/2002 on the Corruption Eradication Commission (hereinafter Law 19/2019) came into effect on 17 October 2019.

1.1. Law 19/2019: Second Amendment to the KPK

The 2019 law intentionally focuses on the nature, status, intergovernmental relationship, and operational framework of the KPK, as well as the perceived necessity to rein in its independence. The law was meant to be amending legislation rather than replacement legislation. However, there have been significant changes introduced in respect of its role, authority, structure, and operation, with 17 new clauses, 25 amended (some significantly), and four removed entirely.

The law's preamble includes statements critical of the KPK and its performance to date:

- b. That the police, prosecutors, and the KPK as institutions that deal with corruption crimes need to increase synergy so that each can be useful and successful in efforts to eradicate corruption based on the principle of equality of authority and protection of human rights.

- d. That some provisions regarding the KPK...as stipulated in Law 30/2002...are no longer in accordance with the life of the state, the development of the law, and the needs of the community so that the law needs to be changed.

The amending legislation focused on the functional and institutional design of the KPK. However, the changes in the law triggered social unrest when announced. Protesters argued that the legislation would weaken the power and authority of the KPK to combat corruption. The DPR, on the other hand, argued that the reforms were important to balance the protection of human rights and anti-corruption measures, although the local media and international anti-corruption organisations had not flagged these issues as being of a high-priority reform imperative.

Two critical legislative changes not only weaken KPK's capacity to act *ex officio* and without undue external interference but also bring it closer to the political power elite and thus involvement with that elite, namely the creation of a government-appointed Supervisory Board over the KPK's activities and operation and changing KPK employee status from independent agent to public servant. These two provisions alone seriously weaken its autonomy and create the risk of turning it into a politically controlled auxiliary state agency, according to critics of the legislation.

Law 19/2019 introduces significant changes to the very core of this oversight framework, dissolving the original Advisory Team and creating in its place an entirely different body in terms of character, role, status, and authority, namely the Supervisory Board. As its name suggests, this newly created body significantly redefines its relationship with the KPK and dramatically impacts the KPK's philosophical and operational status. It also impacts with detriment the KPK's capacity to effectively achieve the imperative of Article 3,

even in its amended form, of carrying out its duties and authorities “independent and free from the influence of any power.”

2. Authority of the Supervisory Board (Dewan Pengawas)

The Supervisory Board (Dewan Pengawas) effectively replaces (and thereby demotes) the commissioners as the new KPK Senior Executive. Its role is not entirely supervisory (implying a reactive character), but proactive and directorial. It is almost entirely concerned with the KPK and its staff and their performance against personal benchmarks determined by the Board through the code of ethics application and the annual individual staff performance reviews. The Board’s role is not addressing the combatting of corruption or external relations per se, and the qualifications for appointment under Article 37D do not require specific skills relating to law enforcement, crime, or business corruption.

Article 37B of Law 19/2019 details the Board’s multiple duties and responsibilities, namely: (a) overseeing the implementation of the duties and authorities of the KPK; (b) granting permission or not to provide the State Intelligence Agency (Badan Intelijen Negara) wiretaps, searches, and/or seizures; (c) drafting and establishing the code of conduct of the chairman and employees of the KPK; (d) receiving and reporting from the public regarding alleged violations of the ethics code by the chairman and employees of the KPK or violations of the provisions in Law 19/2019; (e) holding hearings of the KPK to check for alleged violations of the code of conduct by the leadership and employees of the KPK; and (f) evaluating annually the performance of the leadership and employees of the KPK.

While Article 37B(1) encompasses both institutional and operational authority over the KPK, it also demonstrates a clear intention by the legislators to implement control mechanisms at every level of the organisation through the introduction of a Board-created code of conduct. The code applies to both executive and employee, the prosecution of alleged violations of the code, and the evaluation of individual performance generally.

Pursuant to Article 37E, the chair and members of the Supervisory Board are appointed by the Indonesian president, although the selection process involves the DPR at crucial stages. The initial processes of calling for nominations and shortlisting are conducted by a committee comprising both DPR and public representation and appointed by the president. After observing the public reaction to those nominated, the committee submits a preferred candidate to the president, who is then required to consult with the DPR before announcing and appointing the successful candidate to the Board. Hence the DPR and its various parties have the opportunity to influence appointments at both the preliminary and final stages of determining the Board composition and the eventual appointee.

The five foundation members of the initial Supervisory Board were appointed and sworn in by President Jokowi on 20 December 2019 (Office of Assistant, 2019). By August 2020, the Board was reporting that it was preparing to hear three cases of code of ethics violations by senior KPK officers, including one against KPK Chief Commissioner Firlil Bahuri (KPK, 2020). Indriyanto Seno Adji was appointed to the Supervisory Board and sworn in on 28 April 2021 to replace the late Artidjo Alkostar (“Indriyanto Seno Adji replaces,” 2021).

3. Status of the KPK and Its Officers

The intentions of the DPR with respect to the KPK and their mutual relationship are made very clear in the Explanatory Memorandum to Law 19/2019, which is equally critical of the staff of the KPK:

But in its development the performance of the KPK is perceived to be less effective, with weak coordination between law enforcement lines, the implementation of a code of ethics by the leadership and staff, and problems in the implementation of duties and authorities [of the KPK]. The problem of wiretapping, the management of investigators and investigators who are less co-ordinated, with an overlap of authority with various law enforcement agencies and the weakness of the absence of supervisory agencies able to oversee the duties and the authority of the [KPK] so that there may be blemishes and less accountable implementation of duties and authorities to combat corruption crimes by the KPK.

Under Law 30/2002, the KPK was previously defined as a state agency independent and free from the influence of third parties in performing its duties and exercising its authority (Law 30/2002, Article 3). However, under Law 19/2019, Article 3, as amended, the KPK is now considered a state institution within the group of executive powers agency of government. Although the phrase “independent and free from the influence of any power” is retained, the consequence of making the KPK an executive powers agency is that the organisation is still subject to executive authority. Its members become civil servants and are subject to the law and government regulations on recruitment, employment, performance, etc. Hence, its independence can now be compromised by the political elite and influential corporate third parties.

Law 30/2002 was also silent on the status of KPK employees, with Article 24 merely stating that procedural rules for the appointment of staff would be determined by KPK. Law 19/2019, in Articles 24(2) and 24(3), stipulates that KPK employees are members of the professional corps of civil apparatus employees of Indonesia in accordance with the provisions of the laws and regulations, thus declaring them to be civil servants. Their appointment will also be subject to the provisions of those laws and regulations, which now include undergoing a civil service entrance assessment and being subject to compliance with the code of ethics created by the Supervisory Board. The civil service exam was reportedly a non-standard “national vision exam” created specifically for the KPK, which attracted negative attention because of the nature of some of the questions included therein (Schütte, 2021). *The Jakarta Post* declared the test as simply a pretext to dismiss top KPK employees (Gorbiano, 2021).

The new code of ethics is applicable to all KPK members, including the Supervisory Board members, executive members, and staff. The Supervisory Board is meant to follow up on any reports from the public regarding any alleged violation of the code of ethics by KPK executive members and staff or any violation of any provisions of the KPK law. Supervisory Board members who are alleged to have violated the code of ethics, would be subject to a hearing before the Honorary Assembly of the Code of Ethics, a parliamentary organisation established specifically for parliamentary members.

The reaction from the media as well as the general public and the KPK itself to the restructuring of the KPK was scathing and condemnatory of the government’s actions and expressed concern for the KPK’s future. For example, dire headlines heralded “Scepticism in Indonesia About Fight Against Graft Despite Recent

High-Profile Busts” (Arshad, 2020) and “Indonesia’s Corruption Eradication Commission in Dire Straits” (Mulholland & Mochtar, 2021). *The Jakarta Post* (Fachriansyah, 2020) wondered whether it was “Time to write off the KPK” (2021).

4. The KPK and the Indonesian Presidential and General Elections

Whether proactively or reactively (or indeed both, depending on the issues and individuals involved), the KPK has inevitably become embroiled in the political manoeuvrings leading up to the forthcoming national round of general elections in February 2024. Actions ranging from naming suspects as possibly involved in investigations of corrupt activity to arrests and pursuing formal criminal prosecutions generate regular accusations of politically motivated criminal investigations.

By early 2022, potential presidential candidates were emerging, and the Indonesian media were soon running an active commentary on the three possible leading contenders and their endorsing parties, albeit in partnerships that were still somewhat fluid and flexible. The media were generally reporting that Central Java Governor Ganjar Pranowo (Ganjar) and Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto (Prabowo) were tied in the opinion polls, with Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan (Anies) in third place. Together, the three were leading the rest of the field by a comfortable margin and generally appeared to most likely be the endorsed presidential candidates. The situation with potential vice-presidential candidates was much more uncertain and fluid, although the names of Democrat Party (Partai Demokrat) Chairman Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono, son of SBY, and DPR Speaker Puan Maharani, daughter of the Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan) Chair Megawati Sukarnoputri, were being suggested (Simandjuntak, 2022).

4.1. Focus on the KPK and Chief Commissioner Firlil

Since mid-2022, the KPK’s attention to matters of graft and corruption appears to have increasingly engaged with political matters and personalities. The KPK has been involved in investigations or laid charges of corruption against members of Parliament or leaders or officials of parties within each of the coalition groups supporting their respective candidates. Consequently, it has also been accused by some media of attempting to influence public opinion in respect of presidential candidates or their supporting coalitions through the conduct of their investigations and eventual charges sometimes irrespective of the paucity of evidence against the accused.

However, political opposition against the KPK itself, an ongoing theme since its reconstitution in 2019–2020, is ramping up in the pre-election season, with the accusations of political interference being reinforced with allegations of internal bribery and corruption. Adding even further pressure upon the organisation and undermining its already damaged reputation are the ongoing accusations of corruption and extortion against Chief Commissioner Firlil, calling for further investigation and his removal from office. Firlil has previously been investigated on more than one occasion for breaches of the KPK’s ethics code. More seriously, he has been recently accused of attempting to extort Rp1 billion from Syahrul in late 2022 in return for closing the KPK’s corruption investigation against him (“Analysis: Hunter becomes hunted,” 2023). Furthermore, his role in allegedly endeavouring to involve Anies in the Formula E racing corruption investigation remains ongoing.

The extent to which the accusations, investigations, and/or charges laid may have impacted the outcome of the elections will probably not be determinable until after the counts are finalised, the successful candidates are in office, and promised favours paid and old scores settled. However, the pre-election machinations are still providing a rich diet of gossip and scandal for the press and social media.

4.2. Focus on Presidential Candidate Anies

There has been media speculation suggesting that the KPK has been interfering in the approach to the election by endeavouring to discredit the National Democratic Party (NasDem), as the senior member of the Change for Unity coalition endorsement of presidential candidate Anies. From late 2022 or early 2023 (depending on whether leaked information from within the KPK or the KPK chief commissioner is deemed the more reliable), the KPK has been investigating claims of corruption against former Minister of Agriculture Syahrul Yasin Limpo and two of his senior executives for corruption in respect of their alleged trading in positions within the ministry. Former Minister Syahrul, who was eventually arrested and charged in mid-October 2023, is also a senior member of the NasDem, and formerly part of the Jokowi coalition. Reporting on the case in mid-October, soon after the formal declaration of the presidential candidates, *Republika* asserted that:

The KPK's delay in releasing the names of the suspects has sparked suspicions about the tug-of-war of political interests behind the case. In the political year, ahead of the 2024 elections, allegations of politicization of corruption cases are difficult to dismiss. (Sidebang, 2023)

In a similar vein, *Tempo* accused the KPK of politicising the case and asserted that its handling tarnished its own reputation, embarrassed NasDem, and revealed chronic diseases in the Jokowi administration. The accusation was based on the KPK's apparent lack of transparency and failure to publicly disclose the identities of the accused until late in the investigation, reportedly contrary to longstanding KPK tradition, as well as apparently targeting NasDem members (Saleh, 2023).

The *Tempo's* reference in this regard was no doubt to former Minister for Communication and Technology Johnny G. Plate, also investigated by KPK and who has recently been sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for corruption. Plate is also Secretary-General of NasDem. NasDem Chairman Surya Paloh has claimed that Plate is not corrupt and that he is ready to support the Attorney General's Office to investigate the KPK's bias and handling of the case, suggesting that the Office "also check all the elements in all institutions including the NasDem Party. NasDem welcomes that" ("Minister Johnny G. Plate accused of corruption," 2023). The KPK faced further accusations of political interference when its Deputy Commissioner Marwata publicly suggested at the time of Syahrul's arrest, without providing any detail, that the billions of rupiah seized in a search of his home were intended for the benefit of NasDem. This brought the rapid rejoinder from NasDem that the KPK was trying to influence public opinion (Sidebang, 2023).

Anies himself has also been subject to speculation of being involved in corrupt activity surrounding the introduction of Formula "E" electric car racing to Indonesia. Although not named as a suspect, Anies has reportedly been extensively questioned by the KPK over provincial funding being improperly used to acquire the rights from the international governing body to run Formula E racing in Jakarta. The investigation, which commenced in late 2021, remains ongoing, even as the 2024 election approached. It has been suggested that KPK Chief Commissioner Firli dismissed an investigation director for refusing the chief commissioner's

directive to designate Anies as a potential suspect, overruling the advice of the investigator and a deputy commissioner (“Foul play,” 2023). Firli apparently wanted to formalise an investigation before any political party officially declared Anies as its preferred presidential candidate (Muhtadi, 2022).

The ministerial arrests and prosecutions, as well as his own questioning by the KPK, may well negatively affect the vote for Anies. But it may also attract a sympathy support vote if public opinion moves away from the Jokowi-aligned Prabowo team, following recent media criticism concerning the appointment of Jokowi’s son as Prabowo’s vice-presidential candidate. More than one media source, in reporting on Syahrul’s arrest, pointedly commented that he was the sixth member of the president’s cabinet to be arrested, on trial, or imprisoned on corruption charges (Karmini, 2023; Saleh, 2023). The comments are as much a reflection on the president’s competence and due diligence as on the integrity of those former ministers, namely:

- Former Minister of Social Affairs Idrus Marham, three years imprisonment and a Rp50 million fine for accepting bribes (April 2019);
- Former Minister of Youth and Sports Imam Nahrawi, seven years imprisonment and a Rp400 million fine for corruption related to the provision of grants, and gratuities totalling Rp8.3 billion (June 2020);
- Former Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Edhy Prabowo, five years imprisonment for accepting bribes totalling Rp3.4 billion relating to lobster seed export permits (November 2020);
- Former Social Affairs Minister Juliari Batubara, 12 years imprisonment and a Rp500 million fine for corruption totalling Rp32 billion relating to Covid-19 relief funds programs; Batubara was also ordered to repay Rp14.5 billion embezzled for personal use over a multi-million-dollar Covid-19 graft scandal (June 2021);
- Former Minister for Communication and Technology Johnny G. Plate, 15 years imprisonment for alleged corruption totalling Rp18 billion relating to the construction of regional mobile phone transmission towers (June 2023);
- Former Agriculture Minister Syahrul Yasin Limpo (currently arrested and charged).

A recent media report suggests that Sports and Youth Minister Dito Ariotedjo is alleged to have accepted Rp27 billion in relation to a 4G base transceiver station project. He denied the allegation while on the witness stand in a corruption trial involving former Minister Johnny G. Plate (Ekawati, 2023).

