



REPORT

Indonesian students in Egypt and Turkey

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Middle East has always played an important role in shaping Islamic thought, practice, and activism in Indonesia. This begs the question of what impact the last five years of turmoil in the Middle East has had in Indonesia. Extensive face-to-face interviews with Indonesian students from mainstream backgrounds in Egypt and Turkey suggest that while the students have both observed and absorbed recent events in the region, they saw these events as having only limited relevance to the situation in their home country.

Students saw significant cultural, religious and political differences between Egypt and Turkey and Indonesia that influenced their reading of events in the former countries. None of the students interviewed expressed support for Islamic State or its Caliphate, although a significant number saw the rise of Islamic State as a US conspiracy. There was no sense that the travails of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt at the hands of the military there was causing any reassessment of the benefits of democratic activism, even for Indonesian Islamists — although many students expressed a largely instrumentalist view of democracy. A sizeable number of Indonesian students backed the military coup against the elected president from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Indeed, despite the fact that many of the students we interviewed were religious students, religion was only one criterion by which they judged political events.

The Middle East has always played an important role in shaping Islamic thought, practice, and activism in Indonesia.¹ While Islam in Indonesia has largely evolved in line with local cultural and social outlooks, Indonesian Muslims have long travelled to the Middle East to deepen their knowledge of their faith. Indonesians have also welcomed Islamic preachers, scholars, and activists from the Middle East to Indonesia, sometimes in person and at other times through the translations of their written works.

The greatest impact from the Middle East has been in the area of religious education and practice. The Middle East is still seen as the most prestigious place for Indonesians to study Islam, even if only a relatively small number end up actually studying in the region. Some Indonesians have adapted their religious practices to accord more closely with what are seen as more authentic Islamic practices in the Middle East. A significant minority such as the parliamentary Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS)) has also been influenced by political readings of the faith. And an even smaller minority has been drawn to militant ideas from the Middle East.

All of this makes it worth asking what impact the last five years of turmoil in the Middle East has had in Indonesia. There is, for example, growing concern about the influence of Islamic State's ideas. A small number of Indonesians have travelled to Iraq and Syria to live in the group's self-declared Caliphate, while others have pledged loyalty to Islamic State in Indonesia. Less obvious, but just as important, is the impact the Arab uprisings have had on Indonesian views of politics and religion, and in particular on the compatibility of Islam with democracy. One of the main victims of the authoritarian reaction in the Middle East to the uprisings has been the Muslim Brotherhood, a group whose influence in Indonesia easily outweighs that of Islamic State.

In an attempt to understand the impact of the political, religious, and intellectual ferment in the Middle East in Indonesia, this Report will focus on a group that has traditionally been one of the most important conduits for Islamic thinking from the Middle East: Indonesian students.² For centuries, a small but significant proportion of the Indonesian Muslim community has travelled to the Middle East to study at a variety of Islamic institutions, from leading centres of Islamic learning, such as al-Azhar University in Egypt, to mosque-based *mudaris* associated with particular Islamic scholars and preachers.

In Indonesia the role played by students in transmitting Middle Eastern ideas and influences belies their overall numbers. Students returning from the Middle East have influenced Islamic thinking and activism in a variety of ways: as preachers and proselytisers; as teachers and

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scholars; as translators and publishers of Arabic-language Islamic writings; as political activists and parliamentarians; and, in some cases, as leaders and members of extremist groups. Indeed, studying in the Middle East provides some of these students with an added status or authority to interpret the faith once they return to Indonesia, although their ideas are rarely received uncritically within Indonesia.³

Focusing on students provides an insight into the impact of Middle Eastern ideas and influences on the broader Muslim community in Indonesia. Most Indonesian students studying in the Middle East are representative of the mainstream of the Muslim community. Typically, they come from backgrounds in large Indonesian Islamic movements such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah.

Understanding the conclusions — political, social, and religious — that Indonesian Muslims are drawing from recent events in the Middle East provides some insight into current and future thinking within the broader Muslim community, including whether more extremist ideas from the Middle East are gaining any currency. The receptiveness of the broader community to these ideas could affect everything from the ability of Islamic State and other extremist movements to gain new recruits in Indonesia, to the ability of the Indonesian authorities to combat extremist ideas and carry out an effective counterterrorism campaign.

Some Western political leaders and commentators have argued that support for Islamic State around the world demonstrates that there is something broken in Islam; in some cases there have even been calls for an Islamic 'reformation'.⁴ Inherent in such arguments is an implication that Muslims are seemingly more susceptible to extremism because of the nature of their faith. Understanding how Indonesian students have, at very close range, viewed the turmoil in the Middle East and how it has affected them is, therefore, an important way to test such theses.

For the purpose of this Report, we have chosen two communities of Indonesian students: one in Egypt, which has traditionally been the largest destination for Indonesian students in the Middle East; and one in Turkey, which represents one of the newer destinations. The choice of Turkey reflects in part its proximity to the conflict in Syria, but also the popularity of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP)) and its leader, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in Indonesia. Some Indonesian Islamist movements view the AKP's transformation of Turkish politics as a model for Indonesia.

In total, 40 interviews were carried out for this Report in April and May 2015: 26 in Egypt and 14 in Turkey. (A total of 47 students were interviewed, 29 in Egypt and 18 in Turkey. In some interviews multiple students were present.) The interviews took place in Istanbul, Kayseri, Izmir, and Cairo. We have not revealed the identity of interviewees, although we have coded the interviewees with a 'T' for Turkey or 'E' for Egypt and indicated their organisational affiliation where possible. The

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results of these interviews have been collated in four broad categories: perceptions of cultural differences between Indonesia and Egypt and Indonesia and Turkey; attitudes to democracy; attitudes to religion and society; and attitudes to Islamic State. This Report concludes with a detailed account of the case of two Indonesian students in Turkey who travelled to Syria to join Islamic State, one of whom was killed there.

INDONESIAN STUDENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Today, the largest Indonesian student populations in the Middle East are in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen, with other large communities in Jordan, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, and Sudan. Egypt has the single largest concentration with some 4500 Indonesian students, most of them at al-Azhar University, followed by Yemen, with approximately 2000 (before evacuations in 2015), and Saudi Arabia, with 836 according to official figures and perhaps as many as 2000.⁵ In Egypt, most of the Indonesian students are in Cairo, but they are also spread across other smaller cities including Tanta, Mansoura, and Samanoud. The latter two areas have concentrations of students with Salafi backgrounds (i.e. adherents of approaches to Islam that emphasise a return to the early principles of the faith as seen to be practiced by the first three generations of the Muslim community).

