

## **Sinhala-Muslim Riots in Sri Lanka: The Need for Restoring Communal History**

Rohan Gunaratna

## **Foreign, Political and Financial Influences on Religious Extremism: A Study of Madrassas in Punjab, Pakistan**

Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri

## **Analysing Use of Sharp Weapons in Terrorist Attacks in Indonesia**

V. Arianti



# Preventing Violent Extremism through Madrassa Reforms and Counter-Narratives

The evolving concept of Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), as part of ongoing counter-terrorism and counter-extremism efforts, has to address various social, economic, political religious and individual factors that attract or push youth from activism towards extremism. Social media platforms and religious institutions are crucial mediums of influence that can be used to minimise and eventually eliminate the exploitation of these two domains by violent-extremist groups for recruitment, propaganda and legitimisation of their extremist agendas. Articles in this issue give an insight into the roles played by social media and madrassas as well as religious leaders and extremists in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Indonesia.

The first article by **Rohan Gunaratna** analyses the recent riots between the Sinhalese and Muslim communities in Sri Lanka. It observes the historical development of relations between the two communities, specifically focusing on the role of Sinhala ultra-nationalists in advancing their communal and political agenda in the island state. In 2012 and 2013, the ultra-nationalists' intolerant rhetoric against Muslims and Christians emboldened supporters to engage in mob violence targeting both minorities. Communal riots had erupted in 2014 and intermittent bomb attacks on Muslim establishments occurred in 2017. To restore communal harmony, the author prescribes a cohesive approach that combines laws criminalising intolerant rhetoric and propaganda in cyber and physical space, arrests of those involved in mob violence, and building structures at national and grassroots level to foster communal harmony.

In the second article, **Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri** examines the madrassa (Islamic seminaries) education system in the context of growing radicalisation and religious extremism in Pakistan. The piece studies the madrassas' relationship with various political groups, and their local and foreign funding sources. The study relies on published reports as well as quantitative data collected from over one hundred madrassas in Punjab. The study finds that several madrassas in Punjab have links with local and foreign militant organisations that render them vulnerable to external manipulations and interference. However, madrassas which purely dedicate their energies to learning and teaching are generally free of such manipulations. To meet the challenges and overcome the controversies facing the religious seminaries, the article recommends reforming the educational curriculum, providing quality education, reviewing funding sources of madrassas, banning political affiliations of madrassas and monitoring foreign influences on them.

Lastly, **V. Arianti** probes the use of sharp weapons in terrorist attacks by Indonesia militant groups. She argues that IS' emphasis on knife attacks in its online publications, frequent employment of vehicle-ramming and stabbing by lone-wolf attackers in Europe and local jihadist groups' efforts to seek recognition from IS central contributed to the steady rise of knife attacks in Indonesia. The author believes that while knife attacks will continue to be an attack tactic in Indonesia militant landscape, bombings and shootings will be the preferred tactics because of their relative potential to cause mass casualties.

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# Sinhala-Muslim Riots in Sri Lanka: The Need for Restoring Communal History

Rohan Gunaratna

*The March 2018 Sinhala-Muslim riots in Sri Lanka underline growing communal schisms in the island state. This article examines the rise of Sinhala ultra-nationalism and the violent groups primarily responsible for Sinhala-Muslim unrest since 2012. The establishment's insufficient and delayed response to anti-Muslim violence for fear of alienating the Buddhist Sinhala population has complicated matters further. The communal strife necessitates stricter law-enforcement against groups practicing violence and preaching hatred as well as measures to restore communal harmony.*

## Introduction

The Sinhala-Muslim riots in Sri Lanka in March 2018 erupted following a traffic accident in which four Muslim youth attacked a Sinhala driver in Kandy on 22 February 2018. The driver was seriously injured and died in hospital in Kandy on 3 March 2018. The police detained 14 suspects, including the four youth who attacked the driver.

Overall, the violence that ensued killed two people, injured 15 others, and damaged 45 businesses, homes, and four places of religious worship. Following the communal unrest, a ten-day emergency was imposed and the military was deployed in aid of police. Kandy's Digana and Teldeniya areas were the main hotspots of violence until the police and military restored normalcy. Nonetheless, the frictions between the Sinhalese and Muslims still persist, with tensions likely to grow in the future. Against this backdrop, this article chronologically analyses communal tensions between the Sinhalese and Muslim

communities and the rise of Sinhala ultra-nationalism.