4.3. Focus on Presidential Candidate Ganjar

It is striking that in the pre-election period, presidential candidate Ganjar, closely trailing main competitor Prabowo, does not appear to have been the subject of media speculation in respect of alleged corruption complaint before the KPK or otherwise subject to KPK criminal investigation. On the contrary, between 2015 and 2017, the KPK reportedly awarded his gubernatorial office for ensuring clean governance (Tatler Asia, 2020). Ganjar is said to represent the status quo, which could also mean benefiting from the high popularity ratings that the presidential office was recently enjoying. There was some speculation about his involvement in the e-identity card corruption scandal of almost a decade ago and the subsequent KPK investigation. However, Chief Commissioner Firli is on record as saying in 2022 that the investigation “has yet to find any evidence of the involvement of the Central Java Governor Ganjar Pranowo in the e-KTP procurement corruption” (“KPK: No evidence yet of Ganjar’s involvement,” 2022). Ganjar has been promoting a strong anti-corruption platform, but he has also been staying relatively clear of media brawling in respect of the other two competitors and

their party supporters. His strategy in response to the furore over the Constitutional Court's ruling concerning the validity of Prabowo's selection of Jokowi's son as vice-presidential candidate, for example, is to call upon the president to remain independent, a call echoed by Anies (Strangio, 2023b).

In Ganjar's favour is his status and support within the PDI-P party and its chair, former President Megawati Soekarnoputri, who supported Jokowi in power in 2009 and kept him there in 2014. Lindsay and Butt (2023) suggest that Jokowi's transfer of support to an opposing candidate is sure to be viewed by Megawati as a massive betrayal by Jokowi and that she and her party will do whatever they can to stop Prabowo and Gibran. So far, Megawati has remained silent on this switch of loyalties, but some form of revenge may come in the future. To quote an old tribal proverb, "The tiger never roars when hunting."

4.4. Focus on Presidential Candidate Prabowo

On 22 October 2023, Prabowo publicly announced 36-year-old Gibran Rakabuming Raka, currently mayor of Surakarta in Central Java and President Jokowi's eldest son, as his vice-presidential running mate. The announcement was made closely following a narrow majority ruling by the Constitutional Court on 16 October that the minimum qualifying age for presidential and vice-presidential candidates could be lowered from 40 to 36 years, contrary to Law 7/2017, the General Election Law, in the case of candidates who had been previously elected to regional leadership office.

The ruling has generated widespread opposition and condemnation, with some critics suggesting that this is an attempt by Jokowi to create yet another political dynasty. The president's only statement was to decline to comment in case he was perceived as interfering with judicial authority, and that presidential and vice-presidential candidacies are determined by political parties (Soeriaatmadja & Baharudin, 2023). However, the Court apparently rejected an application from other petitioners to lower the minimum age requirement from 40 to 35 age limit in the first of several similar applications being heard on the same day (Soeriaatmadja & Baharudin, 2023).

On 23 October, the KPK was presented with a formal complaint from the civil society organisation Indonesian Democracy Defense Team, alleging collusion and nepotism with respect to the ruling. Named in the complaint are President Jokowi, Chief Justice Anwar Usman who presided over the judicial hearing, Gibran, and Jokowi's younger son, Kaesang Pangarep. Chief Justice Anwar is also the brother-in-law of Jokowi and uncle of Gibran. He has also attracted criticism for not recusing himself from the hearing for what would appear to be an indefensible conflict of interest.

As is customary for the KPK, it has not yet made any preliminary announcements in response to the complaints, and it is unlikely that any investigation will be concluded before the February elections. In any case, its findings, even if negative, would not directly impact the judicial ruling per se, although they could further influence public opinion. However, the Constitutional Court is conducting its own investigation into the Chief Justice's involvement in the particular hearing involving Gibran, even though he was absent from related hearings by other parties on the same age issue. The KPK is thus in the awkward position that any announcements on investigation outcomes would be widely criticised by one side or another as attempting to influence public opinion and the outcome of the election. Such criticisms would place even further pressure upon the KPK itself and its embattled Chief Commissioner Firlil, who is already facing multiple accusations of multiple KPK

ethics violations as well as a police investigation over allegations of extorting Rp1 billion from Syahrul to halt that KPK corruption investigation.

4.5. Formal Declaration of Presidential Candidates

By late October 2023, the three leading candidates had formally registered as candidates for the presidential elections, and nominated their vice-presidential running mates (JDIH KPU, 2023), namely:

- Prabowo Subianto, nominated by the Gerindra Party and supported by the Advanced Indonesia coalition (comprising the Gerindra, Golkar, Demokrat, PAN, Indonesian Solidarity, PBB, Garuda, and Gelora parties), with Gibran Rakabuming Raka as running mate;
- Ganjar Pranowo, nominated by the PDI-P party and supported by the coalition of the PDI-P, PPP, Hanura and Perindo parties, with Muhammad Mahfud as running mate;
- Anies Baswedan, nominated by the coalition of Change for Unity (comprising the NasDem, National Awakening Party, PKS, and Ummat parties), with Muhaimin Iskandar as running mate.

The Demokrat Party transferred its declared support from Anies to Prabowo after its chairman, Argus Harimurti Yudhoyono, was passed over as Anies' running mate, contrary to what was earlier promised. The Indonesian Solidarity party also transferred its declared support from Ganjar to Prabowo on 24 October. Meanwhile, the National Awakening Party transferred its declared support from Prabowo to Anies after the party's Chairman Muhaimin Iskandar was selected as Anies' running mate.

4.6. The Vagaries of the Opinion Polls

Twelve months out from the election Ganjar appeared to hold a narrow lead over Prabowo in most national opinion polls, with Anies coming third. By June, Prabowo had moved ahead of Ganjar by a small margin which he has continued to maintain. In one opinion poll reported by *The Diplomat* in mid-October 2023, Prabowo led at 37%, followed by Ganjar at 34.% and Anies at 27% (Strangio, 2023a). The poll results also seem to be fairly consistent with other polls (Teresia & Widiyanto, 2023). However, this poll was taken prior to the Constitutional Court's judgment and Prabowo's announcement on his choice of running mate and therefore does not reflect public opinion on these two events. But some opinion polls from late October/early November indicated that Ganjar was at 36.8% having overtaken Prabowo at 34.7% ("Indonesian president hopeful," 2023; "Indonesia presidential contender Ganjar," 2023). These figures may represent a certain displeasure at Prabowo's selection, but it may also be influenced by the Constitutional Court's ethics committee determination in early November to remove Anwar Usman as chief justice but to allow him to remain on the Court and prohibit him from participating in any Court adjudications on election results (Syam & Karmini, 2023). Yet some opinion polls in mid-November indicate Prabowo back in the lead at just over 40%, Ganjar at just under 30%, and Anies at around 23% ("Indonesia's Prabowo stretches lead," 2023; Strangio, 2023c).

Opinion polls are generally based on very small sample sizes, are often regional or socio-economic-based, and are subject to the political leanings of the media sources and those of their proprietors. One conclusion that could be drawn from them, however, is that they cannot be relied upon as sure and reliable predictors of election outcomes. It also seems unlikely that any candidate will achieve a clear majority (50% of the vote

plus one) in the first round in February, requiring a further round of voting between the two leading candidates scheduled for June 2024. This places the eliminated candidate pair, likely Anies and Muhaimin Iskandar, with a substantial capacity to influence the outcome of that final round. The pair are supported by a coalition in the DPR of 167 seats and could bring a potential voting bloc in the vicinity of 25% into the final round. A transfer en masse would likely secure victory for the candidate who receives this support. It could also generate a scenario of Indonesian history repeating itself with a cabinet appointment as a price for the transfer, thus positioning himself and his supporting party in a strategic position to prepare for the 2029 presidential elections.

5. Conclusion

While this article has considered the KPK's activities in respect of candidates and associated parties for the presidential election, the fundamental question that arises is whether the KPK's investigations and related activity are likely to have any real impact on the outcome of the election itself. In some respects, a cynic might argue that the reasonably balanced distribution of accusations and counter-accusations across the various coalitions and their leading personalities, and across the Elections Board generally, could be said to largely cancel out the possible individual-specific negative impacts. The three registered presidential teams and their nominating coalitions have all been involved in various degrees of vilifying each other, with some also accused of corrupt or questionable activity, either directly or by association, over the last year or so.

Post-election, it may well turn out to be very difficult to determine with the appropriate degree of evidence for academic research purposes the impact of first preference voting patterns and party alliances on final election results. Further post-election surveys, which are sure to be conducted, would no doubt be accompanied by interesting reporting commentary. However, some commentators are already suggesting that the forthcoming presidential election could constitute something of a seismic shift for the country. Lindsay and Butt (2023) argue that the Constitutional Court's recent involvement spells the end of its status as an independent check and balance on Indonesia's increasingly powerful rulers, which does not bode well for the country's fragile democracy. The Carnegie Institute opines that the 2024 election is bringing Indonesia to the cusp of an impending generational change (Jaffrey, 2023). The old elite are still in charge of picking the candidates and several have taken measures to bequeath the leadership of their parties to their children. Lacking this kind of lineage, Jokowi is using his incumbent power to position himself among the next generation of kingmakers (Jaffrey, 2023).

Of interest also, albeit of lesser political and public significance, would be the extent of personnel mobility within the senior ranks of the KPK following the conclusion of the election season and the installation of the successful candidates. The introduction and implementation of the 2019 legislative amendments, for example, significantly decimated the senior and investigation ranks of the KPK and hence its focus and operational performance. The amendments dispensed with the Advisory Board members and saw the departure of the chief commissioner, all deputy commissioners, the secretary-general, the key director for prosecutions, as well as other directors. Admittedly, one departing deputy commissioner, namely Firli Bahuri, was elevated to chief commissioner. Media reports indicate that the introduction into the KPK of the specifically crafted civil service exam and the code of conduct also led to staff resignations and dismissals, but actual numbers are difficult to determine.

The KPK history is likely to repeat itself with a similar personnel mobility situation occurring during 2024 and in the post-election settlement period. Four of the five members of the Supervisory Board end their five-year terms (as amended from the initial four-year terms by the Constitutional Court in May 2023) on 20 December 2024, and the commissioners and senior investigators on fixed-term contracts also conclude their terms through 2024. With a newly settled presidential team, a new cabinet, at least in part, and renewed parliamentary and party dynamics post-election, the nature of KPK retentions, departures, and arrivals should be revealing. The general alignment of KPK employment contract completions with the outcomes of the presidential and general elections provides a rare opportunity for assessing whether the old elite is still in charge or whether there is that impending generational change as suggested by the Carnegie Institute.

It is suggested that the KPK, in one guise or another, will continue in post-election Indonesia. Under a Prabowo–Gibran presidency, the KPK would most likely maintain the politicised character that it has pursued over Jokowi's second term in particular and thus continue its shift away from independent authority and action against corruption. The above impending executive and senior contract completions and consequent appointment opportunities would enable appropriate fine-tuning to suit the administration's particular strategic and personal priorities. But further legislative action is most unlikely since such action could be construed as an implied admission that the 2019 amendments by an administration of which Prabowo was a senior member were unjustified, inadequate, or even counterproductive.

Under a Ganjar–Mahfud presidency, there may well emerge an imperative to invigorate the KPK and restore it to its former pre-2019 public status by reinstating some of the statutory independence and authority to act that it originally enjoyed. While Ganjar may be encouraged by electoral success to further the strong anti-corruption message he has been employing in his presidential campaign, he will need strong parliamentary support to give effect to such strong statutory change. Nevertheless, the above forthcoming KPK personnel mobility situation will give his team significant scope to effect change in his desired and perceived necessary directions. Irrespective, Ganjar could determine to continue to promote his electoral message that institutions such as an independent KPK and an independent judiciary are important for Indonesia's integrity and reputation as it develops democratically and economically into a responsible global player.

An Anies–Muhaimin Presidency is the least likely election outcome. However, if his improving performance in recent polls is reflected in the first round of the election, it may well create an opportunity for deals, agreements, or understandings with the Ganjar–Mahfud team in respect of the KPK. The Anies–Muhaimin team and its coalition of supporters have been subject to greater negative attention than the other presidential candidates and have been very critical of the KPK's alleged interference in the election campaigning. An opportunity to redress this attention would be appealing.

One incongruous aspect of the 2019 legislative amendments is that positioning a government-appointed supervisory/directorial framework atop the KPK and bringing its employees into the mainstream civil service framework has brought the organisation into closer association with its political masters and created an opportunity for the KPK to enjoy closer scrutiny of its masters.

It is quite feasible that the team that eventually achieves the presidency might consider that an easily achievable strategy that could be seen to both repair the KPK's declining reputation and maintain a certain

distance apart would be to apply the military and corporate principle of command responsibility. Hence, it could initiate change at the very apex of the KPK. Such change would be more palatable if that apex personality was already the target of personal as well as corporate responsibility.

In any case, it is suggested that changes to the KPK of any significant dimension are unlikely to come to the fore prior to the end of the 2024 election year. The general consensus is that the first presidential round will not produce a clear winner, thus requiring a second round of the two remaining candidates in June, with the eventual winner formally inaugurated as president in October. The “interregnum” period between the second round and inauguration will be marked by the shifting dynamics of politics. The movement of party support between the emergence of likely presidential candidates in early 2022 and the formal declaration of candidates in October 2023 demonstrates the very fluid nature of party loyalties driven more by personality than policy. As demonstrated by Jokowi with the appointment of his presidential opponent Prabowo as defence minister in 2019, the incoming cabinet could well include appointments from the current opposing presidential teams with an axe to grind with the KPK—which may not augur well for the KPK.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

- Analysis: Hunter becomes hunted in Indonesia’s antigraft campaign. (2023, October 16). *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2023/10/16/analysis-hunter-becomes-hunted-in-indonesias-antigraft-campaign.html>
- Arshad, A. (2020, December 7). Scepticism in Indonesia about fight against graft despite recent high-profile busts. *The Straits Times*. <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/scepticism-remain-in-indonesia-about-fight-against-graft-despite-recent-high-profile>
- Coca, N. (2016, February 18). Indonesia’s anti-corruption fight. *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2016/02/indonesias-anti-corruption-fight>
- Ekawati, A. (2023, October 18). Indonesia: Corruption scandals escalate as election nears. *Deutsche Welle*. <https://www.dw.com/en/indonesia-corruption-scandals-escalate-as-election-nears/a-67130795>
- Fachriansyah, R. (2020, December 12). Indonesian minister arrested for alleged embezzlement of Covid-19 relief fund. *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/12/06/juliari-becomes-latest-cabinet-member-to-be-named-graft-suspect-in-recent-weeks.html>
- Foul play at the KPK. (2023, April 13). *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2023/04/12/foul-play-at-the-kpk.html>
- Gorbiano, M. (2021, May 7). “Racist, unnecessary”: How controversial test seen as pretext to fire top KPK employees. *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2021/05/07/racist-unnecessary-how-controversial-test-seen-as-pretext-to-fire-top-kpk-employees.html>
- Indonesian president hopeful Prabowo, tied to Jokowi’s son, falls in polls. (2023, November 8). *The Star*. <https://www.thestar.com.my/aseanplus/aseanplus-news/2023/11/08/indonesian-president-hopeful-prabowo-tied-to-jokowis-son-falls-in-polls>
- Indonesia presidential contender Ganjar takes slim lead in new poll. (2023, November 6). *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/indonesia-presidential-contender-ganjar-takes-slim-lead-new-poll-2023-11-06>
- Indonesia’s Prabowo stretches lead in new survey on presidential contenders. (2023, November 13).

- Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/indonesias-prabowo-stretches-lead-new-survey-presidential-contenders-2023-11-13>
- Indriyanto Seno Adji replaces Artidjo, KPK Supervisory Board consider Jokowi's choice right. (2021, April 28). *VOI*. <https://voi.id/en/news/47669>
- Jaffrey, S. (2023, October 5). Indonesia's 2024 presidential election could be the last battle of the titans. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/10/05/indonesia-s-2024-presidential-election-could-be-last-battle-of-titans-pub-90711>
- Johnson, C. (2015). *Indonesia: Planned new law on corruption commission postponed*. United States Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2015-10-20/indonesia-planned-new-law-on-corruption-commission-postponed>
- Karmini, N. (2023, October 13). Indonesia's former agriculture minister arrested over alleged corruption. *Associated Press*. <https://apnews.com/article/indonesia-agriculture-minister-arrest-corruption-fa39f3a970d8355139af20.26b6a499be>
- Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi. (2019). *Laporan Tahunan KPK 2018*. <https://kpk.go.id/id/publikasi/laporan-tahunan/934-laporan-tahunan-kpk-2018>
- Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi. (2020, August 19). *KPK Supervisory Board holds initial ethics hearing* [Press Release]. <https://www.kpk.go.id/en/news/press-releases/1833-kpk-supervisory-board-holds-initial-ethics-hearing>
- KPK: No evidence yet of Ganjar's involvement in e-KTP corruption. (2022, April 28). *Independent Observer*. <https://observerid.com/kpk-no-evidence-yet-of-ganjars-involvement-in-e-ktp-corruption>
- JDIH KPU. (2023). *Keputusan Komisi Pemilihan Umum Nomor 1632 Tahun 2023 tentang Penetapan Pasangan Calon Peserta Pemilihan Umum Presiden dan Wakil Presiden Tahun 2024*. <https://jdih.kpu.go.id/detailkepku-464d5456525531524a544e454a544e45>
- Kuris, G. (2012). *Inviting a tiger into your home: Indonesia creates an Anti-Corruption Commission with teeth, 2002–2007*. *Innovations for Successful Societies*. https://successfulsocieties.princeton.edu/sites/g/files/toruqf5601/files/Indonesia%20Tiger_ToU_1.pdf
- Law 30/2002 for the Establishment of a Commission for the Eradication of Criminal Acts of Corruption, enacted 27 December 2002.
- Lindsay, T., & Butt, S. (2023, October 24). A twist in Indonesia's presidential election does not bode well for the country's fragile democracy. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/a-twist-in-indonesias-presidential-election-does-not-bode-well-for-the-countrys-fragile-democracy-216007>
- Minister Johnny G. Plate accused of corruption, NasDem defends. (2023, May 19). *Indonesia Business Post*. <https://indonesiabusinesspost.com/insider/minister-johnny-g-plate-accused-of-corruption-nasdem-defends>
- Muhtadi, B. (2022, November 10). NasDem's endorsement of Anies Baswedan: Brilliant gambit or political blunder? *FULCRUM*. <https://fulcrum.sg/NasDems-endorsement-of-anies-baswedan-brilliant-gambit-or-political-blunder>
- Mulholland, J., & Mochtar, Z. A. (2021, March 16). Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission in dire straits. *East Asia Forum*. <https://eastasiaforum.org/2021/03/16/indonesias-corruption-eradication-commission-in-dire-straits>
- Office of Assistant. (2019, December 20). President Jokowi inaugurates KPK Supervisory Board members. *Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia*. <https://setkab.go.id/en/president-jokowi-inaugurates-kpk-supervisory-board-members>
- Saleh, N. (2023, October 23). Tampanan Kasus Korupsi Menteri Pertanian. *Koran Tempo*. <https://koran.tempo.co/read/editorial/484763/siapa-dipermalukan-kasus-korupsi-mentan#>

- Schütte, S. A. (2021, June 9). An administrative war at the KPK: Employees versus leadership. *Indonesia at Melbourne*. <https://indonesiatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/an-administrative-war-at-the-kpk-employees-versus-leadership>
- Sidebang, F. (2023, October 14). Umumkan Uang Korupsi SYL, Waketum Nasdem Tuding KPK Coba Pengaruhi Opini Publik. *Republika*. <https://news.republika.co.id/berita/s2iert484/umumkan-uang-korupsi-syl-waketum-nasdem-tuding-kpk-coba-pengaruhi-opini-publik>
- Simandjuntak, D. (2022, June 10). Looking ahead to Indonesia's 2024 elections. *East Asia Forum*. <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2022/06/10/looking-ahead-to-indonesias-2024-elections>
- Soeriaatmadja, W., & Baharudin, H. (2023, October 16). Indonesia court clears way for Jokowi's son to run in election; President says he is not interfering. *The Straits Times*. <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/indonesia-court-upholds-minimum-age-requirement-for-president-vp-candidates>
- Strangio, S. (2023a, October 23). Prabowo Maintains narrow lead in Indonesian presidential polls. *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2023/10/prabowo-maintains-narrow-lead-in-indonesian-presidential-polls>
- Strangio, S. (2023b, October 31). Indonesian presidential candidates call on president to remain neutral. *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2023/10/indonesian-presidential-candidates-call-on-president-to-remain-neutral>
- Strangio, S. (2023c, November 15). Prabowo Subianto widens lead in latest Indonesia election polls. *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2023/11/prabowo-subianto-widens-lead-in-latest-indonesia-election-polls>
- Syam, F., & Karmini, N. (2023, November 8). Indonesia demotes chief justice for ethical violation after ruling in favor of nephew. *AP News*. <https://apnews.com/article/indonesia-constitutional-court-dismiss-chief-justice-4223047fb46310ffd2c7dfa0bad5b558>
- Tatler Asia. (2020). *Ganjar Pranowo: Governor of Central Java*. <https://www.tatlerasia.com/people/ganjar-pranowo>
- Teresia, A., & Widiyanto, S. (2023, October 29). Indonesia's Prabowo keeps narrow lead in survey on presidential contenders. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/indonesias-prabowo-keeps-narrow-lead-survey-presidential-contenders-2023-10-20>
- Time to write off the KPK? (2021, December 22). *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2021/12/22/time-to-write-off-the-kpk.html>
- Transparency International. (2023, June 21). *Dismissals following controversial civics test further weaken Indonesia's anti-corruption KPK* [Press Release]. <https://www.transparency.org/en/press/dismissals-controversial-civics-test-further-weaken-indonesia-anti-corruption-agency-kpk>

About the Author



David Price is an emeritus professor of international law in the Faculty of Arts and Society, Charles Darwin University, Australia. His recent research focuses on the intersection of public international law, international trade agreements, and intellectual property rights. This has included the application of investor-state dispute settlement involving the Gulf Cooperation Council states, Indonesia, and Australia. He has published widely on IP protection in the Gulf and other developing regions, including Indonesia, and the geopolitics of trade agreements on domestic policy.

Nurturing Hero or Villain: BAKAMLA as the Indonesian Coast Guard

Arie Afriansyah¹ , Christou Imanuel² , and Aristyo Rizka Darmawan³ 

¹ Faculty of Law, University of Indonesia, Indonesia

² Areté Advisor Firm, Indonesia

³ School of Regulation & Global Governance, Australian National University, Australia

Correspondence: Arie Afriansyah (arie.afriansyah@ui.ac.id)

Submitted: 2 November 2023 **Accepted:** 7 February 2024 **Published:** 17 April 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue “Indonesian Heroes and Villains: National Identity, Politics, Law, and Security” edited by Nathan Franklin (Charles Darwin University) and Hans Hägerdal (Linnaeus University), fully open access at <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i380>

Abstract

Maritime security governance is crucial for Indonesia, the world’s largest archipelago spread across a vast water area about the size of the United States. The existence of several law enforcement institutions to uphold Indonesian laws made governance and authority fractured and weak. Consequently, BAKAMLA was established to improve Indonesian maritime security governance by synergising and monitoring law enforcement at sea. Despite being supported politically by Indonesian President Joko Widodo, institutionally, BAKAMLA remains underperforming. This article discusses whether the existence of BAKAMLA fulfils Indonesia’s political and security needs to have an integrated coast guard institution. The article considers relevant literature and the research phase employed in-depth interviews with stakeholders of Indonesia’s law enforcement officers at sea. This article concludes that BAKAMLA is still relevant if significant adjustments are made to institutional empowerment by revising and harmonising relevant laws. Such revision reflects the aspirations of political support and will from the Indonesian government to BAKAMLA.

Keywords

BAKAMLA; coast guard; Indonesia; law enforcement; maritime security; sea governance

1. Introduction

On 12 February 2020, President Joko Widodo, at the inauguration ceremony of the Head of the Indonesia Maritime Security Agency (Badan Keamanan Laut [BAKAMLA]), stated:

Yes, we hope that in the future BAKAMLA will become the embryo of Indonesia's Coast Guard so that later other institutions will return to their respective institutions and at sea only BAKAMLA will be given authority. So BAKAMLA is like the Indonesian Coast Guard. (Hakim & Krisiandi, 2020)

This statement indicates that the government intends to make BAKAMLA the leading civilian institution with authority in Indonesian waters. This way, the authority currently held by other relevant institutions will be integrated into BAKAMLA to ensure there is no overlap in authority and responsibility. However, this "top-down" political approach has been challenging to implement.

This approach was an effort to improve Indonesia's maritime security governance due to some concerns and allegations towards several law officers at sea who allegedly committed corruption (Dewi & Purnamasari, 2021, pp. 38–53). This is in addition to the notorious overlapping authority of at least six law enforcement agencies with patrol vessels at sea, namely the Navy, the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Police, and BAKAMLA (Dirhamsyah et al., 2022, p. 3). Nevertheless, under current regulations and the absence of strong political will to empower the Indonesian Coast Guard, the president's instruction on a single maritime security agency in Indonesian waters is unlikely to be fully implemented.

The study of BAKAMLA as a legal institution has attracted much attention from many scholars. Some have focused on whether BAKAMLA has been a successful successor of the previous agency to coordinate law enforcement in Indonesian waters (Ansori et al., 2017; Puspitawati et al., 2020). Other scholars have critically examined whether or not BAKAMLA worsens the current overlapping legal authority on Indonesian waters (Kurniaty et al., 2021, p. 222; Slamet et al., 2020). There have even been those who have focused on whether BAKAMLA will become a single agency as a multi-task legal institution (Ilham et al., 2022; Prissandi et al., 2023, p. 1978; Wulansari, 2014). More attention needs to focus on how BAKAMLA's capacity to implement its duties and functions as mandated by law has experienced political resistance from other law enforcement institutions. This article examines whether BAKAMLA's efforts as a government institution to fulfil its mandate to become a new maritime security institution can be achieved.

This article found that despite the president's vision to have a single maritime security agency, which remains unfulfilled, BAKAMLA has nevertheless successfully implemented its mandate to synergise, monitor, and conduct patrols at sea by the enactment of Government Regulation No. 13 of 2022. This regulation enables all relevant resources to effectively cover most of Indonesia's waters at all times by coordinated patrols under BAKAMLA (Government of Indonesia, 2022). Following this introduction, observing Indonesia's maritime security is crucial to providing the context for securing the vast waters of Indonesia. Then, BAKAMLA, as the focus of this research, will be evaluated before the article presents its conclusion.

2. Indonesia's Maritime Security Governance at a Glance

With a vast coastline, Indonesia has maritime boundaries with numerous countries, including Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Palau, Australia, India, Thailand, and the Philippines (Purwanto & Mangku, 2016, p. 54). Some of the maritime boundaries of those neighbouring states remain unsettled (disputed areas) and lead to uncertainty on a day-to-day basis (Afriansyah et al., 2022, p. 283). This has caused numerous maritime

incidents. For example, the KRI Tjiptadi-381 ship incident occurred in the overlapping boundaries between Indonesia and Vietnam when the Vietnamese government's vessel hit the Indonesian ship (Maulana & Ika, 2019). Additionally, Indonesia is located at the crossroads of international shipping routes. It is strategically located between the Pacific and Indian Oceans, Asia, and Australia. While there are economic and political benefits from this, this strategic position also exposes Indonesia to risks, such as smuggling, illegal migration, and border crossings (Cribb & Ford, 2009, p. 9). Its vast waters are also prone to illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing. Consequently, improving maritime security is one of Indonesia's primary concerns (Pashya & Gozali, 2023).

These concerns above have compelled Indonesia to establish several regulations and law enforcement agencies (Chapsos & Malcolm, 2017). Currently, Indonesia has at least 13 state entities with the authority to manage, enforce, and/or apply marine governance. They are (a) BAKAMLA, (b) the Indonesian Navy, (c) the Indonesian Marine Police Unit, (d) the Directorate Sea and Coast Guard (KPLP; under the Ministry of Transportation), (e) the Directorate General for Customs and Excise (under the Ministry of Finance), (f) the Directorate General for Immigration (under the Ministry of Law and Human Rights), (g) the Directorate General for Surveillance for Marine and Fisheries Resources (PSDKP; under the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries), (h) Directorate of Surveillance and Health Quarantine (under the Ministry of Health), (i) Agricultural Quarantine Agency (under the Ministry of Agriculture), (j) the Ministry of Forestry and Environment, (k) the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, (l) National Narcotics Agency, and (m) the Indonesia Search and Rescue Agency. Of these government agencies, there are six that have sea patrol vessels and capacity (particularly expertise and human resources). They are the BAKAMLA, the Navy, the Marine Police Unit, the KPLP, the Directorate General for Customs and Excise, and the PSDKP. Under this situation, some have noted that overlapping authority is unavoidable and is a result of at least 15 domestic laws and regulations (Ikrami & Bernard, 2018, pp. 136–140).

Before the BAKAMLA's establishment, the Indonesian government realised the need to coordinate several law enforcement institutions in its waters. Thus, Indonesia established an agency named Badan Koordinasi Keamanan Laut (Coordinating Body for Maritime Affairs), abbreviated as BAKORKAMLA. This institution was established in 1972 under a joint decree of the of the Minister of Defense and Security/Commander of the Armed Forces, the Minister of Transportation, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Justice, and the Attorney General (Minister of Defense and Security/Commander of the Armed Forces et al., 1972; see also Azis et al., 2017, p. 5; Darajati & Syafei, 2018, p. 120). The main objective was to coordinate the agencies that have responsibilities in the maritime security area.

The need to have a more robust coordinating institution for maritime legal enforcement was also provided by the Law on Indonesian Waters (Republic of Indonesia, 1996, Article 24, para. 3). The mandate was implemented through Presidential Regulation No. 81 of 2005 (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2005). One of the most substantial changes was that the authority was initially led by the Ministry of Defence and Security, which then transferred to the Coordinating Ministry of Politics, Law, and Security. This agency acts as a coordinating body for the existing maritime security agency, or in other words, a multi-agency for a single task. This configuration is used for patrols and other related activities to secure the sea by several institutions. Unfortunately, BAKORKAMLA was deemed ineffective due to its authority being limited to coordination only (Suharyo & Bastari, 2021, p. 445).