Most Indonesians in Egypt study at al-Azhar University, followed by Cairo University, and other smaller universities including the Cairo branch of the American Open University. In the past, Indonesians could go directly to al-Azhar without undergoing any selection process at home. But since 2010, all Indonesians who want to study at al-Azhar must pass a written exam administered by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. They are then interviewed by al-Azhar professors who travel to Indonesia for that purpose. Because many Indonesian students in the past did not have sufficient Arabic proficiency to understand the lectures, the new regulation was instituted to ensure more qualified applicants. One student said that when he took the exam in 2012, only 300 of 2500 applicants were accepted, and of those, only the top 20 received a scholarship.⁶

In Turkey, the number of Indonesian students is estimated at 728, most of them Acehnese.⁷ Almost all of them are university students — undergraduates, masters and PhD students — except for a few high school students in Kayseri, in central Turkey. In addition to official government scholarships, there are non-government institutions that sponsor Indonesians to study in Turkey, including the Pacific Countries Social and Economic Solidarity Association (PASIAD, in its Turkish acronym); Suleymaniye or the United Islamic Cultural Centre of Indonesia (UICCI); and Nurcu (Jamaat al-Nur). PASIAD is a non-profit organisation affiliated with the Gülen movement, the transnational religious, social, and political initiative of Turkish Islamic scholar

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Fethullah Gülen. Gülen has operated in Indonesia since 1995 and provides scholarships to study in Turkey and Indonesia. PASIAD runs ten bilingual (Indonesian–English) boarding schools in seven different provinces.⁸

In 2008, the Turkish Government introduced a scholarship program for Indonesians to study in Turkey's senior high schools. The first two groups in 2009 and 2010 were recruited exclusively from existing PASIAD schools in Indonesia, and several students interviewed in this study had unhappy experiences.⁹ In 2012, the Turkish Government launched a new international scholarship program for university students, *Turkiye Burslari*.¹⁰ As at October 2014, 400 Indonesians were in Turkey as part of that program.¹¹ Indonesians are spread across 15 regions in Turkey with the largest populations in Ankara, Istanbul, Bursa, Sakarya, Izmir, Kayseri, Konya, Samsun, Trabzon, and Gaziantep.¹²

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Of the Indonesian students interviewed for this Report, 50 per cent came from NU backgrounds, 22 per cent from Muhammadiyah, 22 per cent from PKS, and a handful belonged to other organisations. Established in 1926, NU is the largest Sunni Muslim organisation in Indonesia with an estimated membership of 30 million. Muhammadiyah, established in 1912, is the second largest and was inspired by Muhammad Abduh's reform movement in Egypt. Both focus on education and social services and both are seen as moderate; however, both have lost members in recent years to hardline Islamist movements, Muhammadiyah more so than NU. While the organisations are not directly involved in politics, in 1998 prominent figures of NU and Muhammadiyah pioneered the National Awakening Party (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB)*) and the National Mandate Party (*Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN)*), respectively.

PKS has been closely identified in the past with the Muslim Brotherhood, although many within the movement today see the AKP as a better model. PKS has a branch in Egypt with 400 members as at April 2015 (it was 1000 before the 2011 revolution). In Turkey, only Muhammadiyah and NU have official branches, while the Islamists are unofficially represented by Islamic study groups in Istanbul and other cities. In both Egypt and Turkey, the PKS students, who tend to support their Islamist counterparts such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, have somewhat strained relations with their NU colleagues and frequently compete for leadership in the Indonesian student associations.

Indonesians in Egypt are called *Masisir (masyarakat Indonesia di Mesir)*. The Indonesian Students Association in Egypt (*Persatuan Pelajar dan Mahasiswa Indonesia (PPMI)*) was established in 1927.¹³ In 1989 PPMI added a women's wing, *Wihdah*, to better accommodate the female students. Similarly, the women's wings of NU (*Fatayat*) and Muhammadiyah (*Aisyiyah*) can also be found in Egypt. Other established organisations such as Islamic Unity (*Persis*) — another Islamic reform movement that was established in 1923 — and

Indonesian Muslim Students (Pelajar Islam Indonesia (PII)) — a student movement founded in 1947 — also have a presence in Egypt. The Indonesian Student Association (Perhimpunan Pelajar Indonesia (PPI)) in Turkey, on the other hand, was only established in 2007 following the substantial increase in student intake from post-tsunami Aceh. Unlike Egypt, where half of Indonesia's 34 provinces are represented by regional student associations, the only province with a regional student association in Turkey is Aceh.

OBSERVING THE DISORDER FIRST-HAND

Over the last five years, Indonesian students in Egypt and Turkey have been exposed to perhaps the most febrile period in the Middle East's history since World War II. From the fall of regimes in the Arab uprisings to the rise of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, these events left a clear impression on most of the students we interviewed, albeit to differing degrees.

In January 2011 Egypt became the second country after Tunisia to experience the Arab uprisings. Massive street protests eventually led to the ousting of long-serving Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in events that in some ways echoed the fall of the Suharto regime in Indonesia in 1998 (although many of the Indonesian students in Egypt when Mubarak fell would have been too young to make a direct comparison). The uprising created new political players and resulted in a dramatically more open — and more chaotic — political environment. But it also empowered old players, most notably the Muslim Brotherhood, which won the period's parliamentary and presidential elections. Egypt's brief experience with democracy was, however, brought to an end by a coup led by the then military chief Abdel Fattah el-Sisi against President Mohamed Morsi from the Muslim Brotherhood. The coup exploited growing fears, including among pro-democracy activists, that the Muslim Brotherhood was using its elected position in an anti-democratic grab for power.

Events in Turkey over the same period were far less dramatic than those in Egypt. Nevertheless the country also suffered a period of political unrest that raised questions about the role of Islam, and Islamists, in politics. For decades, Turkish Islamists had sought to carve out political space in Turkey's avowedly secular politics. Forced to repeatedly reinvent themselves, not least because they were frequently banned from politics or arrested, Turkish Islamists in the form of the AKP finally won the right to form a government in 2002.

Since then the AKP has consolidated its hold on power, repeatedly winning elections. More recently it has gained notoriety for directly targeting its secular opponents in the military, media, and bureaucracy. This in turn has revived old arguments about the ultimate aims of Islamist parties that pursue electoral and gradualist paths to power

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(although the AKP has denied ever being an Islamist party). Indonesian students in Turkey witnessed the ongoing conflict between the AKP and the secular establishment at first hand. In mid-2013 those tensions flared into large-scale protests beginning in Istanbul's Gezi Park and eventually spreading nationwide. While not as threatening to AKP rule as the protests that forced Mubarak from power in Egypt, the Gezi Park protests and Erdoğan's tough response caused a serious, if temporary, political crisis and reinforced perceptions of what some described as Erdoğan's creeping authoritarianism.¹⁴

Indonesian students also saw — although from a greater distance — the rise of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Indeed, a small number of Indonesian students studying in Egypt and Turkey travelled to Syria to join Islamic State. Formed by some of the Sunni jihadists that fought the United States in Iraq in the mid-2000s, Islamic State used the uprising against the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria to revive its fortunes, drawing new members to its ranks, and filling its coffers with war booty and its armouries with captured weapons. In mid-2014 it announced itself to the world by capturing Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul, and seizing a swathe of territory from north-western Iraq. It signalled its pan-Islamic ambition by declaring a restoration of the Caliphate in the territory that it now controlled.

Simply being present in the Middle East at this time of ferment exposed Indonesian students to the debates and discussions surrounding these developments much more so than would have been the case had they been in Indonesia. This is particularly the case with respect to events in Egypt and Turkey, and somewhat less the case with respect to the rise of Islamic State, which has received more widespread coverage in Indonesia.

According to a number of our interviewees in Egypt, students were actively discouraged from anything that might be construed as political activism, including attending demonstrations, by both the Indonesian Embassy and the Egyptian State Security. Indeed, the educational attaché at the Indonesian Embassy in Cairo seemed to have a strong relationship with the students. By contrast, in Turkey monitoring and contact seemed less effective, not least because the students were in smaller groups and spread more widely across the country.