## Background to Sinhalese-Muslim Communal Tensions

Sinhalese resentment against Muslims has been growing slowly. Despite the fact that the Sinhalese are a majority in Sri Lanka, they suffer from a minority complex because the population growth of the Muslims surpasses that of the Sinhalese. The population growth of the Buddhist community stands at 1.1 percent since 1948 whereas the population growth of Muslims is 1.9 percent.<sup>1</sup>

The Muslim landscape in Sri Lanka has been changing since the last decade. Muslims constitute about 9.7 percent of Sri Lanka's population. Buddhists form 70 percent of the population. Meanwhile, 12 percent are Hindus and 7 percent are Christians. Before the recent riots in the Sinhala majority areas of Western and Central Provinces, the Muslims residing in the Tamil-dominated northern and eastern areas had been attacked by Tamil separatists. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), an erstwhile ethno-separatist group fighting to create an independent Tamil state, had subjected the Muslims and Sinhalese to ethnic cleansing. For instance, in August 1990, the LTTE killed 147 Muslims in mosques in Kattankudy. The Muslims did not withdraw from the east, but worked with the Sri Lankan security forces to fight back against terrorism. Muslims also served in the units of the Sri Lankan security forces. The end of the conflict after LTTE's defeat in 2009 created space for Muslims and Sinhalese to reassert themselves.

The Muslim community underwent some changes as indigenous Islamic practices were slowly being influenced by practices from

<sup>1</sup> Izeth Hussain, "Islam, Contraception and Myths on Muslim Population Growth in Sri Lanka," *Colombo Telegraph*, September 20, 2014, [https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/islam-](https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/islam-contraception-and-myths-on-muslim-population-growth-in-sri-lanka/)

[contraception-and-myths-on-muslim-population-growth-in-sri-lanka/](https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/islam-contraception-and-myths-on-muslim-population-growth-in-sri-lanka/)

parts of the Middle East. The growing influence of Salafism and Wahabbism had led Sinhalese hardliners to develop suspicions and prejudices against the local Muslim community. They attributed developments such as the three dozen Muslims who travelled to Iraq and Syria to join the so-called 'Islamic State' (IS), the emergence of Jamaat Tawheed and demand for halal certification, to foreign influences. In addition, Muslims in Sri Lanka were perceived to be increasingly leaning towards exclusivism.

The Sinhalese majority also felt threatened by the large Tamil population in South India and the growing influence of 'foreign' Islam within the local Muslim community. Against this backdrop, a radical segment of the Sinhalese population has been augmenting its presence both in the virtual and physical space. Hard-line Sinhalese Buddhists cited the destruction of Buddha statues in Afghanistan, attacks on Buddhist temples in Bangladesh, and the violence of Al-Qaeda, IS, and other terrorist groups, as justification for their heightened agitation. The Sinhala-Buddhist hard-line groups were also influenced by the propaganda of Myanmar's ultra-nationalist Buddhist monk Wirathu as well as the repressive response of the Myanmar State to the Rohingya issue.

### **Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) and Sinhala ultra-Nationalism in Sri Lanka**

The emergence of Sinhala ultra-nationalism in recent years can be traced to the fight against the LTTE. Unfortunately, as it developed it also began to target the Muslim and Christian communities. The public position of Sinhala ultra-nationalist groups was that Sri Lanka is a Sinhala Buddhist country that is not multi-racial or multi-religious. Groups adhering to this form of ultra-nationalism included a breakaway faction of Jathika Hela Urumaya, led by Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara who founded the Buddhist Brigade - Bodu Bala Sena (BBS). In July 2012, during its inaugural national convention, BBS advocated a ban on vasectomy and tubal ligation in government health facilities as the birth rates of Muslims were high. In addition, as Muslims practiced and adhered to Islamic law, BBS called for the replacement of various legal systems used in the country with a single legal system. BBS also demanded preferential treatment of students who studied Buddhism in competitive university admissions and

advocated for the presence of monks in government schools to teach history.

On occasion, BBS supporters had used violent tactics to advance its ultra-nationalist agenda. For instance, on 4 October 2012, protestors threw stones and bottles at the Bangladeshi High Commission in Colombo over the destruction of Buddhist temples in the Cox's Bazar District. Similarly, on 14 October 2012, BBS stormed a house in Piliyandala where a Christian evangelical group (The Name of Lord Jesus) was allegedly planning to 'convert' Sinhalese Buddhists. Later, the authorities arrested seven BBS members for abducting the pastor but released them after protestors assembled outside the Piliyandala police station. On 25 October 2012, BBS followed it up with a huge protest demonstration in Badulla against conversion, vandalism of Buddhist sites and Islamist terrorism.