Moreover, the various agencies do not always cooperate well in practice because of institutional rivalry, resource competitiveness, and the overlapping of jurisdictions (Prissandi et al., 2023, p. 1979). This hindered BAKORKAMLA's cohesion and general coordination (Azis et al., 2017, p. 7; Laksmana, 2022, p. 136; "Penegakan hukum di laut masih memiliki hambatan," 2014). Lastly, the legal basis for the organisation is a presidential regulation (Presidential Regulation No. 178 of 2014; President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2014), which is deemed weak (Wulansari, 2014). All these concerns have led to the discussion of establishing a new agency (Umbio, 2020, p. 291).

In 2008, Indonesia enacted a law regarding shipping (Republic of Indonesia, 2008). It focused on regulating the security and safety of navigation in Indonesian maritime areas. This law has a particular chapter related to maritime and coastal protection, with a law enforcement mandate not limited to the shipping sector alone. Chapter XVII of this law provides orders to establish an institution whose function is to guard the sea and coast. This institution has the function of guarding and enforcing all "legislations" at sea and beaches. "Legislations" here refer to all Indonesian national laws that apply in maritime and coastal areas (Republic of Indonesia, 2008, Article 276). This institution was made directly responsible to the president of Indonesia. To realise this institution legally and formally, the Shipping Law provided a mandate to be established through government regulation (Republic of Indonesia, 2008, Articles 278–279). However, to this day, the government regulation in question has never been implemented.

Instead, in 2014, Indonesia established a similar institution, BAKAMLA, which in effect is the Indonesian Coast Guard. This agency's legal basis is Law No. 32 of 2014 (Republic of Indonesia, 2014). BAKAMLA was established under the Presidential Regulation No. 178 of 2014 (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2014) and formally replaced the previous institution, BAKORKAMLA. Under Law No. 32/2014, BAKAMLA, as a law enforcement agency, only has the authority to stop, inspect, arrest, seize, and transfer sea vessels to the relevant authorised agency for further legal proceedings (Aprilia et al., 2023, p. 2257). Glaringly obvious is that BAKAMLA needs further investigative authorisation. Notwithstanding, this design differentiates BAKAMLA from the rest of the current law enforcement agencies at sea and its authority does not overlap with other institutions.

Not only is BAKAMLA expected to perform better in maritime security governance, but it is also designed to have a more robust and significant role in Indonesian maritime security efforts. Under Article 3 of the Presidential Regulation No. 178 of 2014 (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2014), BAKAMLA possesses the functions of formulating national policies in the field of security and safety in Indonesian waters and jurisdiction; organising an early warning system for security and safety; carrying out safeguards, supervision, prevention, and enforcement of legal violations; synergise and monitor the implementation of water patrols by related agencies; provide technical and operational support to related agencies; providing search and rescue assistance in Indonesian territorial waters and jurisdiction; and carry out other tasks in the national defence system.

According to Laksmana (2022, p. 135), Indonesia's maritime law enforcement architecture has a division of labour issues, which vary from problem to problem. Some are operational (e.g., lack of assets), while others are political, economic, and strategic. Even on a single issue—illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing—inter-agency coordination challenges and judicial and bureaucracy corruption generate marine law enforcement problems, according to some scholars (Mubarok, 2019a, p. 115; Scarpello, 2020). Policymakers

lack maritime, environmental, and natural resource awareness, which is another issue. Unresolved maritime boundaries with Indonesia's neighbours and China's South China Sea assertiveness have also been blamed (Sodik, 2018, p. 707).

3. BAKAMLA as the Law Enforcement at Sea

There have been two new and important regulations related to BAKAMLA. First, Government Regulation No. 13 of 2022 (Government of Indonesia, 2022), which is designed to ease the transition of BAKAMLA's role in maritime security operations before revising the current law (Humas FHUI, 2022). It includes details on the authority of BAKAMLA, such as synergising patrol schedules between agencies and coordinating the patrols for all government vessels.

The second regulation is the Presidential Regulation No. 59 of 2023 (President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023). This regulation provides a more detailed action plan for Indonesian maritime security efforts. It stipulates clear objectives and responsibilities for the agency. BAKAMLA is entrusted with several tasks, such as the alignment of independent patrol area sectors, revitalisation of monitoring stations and beach radio stations, and synergising patrols between agencies.

Compared to its predecessor, the BAKORKAMLA agency, BAKAMLA has enhanced functions, authority, and cooperation. BAKAMLA has six functions, while BAKORKAMLA only had the following three: (a) formulating and determining general maritime security policies; (b) coordinating maritime security tasks, including guarding, supervising, preventing, and prosecuting law violations; and (c) securing shipping and community and government activities in Indonesian waters. Unlike BAKORKAMLA, BAKAMLA gained further powers. Article 4 of the Presidential Regulation No. 178 of 2014 and Article 63, Paragraph 1 of Law No. 32 of 2014 (Republic of Indonesia, 2014) allows for pursuit, interdiction, stop and inspection, arrest, and transference of foreign sea vessels to competent authorities for legal proceedings, and to integrate security and safety information systems in Indonesian territorial waters. Initial BAKORKAMLA cooperation incorporated existing institutions. With additional authority and tasks, overall BAKAMLA coordinates more effectively. It must also lead maritime security, not just coordinate with other entities. Finally, BAKAMLA has increased its marine security presence and control in Indonesia. Its authority and role are strengthened by a better regulatory framework, although not yet perfect.

Ad-hoc agreements and informal understandings between agencies have worked to ease tensions. The Indonesian Navy (Angkatan Laut) was previously authorised to undertake all law enforcement issues at sea except asylum seekers and illegal forestry matters. In contrast, the Marine Police Unit was not allowed to handle illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing, which was the responsibility of the Ministry of Fisheries (Jatmiko & Tandiarrang, 2014, p. 31). The 2020 North Natuna Sea incident with China (Ng, 2020) prompted maritime officials to use the "class captain" concept, where one agency assigns patrol assets and actions to another in a confined area. The informal agreement was so BAKAMLA would be in a position to fulfil all these responsibilities. Although these power-sharing arrangements are not ideal, maritime policymakers recognised that political and legal improvement are needed to fully "integrate" the agencies and to "review and harmonize" the hundreds of overlapping rules and regulations which are burdensome and costly (Laksmiana, 2022, p. 137).

4. Challenges for BAKAMLA as the Indonesian Coast Guard

BAKAMLA faces numerous practical challenges. These range from overlapping jurisdiction with other institutions, lack of full investigative authority, and facility issues. As mentioned, BAKAMLA has certain functions, such as patrols and inspections on overlapping jurisdiction issues. However, at the same time, other institutions have the right to patrol, inspect, and have the fleet to support that role. It should be noted that each agency has its limitations in terms of resources and scope. However, this might have unintended consequences in practice as ships that pass through Indonesian waters may experience multiple checks from different institutions. This will result in higher costs, delays, and uncertainty (Dewi & Purnamasari, 2021, p. 8).

Another of BAKAMLA's functions is also claimed by another institution. Article 276 of Law No. 17 of 2008 (Republic of Indonesia, 2008) mentions that the Sea and Coast Guard are mandated to exercise maritime security efforts. Ideally, this mandate should be specified by a government regulation establishing the agency. However, until now, required regulation has yet to be introduced. Interestingly, KPLP believed that Article 276 referred to them and so claimed to be the Indonesian Coast Guard (Puspitawati et al., 2020, p. 510). Contrary to this, BAKAMLA received a mandate from another law, Law No. 32 of 2014, which covers a broader mandate, exceeding shipping and port issues. However, the latter law does not amend or harmonise with the Shipping Law.

The third challenge to the operation of BAKAMLA is the lack of authority to perform full investigations. The status quo now allows BAKAMLA to perform an initial investigation of ships during its patrol and pursuit, as provided by Article 61 of Law No. 32 of 2014 (Republic of Indonesia, 2014). The procedure instructs BAKAMLA to send the perpetrator to another agency with related competencies to investigate further. This limits the power of BAKAMLA and will be problematic since, in practice, BAKAMLA should be an all-encompassing, fully integrated agency (Ansori et al., 2017, p. 64). In addition, there is a severe concern over the Navy and BAKAMLA distrust, especially the patrolling superiority in the economic exclusive zone area (Sodik, 2018, p. 759). Information exchange and intelligence sharing are considered important, but maritime intelligence is highly restricted (Supriyanto, 2016, pp. 112–113). PSDKP fishery supervisors have patrol assets and the authority to carry guns, arrest and detain ships and individuals, and burn illegal fishing vessels, which can exacerbate coordination problems when information is not shared (Laksmna, 2022, p. 137).

The last challenge is the disproportion between the area mandated to be monitored by BAKAMLA and the number of fleet facilities owned by BAKAMLA (Laksmna, 2022, p. 139). It is undeniable that Indonesia has a vast maritime area, which is costly and difficult to monitor, let alone enforce rules and laws. BAKAMLA is responsible for surveillance in all Indonesian waters with regard to sovereignty and territorial rights. However, BAKAMLA only owns 10 patrol ships. This number is woefully inadequate, as the head of BAKAMLA stated that 60 is the ideal number for its fleet (Gunawan, 2020).

5. Observing BAKAMLA: Unexpected Hero or Villain?

Initially, BAKAMLA was designed to be the hero that leads the improvement of maritime security governance in Indonesia (Gantika et al., 2023, p. 13; Republic of Indonesia, 2014). However, some of its

duties and authority mean that BAKAMLA is also considered a threat to some (Ardyantara et al., 2020, pp. 416–417). In this section, the article delves more into how these perceptions are managed within institutions across the maritime security realm of Indonesia. Further, it is necessary to analyse the latest development of the plan to revise Law No. 32 of 2014 and specifically what this means for the future of BAKAMLA.

Considering the above challenge, it is crucial to see the role and function of BAKAMLA from several perspectives, both internal and external. These perspectives and thoughts form a general understanding, agreed idea, or differing perceptions that arise from various sources. This will give a better understanding of how BAKAMLA operates and interacts with other agencies. With this in mind, interviews have been conducted with several maritime security agencies, such as the KPLP under the Ministry of Transportation and the PSDKP from the Ministry of Fisheries of Indonesia, as well as BAKAMLA itself.

This research recognises that there are at least three main issues related to the existence of BAKAMLA's capacity as the lead authority in Indonesia's maritime security governance. They are (a) the need to have an institution like BAKAMLA, (b) the evaluation of the BAKAMLA's current authorities, and (c) general expectation for an improved "BAKAMLA."

5.1. Urgency of BAKAMLA as the Indonesian Coast Guard

There is general agreement that an institution like BAKAMLA must be established. This is due to Indonesia's geographical maritime conditions, as well as multifaceted challenges and threats that are both internal and external (Pashya & Gozali, 2023). The complex web of issues and considerations, as highlighted by several key stakeholders, amplifies the need for a specialised agency like BAKAMLA to manage and safeguard Indonesia's maritime interests effectively (Manulang & Setiyono, 2023, p. 5935).

BAKAMLA's comprehensive mandate for maritime law enforcement, coupled with its significant role in responding to maritime incidents and ensuring compliance with maritime laws for national and foreign vessels, points to its indispensable role in upholding Indonesia's maritime security. This role is especially critical considering Indonesia's domestic and global recognition of the importance of maritime security, particularly concerning the preservation of territorial integrity and the protection of valuable marine resources within Indonesian territorial waters (Palupi, 2018, p. 178).

Furthermore, based on a historical perspective on the progression of maritime institutions, Indonesia developed several sectoral ministries and/or agencies to combat significant crimes such as illegal fishing and other transnational crimes via the sea. These crimes and incidents at sea often impact multiple law jurisdictions. For example, during the arrest of foreign illegal fishing vessels by PSDKP, officers may also find trafficked drugs or humans which are the responsibilities of the National Narcotics Agency and Police authorities (Mubarok, 2019b, p. 114). These highlight the urgency for BAKAMLA's establishment as a specialised maritime law enforcement body with the power to synergise the collaboration of various agencies.

However, the ongoing issues surrounding the overlapping authority among maritime law enforcement agencies and the varying interests at play emphasise the critical role that BAKAMLA must assume to address these effectively. This further reinforces the urgency for establishing a robust and coordinated maritime

governance structure led by BAKAMLA to ensure effective collaboration and management of Indonesia's vast and diverse maritime domain (Aryani, 2021, p. 167). As such, BAKAMLA's establishment remains imperative in addressing the complex and dynamic nature of Indonesia's maritime security landscape.

5.2. Evaluating BAKAMLA's Authorities

The evaluation of the existence of BAKAMLA, as essentially the Indonesian Coast Guard, necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and dynamics within Indonesia's maritime security governance. Critical insights from various stakeholders shed light on the intricate issues shaping the agency's role and effectiveness. One of the primary issues highlighted is the problem of overlapping jurisdiction among multiple agencies involved in maritime law enforcement. This lack of clear demarcation has led to inefficiencies and delays in addressing critical maritime incidents. The absence of a coherent and unified approach has confused and hindered the effective response to maritime security threats and challenges.

In contrast, other perspectives emphasise various maritime agencies' distinct and complementary roles, including BAKAMLA. They also underscore the central coordinating role of BAKAMLA in the broader maritime security framework, highlighting the agency's contribution to the overall governance and coordination of maritime security efforts (Aziz, 2018, p. 441). This perspective suggests that BAKAMLA enhances and strengthens the existing governance structure rather than creating additional challenges or conflicts (Dewi et al., 2020, p. 101). However, certain limitations have been noted regarding BAKAMLA's authority and investigative powers (Abraham, 2017, p. 4). Concerns have been raised regarding the potential impact of BAKAMLA's activities on the patrol authority of other maritime agencies (Puspitawati et al., 2020, p. 508). Some stakeholders expressed that BAKAMLA's expanded role could potentially encroach upon the responsibilities and authorities of other agencies, leading to conflicts and challenges in the maritime law enforcement domain (Laksmana, 2022, p. 123).

Furthermore, the historical perception of BAKAMLA as a new, controversial, and weak agency has evolved, with growing political support to bolster its role and effectiveness. Despite initial opposition from various maritime law enforcement agencies, the growing support for BAKAMLA has led to a more collaborative and cohesive approach to addressing overlapping challenges and ensuring the agency's role aligns with the broader objectives of Indonesia's maritime security governance. In evaluating the existence of BAKAMLA, it is crucial to recognise the need for a balanced and coordinated approach that addresses the challenges of overlapping jurisdiction while leveraging the agency's central coordinating role.

5.3. Indonesian Coast Guard Institution Ahead

It should be noted that Law No. 32 of 2014 has positively contributed to the development, management, and protection of the maritime sector in Indonesia. However, the positive contribution of this institution has yet to be followed by the development of maritime law enforcement. The handling of maritime law enforcement is still constrained by the lack of cross-sectoral coordination and frequent differences in the perception of authority among law enforcement agencies at sea, which has led to a siloed and exclusive work culture. This situation makes it highly possible for miscoordination and disharmony to occur, causing security and law enforcement at sea to be ineffective and inefficient. In addition, Law No. 32 of 2014 (Republic of Indonesia, 2014) abstained from harmonising Chapter XVII of Law No. 17 of 2008 (Republic of Indonesia,

2008), which has a regulation that resembles Chapter IX of the latter law regarding law enforcement in Indonesian waters. This means the dualism of the Coast Guard institution still needs to be solved.

The future trajectory of BAKAMLA, as the embryo of the Indonesian Coast Guard, is intricately tied to the concerted efforts to improve inter-agency coordination and ensure its legal responsibilities. Different agencies have various hopes and potential trajectories of BAKAMLA in the evolving landscape of Indonesia's maritime security governance. Enhancing coordination among pertinent agencies remains a focal point for effectively managing maritime incidents. Establishing clear protocols and efficient communication lines ensures a synchronised and timely response to emerging maritime challenges. Strengthening collaboration among the involved agencies remains a priority to foster a more cohesive and integrated approach to maritime security.