Many of the students in Egypt had direct experience of the pervasiveness of the Egyptian internal security service, particularly after the coup. As one student noted:

“Foreigners aren't allowed to interfere in Egyptian affairs. Your SMSs are being read, foreigners are monitored now. Before, if there was a knock on the door, you opened it and the military was there because they suspected something in the house. We don't have equipment that fancy in Indonesia.”¹⁵

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Another student recounted:

“Intelligence is all over the place, it’s extraordinary. Right after my colleague and I were elected as president and vice president of [the Indonesian Student Association], first thing in the morning there’s a phone call. *Assalamualaikum*. ‘Who are you?’ Then the intelligence language comes out. *Later at 11 am, you come to my office*. [I said], ‘What’s going on? Who are you?’ *You just show up here, at this address, you come to the bus terminal and somebody will meet you*. I was alarmed. How did they know that the night before we’d been elected?”¹⁶

Despite these admonitions to stay away from any activity that might be construed as political, our interviews suggest that some Indonesian students did indeed participate in political protests in both Turkey and Egypt. One Indonesian student in Turkey attending a Gülen college on scholarship related how they were instructed to attend rallies against the AKP. The Gülen movement, once a supporter of the AKP, has had a spectacular falling out with the ruling party and has been in conflict with it, including through regular street protests.¹⁷

In Egypt, several interviewees said that a few Indonesian students had attended pro-Brotherhood rallies, including the demonstrations outside the Rabaa al-Adawiya Mosque in Cairo. The Rabaa protest culminated in a confrontation between Egyptian security forces and protestors that saw between 600 and 2500 protestors killed. No Indonesians were killed or injured in the protests and it appears any visits by students that took place were probably fleeting.

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A number of students in Egypt also attended lectures with local Islamic preachers and intellectuals outside their classes at al-Azhar. One student recalled lectures to students affiliated with Muhammadiyah by Najih Ibrahim, the ideologue of the Egyptian Islamist group al-Gamaa al-Islamiyyah. This group fought a violent campaign against the Egyptian regime in the 1990s. Following its military defeat, some of the group’s key thinkers, including Ibrahim, led a reassessment and recanting of the group’s violent past.

In some cases, choosing to study with a religious scholar was not just a function of their religious knowledge. As one female student recounted:

“We study with Sheikh ‘Alaa. He is closest to foreigners, especially from Indonesia and Malaysia. People who live in Alexandria get jealous, because there are very few Indonesians there, but he bonds with us. Almost everyone is invited to converse, almost every day there’s a study session, we have *hadroh* [Islamic music], *nasyid* [Islamic songs]. And that’s why, if you go to Alex for a break, after exams, it’s really crowded. Spiritual refreshing, we call it, ha ha. The reason we like Sheikh

'Alaa? Because he's, well, if you saw him, you'd fall in love, ha ha ha. Handsome, smiles a lot and, wow, he's sooo tall!'¹⁸

Despite these interactions with local people, the impression we gained from these interviews was that activities within the Indonesian community, particularly through student organisations, became the main form of social life, and communication through social media took on heightened importance. For example, according to our interviewees, Indonesian students in Egypt had an intense and at times heated debate about the merits or otherwise of the coup against President Morsi. But this debate was held almost entirely within the Indonesian student community, including on its Facebook page. One Indonesian remarked that she had more interaction with people from different parts of Indonesia in Egypt than she ever had at home, even though most students are grouped in regional associations and often live with others of the same ethnic group.¹⁹

Language seemed to be a significant barrier for some of the students. Even the Indonesian students at al-Azhar seemed to have inadequate language preparation, often not enough to understand lectures in class. According to some of our interviewees, a number of students simply gave up going to lectures. Instead, they choose to study with scholars who spoke in dialects closer to Modern Standard Arabic, the formal, literary form of the Arabic language that the Indonesian students would have first learned, rather than in the more colloquial Egyptian dialect.

PERCEPTIONS OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

One striking commonality in many of the interviews was the perception of cultural differences between Egypt and Turkey and Indonesia. This is important because in many cases it seemed to have a direct bearing on the extent to which students saw the events they were witnessing in the Middle East as applicable or relevant to Indonesia.

A number of the students interviewed saw the locals, particularly in Egypt and to a lesser extent in Turkey, as argumentative and conflict-prone. Of the 29 students interviewed in Egypt, eight mentioned this in their interviews. In these students' view, it was these characteristics that encouraged violence in the Middle East, and therefore required a strong, even authoritarian, ruler. By contrast, they saw themselves, and Indonesian culture, as softer and less confrontational.

One student in Cairo, when asked why the Indonesian transition to democracy was relatively successful while the Egyptian one was not, said, laughing:

"Because they're Arabs! In Algeria before, how many FIS [Islamic Salvation Front] were killed, after the coup d'état by the military? In ten months, 250 people died. There were all those demonstrations when security forces shot them. FIS was

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patient, then they took revenge. Then the military fought back. They both took revenge. That's Arabs for you. Look at Syria. Bashar al-Assad only killed ten, twenty. Then the opposition took up arms, right? Ya, Arabs. We easterners, we're different."²⁰

Another agreed:

"We from the East are more accepting, calmer, easier to make peace. Here if you seek vengeance, you go all the way, because Arabs by nature are more violent. Pak Hosni Mubarak only stepped down after 18 days of protests, whereas Suharto stepped down after three."²¹

And as one student argued:

"Egyptians are very easy to provoke. Two people can be talking among themselves about Morsi, then others jump in and interrupt. It happens on the tram or the train. Even though they don't know one another, when they're standing next to each other and don't have the same opinion, they just jump in. Sometimes it even becomes physical. After observing the culture and characters of the Arab people, I support the use of military in transition. Only the Prophet can control the Arabs; if not the Prophet, then at least the military!"²²

One student in Turkey contrasted Indonesia's 'unity in diversity' motto with Turkey's approach, which in their view was to eliminate differences.

"Turkey is a strange country. They wiped everything out here and then said, 'We're the Turkish nation' whereas in fact it's a mixture of many elements — central Asian, European, Arab — but they're told to say we are Turks. Read their civic education books, that's what it says. That's what was planted by Atatürk."²³

Another noted the resentment bred by 'Türkçülük', the assimilation policy of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

"Turks forced Kurds to become Turkish, to speak and dress like Turks. They had to speak Turkish even though they had their own Kurdish language. Erdoğan abandoned that, he won over the Kurds by saying, 'We're brothers in Islam. Okay, I'm a Turk and you're a Kurd, but we're both Muslims'."²⁴

In comparing themselves favourably with Egypt and Turkey, the Indonesian students had a tendency to downplay the violence that accompanied their own country's transitions, conveniently ignoring as many as half a million deaths in 1965; perhaps over one thousand in May 1998; some 6000 in the conflicts in Ambon and Poso that erupted shortly after President Soeharto stepped down; and thousands more in

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the conflicts in Ambon, Poso, Aceh, and Kalimantan.²⁵ Asked about the difference between the military's role in Indonesia and Egypt, a student explained:

“When [President] Sukarno resigned, how many died? Not many. When [President] Soeharto resigned, how many died? Not many. In Indonesia the leadership is relaxed. When Morsi resigned, 600 people died. It's their nature.”²⁶

ATTITUDES TO DEMOCRACY

Student attitudes to key events that they witnessed in Egypt and Turkey seemed to be partly informed by their existing political outlooks and backgrounds. Students from PKS backgrounds were, for example, mostly hostile to the military takeover in Egypt, which is unsurprising given the close affiliation between PKS and the Muslim Brotherhood. All of the PKS students interviewed supported Morsi and argued that bringing down a legitimate president was wrong. But only one NU student was willing to argue that for the sake of democratic principles, Morsi should have been allowed to continue.

