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ANNEX 5

## **Workshop**

# **America in Question: Indonesian Democracy and the Challenge of Counter-terrorism in Southeast Asia**

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## **Putting All Cards on the Table: Trust as a Factor in the War Against Terror<sup>1</sup>**

Bahtiar Effendy  
(Lecturer, State Islamic University Jakarta)

Co-organized by  
Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Jakarta  
The Liu Institute for Global Issues, University of British Columbia, Vancouver

**Putting All Cards on the Table:  
Trust as a Factor in the War Against Terror<sup>1</sup>**

Bahtiar Effendy  
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Issue on terror is orchestrated by the West to clobber Islam as it is impossible to attack [the Muslim world] directly as in the case of Afghanistan and Iraq. The Islamic world is cornered to be made a common enemy and then dominated particularly by a country which claims itself super power and world police.

M. Amien Rais<sup>2</sup>

**Introduction: From Tranquility to Ferocity?**

Indonesian Islam has been generally viewed as moderate and tolerant. Many have even suggested that Indonesian Islam represents a different kind of Islam compared to that of the Middle East. This, however, does not --and will not--

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<sup>2</sup>*Kompas*, 24 January 2006.

qualify Indonesian Islam to become a religious sect or denomination. Like Islam that came to any other part of the world, Indonesian Islam has its origins from the Islamic heartland where this religion grew and developed since the early seventh century. Hence, both Indonesian Islam and Middle Eastern Islam share the basic teachings of Prophet Muhammad and regard the Qur'an and Sunnah as two most important sources of Islam.

In spite of this, like Islam in many other converted regions, Indonesian Islam was a product of the history of proselytization. In this context, the coming of Islam was very much influenced and shaped by the very nature of its stakeholders --the bearers, the audience, and the socio-cultural, economic and political context of the area. Primarily because of this, Islam --through the interpretations of its preachers (*da'is*)-- had to adjust itself to the local circumstances without giving up its main and basic religious tenets. As such had been a major factor which made Indonesian Islam somewhat different in its particular or detail outlook and orientation from Islam developing elsewhere --including its point of origin!

Historians and students of Indonesian Islam are generally in agreement that religious proselytization via trading activities had contributed to the peaceful character of the country's acceptance of Islam. Penetration pacifique, as they often described the nature of the spread of Islam in the Nusantara world, was the general assessment of anyone examining the main characteristics of the development of Islam in this area. Of course, this does not mean that trading or commercial activities proper had automatically led to the peaceful acceptance of Islam by the local inhabitants. Instead, the circumstances which Muslim traders had crafted --settling down in the region, mingling with and marrying the locales, and preaching religion-- were the main ingredients that paved the way of Indonesia's tranquil conversion to Islam.

Tranquility then perhaps is the distinctive character of Indonesian Islam. Though a certain degree of schism had been in existence, which led to bitter religio-

political conflicts between coastal and hinterland Islam, in general the basic outlook of Islam in the country has been a docile, tolerant, and friendly one.

This benign standing is shattered by the recent events involving a number of Indonesian Muslims who are perceived to have a link with international and/or regional radical Islamic organizations. Never in the history of the archipelago Islam is to be connected with terror. Following the Bali bomb-blasts in October 2002, which killed nearly 186 innocent people and injured more than 300 others, Indonesian Islam has been suspected to have ferocious sides. The suspicion grows as more and more violent acts take place in surprising phases and numbers --the bombing of the J.W. Marriott Hotel in early August 2003; the Kuningan bombing in September 2004; the Bali bombing II in 2005; and other terrors carried out in many other areas in the archipelago.