Looking ahead, optimism is shared by some in BAKAMLA's ability to effectively fulfil its legal obligations, serving as an advisory and coordinating force within Indonesia's maritime domain. Emphasising the complexity of Indonesia's maritime challenges, a network of specialised institutions is necessary to manage the diverse array of maritime issues effectively. This perspective underlines the crucial role that BAKAMLA is expected to play in ensuring the safety and security of Indonesia's extensive maritime resources.

BAKAMLA's envisioned role as a Coast Guard agency with the authority to enforce maritime safety standards represents a crucial aspect of its future function, as articulated by the agency itself. In addition to its responsibility in law enforcement, search and rescue operations, and overall protection at sea, the agency's efficacy relies heavily on comprehensive regulatory support. Implementing necessary regulatory reforms, backed by high-level political support and effective inter-agency coordination, will substantially boost BAKAMLA's authority and enhance its overall effectiveness in safeguarding Indonesia's maritime interests. With these considerations in mind, the outlook for BAKAMLA hinges on successfully implementing streamlined communication protocols, strengthened collaboration, and comprehensive regulatory reforms. Addressing these challenges will be fundamental to empowering BAKAMLA as a central pillar in Indonesia's maritime security governance, ensuring the preservation and protection of the nation's vital maritime resources and territorial integrity (Pashya & Gozali, 2023).

With specific consideration of the above, Law No. 32 of 2014 is being revised with specific attention to Coast Guard institutional improvements. The revision initiative came from the Regional Representative Council (Dewan Perwakilan Daerah [DPD]), which recognises the need to improve maritime sector governance, particularly law enforcement. On 15 December 2022, the DPD officially proposed the Bill on the Amendment of Law No. 32 of 2014 at the *Prolegnas* (National Legislation Priority) meeting. This legislative package was also considered in the 2022 priority DPD proposal ("PPUU DPD RI usulkan tiga RUU masuk prolegnas tahun 2023," 2022). The proposed bill for the 2022 legislative programme allowed for maritime responsibilities to increase from five to six duties. This project seeks legal certainty in maritime law enforcement that ensures governance at sea can be controlled and safely applied, free from threats to navigation, marine environmental damage, and legal violation threats, to achieve national development goals (Humas Bakamla RI, 2023).

The proposed revision to Law No. 32 of 2014 is to harmonise Chapter XVII of the Law No. 17 of 2008 (Republic of Indonesia, 2008). The overlapping areas under the two laws will be merged into the new law. Some legal enforcement authorities will only be given to BAKAMLA, while the Ministry of Transportation will retain some

responsibilities relevant to navigational matters. There is also a discussion of merging personnel and resources of KPLP and BAKAMLA to end the dualism of the Indonesian Coast Guard in the future (“Pemerintah sepakat bentuk Indonesian Coast Guard,” 2023). Consequently, the new Indonesian Coast Guard will have investigative power that will focus on violations of navigational provisions. This will avoid further overlapping of authority with other law enforcement agencies in Indonesian waters.

6. Conclusion

BAKAMLA has been through a transformation process, to achieve improvement in numerous aspects. In addition, other institutions’ perceptions towards BAKAMLA have also evolved. The common dilemma is the division of authority between the agencies and collaboration to pursue a common interest, namely protecting Indonesian waters. Having several law enforcement institutions for this has not achieved results. This is due to sectoral mandates with different or fragmented laws. The proposal to integrate law enforcement at sea into a single agency remains a challenge to realise. Trust issues, division of labour and resources, political will, and different bureaucratic processes among law enforcement institutions hinder the improvement of maritime security governance.

However, the general aspiration to improve maritime security governance remains universal in Indonesia. Pressure from commercial users of the Indonesian waters, encroachments from external powers on Indonesian borders, and constant threats of transnational crimes via the sea have been the factors that warrant better maritime governance. Giving authority to only one institution appears to be the best solution. Indonesia is trying to compromise on different proposals by establishing BAKAMLA as the chief commander of the collective effort to secure the sea. Even if it only absorbs some of the collective authority from other agencies, it will harmonise operations for better results. This was the intention, as stipulated in Government Regulation No. 13 of 2022 (Government of Indonesia, 2022).

Lastly, significant challenges arising from overlapping responsibilities and authorities have led to inefficiency and the perception of BAKAMLA as a “stepchild” institution. A proposal to create a new Indonesian Coast Guard, professionalising and integrating the agencies of KPLP and BAKAMLA into a more coherent and competent maritime and Coast Guard structure, has been discussed, and appears to be the best option to address these challenges. However, the successful implementation of this proposal will depend on careful planning, regulatory changes, policy support, and practical cooperation between relevant authorities to streamline and improve Indonesia’s maritime law enforcement mechanisms moving forward. The new president of Indonesia in 2024, whoever that might be, will have to regularly assess the region and ensure that the nation is ready to respond appropriately when required, and a well-resourced and well-defined institution like BAKAMLA will help Indonesia protect its maritime interests and fulfil its responsibilities as a sovereign state.

Funding

This article was produced with the co-assistance of funding from Charles Darwin University and the Faculty of Law Universitas Indonesia.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

References

- Abraham, A. (2017). Indonesian maritime law enforcement: Progress and problems. *Indonesian Journal of International Law*, 15(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.17304/ijil.vol15.1.716>
- Afriansyah, A., Darmawan, A. R., & Pramudianto, A. (2022). Enforcing law in unresolved maritime boundaries: Indonesian border experience. *The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law*, 37(2), 282–299. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718085-bja10092>
- Ansori, A., Ikhsanudin, A. H., & Suhardono, E. (2017). Sinergi BAKAMLA dengan TNI AL guna penanggulangan tindak pidana di laut dalam rangka penegakan hukum. *Jurnal Prodi Strategi Pertahanan Laut*, 3(3), 47–68. <https://doi.org/10.33172/SPL.V3I3.139>
- Aprilia, W., Sutanto, R., Prakoso, L. Y., Priyanto, P., & Adriyanto, A. (2023). The efforts of the Maritime Security Agency in preventing transnational crime at the state frontier are viewed from the strategic position of the Riau Islands. *International Journal of Social Science*, 2(5), 2252–2260. <https://doi.org/10.53625/ijss.v2i5.4962>
- Ardyantara, D. M., Sukarna, K., Sadono, B., & Arifin, Z. (2020). Reposisi kewenangan antar lembaga negara dalam pengaturan terkait pertahanan keamanan maritim nasional. *USM Law Review*, 3(2), 404–418. <http://dx.doi.org/10.26623/julr.v3i2.2593>
- Aryani, C. (2021). Mendorong lahirnya RUU keamanan laut dalam penguatan sistem keamanan laut nasional. *Jurnal Pembangunan Hukum Indonesia*, 3(2), 155–173. <https://doi.org/10.14710/jphi.v3i2.155-173>
- Azis, N. A., Setyawanto R, L. T., & Hardiwinoto, S. (2017). Kewenangan badan keamanan laut (Bakamla) dalam pelaksanaan pengamanan di wilayah perairan Indonesia. *Diponegoro Law Journal*, 5(4), 1–13. <https://ejournal3.undip.ac.id/index.php/dlr/article/view/15743>
- Aziz, M. F. (2018). Developing joint development zone in disputed maritime boundaries. *Indonesian Journal of International Law*, 15(4), 432–448. <https://doi.org/10.17304/ijil.vol15.4.735>
- Chapsos, I., & Malcolm, J. A. (2017). Maritime security in Indonesia: Towards a comprehensive agenda? *Marine Policy*, 76, 178–184. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2016.11.033>
- Cribb, R., & Ford, M. (2009). *Indonesia as an archipelago: Managing islands, managing the seas*. ISEAS—Yusof Ishak Institute. <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/16146>
- Darajati, M. R., & Syafei, M. (2018). Politik hukum pembentukan badan keamanan laut dalam menjaga keamanan maritim di Indonesia. *Era Hukum—Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Hukum*, 16(1), 107–127. <https://doi.org/10.24912/erahukum.v16i1.2379>
- Dewi, Y. K., Afriansyah, A., & Darmawan, A. R. (2020). Comparative law enforcement model at sea: Lesson learned for Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of International Law*, 18(1), 83–104. <https://doi.org/10.17304/ijil.vol18.1.802>
- Dewi, Y. K., & Purnamasari, D. (2021). Costs of maritime security inspection to merchant ship operations—The Indonesian shipowners' perspective. *Australian Journal of Maritime & Ocean Affairs*, 15(1), 38–53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18366503.2021.1962059>
- Dirhamsyah, D., Umam, S., & Arifin, Z. (2022). Maritime law enforcement: Indonesia's experience against illegal fishing. *Ocean & Coastal Management*, 229, Article 106304. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2022.106304>
- Gantika, N., Prayitno, R., & Yandi, R. (2023). Upaya badan keamanan laut dalam penegakan hukum terhadap tindak pidana kelautan. *Science and Research Journal of Mai Wandeu*, 3(1), 8–16.
- Government of Indonesia. (2022). *Government Regulation No. 13 of 2022 on implementing security, safety, and law enforcement in Indonesian water and jurisdiction areas*.
- Gunawan, D. (2020, September 18). Di Natuna, kapal Bakamla hadapi China dengan meriam 12,7 MM.

- detikNEWS. <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5178289/di-natuna-kapal-bakamla-hadapi-china-dengan-meriam-127-mm>
- Hakim, R. N., & Krisiandi. (2020, February 12). Jokowi sebut nantinya hanya Bakamla yang berwenang jaga laut Indonesia. *KOMPAS*. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2020/02/12/20315571/jokowi-sebut-nantinya-hanya-BAKAMLA-yang-berwenang-jaga-laut-indonesia>
- Humas Bakamla RI. (2023, May 26). Bakamla RI hadiri rapat kerja PPUU DPD RI, bahas revisi UU. *Badan Keamanan Laut*. https://bakamla.go.id/publication/detail_news/bakamla-ri-hadiri-rapat-kerja-ppuu-dpd-ri-bahas-revisi-uu
- Humas FHUI. (2022, June 16). Webinar: Kebijakan penegakan hukum keamanan laut pasca penerbitan PP No. 13 tahun 2022. *Fakultas Hukum Universitas Indonesia*. <https://law.ui.ac.id/webinar-kebijakan-penegakan-hukum-keamanan-laut-pasca-penerbitan-pp-no-13-tahun-2022>
- Ikrami, H., & Bernard, L. (2018). Indonesia's maritime governance: Law, institutions and cooperation. *The Korean Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 6(2), 134–171. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/22134484-12340110>
- Ilham, M., Nur, N. M., & Hipan, N. (2022). Kedudukan badan keamanan laut (bakamla) dalam penegakkan hukum di wilayah laut Indonesia. *Jurnal Yustisiabel*, 6(1), 55–69. <https://doi.org/10.32529/yustisiabel.v6i1.1591>
- Jatmiko, B., & Tandiarang, F. J. (2014). *Designing for inter-organisational coordination in Indonesia's maritime domain* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Indonesia Naval Postgraduate School.
- Kurniaty, R., Herman, S., & Setyo, W. (2021). The role of Marine Security Agency (BAKAMLA) as sea and coast guards in Indonesian water jurisdiction. *Fiat Justisia: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum*, 15(3), 221–232. <https://doi.org/10.25041/fiatjustisia.v15no3.2017>
- Laksmiana, E. A. (2022). Remodelling Indonesia's maritime law enforcement architecture: Theoretical and policy considerations. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 44(1), 122–149. <https://doi.org/10.1355/cs44-1e>
- Manulang, M. O., & Setiyono, J. (2023). Maritime security from the perspective of international regulations and enforcement in Indonesia. *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*, 6(10), 5931–5936. <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v6-i10-18>
- Maulana, H., & Ika, A. (2019, April 29). 2 kapal pemerintah Vietnam tabrak KRI Tjiptadi-381 yang sedang patroli. *KOMPAS*. <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2019/04/29/08345151/2-kapal-pemerintah-vietnam-tabrak-kri-tjiptadi-381-yang-sedang-patroli>
- Minister of Defense and Security/Commander of the Armed Forces, Minister of Transportation, Minister of Finance, Minister of Justice, & Attorney General. (1972). *Joint Decree of the Minister of Defense and Security/Commander of the Armed Forces, Minister of Transportation, Minister of Finance, Minister of Justice, and Attorney General, Number: KEP/B/45/XII/1972; SK/901/M/1972; KEP.779/MK/III/12/1972; J.S.8/72/1; KEP-085/J.A/12/1972 concerning the establishment of a security coordination agency at sea and a joint operations command for security at sea*.
- Mubarok, Z. (2019a). *Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing and transnational organized fisheries crimes: Perspectives of legal and policy measures of Indonesia* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Wollongong.
- Mubarok, Z. (2019b). Indonesia legal analysis of IUU fishing and transnational organized fisheries crimes: Loopholes and proposed measures. *Indonesian Journal of International Law*, 17(1), 113–137, <https://doi.org/10.17304/ijil.vol17.1.780>
- Ng, J. (2020, January 15). The Natuna sea incident: How Indonesia is managing its bilateral relationship with China. *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/the-natuna-sea-incident-how-indonesia-is-managing-its-bilateral-relationship-with-china>