What was particularly interesting was the limited role that religion seemed to play in informing students' views of events in the region.

What was particularly interesting was the limited role that religion seemed to play in informing students' views of events in the region. For example, despite the fact that many of the non-PKS students came from Islamic activist backgrounds, they had little compunction backing the military in its conflict with the overtly religious Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

For some students, Morsi's lack of success in delivering results was a clear factor in his failure. As one student noted:

“Morsi was given a year, but he didn't do anything. He couldn't overcome the economic problems, prices were still high then. He focused more on Palestine than Egypt. Egyptians resented it. It's logical that there were protests. I don't take sides in these matters but it was the people who voted for him and the people too who brought him down. That's why the Indonesian ambassador said, in a democracy, the people are the supreme leader, I become president because of the people, and the people have the right to bring me down because they chose me.”²⁷

For other students, Morsi's fault lay in moving too quickly, while placing the Brotherhood's interests above those of the nation.

“Morsi's major weakness was that he tried to change the state's constitution. He wanted to establish sharia in less than a year. The Muslim Brotherhood said they wanted to work through a democratic path, but in reality, they tended to obey orders from the organisation. They put the interests of the Muslim

Brotherhood above the public's. They couldn't create a policy that served all elements of society; they just obeyed what the Murshid [General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood] said."²⁸

Perceptions of Morsi's faults among some students were mirrored by the view of other students of President Erdoğan's strengths. A number of the students believed, for example, that the Turkish president succeeded by putting economic development before the more controversial Islamist agenda.

"People understand there have been changes, they can see the difference. One man told me a story. In the past, we paid taxes and bad schools remain bad. Nobody knew where our tax money went. Now look at Erdoğan. He built new schools from our tax money. There was a student who supported the AKP. Then he told me about Erdoğan, how he used tax money for development. People became involved through public facilities and transparency, that's what people loved about him."²⁹

Others noted the importance of Erdoğan's gradual approach.

"The Brotherhood in Egypt is the origin of the Brotherhood all over the world. Here [in Egypt] it tried to rise up too quickly. It's different in Turkey. Erdoğan himself is part of the Brotherhood. But he plays a slow game. So before Erdoğan dug in his claws, he'd developed Turkey and made the people prosperous. So that was okay. In Egypt nothing yet had happened, they went straight ahead and changed everything."³⁰

Another student explained:

"I think [Erdoğan] is doing it in stages. The first thing he did was to develop Turkey. Then he'd Islamise [the country]. The Turks are actually really secular. But there are still people who are fanatical about religion. When Erdoğan started to reveal his Islamic agenda, he began by choosing a wife who was a Kurd. The Kurds are symbolic of fanatical Islam. Then his wife offered to give prizes to anyone who wore a hijab, they'd be given a prize, the first few people. So, those [religious] fanatics, immediately idolised Erdoğan. 'Our leader, he's got a plan, and he loves Islam. And he's clean.' Those were plus points for the fanatics. The secularists — and we know that inside every secularist there's a religious side that's just waiting to grow — when they saw the progress Erdoğan had made, and how good he was religiously, they wanted to be like him. So he turned his gaze from the fanatics to the ordinary people."³¹

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STRONG DEMOCRACY OR STRONG LEADER?

In general, most students expressed support for democracy. One PKS student said the lessons he learned from watching Egypt's political path was that democracy was the best tool by far in Indonesia, and that he and other Indonesians had to protect and value it.³² By and large, the experience of studying in Egypt and Turkey seemed to reinforce the students' conviction that Islam and democracy in their own country could and should co-exist, and it was not necessary to formally apply Islamic law.

"If we consider sharia as formal law, it's as though we're forced to obey it, it's a burden for us. In fact, it is, but in essence much of sharia law is in accordance with the needs of mankind. If we understand that sharia is what we need, then people won't feel that they are forced to implement it. That's how I see it."³³

Another student insisted that Islamic law could only be applied in full under conditions of greater material equality.

"You can't just apply *hudud* [the criminal justice provisions of Islamic law] willy-nilly. For example, I'm a thief and steal a few things, there are standards in Islam. It doesn't mean that if I steal a watch, my hand is immediately cut off. A state can apply *hudud* if people are prosperous, if their salaries are high. But if everyone's equal and their needs are met, then why would anyone steal?"³⁴

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But support for democracy was also allied to, and to some degree overshadowed by, support for strong leaders. Indonesian students in both Egypt and Turkey expressed admiration for President Erdoğan because he represented both strength and popular support. Students saw Erdoğan's firmness as the key reason Turkey has become stronger and more prosperous in the past decade. Of the 47 students interviewed in both countries, 17 saw Erdoğan as a role model. As one student remarked:

"There is no leader like him in Southeast Asia. Turkey nowadays is under threat. Countries around Turkey have fallen. Palestine, Syria, Iran, and now all eyes are on Turkey. If it has no leader like Erdoğan who is strong as a rock, it would be difficult."³⁵

Some students in Turkey thought that a little more Erdoğan-style toughness in Indonesia might get more results than messy democracy has thus far.

"There are positive examples from Turkey for Indonesia, such as prioritising the development of infrastructure and facilities. When that's done, it makes life easy for people. Even if it means using a little force. In Indonesia, facilities and infrastructure are a problem. Even clearing the land is problematic. But it would be

difficult to apply such a strategy in Indonesia because we're used to freedom, that was what Reformasi was all about. Reform means freedom. That's what people think. But where's that freedom going?"³⁶

A majority of students in both countries were also willing to tolerate crackdowns on civil liberties, up to a point. Even if some disapproved of Erdoğan's quickness to arrest his enemies, they still saw him as the best choice available for Turkey. Several students who supported the military coup against Morsi argued that sacrificing individual rights for the greater good was legitimate and had a long-established history in Islam.

"Not all coups are bad. Some coups protect lives, they solve problems. In Islamic history, we've had more than 30 coups. In Egypt, it's been like that, too. The Mamluks were overthrown by the Fatimids, [who] were overthrown by Ayyubids. The last one was King Farouk. So coups are normal. *Al-ghalabah*, that's what we call them. They're a tool. As long as the tool is useful, we can use it. In a situation of peace and harmony, we can't use it, because power should change hands peacefully. But when we have a situation of *al-munazah* or conflict — and when Morsi was in charge, it generated conflict — then you can't use democracy. Instead you use *al-ghalabah*, the principle that the strongest rules."³⁷

Nevertheless, some of the students expressed concerns about the growing authoritarianism of a leader they admired. President Erdoğan's growing crackdown on opposition came up reasonably frequently in interviews. As one student noted:

"Erdoğan was great in the beginning, he was truly committed to democracy and supported by all levels of society, especially devout Muslims. But now in 2015 he is losing his democratic credentials. He's beginning to look like a dictator. He's had two terms. He was perfect during his first term, from the perspective of the development of Islam, development of the economy, development of infrastructure. He proved Turkey could be strong. If it weren't for him, Turkey would be like Egypt. But he's become like a dictator, he wants absolute power, he won't tolerate criticism. A high school student criticised him and got arrested."³⁸

Students thought freedom of expression in Indonesia was better than what they witnessed in Egypt and Turkey. A student at al-Azhar noted:

"In terms of freedom of opinion, it's not free here. In fact, there was an ultimatum from [Egyptian] State Security that you couldn't differ on issues of politics. If [the Indonesian Student Association] is planning an event, we have to report to State Security. Here there are real restrictions on political opinion. A

...students in both countries were also willing to tolerate crackdowns on civil liberties, up to a point.

lot of students don't like the current government but they stay quiet. We just use facial expressions. It's a sensitive topic to discuss and not just with Egyptians. Because we never know who's for and who's against, so we have to be careful."³⁹

Likewise in Turkey, a student commented:

"I think Indonesia is more democratic. In terms of the freedom to express your opinions, anyone can say what they want. It's not like that here. When it comes to religion, people here tend to do as they're told, they're not very critical."⁴⁰

ATTITUDES TO RELIGION AND SOCIETY

Of the 29 students interviewed in Egypt, nine saw Indonesia as less religiously tolerant than Egypt. One was astounded that Indonesian Muslims wearing headscarves would be welcomed into Coptic churches. Indonesian students in Egypt were surprised that despite what they saw as their greater piety, Egyptians were very relaxed about differences in dress, prayer, and schools of thought within Islam — more so than Indonesians.