#### **Bases of Uneasiness**

In itself this development startles many Indonesian Muslims. Reading the history of Islam and its thinkers and activists in the archipelago, one cannot conclude with a comfortable certainty that the whole issue of terror is a home-grown phenomenon which corresponds nicely to the character or authenticity of Indonesian Islam. Obviously, many Indonesians were not aware of the fact that some of their fellow Muslims were exposed to international experiences which were different from their own. Sadly enough, some of those experiences, which were especially evolved around the Afghanistan and/or Southern Philippines networks, are now perceived to be connected with terrorism. While their roles in carrying out terrorist and horrible acts must not be trivialized, to understand it beyond reasonable doubts requires more than what have been revealed and presented by mass media to the public at large. More importantly, to solidify the already existing efforts to combat terrorism necessitates trust and transparency among the parties involved -- the state as well as the international coalition of the willing.

Unfortunately, as they will be clearer in the following pages, these are factors that are missing in the still unstructured war against terror. This void not only hampers our endeavors to fight terrorism, but also raises unnecessary questions –if not suspicions– with regard to the whole issue of terror. The recent statement of Amien Rais, the former chairman of Muhammadiyah and People’s Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia, issued in a public dialogue on “Kontroversi Gerakan Teroris di Indonesia: Mengapa Harus Umat Islam?” (The Controversy of Terrorist Movement in Indonesia: Why [it] Must be Muslim Communities?) can be regarded as a reflection of his uneasiness, uncertainty, and perhaps even distrust on the issue of terror. Of course, this does not imply that he condones such dreadful acts. The fact that contemporary discourse on –and campaign against, or even acts of– terrorism evolved in such a way only encouraged Amien Rais to react the way he did.

And for reasons not too difficult to understand, Amien Rais is not alone in embracing such a perception. Many Indonesian Muslims, both at the elite as well as grass-roots levels, share the same feeling –though perhaps with different degree and intensity. Syafii Maarif, Hasyim Muzadi, and Hidayat Nurwahid, to mention only a handful of them, are among those who share comparable uneasiness, sense of uncertainty with respect to the issue on terror.

At the international context, the bases of uneasiness are by and large cultural and political. The former refers to the cultural perception of the West towards Islam. In the eyes of many Westerners, the horrible acts carried out by Muslims only solidify their hostile perception of Islam especially after the event of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and more importantly following the dreadful attacks on the World Trade Center of September 11, 2001. For this, Fawaz Gerges wrote that “[m]ost Americans’ cultural perception of Arabs/Muslims is that they are dangerous, untrustworthy, undemocratic, barbaric, and primitive. [And] since the early 1980s,

events in the Muslim world have become traumatic news in the United States.”<sup>3</sup> Or as reiterated by Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies: “From its seventh-century breakout from the Arabian peninsula until the late 17th century, Islam advanced at a sword point, spreading from the Pyrenees to the Philippines. The tide was checked only at the gates of Vienna. From the decline of the Ottoman empire until the 1970s, Islam ebbed. Today --fueled by oil wealth, surplus population, immigration and the rise of fundamentalism-- Islam is resurgent. Instead of wild horsemen, its banners are carded by guerrillas, terrorists, theocrats and tyrants.”<sup>4</sup>

This cultural perception of Islam gained its practical relevance when a number of American religious leaders echoed similar sentiments. Jerry Falwell, for instance, issued a statement on CBS’s “60 Minutes” that “Muhammad was a terrorist.” In a similar vein, Pat Robertson portrayed Muhammad as “a robber and a brigand” and that Islam is “a monumental scam.” And Franklin Graham characterized Islam as “a very evil and wicked religion.”<sup>5</sup> All of these are certainly more than instant comments. Rather, all of these represented the inherent and much deeper perceptions of the West toward Islam --though not always be part of their consciousness at all time. Those cultural perceptions emerge only if windows of opportunity are presented to them. And the event of September 11 did play such function!

Through this cultural perception Muslims understand that in spite of the formal recognition by some Western leaders that Islam is not the target, there are evidence that many Muslims in Europe, North America, and Australia become

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<sup>3</sup>Fawaz A. Gerges, *American and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 6-7.

<sup>4</sup>Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies, *Why Do People Hate America?* Cambridge, UK: Icon Book, 2002, pp. 15-22).