- Palupi, D. A. (2018). The role of Bakamla in law enforcement in Indonesian waters and Indonesian jurisdiction. In D. Ahmadi, L. Halimah, A. Satriani, R. Adwiyah, Alhamuddin, D. A. N. Sirodj, & A. N. Permatasari (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Social and Humaniora Research Symposium (SoRes 2018)* (pp. 177–179). Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/sores-18.2019.41>
- Pashya, M. H., & Gozali, G. (2023). *Bakamla's duty and the challenges in securing Indonesia's waters* (THC Insights No. 41). Habibie Center. <https://www.habibiecenter.or.id/img/publication/1fc7eae1fa85dd018209c0e628f7ebf8.pdf>
- Pemerintah sepakat bentuk Indonesian Coast Guard melalui fusi antara Bakamla dan KPLP. (2023, June 27). *Kementerian Koordinator Bidang Kemaritiman dan Investasi*. <https://maritim.go.id/detail/pemerintah-sepakat-bentuk-indonesian-coast-guard-melalui-fusi-antara-bakamla-dan-kplp>
- Penegakan hukum di laut masih memiliki hambatan. (2014, December 3). *Hukumonline*. <https://www.hukumonline.com/berita/a/penegakan-hukum-di-laut-masih-memiliki-hambatan-lt547f2fca0e249/#>
- PPUU DPD RI usulkan tiga RUU masuk prolegnas tahun 2023. (2022, 20 September). *Dewan Perwakilan Daerah*. <https://dpd.go.id/daftar-berita/ppuu-dpd-ri-usulkan-tiga-ruu-masuk-prolegnas-tahun-2023>
- President of the Republic of Indonesia. (2005). *Presidential Regulation No. 81 of 2005 on the Maritime Security Coordinating Agency (BAKORKAMLA)*.
- President of the Republic of Indonesia. (2014). *Presidential Regulation No. 178 of 2014 on Badan Keamanan Laut*.
- President of the Republic of Indonesia. (2023). *Presidential Regulation No. 59 of 2023 on national policy for security, safety and law enforcement in Indonesian waters and jurisdiction*.
- Prissandi, G., Wiranto, S., Said, B. D., Widodo, P., Saragih, H. J. R., & Suwarno, P. (2023). Reformulation of regulations in the context of structuring the Indonesian maritime security regime. *International Journal of Humanities Education and Social Sciences*, 2(6), 1969–1983. <https://doi.org/10.55227/ijhess.v2i6.533>
- Purwanto, H., & Mangku, D. G. S. (2016). Legal instrument of the Republic of Indonesia on border management using the perspective of archipelagic state. *International Journal of Business, Economics and Law*, 11(4), 51–59.
- Puspitawati, D., Hadiyantina, S., Susanto, F. A., & Apriyanti, N. (2020). Law enforcement at Indonesian waters: Bakamla vs. sea and coast guard. *Indonesian Journal of International Law*, 17(4), 495–518. <https://doi.org/10.17304/ijil.vol17.4.797>
- Republic of Indonesia. (1996). *Law No. 6 of 1996 on Indonesian waters*.
- Republic of Indonesia. (2008). *Law No. 17 of 2008 on shipping*.
- Republic of Indonesia. (2014). *Law No. 32 of 2014 on ocean affairs*.
- Scarpello, F. (2020). Susi versus the rest: The political economy of the fisheries industry in Indonesia during Jokowi's first term. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 28(2), 122–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02185377.2020.1774908>
- Slamet, S. A., Djaenuri, A., Effendy, K., & Lukman, S. (2020). Efektivitas badan keamanan laut dalam melaksanakan fungsi penegakkan hukum di perairan laut Indonesia. *Papatung: Jurnal Ilmu Administrasi Publik, Pemerintahan Dan Politik*, 2(3), 178–189. <https://doi.org/10.54783/japp.v2i3.29>
- Sodik, D. M. (2018). The outermost small islands of the Indonesian archipelago: A legal analysis. *The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law*, 33(4), 706–767. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15718085-13310001>
- Suharyo, O. S., & Bastari, A. (2021). Review strategis upaya pengamanan laut nasional menuju keamanan maritim dan pengelolaan ruang laut Indonesia. *REKAYASA Journal of Science and Technology*, 14(3), 443–449. <https://doi.org/10.21107/rekayasa.v14i3.13087>

- Supriyanto, R. A. (2016). Naval counter-piracy in Indonesia. In C. Liss & T. Biggs (Eds.), *Piracy in Southeast Asia: Trends, hot spots and responses* (pp. 112–113). Routledge.
- Umbio, R. S. (2020). Juridical review of authority overlapping issues in law enforcement in marine and coastal area. *The 2nd International Conference and Call Paper*, 1(1), 289–300. <https://jurnal.unissula.ac.id/index.php/lics/article/view/13739>
- Wulansari, E. M. (2014). Penegakan hukum di laut dengan sistem single agency multy tasks. *Jurnal Rechtsvinding*, 2014, 1–6. https://rechtsvinding.bphn.go.id/jurnal_online/PENEGAKAN%20HUKUM%20DI%20LAUT%20DENGAN%20SISTEM%20SINGLE%20AGENCY%20MULTY%20TASKS.pdf

About the Authors



Arie Afriansyah is an associate professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Indonesia. Besides teaching duties, currently, he is the chairman of the Center for Sustainable Ocean Policy at the Faculty of Law, University of Indonesia, the editor-in-chief of the *Indonesian Journal of International Law*, and the editor-in-chief of the *Indonesia Yearbook of International Law*. He is also the president of the Indonesian Society of International Law Lecturers (2020–2024).



Christou Imanuel is a graduate of the University of Indonesia, focusing on the law of the sea. He serves as a researcher at the Areté Advisor Firm and the Center for Sustainable Ocean Policy, where his interest in maritime law and international affairs has led to several publications. With interests in international politics and governance, Christou has pursued non-degree coursework in these fields at Leiden University, further enriching his understanding and insights.



Aristyo Rizka Darmawan is a lecturer in international law at the Faculty of Law Universitas Indonesia and a former visiting fellow with the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University. Currently, he is a PhD scholar at the School of Regulation and Global Governance at the Australian National University. His research focuses on the intersection between international law of the sea, foreign policy, and maritime security in the Asia Pacific. He obtained his master's degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, US, and a BA in law from Universitas Indonesia.

“The Flower and the Wall”: Poet-Activist Wiji Thukul and Progressive Martyrdom in Post-Suharto Indonesia

Stephen L. Miller  and Rifka A. O. Sibarani 

Faculty of Arts and Society, Charles Darwin University, Australia

Correspondence: Stephen L. Miller (Stephen.Miller@cdu.edu.au)

Submitted: 30 October 2023 **Accepted:** 2 February 2024 **Published:** 17 April 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue “Indonesian Heroes and Villains: National Identity, Politics, Law, and Security” edited by Nathan Franklin (Charles Darwin University) and Hans Hägerdal (Linnaeus University), fully open access at <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i380>

Abstract

Since the fall of Major-General Suharto’s “New Order” regime, Indonesia has struggled to deal with its authoritarian legacy. This article argues that in the quarter of a century since his disappearance, the Indonesian poet-activist Wiji Thukul (1963–1998?) has become a martyr for the still unfulfilled progressive ideals of the Reformasi (reform) movement that helped to bring down that regime in 1998. Using the developing body of theory around “secular” or “political” martyrdom, this article examines the process by which this status has been achieved, situating its development alongside the emergence of the Refusing to Forget movement, as well as comparing and contrasting his fate with that of two other candidates for the label of Reformasi martyr: those of the labour activist Marsinah (1969–1993) and the human rights lawyer Munir Said Thalib (1965–2004). It argues that Thukul’s role as a martyr has been significant in maintaining progressive public discourse about the human rights abuses of the Suharto period, as well as the continuing illiberalism of the period since the end of the regime, and that Thukul remains relevant to efforts to stimulate and nurture the fragile democratisation project that was initiated in the late New Order period. In particular, the authors see Thukul’s brand of grassroots creative practice as playing a central role in his emergence as a progressive icon and in giving his life and work international significance.

Keywords

democratisation; human rights; Indonesia; Marsinah; Munir Said Thalib; Reformasi; secular martyrs; Suharto; Wiji Thukul

1. Introduction

This article will consider a particular kind of hero (the secular/political martyr), in a particular context: the relatively stable, but illiberal and possibly degenerating, democracy of Indonesia in the post-Suharto era. Its focus is the poet, dramatist, community organiser, and working-class political leader, Wiji Thukul.

It argues that the character of Thukul's creative and political practice and the way his public memory (and therefore his martyrdom) has become established has made him a leading figure among a number of icons who lost their lives in the years around 1998 when Major-General Suharto stepped down as president and the current era of party political democracy began.

It compares his fate in public memory with two other key candidates for consideration as martyrs of the movement for democratic reform that, in the 1990s, grew out of opposition to the Suharto regime (the Reformasi movement): Marsinah and Munir Said Thalib. We assert that the political context of an illiberal—but surviving—democracy, in which the gains of reform seem fragile and democratic ambitions can sometimes seem to be distant goals, has made the public remembering of murdered (or “disappeared”) activists important, providing both inspiration and maintaining morale.

2. The Context of Post-Suharto Indonesia

In the years following Suharto's withdrawal from the political stage, Indonesia entered a period of intense political reform (and political instability). These reforms saw the re-establishment of free parliamentary elections, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the press, among other improvements in political life (Aspinall, 2005; Mietzner & Aspinall, 2010). In this period, it seemed possible that many of the ambitious democratic and social justice goals of the Reformasi movement might be within reach. Indonesia was rated highly (“free”) by Freedom House in its annual ranking designed to measure political freedom in different countries (Freedom House, 2006). As Power and Warburton (2020) note, by 2013, this rating had fallen to “partly free” and a number of other indices tracked a degeneration of democratic life in Indonesia throughout the presidencies of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Joko Widodo (“Jokowi”). At the time of writing, the front-running candidate to replace Widodo is Prabowo Subianto, Suharto's former son-in-law and a Suharto-era general associated with alleged human rights abuses, including being linked to the disappearance of Thukul and other progressive activists (Barrett, 2024; Birtles, 2023; Easton, 2022; Ratcliffe & Mulyanto, 2024; Teresia & Christina, 2024; Utama, 2023).

A range of explanations have been put forward to explain this persistent, and sometimes growing, illiberalism (Bourchier, 2015; Hadiz, 2017; Mietzner, 2020). These explanations have been based on elements of both Indonesian and global history and politics, but most have indicated a degree of fragility in Indonesia's democracy, which has nevertheless endured for over a quarter of a century (much longer than its 1950s equivalent) and shows no clear sign of imminent collapse (Graham, 2016; Setiawan, 2022b).

However, in a situation where the oligarchy of the Suharto era persists (Ford & Pepinsky, 2014; Hadiz, 2001; Winters, 2011) and democratic reforms achieved since 1998 seem under almost constant threat, it is understandable that those looking to defend and extend reforms should look to inspirational heroes, even martyrs.

3. Martyrs and Memory

While the idea of martyrdom is rooted in religion (Middleton, 2011; Mitchell, 2012), it has been used in secular contexts for at least 200 years (David's *The Death of Marat* from 1793 might be considered the premiere early modern image of secular martyrdom). Discussion of the concept in the religious context has a long scholarly history, but attention has only relatively recently moved to specifically political and secular notions of it (see, for example, Outram & Laybourn, 2018). Murphy (2023) prefers the term “political martyrdom” and differentiates three key elements to the process of martyrdom: firstly, an “unnatural” death linked to the martyr’s identity or political commitments; secondly, the “consecration” of the martyr’s death in a community/social group; and finally, the transmission of narratives relating to the martyr’s death (and life).

We argue that Thukul, and the other two figures we discuss, have fulfilled these criteria. Murphy also emphasizes the importance of memory studies to scholarly understandings of martyrdom, quoting Karl Mannheim: “Past experience is only relevant when it exists concretely incorporated in the present” (Mannheim, 1952, as cited in Murphy, 2023, p. 476). In short, martyrdom is not the creation of the martyr, whatever their intentions may be; it is the creation of a community or communities after their death. As Halbwachs (1980, p. 84) argued, “Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time.” Public memory is not passive, it requires “active engagement with past events, driven and shaped by the concerns of present actors” (Murphy, 2023, p. 476). These actors and this process are situated in a particular context or set of contexts and particular political circumstances (Olick et al., 2011, p. 37).

The life and creative/political practice of Thukul has been important to the way he has been taken up as a hero/martyr, but it is also important to recognize “where the real action of martyrdom lies: in the narratives that communities adopt after death, and the political and cultural work done by those narratives over time” (Murphy, 2023, p. 468). Moreover, a martyr/hero’s legacy “represents a locus of mobilisation” (Murphy, 2023, p. 470). This article argues that the current context of a fragile, relatively illiberal, and possibly degenerating democracy in Indonesia provides a particular poignancy to narratives concerning Thukul’s life and death and is important in explaining the prominence these public memories have had in the past 25 years. However, this context is not sufficient to comprehensively explain the contours of his place in public memory in this period.

In the next section, we give a brief outline of Thukul’s life as well as an account of his political and creative practice. This cannot be a comprehensive or even relatively detailed account (we provide this in Miller et al., 2023). We do seek, however, to give the reader some sense of Thukul as an artist and activist, as well as the context of his work and activity. The article then describes the process which has seen Thukul become a Reformasi martyr.

4. Wiji Thukul’s Life, Art, and Activism

Wiji Thukul, whose name translates as “a seed sprouts,” was born Wiji Widodo in 1963 in the Central Javanese royal city of Surakarta (Solo). His parents were from the urban working-class and he spent his childhood and much of his adult life in a poor *kampung* (a neighbourhood, something akin to the Spanish *barrio*). When he was still a toddler, his city and many other parts of the country were intensely affected by the “anti-communist” killings of 1965–1966 (Cribb, 2001; McGregor, 2018; Melvin & Pohlman, 2018). Solo and the area around it was a communist stronghold in the early 1960s and tens, if not hundreds, of

thousands of people were detained, tortured, and murdered for real or alleged links to communism in a pogrom organised by the Indonesian military and backed by Western governments (including the United States and Australia; Melvin, 2018).

The killings were the “original sin” (Farid, 2005) of the Suharto regime, destroying possible sources of opposition to the new regime, creating an atmosphere of fear and providing a key plank of illiberal politics that has stubbornly outlasted the fall of the regime for more than a quarter of a century (Graham, 2016; Hadiz, 2017; Melvin, 2018; Mietzner, 2020; Miller, 2018). It was in this political context that Thukul lived his childhood. Indeed, almost his entire life was lived within the bounds of Suharto’s authoritarianism.

Thukul is best known for his poems. Poetry has had a prominent role in national life in Indonesia, with figures such as Chairil Anwar (1922–1949) and W. S. Rendra (1935–2009) widely revered. Poetry readings and poetry reading competitions are common in national rituals, such as Independence Day, Youth Oath Day, Kartini Day, National Language Day, and Armed Services Day. It was at one such event that Thukul had his first experience of the power of his words. Already known for a love of writing, he was invited to read a poem at Independence Day celebrations in his local *kampung*:

I had no idea it would cause such a commotion in the community. It was short and simple. But rather mischievous. The title was, “Independence in 1982.” The lines were: “Independence is rice/when eaten it becomes shit.” Just that. Very brief. But what happened? The next morning, the whole organising committee was called in to face the neighbourhood authorities. (Thukul, 1995)

Thukul considered the experience “beautiful.” Ordinary people in the audience responded with delight and hilarity, the authorities with fear and repression. Thukul began to hone his skills by busking his style of sharp-edged comic poetry. As opposed to the staged declamation of school competitions and national rituals, Thukul had to work hard to relate to his audience, who were ordinary people going about their business (“Keliling kampung baca sajak dan mendongeng,” 1985). Thukul expressed the power relations implicit in such staging, relations reflective of broader divisions and marginalisation, in his famous poem, “stage boundary”:

to the players
this is our zone of authority
do not cross this boundary
do not interfere with what happens up here
because you are spectators
you are outsiders
do not change the story we have prepared
do not adjust the plot we have planned
because you are spectators
you have to be silent
this broad stage is not for you
it’s ours
what happens here
don’t try to dispute it

this broad stage is for us
not you
do not try to introduce dangerous questions
into this performance
this broad stage is only for us
you have to pay us
for what we do up here
let us do what is in our authority
you just watch
your place is down there (Thukul, 2014, p. 34, translation by Stephen Miller)

Thukul became involved with local artists and intellectuals with connections to wider regional and national networks. He joined Teater Jagad (“World Theatre”), which was led by Lawu Warta (a student of Rendra) and came into contact with many intellectuals with national profiles, such as Arief Budiman, Ariel Heryanto, and the dissident Catholic priest and writer, Romo Mangunwijaya. Through these networks, he was able to access underground literature, including books by Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Karl Marx, and Antonio Gramsci. By the late 1980s, he had emerged as an important progressive intellectual. He was often invited to speak or perform at middle-class events, but had an equivocal relationship to such events, to the timidity of intellectuals involved in such events, and to the patronising and opportunistic empathy such thinkers might express for working-class people like himself. Thukul himself was an auto-didact, his education, like so many others, having been cut short by poverty. He expressed his discomfort with this mainstream middle-class intellectualism in his poem “root out the clever people”:

I root out
the clever people
inside my head
I’m not intimidated anymore
by the words of clever people,
who speak with such passion
the world doesn’t change because of the chatter
of speakers in seminar rooms
whose pronouncements are published
on the pages of newspapers—
maybe their readers are in awe
but the world doesn’t change
when the newspaper is folded and put away (Thukul, 2014, p. 72, translation
by Stephen Miller)

Thukul came from a working-class background and never left the community into which he was born. He was directly involved in the struggles of the community around him, such as the Sritex textile workers strike in 1995, one of the largest strikes of the Suharto era (Adiningtyas, 2018, p. 49). He also organised an alternative educational workshop for children in his *kampung* unable to continue their education (the Flood Prone Workshop, an allusion to the frequent flooding that covered the neighbourhood in water polluted by the textile factory).