"Here people understand differences in a wiser way, especially at al-Azhar, because we discuss how these differences emerged. No one makes a big deal of it, we know this is imam A, this is imam B. It's not like that in Indonesia. Differences over *qunut* [a prayer recited while standing] can cause debates that lead to fights. In Indonesia, there are differences over Idul Fitri [the religious holiday that marks the end of Ramadan]. Muhammadiyah says one thing, NU says another. Not here. Here there is a determination on the end of Ramadan, so when they make a ruling, everyone has to follow it. Here there's more religious knowledge and people are used to differences."⁴¹

As another student noted:

"Everyone in Egypt gets along. It's fine between different schools of thought (*mazhab*). In Indonesia, if you differ only slightly in your prayers, they glare at you. Here we pray in our ordinary clothes, no problem. In Indonesia, they'd say, 'How dare you not wear a *mukena*! [a white cotton covering used by women for praying]'. As long as you cover yourself, no problem. It's better here, more flexible. People aren't as quick to judge."⁴²

One Indonesian in Cairo was particularly startled to see Sunni and Shia praying in the same mosque, even though in separate areas.

"The Shia in Egypt are in a place known as Babul Futuh. I once went there around sunset one evening. They have their own area for praying. Among Sunnis, Wahhabis, there's no

[Students] were surprised that ... Egyptians were very relaxed about differences in dress, prayer, and schools of thought within Islam...

difference, but the Shia have their own *shaf* [separate line of prayer]. There's no problem to be together in the same mosque. If it were us, maybe a war would erupt. But here it's normal. Maybe Shias feel that the mosque is their heritage too."⁴³

According to a number of Indonesian students in Egypt, the idea of accommodating differences was repeatedly stressed at al-Azhar University.

"Because al-Azhar is moderate, the material taught here is moderate too, not just from one group. In Islamic law [*fiqh*], they teach all schools of thought. I had a friend who was close-minded, so when she sees things that don't match her beliefs, she gets uncomfortable and claims they are *haram* [forbidden] and no good. Now she's a little better, maybe because of *talaqqi* [off-campus discussion groups], which is popular now. She's become more flexible in her thinking."⁴⁴

Another agreed:

"Al-Azhar takes all kinds of people here: there are Wahhabis, Ikhwanis [Muslim Brotherhood], from all over the world. Even Shia people. The important thing is Islam. For Indonesia, there are people from NU, Muhammadiyah, PKS, and so forth. Most of them have absorbed the teachings of al-Azhar. They come to a kind of understanding and become moderate. That's why we could hold the joint celebration of the Prophet's birthday [traditionally rejected by Muhammadiyah as *bid'ah*, an unwarranted innovation]. The leadership of Muhammadiyah here is totally used to this. But they still have to ask permission from the Muhammadiyah organisation [in Jakarta], can we do this or not. It was permitted, as it happened."⁴⁵

In Turkey, by contrast, the extent of secularism was a revelation to many of the Indonesian students; some were shocked that few people prayed. As one student recounted:

"We thought all the women would be wearing headscarves, just like in Aceh. And because there were no headscarves, we thought everyone was a tourist! Then it turned out they were all Turks."⁴⁶

But some Indonesian students also seemed taken aback by the exclusivism of the different Islamic organisations they saw in Turkey. To some, these organisations seemed more akin to cults, with total obedience to the leaders, than to the civil society organisations they were used to at home. One student explained:

"*Jemaat* are like mass organisations. There's the *jemaat* of Fethullah Gülen, the *jemaat* of Nuri and so forth. And for the most part, they all hate each other. Well, the Gülen *jemaat*

...the extent of secularism [in Turkey] was a revelation to many of the Indonesian students...

doesn't hate the rest, but everyone hates Gülen. I even had a teacher, he was a member of the Nur *jemaat*, he found out I was staying in the house of this [Gülen] *jemaat*. Now when I greet him with 'Assalamualaikum', he doesn't answer."⁴⁷

Several students remarked on how members of a *jemaat* seemed to blindly follow their leader.

"The bad thing is that people who don't know much about anything tend to idolise the *ustad* [teacher] too much. I'm not defending the Hizmet [the unofficial name of the Gülen movement], but why don't they read books that other people have written, not just one book, by Fethullah Gülen? So, for example, there's a video with Hoja Effendi [nickname for Fethullah Gülen] giving a sermon, and it even had the Turkish people crying."⁴⁸

ATTITUDES TO ISLAMIC STATE

The rise of Islamic State was another key regional development that was discussed with Indonesian students in Egypt and Turkey. In Indonesia the movement has gained a small following among extremist groups. None of the students interviewed, however, expressed support for the group. One young student in Turkey, whose friend joined Islamic State and was later killed, had, however, once given serious consideration to joining himself.

A number of arguments were used by the students in condemning the actions of Islamic State. These included that Islamic State was pitting Muslim against Muslim, that its violence was hurting the image of Islam, and that the group was misrepresenting the opinions of well-known scholars to support its interpretation of Islamic law. As one al-Azhar student said:

"You don't just shoot, 'You're a Shia' — bang! You have to understand a lot before you apply sharia, it isn't as easy as some people think. [My teacher at al-Azhar] said that *hudud* laws were designed not to be applied but rather to deter people from committing the crimes or never do them again. None of the *ulama* [Islamic scholars] who understand this agree with Islamic State."⁴⁹

"You have to understand a lot before you apply sharia, it isn't as easy as some people think."