<sup>5</sup>See, Fareed Zakaria, “Time to Take On America’s Haters,” *Newsweek*, October 21, 2002.

victims of such cultural perceptions of Islam. And it is because of this cultural perception that many Westerners seem to see terrorism in a less complex way compared to the Indonesian Muslims. While the latter has not come to a reasonable certainty on factors lead to terrorism, the former has been able to pinpoint with relative certainty that “Saudi Islam” is the root-cause of terrorism.<sup>6</sup>

Though the more authoritative and responsible analysis has yet to be made, it is only logical to assume that a similar cultural perception of the West has also been entertained by many Muslims. Indonesian Muslims are no exception, and the evidence of this cultural sentiment can be found in the way they reacted to America’s war on terror. Instead of seeing the United States’ strike on Afghanistan as a necessary campaign against terrorism, many Indonesian Muslims regarded it as a rampage on the Muslim world. And primarily because of this, they staged demonstrations and even issued threats to carry out sweepings to expel citizens of the United States and their allies from Indonesia.<sup>7</sup>

The (re)proliferation of this cultural perception of Islam has resulted in the emergence of a mutual distrust and hatred between Indonesian Muslims and the Americans which made terrorism more difficult to comprehend. Substantively speaking, however, Indonesian Muslims seemed to be less bothered by such commentaries compared to the possible ramifications of the United States policies toward the Muslim world. Many believed that the horrible attacks of September 11,

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See, for instance, Stephen Schwartz, *The Two Faces of Islam: The House of Sa’ud From Tradition to Terror*, New York: Doubleday, 2002; Dore Gold, *Hatred’s Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism*, Washington DC: Regnery Publishing Inc., 2003; Bernard Lewis, *The Crises of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*, New York: The Modern Library, 2003.

<sup>7</sup>C. Van Dijk, “The Hearts and Minds of the People: Southeast Asia After 11 September 2001,” a paper presented to an international seminar on “Islamic Militant Movements in Southeast Asia,” organized by PBB, UIN Jakarta and INIS, Jakarta, 22-24 July 2003, p. 30.

2001 ended the 12 years of post-cold war era. Though what will follow is still less certain, but the event has “transformed the international security environment and dictated a new ‘grand strategy’ for the United States.”<sup>8</sup>

In this respect, what worries many Indonesian Muslims are not the campaigns against terrorism, but how such campaigns are defined and realized. And the unilateral stance held dearly by the Bush administration only strengthened the apprehension of many Indonesian Muslims to share the United States’ viewpoint and to follow their lead and strategy in combating terrorism.

Partly because of this, while shared the grievances of the victims and condemned the attackers of the World Trade Center, many Indonesian Muslims could not accept the United States raids on Afghanistan which caused comparable number of casualties to those who lost their lives in the dreadful event of September 11. In fact, they criticized the attacks on Afghanistan quite harshly. Even the soft-speaking Mustofa Bisri, a leader of an Islamic boarding school in Rembang, Central Java, and one the most notable figures in Nahdlatul Ulama, argued that the attack on Afghanistan was a terror in itself. In his view, the United States need to conduct “self-introspection or being resisted by worldwide powerless people.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, despite the pledge of solidarity with the United States which was uttered in front of President Bush during her visit to Washington, D.C. in 2001, President Megawati once “felt obliged to re-accent her own views for domestic (Muslim) consumption: to dissent from the American willingness to use of force and to regret the civilian

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<sup>8</sup>Robert J. Lieber, “A New Era in U.S. Strategic Thinking,” *September 11 One Year Later*, a special electronic journal of the U.S. Department of State, September 2002, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Mustofa Bisri, “AS Introspeksi atau Dilawan Orang Lemah Sedunia,” *Tempo*, 21 October 2001, p. 43.



