

linguistics, political science, sociology, and the broad spectrum of related interfacing, this set of collected papers might prove to be a mine of information that holds some valuable *trouvailles*.

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Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad. Islam, Militancy, and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia*. Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press (Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications (Studies on Southeast Asia, 40), 2006, 220 pp.

The presentation of facts, narration of events, explications of intersections or interfacing, and rigorous diagnosis are accomplished here almost to perfection – except for the flawed ‘Conclusion’.

For the *jihad* in the Moluccas approximately 7,000 fighters of the Holy War Force, *Laskar Jihad* (LJ) volunteers, were deployed to Ambon, beginning 30 April 2000. Their arrival imbued the local Muslim struggle with the spirit of *jihad* and intensified the aggressiveness. This stimulated Christian Moluccans to organize themselves. The commander-in-chief, Thalib, was acknowledged nationally as a hero. The greatest achievement of LJ was perhaps its successful dissemination of propaganda in Bahasa Indonesia and English. *Laskar Jihad Online* became an interactive channel, conveying messages worldwide. The government of President Abdurrahman Wahid sent a combined battalion to Ambon. The decisive attack in Kebun Cengkeh led to the defeat of LJ fighters on 24 June 2001.

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, allegations linking LJ to al Qaeda multiplied. Thalib admitted that he had met with Bin Laden and that a Bin Laden envoy had met him in Ambon. Thalib, however, accused Bin Laden of

being a sectarian (*khariji*), ignorant of proper Islam, thus repeating the harsh criticism of Bin Laden he had published in the journal *Salafy* seven years earlier. *Laskar Jihad Online* published a *fatwa* by the highest Saudi '*ulama*, declaring that Bin Laden deviated from proper Islam because of his rebellion against the Saudi Arabian government. Indonesian government ministers met with representatives of Muslim and Christian parties in Malino, South Sulawesi where, on 12 February 2002, the Second Malino Agreement was signed. Five days after the bombing in Bali, on 12 October 2002, LJ disbanded.

Tracing the evolution of the ideology, the author focuses on the Salafi Islamic propagation movement, *da'wa*, representing the most puritanical sect of Islam, Wahhabism, and its expansion. The Salafis call themselves 'the people of the Prophetic Traditions'. The four main aims of the *Salafi da'wa* are to teach, purify, revive, and disseminate. The Salafis 'believe that the Muslim *umma* failed to avoid various forms of polytheism (*shirk*), reprehensible innovation (*bid'a*), and superstition (*khurafa*)'. Salafi communities multiplied, which led to the emergence of foundations. Beginning in the 1990s, they no longer needed to organize their activities secretly, upon the launching of an official Islamization strategy.

Addressing the antagonism of 'apolitical Salafism' and 'jihadist activism', the author set the theme by stating that 'the jihad discourse among Laskar Jihad fighters exemplifies a successful

amalgamation of doctrinaire-revivalist ideas and a militant battle cry'. The key criteria under deliberation are *tawhid*, 'to accept and believe in the oneness of God and His absolute authority'; *ahl al-Sunna wa'l-jama'a*, the followers of the Sunna of the Prophet and the first generation of Muslims (*Salif al-Salih*); *al-Wala wa'l-bara*, *al-wala* meaning 'to love, support, help, follow, defend' and *al-bara*, meaning 'to despise, desert, denounce'; *hizbiyya*, involvement in partisan politics; and *hakimiyya*, governance belongs to God, owing to God's absolute sovereignty.

Paradoxically, the Salafis accuse the Muslim Brotherhood of being enmeshed in the sins of *bid'a*, reprehensible innovations, especially because of its ambition to unite the Muslim *umma*. The Salafis oppose their rivals' active involvement in partisan politics, *hizbiyya*, for the following reasons: (1) it deviates from the way of faithful Muslims; (2) its leader comes perilously close to the sins of *bid'a*; (3) its members are committed to the doctrine of *al-wala wa'l-bara* on the basis of their loyalty to a particular leader rather than the Qur'an and Sunna; and (4) it teaches fanaticism. The Salafis insist that one devastating result of the *hizbiyya* movement is the spread of a revolutionary spirit among Muslims. A total rejection of democracy distinguishes the Salafis from members of the Muslim Brotherhood and Jama'at-I Islami.

Salafis' inconsistency in their attitudes toward political activism seems unequivocal given the fact that they pio-

neered the call for *jihad* in the Moluccas. Salafis' repudiation of political activism is not an intrinsic part of their ideology, but rather a tactic and strategy. What they mean by *jihad* is clearly an armed war as a manifestation of the completeness of a Muslim's submission to God, which constitutes a higher obligation than the pilgrimage, prayer, or fasting. Given the contemporary scenario, with President Abdurrahman Wahid determined to foster democracy in discord with the military establishment that fanned the conflict rather than smothered it, the Salafis construed an emergency to justify their appointment of a contemporary imam who would unite them. Thus, Thalib had himself appointed leader, thereby disregarding the Salafists' repudiation of any *hizbiyya*, i.e. political partisanship.