Another student in Egypt said: "If we are against fellow Muslims, it is not jihad. It degrades the meaning of jihad."⁵⁰

The burning to death of a Jordanian pilot by Islamic State in January 2015, just two months before these interviews took place, was seen as particularly egregious. A student in Turkey noted:

“Islamic State is hardline; it kills and destroys anything that doesn’t conform to its way of thinking. There isn’t any group that isn’t angry with them. The angriest of all are the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah. And the Wahhabis don’t like Islamic State either, despite being hardline themselves. It’s obvious they’re damaging the image of Islam. You’re not allowed to punish or kill someone by burning them. Even when you slaughter an animal, you have to do it with a sharp knife. For example, if a Shia kills someone, the punishment is *qisas* [retaliation]. That’s Islamic law. But there are rules about that too. His eyes must be closed, and he must be shot right in the heart. That [burning the pilot] was torture.”⁵¹

Very few of the students interviewed in either Turkey or Egypt showed any in-depth understanding of the Syrian conflict. For most it was a sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims. Of the 47 students interviewed, 16 (including Muhammadiyah and NU students) were convinced that the United States had either started the Syrian conflict or created Islamic State to divide or destroy Islam. As one student explained:

“I don’t really understand what’s going on. But basically, there are people who want to set up an Islamic state, which others, like America, are using for their interests and supporting with weapons and cash. America’s interest is to destroy Islam. If Islamic State is under its control, it will divide the Islamic world. Even if Islamic State controls Syria, and declares itself an Islamic Caliphate, many [Muslims] don’t agree. And ultimately, there will be war, Muslim against Muslim, and Islam will be destroyed.”⁵²

A student in Egypt gave a similar argument:

“Bashar al-Assad is being helped by the president of Iran because he shares their faith. The Sunnis don’t have anyone to defend them. So America comes and says we’re going to defend the Sunnis. But use your brain; is it possible that someone who doesn’t share our religion, our beliefs, is going to defend us, especially when in one respect they’re our enemy? No, there has to be a motive. Iran is helping Syria, and it turns out Iran is a friend of Russia and China. America doesn’t want to be left behind so they invite the United Kingdom, Germany, and France. If we look at the strategic location, we see that [the area Islamic State controls] produces oil and America wants military bases there. America can easily crush Islamic State. That’s why for Arabs, Islamic State is ‘made in America’. If you look at their arms, all of them are from America. The aim is to divide us; that’s always been [American] policy.”⁵³

“America’s interest is to destroy Islam. If Islamic State is under its control, it will divide the Islamic world.”

Students were also asked about their attitudes towards Islamic State's self-declared 'Caliphate'. None of those interviewed expressed their support for it or thought it legitimate. What was significant, however, were the arguments used by those Indonesian students studying at al-Azhar University in Egypt. It was clear from the similarity in their responses that they had received detailed and in some cases quite legalistic arguments from their teachers about why the establishment of a Caliphate was wrong. Indeed the counter-messaging to Islamic State at al-Azhar seemed to be systematic and effective in terms of convincing Indonesian students of the Caliphate's illegitimacy. As one student noted:

"In terms of a Caliphate, the question is how it's formed. Re the state, what form it takes and how it's formed. And re Islamic law, is anyone who doesn't apply it automatically a *kaffir* [a non-Muslim]? The other day our Shekh at Azhar explained it really well. He said it's really problematic how Islamic State applies Islamic law. To apply sharia, he said, you have to have *ulama* [Islamic scholars] and who among *ulama* whose credibility is recognised wants to live with Islamic State? So far, no one."⁵⁴

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Of some 400 Indonesians who have travelled to Syria and Iraq to join Islamic State or other extremist groups, only four are known to have come from the Indonesian student cohort in the Middle East, although others may have slipped through. It was clear from our interviews that in both Egypt and Turkey, the Indonesian embassies and the schools attended by Indonesian students were taking steps to discourage students from joining the Syrian conflict. Several students brought up the case of Muhammad Rizqi Utama, a student from West Java who tried to cross into Syria to deliver aid. He was prevented from doing so by Turkish authorities and then was stopped by Egyptian authorities in Cairo airport when they saw the Turkish stamp in his passport. He was immediately deported. The lesson the Indonesian students drew from that incident was that if you went to Turkey or Syria, you would not be allowed to re-enter Egypt.

The Turkish Government stance does not appear to have been as unambiguously hardline as that of the Egyptian Government. Nevertheless, when two Indonesian students left their studies at Imam Hatip school in Kayseri and a technical institute in Izmir to join Islamic State, the reaction was swift. The school summoned all students to a special assembly, warned them against leaving to join Islamic State, and collected all their passports for safekeeping until they were due to go home.

Even with all of these measures — concerned embassies, vigilant schools, strict governments, and an environment that was generally hostile to Islamic extremism — the fact that the two students left secretly for Syria is a reminder of how powerful Islamic State's appeal can be. It

is also a story of missed cues. Friends were aware that the two were unhappy, disillusioned, and angry at school. They were also aware of some changes in behaviour, including an obsession with Islamic State videos. Yet they still did not suspect that the two would actually join the group.⁵⁵

THE STORY OF YAZID AND BAGUS

Yazid Ulwan Falahuddin alias Abu Zeyd, from Surabaya, and Wijangga Bagus Panulat, known as Bagus, from Temanggung, near Solo, had both attended a Turkish–Indonesian junior high boarding school in Semarang, Central Java. The school, called Semesta, is one of ten in Indonesia run by PASIAD. Semesta specialises in maths, science, and computer training, with instruction in English and Indonesian, and Yazid and Bagus had been star students.

In 2009, when Bagus was 15, he was offered a scholarship to continue his studies in Turkey. Yazid got the same offer in 2010. They accepted, thinking this was an opportunity to deepen their focus on maths and science. Instead, they found themselves at Imam Hatip school in Kayseri, a religious school run by the Turkish Government where 75 per cent of the curriculum was devoted to Islam and the focus was on preparing students to become imams. There were no Turks among the 500 students; all were internationals. One student said that Indonesians felt they had been tricked and brought to Turkey under false pretences, and they hated it. It did not help that some residents of Kayseri were less than friendly towards foreigners and thought the Indonesians were Chinese.⁵⁶

Fellow Indonesians who knew the two students at Semesta said from the beginning that Yazid and Bagus had been the quiet ones in their original group of 20. They were withdrawn, rarely socialised, and Yazid in particular liked to play video games that involved shooting. They were not diligent about daily worship and often slept through dawn prayers. Yazid, whose friends said he was a computer whiz, spent most of his waking time online. “His life was internet café, bedroom, laptop, handphone, that’s it,” said one classmate.⁵⁷

Bagus resented the control that the school and the Gülen *jemaat* — which later gave him a university scholarship — tried to exert over their lives. According to a friend:

“There were lots of activities around reading books [written by Gülen], reading the Quran. Bagus didn’t want to take part, so he was threatened by the *jemaat*. ‘If you don’t take part, we won’t pay your ticket back to Indonesia.’ He said, ‘Doesn’t matter.’ That’s what he was like. He was really good to his friends. But with someone he didn’t know well, who tried to control his life, then he didn’t like it, to the point that he actively opposed it.

They were withdrawn, rarely socialised, and Yazid in particular liked to play video games that involved shooting.

Another time when we were still at Imam Hatip, there was an announcement that we couldn't keep food [in the dormitory rooms]. The school head said it was a regulation from the government. We had Indonesian food there as well as medicine from our mothers, chocolate, all sorts of things. We returned to our dormitory and found that everything had been thrown out. Food that we hadn't touched had been thrown out. Bagus was really angry, more angry than I'd ever seen him. The next day there was a mysterious flyer with a warning to the school head. 'Does Islam teach us to be wasteful?' He wrote at length about the errors made by the head of school and questioned whether we should obey someone like that. He made all these insults, then urged us to boycott classes. At first we didn't know who was behind it. Once it became known that it was Bagus, he didn't care."⁵⁸

In terms of school work, both Yazid and Bagus were seen as extremely smart but lazy and unmotivated — a fellow student said they would stay away from school for two weeks at a time. Then, in their last year at Imam Hatip in 2013, both boys became very serious about studying Arabic, and Yazid joined a physical fitness centre. Yazid once spent two hours visiting a Syrian charity booth in Kayseri, asking many questions about the conflict. During the summer break, the Indonesian students were given tickets to return home. Yazid went back to Surabaya and seems to have made contact with a pro-Islamic State group there. When he returned in September, he gave an article to his friends about how it was permissible to wage jihad without one's parents' permission. He began posting Islamic videos of atrocities against Muslims on his Facebook page. Even so, none of his friends thought that he was serious about going to Syria. In December, he sent a message to his mother by phone, saying he was taking an SAT test and asking if she could send him money. She sent about 4 million rupiah (US\$295). Shortly afterwards, Yazid left for Syria.