casualties that ... resulted from it.”<sup>10</sup>

This, however, does not mean that both the government and Indonesian Muslims take terrorism lightly. Certainly there are differences between Indonesians and Americans with regard to the way they view this pressing problem. In addition to differences on how terrorism is defined and how it should be fought, many Indonesian Muslims also believe that Indonesia should not be viewed as a hotbed of terrorism. Like the United States, Indonesian Islam and Muslims are victims of terror. The Bali bomb-blasts in October 2002; the bombing of the J.W. Marriott Hotel in early August 2003; the Kuningan bombing in September 2004; the Bali bombing II in 2005; and other terrors carried out in many other areas in the archipelago are undeniable proofs. The fact that those who are responsible for such horrible acts claimed to be Muslims only suggest that Indonesian Islam has been actually hijacked by terrorists. Therefore, it is only fair to argue that to relate Indonesian Islam with terrorism does not appear to have a solid ground.

Unfortunately, many countries –even the neighboring ones– do not share that particular idea. Instead, Indonesia is conveniently perceived as a country where terrorism found its natural ground. Partly because of this, Indonesia is continuously denied the rights to question –let alone to detain– two major players: Umar Al-Faruq and Hanbali. The fact that these two figures were responsible for many terrors carried out in the Indonesian soil, such denial contributed to the rise of suspicions with regard to the certain aspects –if not the whole– of terrorism. And Al-Faruq’s recent fled from the United States-run maximum security prison in Begram, Afghanistan, only provides additional mystery to the issue on terror.<sup>11</sup>

Given the above circumstances –culturally as well as politically, it is understandable that many Muslims still have some reservations with regard to the

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<sup>10</sup>Emmerson, Donald K. “Southeast Asia And The United States Since 11 September,” *Van Zorge Report on Indonesia*, Vol IV, No. 1, 21 January 2002, p. 27.

<sup>11</sup>See, “Misteri Pelarian Al-Faruq,” *Tempo*, 7-13 November 2005.

whole story of terrorism. Though they may have already died down, there were speculations whether the Bali bomb-blasts were actually carried out by individuals such as Imam Samudera and Amrozi who were suspected to have connections with Jamaah Islamiyah.<sup>12</sup> (Jones). Much has been said with regard to this organization, and yet many Indonesian Muslims still have so little knowledge about it. Because of that, as suggested by Sydney Jones, “some still doubt JI’s existence as an organization.”<sup>13</sup> This, however, does not mean that Muslims do not want to believe in the existence of Jamaah Islamiyah. It is the cultural and political circumstances described above which seemed to prevent the victims –Indonesians and Americans included– from having a unified, shared understanding of terrorism as well as its organizational networks and how to fight it.

In addition to the cultural and political factors that have created uneasiness to the Indonesian Muslims with regard to terrorism, there is one domestic factor which is worth to be put into the equation: the old practices of the New Order’s intelligence agency in orchestrating and masterminding subversive activities in order to legitimize the use of force to domesticate the Muslims. The use of certain explosive materials as well as the circumstances surrounding Umar Al-Faruq’s involvement in terrorist acts only shed a light of apprehension as if these horrible acts went beyond Amrozi, Imam Samudera or even Jamaah Islamiyah. As such is not entirely an illusive stand point as certain apparatus of the New Order government had the history of engineering activities to –borrowing Amien Rais’s phrases– “clobber, corner and then dominate” Muslims. Even the former intelligence chief Z.A.

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<sup>12</sup>See, Sidney Jones, “Jemaah Islamiyah: A Short Description,” a paper presented to an international seminar on Islamic Militant Movements in Southeast Asia, organized by PBB, UIN Jakarta and INIS, Jakarta, 22-24 July 2003.

<sup>13</sup>Sidney Jones, “Jemaah Islamiyah: A Short Description,” p.