The militancy of the Salafist movement is explained as the interfacing of nine factors: (1) the Hadramis' role in the dynamics of Islam in the archipelago; (2) the impact of the *Persatuan Islam* (Persis), a reformist organization established in 1923 whose members engaged in the *Sarekat Islam* (Islamic League, SI), active in criticizing nationalism, communism, and secularism; (3) the biography of the founder of LJ, Thalib, born into a Hadrami family active in al-Irsyad, a modernist Muslim organization of predominantly non-*sayyid* Hadramis, and granted a scholarship, in 1986, to study at the Mawdudi Islamic Institute in Lahore, Pakistan, where he volunteered to join the mujahidin in the Afghan War; (4) Thalib's support of

the *Jama'at al-Da'wa ila al-Qur'an wa Ahl-I Hadith*, a strict Salafi faction and Saudi Arabian 'principality' led by Jamil al-Rahman, which developed the most hostile attitude towards non-Muslims, frequently attacking journalists and humanitarian workers, resorting to iconoclasm, destroying statues and monuments, and attacking local religious practices they considered anathema to Islam; (5) Thalib's appointment, immediately upon his return from Afghanistan, as both the director of and teacher at the *Pesantren al-Irsyad Tenganan*; (6) Thalib's visit to Yemen, in 1990, to deepen his insights into Wahhabi teachings with Muqbil ibn Hadi al-Wadi'i, known as a Salafi ideologue *par excellence*, and then succeeding in gaining support that facilitated the dispatch of hundreds of Indonesian youth to study at the Islamic teaching centers associated with al-Wadi'i; (7) the *Sururiyya* issue, inflamed by Thalib to highlight the conflict between the Salafis and, particularly, the Muslim Brotherhood so as to reinforce his relationships with prominent Salafi authorities in Middle Eastern countries; (8) the wide propagation of the utopian scenario through the periodical *Salafy*; and (9) the network centered in the *Ihyaus Sunnah*, the pesantren established by Thalib in 1994 at Degolan Kaliurang, north of Yogyakarta.

Indonesia's transition to democracy challenged the Salafi movement to engage in *realpolitik* shortly after the collapse of the New Order regime in May 1998. The constellation that was deemed

conducive is diagnosed as caused by six factors: (1) With Habibie in power and given his attempt to involve hard-line Muslim organizations in helping him resist opposition challenges provided access for the Salafis to institutional action, particularly when the challenge faced by Habibie mounted in relation to the emergence of Megawati Sukarnoputri as a candidate for president. (2) The conflict between Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas erupted on 19 January 1999, and reached its peak after Wahid came to power in October 1999. In their battle against Wahid, the Salafis enjoyed the support not only of hard-line Muslim organizations but also of military elites, who saw the chance to utilize militant Muslim groups to retaliate against Wahid for sacking them from key military positions. (3) In January 2000, the Salafis issued their jihad resolution and proclaimed the establishment of the *Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah wal-Jama'ah* (FKAWJ), which was openly hostile to Wahid's political stance, thereby mobilizing a consensus. (4) By projecting the Moluccan conflict as evidence of a conspiracy to undermine Islam and destroy the territorial integrity of Indonesia, the Salafis combined religious rhetoric and nationalist sentiment. (5) The determination to fight *jihad* required the Salafis to request *fatwas* from religious authorities in the Middle East whom Thalib visited in order to persuade them personally. (6) To recruit and dispatch voluntary fighters, the FKAWJ organization was crucial with its hierarchical and bureaucratic

structure as well as network. FKAWJ also did not deny having received financial support from the transnational Salafi *da'wa* network.

Most LJ members were ethnically Javanese, aged between twenty and thirty-five years, almost half of them students, dropouts or graduates from science and engineering departments of a dozen universities. These recruits asserted their claim to be true Muslims by trading their Javanese (*abangan*) names for Arabic (Islamic) ones.

Wherever they clustered and settled, they constructed enclaves, called '*titik daura*' ('turn', i.e. workshop sites), a social system centered on modest mosques or *musallas*, smaller places to pray. The Salafis' enclave culture reinforced a hegemonic masculinity, a configuration of gender practice that legitimized the patriarchy as well as polygyny. The Salafi enclave did not have any particular political agenda. Nor did it have a specific programme of action. What it pursued was apparently mere rhetoric. It formed a domain in which a resistance identity was created. This resistance oscillated between two poles: enclave and *jihad*, which can transform marginality into centrality and defeat into patriotism.

Research is based on content and discourse analyses of a wide range of publications, including LJ internal documents, speeches, talks, public sermons, and two stints of intensive fieldwork with visits to Jakarta, Bandung, Cirebon, Semarang, Salatiga, Solo, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, Makassar and Ambon. Inter-

views were conducted with LJ group leaders and members, sympathizers, veterans of LJ missions in the Moluccas, common people, local militia members, and leaders of Muslim and Christian communities, totaling around 300 persons. The author also recorded life histories, participated in collective prayers and religious gatherings, and contacted institutions and organizations to trace the relationship between LJ and other Islamic groups.

What the author offers under the label of 'Conclusion' (pp.215–221) are assorted findings already presented in various chapters; some fallacies, few research hypotheses, and authentic conclusions underpinned by original research.

The author's authentic and salient conclusions deserve to be summarized as follows: (1) The Salafis' resort to violence by LJ proves that their repudiation of political activism was more a strategy to deal with the distressing and discouraging political situation that prevailed under the New Order regime. (2) The decision to resort to violence went hand-in-hand with the radicalization of its ideology. (3) Deprived youth felt that *jihad* is one way to express their resentment and frustration. By joining the LJ, they had the opportunity to flaunt their new religious identity, negotiate their illusory strength, and resist their own sense of marginalization. (4) This action was an endeavor to shore up their self-image as the most committed defenders of Islam, and thereby reinforce their identity. (5) Despite its limited

contribution in terms of participation in real battles, LJ claimed the public role of heroes predestined to sacrifice their lives in defending Moluccan Muslims.

This is both a perturbing and elucidating research study. The reader is challenged to grasp the sheer complexity of LJ dynamics in its turbulent context, as reflected in the somewhat complicated narration and diagnosis of an episode that sadly caused the death of many people. A list of abbreviations, glossary, extensive bibliography supplemented by listings of newspapers and magazines as well as websites, and a highly detailed index enhance the timely usefulness of this book.

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