When his friend's couldn't find Yazid at the dormitory, they thought he was sleeping at an internet café, as usual.⁵⁹ For three months, no one heard from him. Then he came back online after finishing military training in Syria, urging his friends to come too. His posts were all about how good the life was. The food was great, with lots of horse meat kebab. You had to pay \$100 to 'register' but then after training you got \$60 a month. He was initially assigned to guard duty.⁶⁰

Bagus had always intended to go as well. In November 2013 he graduated from Imam Hatip and moved to Izmir, where he took the entry exam for the Izmir Institute of Technology and was accepted. In February 2014, it became clear from his Twitter account that he was considering trying to go to Syria, but still had doubts. He made a trip back to Kayseri to see friends from Imam Hatip, who joked about what a silly decision Yazid had made by joining Islamic State.

...it became clear from his Twitter account that [Bagus] was considering trying to go to Syria, but still had doubts.

After returning to Izmir, Bagus told a close friend that he wanted to go and needed to sell his laptop and phone. His friend wondered at the time whether he should report it to someone but in the end said nothing. He wondered if one reason Bagus decided to leave was that he realised he had fallen so far behind in his studies that it would be difficult to catch up. Bagus left the Institute at the beginning of the second semester. Asked if frustration at school might have pushed him to look for an alternative, the friend said:

“He never spoke to me about that, but I think it must have been something like that. There were other factors, he couldn’t go to school, he had difficulties with his studies, his social circle was limited. The friends he liked most had dispersed to other cities.”⁶¹

In March 2014, Bagus decided to ask his mother for permission to go to Syria (his father had died when he was little). His mother refused. According to his friend in Izmir:

“He didn’t get permission, but that’s all he said, so I advised him to forget about it. You can do jihad here by studying, I told him. So for a week, everything was normal, we played games, watched Japanese and Korean dramas together. When Yazid came back online, however, he and Bagus were in constant contact. Yazid would give him verses from the Quran. He’d tell Bagus to read about jihad. Bagus would read, Yazid would explain. He only wanted to listen to Yazid. Then Yazid would share videos with lectures about jihad.”⁶²

Eventually, Bagus made up his mind to leave. Sometime in April, he left by bus for Urfa and was met there through a contact arranged by Yazid. He crossed into Syria, had a month of military training, and then took up guard duty in different places, never in the same place as Yazid.

For about a year, he stayed in contact with his friends in Turkey. In February 2015, he sent a message to a friend in Izmir that he was getting married. It was the last message to reach Turkey. On 30 April, Bagus was killed, apparently in battle.

In the case of Yazid and Bagus, their friends had ample warning that they were interested in joining Islamic State but they were not sure how or whether to report it to anyone. This suggests that both the Indonesian embassies, working with schools where Indonesians are studying, could usefully put in place a system where students could register concerns anonymously about fellow students planning to join, or feeling pressure to join, in a way that would trigger a non-punitive counselling process. The educational attachés in both countries seemed to be doing a good job of warning students about the consequences of joining, but in this case, an anonymous hotline might have helped. The warning issued by the Turkish school to students after Bagus and Yazid left should also

In the case of Yazid and Bagus, their friends had ample warning that they were interested in joining Islamic State but they were not sure how or whether to report it to anyone.

become a regular practice in Indonesian schools as well as those abroad to deter future students from following in their footsteps.

It is also significant that even though the crossing points into Islamic State-controlled territory are on the Turkish border, Yazid had to go back to Surabaya to get the relevant contacts. Islamic State requires a reference from someone already in Syria, and Yazid apparently lacked one. When he went home, he found the group in East Java that controlled the sending network, got the reference and then once there, recommended Bagus. This suggests that the focus of Indonesian prevention programs still needs to be on the networks at home.

Finally, it is clear that had Bagus and Yazid ended up in a school that had the maths and science courses they expected, they might not have left for Syria. It underscores the need for better information being available to students in Indonesia about the schools and scholarships available abroad.

CONCLUSION

The interviews conducted for this Report provide significant insights into the thinking of a fairly representative sampling of Indonesian students in the Middle East. The fact that most come from mainstream backgrounds is also important. In particular, it is the views of the mainstream that will tell us whether extreme views are gaining wider currency.

Understanding how students from mainstream backgrounds are reacting to events and ideas in the Middle East is also important in the context of suggestions that Indonesian Islam is somehow being Arabised. These interviews suggest that Indonesians living and studying for extended periods in the Middle East by and large adopt a critical attitude to what they see and hear. Nothing is taken to be automatically applicable to Indonesia. In fact, what comes through very clearly is that most Indonesian students are far more conscious of the cultural and political differences between Indonesia and the Middle East, than they are of the similarities.

The interviews did highlight some areas of concern, in particular: the instrumentalist view of democracy held by many of the students; the propensity of some students to view conflict in the Muslim world as the result of a US-led conspiracy; and the difficulty of preventing young vulnerable people from falling victim to the ideas of Islamic State. Indeed, in the case of the latter more work needs to be done by Indonesian authorities to ensure that especially younger Indonesian students are monitored effectively.

Nevertheless, most of what we found in the interviews was encouraging. There was no support for Islamic State or its Caliphate. There was no sense that the failure of the Egyptian uprising and the crushing of the Muslim Brotherhood was causing a reassessment of the value of

...Indonesians living and studying for extended periods in the Middle East by and large adopt a critical attitude to what they see and hear.

peaceful and democratic political participation, including for an Islamist movement such as PKS. Interestingly, despite the fact that many of the students we interviewed were religious students, religion was only one criterion by which they judged political events and leaders, and often not the most important.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly for an age in which Western political leaders still talk loosely and superficially about Islam and Muslims, our interviews with Indonesian students underlined how far off the mark monolithic views of the Islamic faith and its faithful really are.

NOTES

¹ For a full discussion of the issues, see Anthony Bubalo and Greg Fealy, *Joining the Caravan? The Middle East, Islamism and Indonesia*, Lowy Institute Paper No 5 (Double Bay: Longueville Media, 2005).

² See Bubalo and Fealy, *Joining the Caravan? The Middle East, Islamism and Indonesia*.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Jared Owens, "Tony Abbott Calls for Religious Reformation of Islam", *The Australian*, 9 December 2015, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/tony-abbott-calls-for-religious-reformation-of-islam/news-story/de19d671a2dca24610db7fb32a0fef49>.