When a number of left-leaning activists and organisations coalesced around the illegal Democratic People's Party (Partai Rakyat Demokratik [PRD]), which was declared in April 1996, Thukul worked with the party as a key leader of its cultural wing, the People's Cultural Work Network (Jaringan Kerja Kebudayaan Rakyat). The PRD soon became involved in one of the biggest campaigns of the late Suharto era—the Indonesia Democratic Party (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia [PDI]) crisis in 1996. Mass demonstrations and riots followed the government's forced ousting of Megawati Soekarnoputri as leader of one of the two alternative political parties that were allowed by the regime to play a largely symbolic role in the national parliament. The campaign culminated in a military attack on the PDI headquarters in Jakarta, which had been occupied by supporters of Megawati, including many students and PRD activists (among others, many from the PRD's student front, SMID; Aspinall, 2005).

In the aftermath of the military's attack on PDI headquarters, the PRD was singled out by the regime as the communist "puppet master" (*dalang*) of the campaign (Heryanto, 1997). A look-alike of the party chairman (and later PDI-P member of parliament), Budiman Sudjatmiko, even made an appearance as the black hat villain in a popular television soap opera. Dozens, perhaps hundreds, of activists were pursued by the regime's security forces and then detained and tortured. Often family, friends, and organisations such as the Indonesian Legal Aid Institute (Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia) were not informed of their whereabouts. Many activists went missing for weeks or even months. Some, like Thukul, never reappeared.

5. Thukul Becomes a Martyr

With security forces pursuing PRD activists intensively and key leaders, including Budiman, already detained, the party continued to organise underground and Thukul became a member of the party's underground leadership. He remained active throughout 1997 and early 1998, but disappeared sometime around or shortly before Suharto stepped down as president in May of that year (Curtis, 2000).

Initially, fears were not held for Thukul, as other activists who had disappeared reemerged from hiding or were released from detention. But Thukul and several others did not return. Thukul's wife, Siti Dyah Sujirah ("Sipon," 1968–2023) campaigned for answers regarding the fate of Thukul and others who had not returned (Gitiyarko, 2023). She and other family members worked with NGOs, especially the Indonesian Association for Families of the Disappeared (Ikatan Keluarga Orang Hilang Indonesia) and the Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence (Komisi untuk Orang Hilang dan Korban Tindakan Kekerasan), of which Munir was a founding member and key leader. PRD activists, such as the Indonesian Association for Families of the Disappeared chair, Mugiyanto, were active in both organisations. The Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence worked with those looking for answers and justice in relation to people who had been tortured or disappeared in the final period of the regime, as well as those concerned with the horrific human rights abuses at the beginning of the regime in 1965–1966 (Azhar, 2014). In this way, the Commission brought together the violations that marked the foundation of the regime with those that marked its demise. Failure to come to terms with both waves of violence and suppression, especially the former, is important to understanding the resilience of illiberal politics in Indonesia since 1998, despite the apparent consolidation of electoral politics (Miller, 2018; Setiawan, 2022a).

This struggle to pursue clarity and justice for victims of Suharto era violence and oppression naturally had a strong public memory aspect, as it required the public recovery of the experience of victims of the regime, all

the way from its bloody genesis in 1965 to the disappearances (including that of Thukul) in 1997–1998. It led to the development of a movement to Refuse to Forget (Menolak Lupa) or Resist Forgetting (Melawan Lupa; Hearman, 2014; Prawiro & Rahma, 2021; Setiawan, 2022a; Wardana & Hutabarat, 2012).

By the early 2000s, Thukul was emerging as one of the main icons of the movement. In 2000, the first comprehensive collection of his poems, *Aku Ingin Jadi Peluru (I Want to Be a Bullet)* was published (Thukul, 2000). A documentary including interviews with his family, friends, and fellow activists was released, and he was posthumously awarded the Yap Thiem Hien Award for Human Rights in 2002. In 2003, a major article was published in English, “Wiji Thukul, People’s Poet,” alongside 10 translated poems (poems and articles had appeared during the 1990s in English in forums such as *Inside Indonesia*). In 2004, the Indonesian Association for Families of the Disappeared produced another documentary that included interviews with friends, family members, and survivors.

Thukul’s status was further enhanced during week-long commemorations in 2007. A highlight of these events was the launching of the book *Kebenaran Akan Terus Hidup: Catatan-Catatan Tentang Wiji Thukul (The Truth Will Live on: Notes on Wiji Thukul)*, edited by ex-PRD activist Wilson bin Nurtiyas (who was detained following the 1996 events; Wilson, 2007). This included essays and testimonies by cultural and political associates of Thukul. On the Thursday of that week, families of the disappeared and dozens of human rights activists gathered around the National Monument in Central Jakarta to protest, display banners, give speeches, and discuss developments in various cases. Inspired by the Argentinian Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, *Kamisan* (from the Indonesian word for Thursday, *Kamis*, with the suffix -an, which implies collective, mutual, or ritual action) has since become an ongoing tradition (Febriansyah, 2009; Setiawan, 2022a; Suh, 2012). This demonstration brought together those campaigning for justice over the violence of 1965–1966, the violence in the last days of the regime, and the violence that continued into the Reformasi period, especially the murder of Munir (see Section 6). Since 2007, it has continued to include new cases, such as that of the probable murder of North Sumatran environmental activist Golfrid Siregar in 2019 (Wiratraman, 2022).

Around this time, Thukul’s case and image increasingly entered public discussion and popular culture. His family and friends appeared on popular talk shows such as *Kick Andy!* and *Mata Najwa (Najwa’s Eye)*. Thukul’s children came to play an increasingly important role, producing their own artworks that related to their father’s life, work, and disappearance. In 2009, a bilingual (Indonesian and English) collection of the poems of his daughter, Fitri Nganthi Wani, was published and launched with great fanfare (Wani, 2009). The over 1,000 invited guests included well-known journalists, writers, celebrities, and politicians. The event closed with Indonesia’s Bob Dylan and rock legend, Iwan Fals (“Ivan Off-Key”), singing a version of a poem that Wani had written when she was just eleven years old: “Pulanglah Pak” (“Come Home, Papa”).

Coverage in the mass media continued into the 2010s. Among others, in 2013 *Tempo* (Indonesia’s foremost current affairs magazine, something like Germany’s *Der Spiegel*) ran a special issue on his life and case, accompanied by another collection of poems, *The Generals Are Furious*. In 2014, Indonesia’s foremost publisher, Gramedia, published a comprehensive collection of Thukul’s poems (Thukul, 2014). From around this time his son, Fajar Merah, began releasing versions of his father’s poems put to music with his band Merah Bercerita (his version of “The Flowers and the Wall” has attracted over 2.6 million views on YouTube, as of January, 2024). In 2016, a major feature film, *Solo, Solitude (Istirahatlah Kata-Kata, or Rest Now, Words* in the original Indonesian) was released about the last months of Thukul’s life and, in 2018, another

documentary, *Grassroots Ballads (Nyanyian Akar Rumput)*, was released. The latter won the 2018 Citra award (the Indonesian equivalent of an Oscar) for best documentary feature film and was given a full cinema release in 2020 (it was then released to the public domain on Youtube on what would have been Thukul's 60th birthday, 26 August 2023).

Thukul's image continues to adorn murals around the country and cultural products such as t-shirts and posters remain common. Although Thukul is probably the most prominent Reformasi martyr in Indonesia (although not internationally), he is certainly not alone. In the next section, we briefly discuss two other Reformasi icons before proceeding to a discussion of the meaning of this public memory.

6. Other Reformasi Martyrs

The democratic struggles of the late New Order and Reformasi era have produced a number of martyrs. Thukul, Munir, and Marsinah stand out for their particular prominence and all regularly feature, Che-Guevara-like, in murals and other forms of popular culture (Mansfield et al., 2023). This article is focused on Thukul, but for comparison and discussion, we will also discuss the latter two figures.

Marsinah was an East Javanese factory worker who became a union activist during an industrial upsurge that swept Indonesia in the early 1990s. In May of 1993, she was a key leader of a strike at a watch factory that was demanding, among other things, the implementation of minimum wage regulations and the disbanding of the "yellow" government-run union, SPSI (Serikat Pekerja Se-Indonesia, the All-Indonesia Workers' Union). The campaign came under pressure from the local military command, which physically confronted the strike picket line and then summoned 13 workers to its headquarters, forcing them to sign letters of resignation (Silvey, 2003). Over the following days, they forced a further eight workers to do the same. Marsinah went to the military headquarters to ask about her comrades after the initial detentions and then disappeared shortly afterwards. Three days later, her raped and mutilated body was found in a rice field. While a police investigation was undertaken during the Suharto period, all of those initially charged and convicted had their convictions later quashed and were released. This raised the suspicion that the investigation was manipulation to deflect attention from the local military command (see Collins, 2002; Mohamad, 1993a, 1993b, 1994; Weix, 2002). The case remains unsolved.

Following her death, Marsinah became a symbol of the struggle for workers' rights in Indonesia. Her image and story have continued to be used, with her silhouette still frequently being seen at union and student events, as well as on murals, t-shirts, and other political paraphernalia (see Figure 1 below for an example). In this way, she plays a role similar to Munir and Thukul (Avonius, 2008).

Like Thukul, her story has found its way into art and popular culture, although in a more limited way. In the 1990s she was the topic of two dramatic works by the prominent dissident writer, Ratna Sarumpaet (Hatley, 2007; Sarumpaet & McGlynn, 2000). In 2002, a feature film about her case, *Marsinah, Cry Justice*, was released. This was directed by the legendary actor, director, and screenwriter, Slamet Rahardjo, who won a Citra best director award for it.

Munir Said Thalib (1965–2004) was a lawyer and activist involved in a number of campaigns around human rights abuses throughout the Suharto era and in the early Reformasi period. This included the campaign to find



Figure 1. A demonstrator waves a flag with an image of Marsinah's face during a demonstration in 2018: The flag reads "Marsinah: Make Her a Workers' Hero and a People's Hero." Source: Courtesy of Elma Adisya.

justice for the families of those who "disappeared" immediately before the fall of the New Order regime, such as Wiji Thukul. In September 2004, he was assassinated by arsenic poisoning on a Garuda Indonesia flight from Jakarta to Amsterdam, in the Netherlands, where he was due to undertake postgraduate legal studies.

Munir was well-known internationally and won the prestigious Right Livelihood award in 2000 (Right Livelihood, n.d.). Consequently, when news of his death spread globally, significant international pressure was brought to bear on the newly elected government of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to investigate his death. Before his death, Munir had reportedly wryly commented that Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, as a former army general under Suharto, was a "user of democracy, rather than a believer in it" (Easton, 2022, p. 136). While his government did establish an investigation into Munir's death, and this did lead to the conviction of Pollycarpus Priyanto, a Garuda Indonesia pilot, those responsible for initiating and authorising what had all the hallmarks of a state intelligence assassination operation were never identified or pursued (Harsono, 2020; Wahyuningroem, 2014).

Like Thukul, Munir's image is common on murals, posters, and other forms of popular material culture. Several books have been published about his case and life, including a graphic novel. Like Thukul, his case has been the focus of a few films, although none has had the same reach as *Solo, Solitude*. Unlike Thukul's case, his has not been picked up by popular talk shows to the same extent, although a number of current affairs segments have garnered hundreds of thousands of views on YouTube. Munir has had more coverage outside of Indonesia, including Easton's (2022) account of his life and the aftermath of his murder.

7. Discussion: Thukul and the Other Major Reformasi Martyrs

While we argue that the three figures considered in this article all have and do play similar roles in maintaining the public memory of Suharto's authoritarianism and the continuing illiberalism that flows from the unfinished process of Reformasi, it is clear that there are also differences. To begin with, each lost their life at a different stage in the process of the transformation of Indonesia from a dictatorship to the present day's relatively illiberal democracy. Marsinah was murdered during the massive upsurge in wildcat industrial action that, in retrospect, can be seen as marking the beginning of the end for the regime. Five years later, Thukul disappeared just before Suharto stepped down and Munir was murdered six years into the process of this transition. By the time of his murder, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono had already won by far the largest share of votes in the first round of the presidential election and was about to easily defeat Megawati in the final run-off. The presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, a military faction member of parliament from Suharto's last term, can be seen as the transition point between the period of substantive democratic reform to "democratic recession" and even regression. Consequently, the period covered by their deaths covers the period from the emergence of a mass democratic opposition movement to the authoritarianism of the Suharto regime up to the stabilisation of the post-regime political system as a fragile and relatively illiberal democracy.

All three figures became icons of the Refuse to Forget movement, but this manifested differently in Thukul's case. Marsinah and Thukul were both working class and never left that class milieu. Munir, although he had some experience in labour politics, made his name as a lawyer and human rights advocate. Although Marsinah's murder had national influence and national impact, her activity was entirely local and her murder took place in the context of a local industrial dispute. While Thukul was rooted in and engaged with his local working-class environment, he was also integrated into national networks and had a profile as an important intellectual and artist. Munir was a national figure, well-integrated with international human rights networks. When he was murdered, this meant that the international outcry was immediate and his case continues to be the best known of the three outside of Indonesia.

Family has played a key role in keeping alive the memory of both Thukul and Munir. The latter's wife, Suciwati, continues to publicise his case and campaign for democratic reform, but this is particularly the case for public memory of Thukul. His wife, his younger brother, and his two children have all played important roles in his public memory. His wife, Sipon, spent 25 years struggling to get justice over Thukul's disappearance, but died on January 5, 2023, without finding satisfaction. Along with Thukul's younger brother, Wahyu Susilo, she was a regular guest on television programmes and both made frequent appearances in other media. In addition to this, the role of Thukul's children has been especially important. They have also appeared in the media (particularly Wani), are artists themselves, and have produced a significant body of works that focus on his life and disappearance.

Thukul was not simply a political figure and community activist, he was also a well-known artist. And he was one with a relatively unique background and creative practice. He was working class and stayed working class. His art was thoroughly integrated with his community activism and this class perspective. Not only this, both his children are artists who have produced artworks that directly focus on his life, work, and fate. All of these factors have combined to mean that Thukul's role as an icon has perhaps loomed largest among the key martyred icons of the Reformasi movement.

8. Conclusion

We are flowers
that you don't want to grow
...you are the wall
but we have spread our seeds
in your wall
and one day we will grow up together
with the conviction: you must be destroyed. (Excerpt from "The Flowers and
the Wall"; Thukul, 2014, p. 81)

In his 1993 poem, "The Flowers and the Wall," Thukul uses a metaphor that may seem strange for an energetic and radical working-class activist: that of flowering weeds gradually bringing down a wall. The image contrasts the grand ambition of bringing down the seemingly impervious wall and the apparent impotency of small weeds seeking out their place in the sun. While Thukul wrote this poem in the context of the New Order regime, it is, nevertheless, perhaps even more apt for the situation that has faced the Reformasi movement since 1998.