Maulani also shared this concern.<sup>14</sup>

Some Indonesian Muslims knew this too well as they were exposed to the political history of Islam in the country. For so many years Indonesian Muslims had been at an impasse in terms of its political relationship with the state. The regimes of both Presidents Soekarno and Soeharto have regarded political parties based on Islam as potential power contenders capable of undermining the nationalist basis of the state. Primarily because of this, for more than four decades both governments have worked to contain and domesticate Islamic parties. As a result, not only did leaders and activists of political Islam fail to make Islam the state ideology and religion in 1945 (on the eve of Indonesia's independence) and again in the late 1950s (during the Constituent Assembly debates over Indonesia's constitutional future), but they also found themselves repeatedly labeled minorities or outsiders. In short, as some have suggested, political Islam has been constitutionally, physically, electorally, bureaucratically, and symbolically defeated. Most distressing, political Islam had frequently been a target of distrust, suspected as opposed to the state ideology Pancasila. For their part, politically active Muslims have looked with suspicion on the state. In spite of the willingness of the state to recognize and assist Muslims in the practice of their religious rituals, they consider the state as maneuvering to dethrone the political significance of Islam and embrace the idea of a secular polity. In this respect, suffice it to say that a mutual suspicion between Islam and the state occurs in a country in which the majority of its populations are Muslims.<sup>15</sup>

In the heyday of the New Order authoritarianism, comparable organizations to Jamaah Islamiyah, such as Komando Jihad (Jihad Command) and many other

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<sup>14</sup>See his *Mengapa Barat Memfitnah Islam?* Jakarta: Daseta, 2002.

<sup>15</sup>Bahtiar Effendy, *Islam and the State in Indonesia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003.

radical groups were believed to be state-sponsored organizations. The sole purpose of their existence was to enhance the legitimacy of the state in suppressing political Islam and its activists. Under the shadow of such history, to connect Jamaah Islamiyah with Abdullah Sungkar and/or Abu Bakar Baasyir --proponents of Islamic state idea tried in the early 1980s by the New Order regime-- would only cast further doubts among many Indonesian Muslims. This was even so as the trial of Abu Bakar Baasyir could not render a guilty verdict on this particular charge.

In short, Muslim suspicion remains on the surface. Even though the country has undergone regime change, as such does not seem to have any bearings with respect to the existing suspicion of many Muslims toward terrorism in a democratically-governed Indonesia. On the contrary, certain maneuvers of the government in its fight against terrorism had cast further doubts. In this regard, many Muslims failed to understand the fact that Imam Samudera's "testimonial" work was allowed to be published --and in fact the government had lent a hand to its circulation.<sup>16</sup>

**Concluding Remarks:  
Soft Power Enhancement and Mutual Trust Development**

Indonesia is still in a very weak position to establish a balance and less skewed relations with many other countries, let alone with the United States! Yet, it is important to note that in spite of the fact that Americans are now entertaining a unilateralist stance in their foreign policy execution, there is no guarantee that they can survive by depending solely on their hard power --economically as well as politically. As Joseph S. Nye has suggested, there is so much of the US soft power that needs to be reexplored and redeveloped.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>See, Imam Samudera, *Aku Melawan Teroris*.

<sup>17</sup>See his *The Paradox of American Power*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Furious as they may be, the United States should not lose sight regarding the significance of their soft power in country to country as well as people to people relations to fight against terrorism. With the exceptions of having its embassy guarded with a psychologically irritating barbed-wire fencing or issuing numerous travel warnings which somewhat affect Indonesia's tourism industry, Ambassador Ralph Boyce had actually undertaken some meaningful measures to make the United States' soft-power developed. He not only designed regular digital conferences which enabled Indonesians to communicate with their fellow Americans on certain issues, but he also arranged a number of visits for many Muslim leaders, including those who administer Islamic traditional educational institutions, to come to the United States to have a very first hand experience on the values and traditions of the American people. Similarly, he traveled, met, and talked to many Indonesians quite extensively to know more about Indonesia, including the lives in Islamic boarding schools.

All of these measures are difficult to assess in a period when "normalcy" has yet to unfold in Indonesia's as well as the United States's socio-economic and political conditions. Given the efforts, however, one can expect that some day, somehow, they will yield something. Putting all the available cards on the table, especially those which are related to the war against terror, will only speed up the development of a mutual trust between the Indonesians and Americans.\*\*\*