⁵ The official figure for Egypt as at December 2014 is 3500, but the Indonesian Student Association (Persatuan Pelajar dan Mahasiswa Indonesia (PPMI)) believes that the actual number is between 4500 and 5000: see "Presiden Mesir Jamin Keamanan Mahasiswa Indonesia", *Antara News*, 22 March 2015, <http://www.antaraneews.com/berita/486644/presiden-mesir-jamin-keamanan-mahasiswa-indonesia>. For Yemen, see "Mahasiswa Indonesia yang Dievakuasi dari Yaman Dapat Kelonggaran Selesaikan Kuliah", *Kompas*, 13 April 2015, <http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2015/04/13/08082491/Mahasiswa.Indonesia.ya.ng.Dievakuasi.dari.Yaman.Dapat.Kelonggaran.Selesaikan.Kuliah>. For Saudi Arabia, see Nur Rahmi, "Ratusan Mahasiswa Indonesia di Saudi Dapat Tiket Liburan Gratis", *Miraj News*, 1 July 2015, <http://mirajnews.com/id/ratusan-mahasiswa-indonesia-di-saudi-dapat-tiket-liburan-gratis/77918/>.

⁶ Interview with Students E18-Persis, E19-Persis and E20-PKS.

⁷ Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC) correspondence with Indonesian Student Association (Perhimpunan Pelajar Indonesia (PPI)), Turkey, 14 November 2015. According to the PPI website, there were only a few dozen Indonesians in Turkey before 2005. After the December 2004 tsunami in Aceh, more Indonesian students went to Turkey, thanks to the scholarships provided by various Turkish non-government organisations, including PASIAD (Pacific Countries Social and Economic Solidarity Association), that were involved in the Aceh recovery. See "About Us", www.ppiturki.org, 14 November 2015.

⁸ The ten schools as at November 2015 were Pribadi Depok and Pribadi Bandung in West Java; Kharisma Bangsa in Ciputat, Banten; Semesta in Semarang and Sragen in Central Java; Fatih and Teuku Nyak Arif in Banda Aceh; Kesatuan Bangsa in Yogyakarta; SMAN Banua in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan; and the newest, SMAN 1 in West Sumatra. All are jointly run by PASIAD and a number of local foundations. For example, the Semesta school in Semarang is the result of cooperation between PASIAD and Al-Fatih Foundation Semarang. The schools emphasise science, and all science subjects are taught in English and follow an international curriculum. All other subjects are taught in Indonesian, using the Indonesian national curriculum. Dewi Mulyani, "Pengaruh Kerjasama Pasiad Indonesia dengan Indonesia di Bidang Pendidikan Menengah", *Jurnal Online Mahasiswa Universitas Riau* 2, No 2 (October 2015).

⁹ The students thought they were going to learn at one of Turkey's modern schools, when in fact they were sent to a religious high school in Kayseri. Six students in the first batch decided to leave, while the rest struggled to survive. One student from each batch ended up joining Islamic State in Syria.

¹⁰ Katie Duncan, "Turkey: Government Invests Record Amount in HE Scholarships", *The Pie News*, 13 August 2014, <http://thepienews.com/news/government/turkey/>.

¹¹ "Turkish-Indonesian Partnership Sees Brighter Future", *The Jakarta Post*, 29 October 2014, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/10/29/turkish-indonesian-partnership-sees-brighter-future.html>.

¹² "DPS PI Turki 2015", 15 November 2015, www.kpuppiturki.wordpress.com, and IPAC correspondence with the president of PPI Turkey, 14 November 2015.

¹³ "Histori PPMI dari Masa ke Masa", 8 September 2014, www.ppmimesir.org.

¹⁴ "Mr Erdogan's Authoritarian Creep", *Financial Times*, 6 August 2013, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/5fe674f6-fe98-11e2-b9b0-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3zW8AjkAh>; "Creeping Authoritarianism", Newsbook (blog), *The Economist*, 10 June 2011, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/newsbook/2011/06/turkish-election>.

¹⁵ Interview with Student E1-Nahdlatul Wathan.

¹⁶ Interview with Student E9-NU.

¹⁷ Interview with Student T15-PKS.

¹⁸ Interview with Student E4-PKS.

¹⁹ Interview with Students E4-PKS and E5-PKS.

²⁰ Interview with Student E7-PKS.

²¹ Interview with Student E8-Muhammadiyah.

²² Interview with Student E10-NU.

²³ Interview with Student T2-NU.

²⁴ Interview with Student T11-PKS.

²⁵ The best assessment of the 1965 deaths is *The Indonesian Killings of 1965–1966: Studies From Java and Bali*, ed Robert Cribb (Clayton, Victoria: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990). In May 1998, while the violence was directed against ethnic Chinese, most of the victims were non-Chinese Indonesians shopping in malls that were set on fire. The most detailed study is probably Tim Gabungan Pencari Fakta (TGPF), "Peristiwa Tanggal 13–15 Mei 1998 [Final Report of the Joint Fact-finding Team on the 13–15 May Riots]", which cites figures of a non-government organisation, Tim Relawan, as 1217 deaths in Jakarta and 33 outside Jakarta, with police figures much lower: 451 in Jakarta and 30 outside Jakarta. The most accurate death toll for the conflict in Maluku — about 3257 in North Maluku and another 2793 in Maluku — is in Patrick Barron, Muhammad Najib Azca and Tri Susdinarjanti, *After the Communal War: Understanding and Addressing Post-conflict Violence in Eastern Indonesia* (Yogyakarta, Indonesia: CSPS Books, 2012). For Poso, see David McRae, *A Few Poorly Organised Men: Interreligious Violence in Poso, Indonesia* (Brill, 2013) where he estimates the death toll at about 500.

²⁶ Interview with Student E9-NU.

- ²⁷ Interview with Student E1-Nahdlatul Wathan.
- ²⁸ Interview with Student E17-NU.
- ²⁹ Interview with Student T2-NU.
- ³⁰ Interview with Student E9-NU.
- ³¹ Interview with Student T2-NU.
- ³² Interview with Student E7-PKS.
- ³³ Interview with Student T4-NU.
- ³⁴ Interview with Student E1-Nahdlatul Wathan. Students E21-Muhammadiyah, E14-Muhammadiyah, and E24-PKS also made similar remarks.
- ³⁵ Interview with Student T15-PKS.
- ³⁶ Interview with Student T4-NU.
- ³⁷ Interview with Student E7-PKS.
- ³⁸ Interview with Student T11-PKS.
- ³⁹ Interview with Student E3-PKS.
- ⁴⁰ Interview with Student T4-NU.
- ⁴¹ Interview with Student E12-NU.
- ⁴² Interview with Student E20-PKS.
- ⁴³ Interview with Student E12-NU.
- ⁴⁴ Interview with Student E12-NU.
- ⁴⁵ Interview with Student E9-NU.
- ⁴⁶ Interview with Student T12-unaffiliated.
- ⁴⁷ Interview with Student T11-PKS.
- ⁴⁸ Interview with Student T3-NU.
- ⁴⁹ Interview with Student E14-Muhammadiyah.
- ⁵⁰ Interview with Student E2-Muhammadiyah.
- ⁵¹ Interview with Student T4-NU.
- ⁵² Interview with Student T15-PKS.
- ⁵³ Interview with Student E1-Nahdlatul Wathan.
- ⁵⁴ Interview with Student E14-Muhammadiyah.
- ⁵⁵ Interviews with Students T10 and T12, both unaffiliated.
- ⁵⁶ Interview with Student T10-unaffiliated.
- ⁵⁷ Interview with Student T12-unaffiliated.
- ⁵⁸ Interview with Student T10-unaffiliated.
- ⁵⁹ IPAC interview with an Imam Hatip alumnus in Semarang, 5 April 2015.
- ⁶⁰ Interview with Student T16-NU.
- ⁶¹ Interview with Student T10-unaffiliated.
- ⁶² Interview with Student T10-unaffiliated.

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