Thukul was a captivating and charismatic leader of a movement that set out in the 1990s with great and hopeful ambitions for progressive change in Indonesia. While the mass strikes and student demonstrations of the 1990s did play a role in bringing the Suharto dictatorship to an end, they were not able to change the politics of oligarchy that formed the backbone of the regime and, consequently, Indonesia's democracy has continued to be fragile and, to a significant extent, illiberal. From this point of view, the period since the fall of the Suharto regime has been more difficult and potentially more demoralising. Progress has been slow and, at times, difficult. While the human rights situation continues to be much better than during the New Order period, in several areas political developments have stalled, stagnated, or even regressed, leading some observers to describe Indonesia as being in a "democratic recession" since the stabilisation that came with the Yudhoyono presidency.

As we have seen, Murphy (2023) argues for three key phases in the public memory of a "secular" or "political" martyr: (a) unnatural death linked to a cause, (b) consecration of the person as a martyr for that cause, and (c) social/communal transmission of a narrative concerning the person's life. Moreover, he states that the classic religious notion of the martyr often included an element of being socially or politically marginalized, making narratives of hero-martyrs "a classic weapon of the weak" (Murphy, 2023, p. 472). He sees this as also being relevant to non-religious martyrdom. Nevertheless, such processes of public memory produce "a powerful story that links past and present, reinforcing communal solidarity" (Murphy, 2023, p. 470). That is, it creates and maintains both identity and morale. In the difficult circumstances faced by the Reformasi movement since the fall of Suharto, this role is significant. But solidarity is more than identity and morale, and narratives of a hero-martyr need also to be a "locus of mobilisation" (Murphy, 2023, p. 470). That is, the narratives need to inspire continuing activity, possibly in circumstances where progress may be slow or fraught (such as has been the case in Indonesia since the early-mid 2000s).

We argue that Thukul's story, as it has been told since 1998, provides precisely these characteristics. His principled and uncompromising stance in the face of violence and repression is inspiring. Moreover, by comparing Thukul's place in public memory with that of Marsinah and Munir, we can see that his place in

public memory is not solitary, but rather is part of a complex of narratives that include other martyrs to the cause of progressive political change in Indonesia.

The public narratives of memory around Thukul, Marsinah, and Munir have been constructed around both similarities and differences in the stories of their lives and work. The process of public memory associated with them has likewise included both parallels and contrasts. While Thukul was working class, like Marsinah, he was also an intellectual who produced a body of artistic work giving voice to the progressive politics for which he gave his life. Not only this, creative work, including by his children, has produced a set of stories that give him particular prominence. These narratives have helped maintain progressive public discourse about the abuses of the Suharto era and the illiberalism that has often continued to characterize Indonesian politics.

Finally, we argue that Wiji Thukul should be remembered outside of Indonesia's borders. The quality and character of his work are enough to justify this, but his place in public memory in the world's fourth most populous country and third-largest democracy is also grounds for him to be known and discussed in a broader international context of progressive political martyrs.

Acknowledgments

We would like to especially thank Dr Richard Curtis, who worked with us on a precursor project to this article and, in the process, provided us with important materials and discussion. We would also like to thank Dr Nathan Franklin at Charles Darwin University for organising the Understanding Indonesia conference and championing this thematic issue. Associate Professor Valentina Gosetti of the University of New England provided valuable encouragement and advice to keep writing on Thukul. This project, of course, would not have been possible without the tireless work of many activists pursuing justice in many different human rights cases in Indonesia. We dedicate this article to all those who have continued this protracted struggle in often difficult and thankless circumstances.

Funding

The authors have participated in this thematic issue project with support from a "rainmaker" grant from Charles Darwin University.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

References

- Adiningtyas, W. (2018). *The assemblage of power: The role of the state in minimum wage policy in Indonesia* [Unpublished master's thesis]. Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington. <https://doi.org/10.26686/wgtn.17134049>
- Aspinall, E. (2005). *Opposing Suharto: Compromise, resistance, and regime change in Indonesia*. Stanford University Press.
- Avonius, L. (2008). From Marsinah to Munir: Grounding human rights in Indonesia. In D. Kingsbury & L. Avonius (Eds.), *Human rights in Asia: A reassessment of the Asian values debate* (pp. 99–119). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Azhar, H. (2014). The human rights struggle in Indonesia: International advances, domestic deadlocks. *SUR—International Journal on Human Rights*, 11, 227–236.
- Barrett, C. (2024, January 8). Ex-general with dark history reinvents himself for TikTok generation. *The Sydney*

- Morning Herald*. <https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/ex-general-with-dark-history-reinvents-himself-for-tiktok-generation-20240105-p5evbs.html>
- Birtles, B. (2023, December 21). What do we know about Indonesia's presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto? *ABC News*. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-12-21/what-we-know-about-indonesias-presidential/103257444>
- Bourchier, D. (2015). *Illiberal democracy in Indonesia: The ideology of the family state*. Routledge.
- Collins, E. F. (2002). Indonesia: A violent culture? *Asian Survey*, 42(4), 582–604. <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2002.42.4.582>
- Cribb, R. (2001). Genocide in Indonesia, 1965-1966. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 3(2), 219–239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713677655>
- Curtis, R. (2000, July 2). Where is Wiji Thukul? *Inside Indonesia*. <https://www.insideindonesia.org/where-is-wiji-thukul>
- Easton, M. (2022). *We have tired of violence: A true story of murder, memory, and the fight for justice in Indonesia*. The New Press.
- Farid, H. (2005). Indonesia's original sin: Mass killings and capitalist expansion, 1965–66. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 6(1), 3–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1462394042000326879>
- Febriansyah, M. (2009). *Performing arts and politics in New Order Indonesia: Compromise and resistance* (Südostasien Working Paper No. 38). Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften. <https://www.iaaw.hu-berlin.de/de/region/suedostasien/publikationen/working-papers/soa-wp-038-performing-arts-and-politics-in-new-order-indonesia-compromise-and-resistance-muhammad-febriansyah.pdf>
- Ford, M., & Pepinsky, T. B. (2014). *Beyond oligarchy: Wealth, power, and contemporary Indonesian politics*. Cornell University Press.
- Freedom House. (2006). *Freedom in the world 2006: The annual survey of political rights and civil liberties*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom_in_the_World_2006_complete_book.pdf
- Gitiyarko, V. (2023, August 23). Wiji Thukul's voice echoes through time. *Kompas.id*. <https://www.kompas.id/baca/english/2023/08/23/en-suara-wiji-thukul-bergema-melintasi-waktu>
- Graham, C. (2016). Illiberal democracy in Indonesia: The ideology of the family state. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 52(3), 411–414. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2016.1283749>
- Hadiz, V. R. (2001). Capitalism, oligarchic power and the state in Indonesia. *Historical Materialism*, 8(1), 119–151. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1569206X-00801005>
- Hadiz, V. R. (2017). Indonesia's year of democratic setbacks: Towards a new phase of deepening illiberalism? *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 53(3), 261–278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2017.1410311>
- Halbwachs, M. (1980). *The collective memory*. Harper & Row.
- Harsono, A. (2020, September 7). Sixteen years on, still no justice for Munir's death. *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/07/sixteen-years-still-no-justice-munirs-death>
- Hatley, B. (2007, September 29). Ratna accused, and defiant. *Inside Indonesia*. <https://www.insideindonesia.org/editions/edition-5552/ratna-accused-and-defiant>
- Hearman, V. (2014, March 29). Remembering Munir. *Inside Indonesia*, 115. <https://www.insideindonesia.org/archive/articles/remembering-munir>
- Heryanto, A. (1997). Indonesia: Towards the final countdown? In D. Singh (Ed.), *Southeast Asian affairs 1997* (pp. 107–126). ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Keliling kampung baca sajak dan mendongeng. (1985, December 8). *Minggu Ini*.

- Mansfield, M., Nilan, P., & Wibawanto, G. R. (2023). Rebel imaginings: Street art in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. *Visual Studies*, 39(1/2), 239–253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1472586x.2023.2237001>
- McGregor, K. (2018). Historical justice and the case of the 1965 killings. In R. Hefner (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of contemporary Indonesia* (pp. 129–139). Routledge.
- Melvin, J. (2018). The road to genocide: Indonesian military planning to seize state power prior to 1 October 1965. In K. McGregor, J. Melvin, & A. Pohlman (Eds.), *The Indonesian genocide of 1965: Causes, dynamics and legacies* (pp. 51–69). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71455-4_3
- Melvin, J., & Pohlman, A. (2018). A case for genocide: Indonesia, 1965–1966. In K. McGregor, J. Melvin, & A. Pohlman (Eds.), *The Indonesian genocide of 1965: Causes, dynamics and legacies* (pp. 27–47). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71455-4_2
- Middleton, P. (2011). *Martyrdom: A guide for the perplexed*. A & C Black.
- Mietzner, M. (2020). Authoritarian innovations in Indonesia: Electoral narrowing, identity politics and executive illiberalism. *Democratization*, 27(6), 1021–1036. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1704266>
- Mietzner, M., & Aspinall, E. (2010). Problems of democratisation in Indonesia: An overview. In E. Aspinall & M. Mietzner (Eds.), *Problems of democratisation in Indonesia: Elections, institutions and society* (pp. 1–20). ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Miller, S. (2018). Zombie anti-communism? Democratization and the demons of Suharto-era politics in contemporary Indonesia. In K. McGregor, J. Melvin, & A. Pohlman (Eds.), *The Indonesian genocide of 1965* (pp. 287–310). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71455-4_15
- Miller, S., Curtis, R. A., & Sibarani, R. A. O. (2023). Remembering Wiji Thukul, Indonesia’s murdered poet-activist. *Journal of Language, Literature and Culture*, 70(2), 65–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20512856.2023.2296688>
- Mitchell, J. P. (2012). *Martyrdom: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Mohamad, G. (1993a, August 21). Marsinah. *Tempo*. <https://majalah.tempo.co/read/catatan-pinggir/5680/marsinah>
- Mohamad, G. (1993b, December 18). Marsinah. *Tempo*. <https://majalah.tempo.co/read/catatan-pinggir/6527/marsinah>
- Mohamad, G. (1994, January 13). In rural Java, death comes to a fighter and a dreamer. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/01/13/opinion/IHT-in-rural-java-death-comes-to-a-fighter-and-a-dreamer.html>
- Murphy, A. R. (2023). Theorizing political martyrdom: Politics, religion, death, and memory. *Political Theology*, 24(5), 465–485. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1462317X.2022.2125118>
- Olick, J. K., Vinitzky-Seroussi, V., & Levy, D. (2011). *The collective memory reader*. Oxford University Press.
- Outram, Q., & Laybourn, K. (2018). *Secular martyrdom in Britain and Ireland: From Peterloo to the present*. Springer.
- Power, T., & Warburton, E. (2020). The decline of Indonesian democracy. In E. Warburton & T. Power (Eds.), *Democracy in Indonesia: From stagnation to regression?* (pp. 1–20). ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Prawiro, F., & Rahma, S. A. (2021). Representasi sosial tentang Tragedi Semanggi pada mahasiswa Unika Atma Jaya. *MANASA*, 10(2), 36–46. <https://doi.org/10.25170/manasa.v10i2.2974>
- Ratcliffe, R., & Mulyanto, R. (2024, January 9). From military leader to “harmless grandpa”: The rebranding of Indonesia’s Prabowo. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/09/indonesia-election-prabowo-subianto-rebranding-kidnapping-accusations>
- Right Livelihood. (n.d.). *Munir*. <https://rightlivelihood.org/the-change-makers/find-a-laureate/munir>

- Sarumpaet, R., & McGlynn, J. H. (2000). Marsinah accuses. *Manoa*, 12(1), Article 155166.
- Setiawan, K. M. P. (2022a). Struggling for justice in post-authoritarian states: Human rights protest in Indonesia. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 26(3), 541–565. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2021.1947805>
- Setiawan, K. M. P. (2022b). Vulnerable but resilient: Indonesia in an age of democratic decline. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 58(3), 273–295. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2022.2139168>
- Silvey, R. (2003). Spaces of protest: Gendered migration, social networks, and labor activism in West Java, Indonesia. *Political Geography*, 22(2), 129–155. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298\(02\)00092-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(02)00092-6)
- Suh, J. (2012). *The politics of transitional justice in post-Suharto Indonesia*. Ohio State University.
- Teresia, A., & Christina, B. (2024, January 8). Indonesia presidential frontrunner under fire as rivals attack defence plans. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/indonesia-presidential-frontrunner-under-fire-rivals-attack-defence-plans-2024-01-08>
- Thukul, W. (1995). Wiji Thukul. *Suara Independen*, 1(5).
- Thukul, W. (2000). *Aku ingin jadi peluru: Sajak-sajak*. Indonesia Tera.
- Thukul, W. (2014). *Nyanyian akar rumput: Kumpulan lengkap puisi*. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Utama, V. R. (2023, December 15). Prabowo Subianto: Indonesia's perennial strongman recast as the adorable grandpa. *Indonesia at Melbourne*. <https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/prabowo-subianto-indonesias-perennial-strongman-recast-as-the-adorable-grandpa>
- Wahyuningroem, S. L. (2014, September 9). Solving Munir's murder case, a test for Indonesia's president-elect. *The Conversation*. <http://theconversation.com/solving-munirs-murder-case-a-test-for-indonesias-president-elect-31293>
- Wani, F. N. (2009). *After my father disappeared: A collection of poems, 1999–2007*. Pusat Sejarah dan Etika Politik.
- Wardana, A., & Hutabarat, R. (Eds.). (2012). *Melawan lupa: Narasi-narasi Komunitas Taman 65 Bali*. Taman 65 Press.
- Weix, G. G. (2002). Indonesian labour activism in the 1990s and the “Marsinah” case. In B. S. A. Yeoh, P. Teo, & S. Huang (Eds.), *Gender politics in the Asia-Pacific region* (Vol. 2, pp. 91–103). Routledge.
- Wilson. (Ed.). (2007). *Kebenaran akan terus hidup: Catatan-catatan tentang Wiji Thukul*. IKOHI.
- Winters, J. A. (2011). Oligarchs and oligarchy in Southeast Asia. In R. Robison (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of Southeast Asian politics* (pp. 53–67). Routledge.
- Wiratraman, H. P. (2022). Constitutional struggles and the court in Indonesia's turn to authoritarian politics. *Federal Law Review*, 50(3), 314–330. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0067205X221107404>

About the Authors

Stephen L. Miller (PhD) is a lecturer in the Faculty of Arts and Society, at Charles Darwin University, Australia. Between 2016 and 2019, he was a visiting lecturer at Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia, and prior to this, he taught Indonesian language and cultural studies at the University of Tasmania, the University of New England, and the University of the Sunshine Coast.

Rifka A. O. Sibarani is a PhD candidate at the Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University, Australia. She received her bachelor of political science from Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia, and completed a master's in public policy at the University of Tasmania as an Australian Awards scholarship recipient.



POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

ISSN: 2183-2463

Politics and Governance is an international, peer-reviewed open access journal that publishes significant and cutting-edge research drawn from all areas of political science.

Its central aim is thereby to enhance the broad scholarly understanding of the range of contemporary political and governing processes, and impact upon of states, political entities, international organisations, communities, societies and individuals, at international, regional, national and local levels.



cogitatio

www.cogitatiopress.com/politicsandgovernance