Gradually, BBS built a strong social media capability to support its campaign on the ground. BBS leaders called for a ban on different forms of the veil including *burqas* and *abayas* (head to toe veil donned by some Muslim women), and highlighted the slaughter of cows and mistreatment Sri Lankan female workers in the Middle East through its active social media and physical campaigns. Despite mediations by government leaders to defuse tensions and avoid confrontation with other religious communities, BBS did not pay heed to official advice.

### **BBS' Turning Point: Group to Mass Movement**

Over time, BBS transformed from a group into a movement by engaging the broader Sri Lankan population in their ultra-nationalist efforts. In its propaganda campaign, BBS falsely showcased to the public that it had tacit governmental support to legitimise its cause. BBS then turned to engage the masses by holding a series of public rallies. At a huge rally in February 2013, BBS declared a ten-point resolution, which included eliminating halal certification, and a ban on Sri Lankan women working in the Middle East and on

mosque building financed by Middle Eastern nations.<sup>2</sup>

BBS started a campaign against halal certification by the All Ceylon Jamiyyathul Ulama (ACJU), a mainstream Islamic organisation, and demanded that shops be cleared of halal meat by April 2013.<sup>3</sup> On 17 March 2013, BBS held a rally in Kandy, the cultural capital of the country, claiming that Muslims were destroying Buddhist heritage, and that Muslim-owned retail chains were converting their Buddhist Sinhalese employees to Islam.

#### Sinhala-Muslim Riots in 2014

The sustained campaign against minorities, particularly Muslims, eventually erupted into communal riots in June 2014. On 12 June 2014, during *Poson Poya* (celebration of Buddhism's arrival in Sri Lanka), a monk Ayagama Samitha and his driver, were confronted by Muslims in Dharga Town. In response, the Aluthgama police station was surrounded by monks and supporters, demanding immediate action. Even though, the three Muslims were remanded in police custody until 25 June 2014, the protesters turned violent and attacked the police and Muslim shops. On 15 June 2014, BBS staged rallies in Aluthgama, Beruwala and Dharga Town in Kalutara District. After a rally in Dharga Town, riots broke out. Four people were killed, 80 injured and at least 10,000 people (8,000 Muslims and 2,000 Sinhalese) displaced. After a curfew was imposed, the police, Special Task Force and military were called to restore law and order. The perpetrators of violence were however not prosecuted by the authorities.

The government could not contain the rising threat from BBS and similar groups notwithstanding evidence against them. Despite two dozen intermittent petrol-bomb attacks on mosques and Muslim-owned businesses in 2017, the directing figures of the extremist groups remained free.<sup>4</sup> Even the police were unable to arrest the BBS

activists as the group threatened to create a 'bloodbath against the Muslims'.<sup>5</sup> Yet, there was no concerted strategy by the government or its community partners to prevent these sporadic incidents from turning into a cycle of violence.

#### Sinhala-Muslim Riots in 2018

The growing anti-Muslim sentiment among BBS and other sections of Sinhalese ultra-nationalists, the intermittent attacks and sporadic vigilante violence eventually precipitated into full-blown communal clashes. This occurred on 26 February 2018 when a group of Sinhalese youths arrived at a restaurant in Ampara town and alleged that there were infertility pills in their food. They attacked the owner of the restaurant and mobilised a mob, which attacked hotels and shops in the surrounding area of Ampara. As the police could not contain the situation, the Special Task Force was called to disperse the mob. During the protests, Muslim populations in Maruthamunai, Sammanthurai, Akkaraipattu, Addalaichenai and Kalmunai in Ampara District engaged in retaliatory protests, resulting in damages to public property.

More trouble erupted - this time in Central Province - after the truck driver who was assaulted on 22 February succumbed to his injuries on 2 March in Kandy. Despite ensuing riots in the Central Province, the riots did not spread beyond the area because the vast majority of the Muslims and Sinhalese do not hate each other.

Notwithstanding recent tensions, most Sinhalese and Muslims in Sri Lanka believe in moderation, tolerance and peaceful co-existence. Those who are most vulnerable to politicisation and radicalisation among the Muslims and Sinhalese exist at the fringes of both communities. Moreover, those behind these riots are the organised groups which have exploited the poor socio-economic strata of Sri Lankan society to instigate violence. However, both Sinhalese and Muslims are

<sup>2</sup> Tariq A. Al Maena, "Neo-fascism on the rise in Sri Lanka," *Gulf News*, February 23, 2013 <http://gulfnews.com/opinion/thinkers/neo-fascism-on-the-rise-in-sri-lanka-1.1150052>.

<sup>3</sup> "Sri Lanka hardline group calls for halal boycott," *BBC*, February 17, 2013. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-21494959>.

<sup>4</sup> "Sri Lanka arrest five over anti-religious violence," *Reuters*, June 11, 2017 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sri-lanka-violence-muslims-idUSKBN1920TJ>.

<sup>5</sup> D.B.S. Jeyaraj, "Bodu Bala Sena's Gnanasara Thero To Be Arrested Following President Sirisena's Directive To Law And Order Minister Sagala Ratnayake" *dbsjeyaraj.com*, May 23, 2017, <http://dbsjeyaraj.com/dbsj/archives/53137>.

being gradually exposed to exclusivist and extremist narratives in the physical and virtual domains. Once they are exposed to ethnic and religious extremism and exclusivism, they are then made to believe that they cannot co-exist.

To avert communal violence in future, the government and the community should immediately adopt a three-pronged strategy: a) a robust legal framework that criminalises incitement to hatred and violence, b) a strong political will by leaders to take sustained and decisive action to proscribe these extremist groups and punish their directing figures, and c) seed and sustain structures at the national, provincial, district and local governments level to foster communal harmony.

### Conclusion

Sri Lanka's ethnic and religious differences are widening and there are fears that communal tensions in the country will mirror Myanmar. In order to remain in power or return to power, ethnic and religious leaders have manipulated the ethnic and religious vote. Successive governments are reluctant to take decisive action against extremist preachers and wider intolerance for fear that it would affect their voter bank. The state needs to take a decisive stand in the cyber and physical space to contain the threat of extremism and intolerance across ethnic and religious lines.

On 4 February 2018, Sri Lanka celebrated 70 years of independence. Unfortunately, the communal mobilisation for political ends since 1956 has divided the country into three parts, Sinhalese, Muslims and Tamils, gravely damaging the socio-political fabric of Sri Lanka. The riots of 2014 and 2018 should not come as a surprise in a country that is already divided along communal and religious lines. There is an urgent need for the government and parliamentary opposition to adopt a bipartisan approach in uniting the communities. Integrating the Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims politically, socially and economically is a critical step towards social harmony. The government and political leaders need to rise above ethnic and religious politics to bring stability and security to Sri Lanka. As James Freeman Clarke said, "A politician thinks of the next election, but a statesman, of the next generation." The state needs to apprehend

those involved in violence without fearing the risk of alienating the Sinhalese.

*Rohan Gunaratna is Professor of Security Studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technology University, and Head of International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, Singapore. He can be reached at [ISRKGunaratna@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:ISRKGunaratna@ntu.edu.sg).*

# Foreign, Political and Financial Influences on Religious Extremism: A Study of Madrassas in Punjab, Pakistan

Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri

*This paper examines multiple factors related to foreign, political and financial influences on madrasa education in Pakistan and the extent of religious extremism in these madrassas. It is based on surveys carried out in nine districts of the Punjab province among madrasa students, their parents and teachers. The study found that some madrassas were propagating extremism, and were subjected to foreign and political influences.<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

In Pakistan, government and legislators believe some of the madrassas have close ties with radical, sectarian, militant, and political groups in and outside the country. These links encourage the students and administration of these madrassas to play an active political role. The madrassas are also financially vulnerable, leading them to accept funds from international and domestic political groups allegedly in return for pursuing policies, which may not necessarily be in the interest of the country.

This paper studies the relationship of the madrassas in Pakistan with various political groups, their local and foreign funding sources, and the impact of poverty on student enrollment. The study has relied on internationally published reports and quantitative data collected from over one hundred madrassas in nine districts of Punjab through questionnaires.

Divided into five sections, the first two sections of this paper examine the nature of the problem, and the radicalisation of madrassas

in recent history. The third section reviews the literature on madrasa education in Pakistan and the factors influencing the extremist behavior of some madrasa students. The fourth and final section discusses the madrasa education system and major findings of a survey conducted in Punjab, Pakistan's most populous state with over 110 million people.

## Nature of the Problem

Religious extremism in Pakistan started off as non-violent puritanism before gradually becoming 'distinctively violent extremism':

“The long history and evolution of sectarianism and religious extremism in Pakistan has been well documented and analysed, especially the process of politicisation and militarisation of religious groups.”

Pakistani government and critics of the madrasa system claim that the madrassas affiliated with militant outfits invite militant commanders to visit madrassas and approach students for recruitment. Further, it is alleged that leaders of sectarian outfits instigate students against other sects through provocative speeches and distribution of hate literature.

Similarly, anti-western political views can also provoke madrasa students to join global militant organisations or start agitation against their own governments. This leads us to explore the political and monetary-based influences on these madrassas which have

<sup>1</sup> This is an abridged version of a longer draft of over 12,100 words. Only relevant parts of the survey carried out in Punjab are reflected. Moreover, the

finding findings and views expressed in this article are the outcome of author's own research and do not reflect the position of the International Centre for Political and Terrorism Research (ICPVR).

damaged the socio-cultural fabric of the country.

### Historical Context

In Pakistan, the madrassas offer affordable religious education to the poor sections of society who cannot afford mainstream education. Historically, the madrassas were centers of excellence for Islamic learning, producing many great figures and personalities. It can be argued that today they are having a conservative impact upon the society. Some go further to allege that madrassas are producing a religious class of violent extremists in Pakistan and abroad. A review of developments in the last few decades would shed light on the radicalisation of segments of society in Pakistan.

### Russian Intervention in Afghanistan

With the Russian intervention in Afghanistan in 1979, Afghanistan emerged as the final battleground of the Cold War between the United States and Russia. With the help of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the US promoted jihadist proxies (the so-called Afghan Mujahideen) to defeat the Russian forces in Afghanistan. Following the defeat and withdrawal of Russia from Afghanistan in 1989, the militant groups, drawn primarily from the Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith schools of thought, took to 'cleansing' the country of 'infidel Shias' in Pakistan. The Afghan 'Jihad' gave a new dimension to the Sunni-Shia conflict in Pakistan with the injection of violence into it.<sup>2</sup>

### Islamic Revolution of Iran (1979)

Sunni-Shia rivalry entered a new phase following the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran

<sup>2</sup> Murphy, Eamon and Malik, A. "Pakistan Jihad: The Making Of Religious Terrorism," *Islamabad Policy Research Institute Journal* 9(2) (2009): 23.

<sup>3</sup> Department of State, Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, *2005 Report on International Religious Freedom*, 2005, Washington, DC.

<sup>4</sup> Naseem Razi, "Theological Extremism and its Effects: Pakistan Perspective," *Journal of Social Science for Policy Implications* 2, no. 4(2014):59-72

which recognised the Shia faith as the official state religion. Fears that Iran would export Shi'ism to other countries led to renewed rivalry to seek greater influence in the Middle East and beyond.<sup>3</sup> The eight year Iran-Iraq war that ensued became the basis for Saudi-Iran competition along sectarian lines.

### Pakistan— A Battle Field for Sectarian Proxy-war

Following the Russian retreat from Afghanistan, civil war broke out. The negative spillover of the Afghan war adversely affected religious harmony in Pakistan by sowing seeds of hatred and violence.<sup>4</sup>

General Zia-ul-Haq, President from 1978 to 1988, politicised the Pakistani madrassas along sectarian lines and used them for fighting the Afghan jihad (Tariq, 2011).<sup>5</sup> This development left madrassas vulnerable to external exploitation for political and other purposes.

For a long time, various Pakistani governments have made efforts to reform the madrasa system in Pakistan without much avail due to weak political will, and poor policy planning and execution (Shabir *et. al* 2012).<sup>6</sup>

Arguably, in the absence of basic social and welfare services to the masses by various Pakistani governments, madrassas and militant religious groups emerged as the alternative suppliers of these services. This enabled these groups to gain a devout political following as well as coercive power.<sup>7</sup>

### Review of Literature on Madrassas

Most authors focused on one or two issues relating to madrasa enrolment, political affiliations and foreign funding. In Pakistan, it

<sup>5</sup> Malik, Mohammad Tariq, "The Rise And Impact Of Islamic Fundamentalism In Pakistan After The Soviet Invasion In Afghanistan With Special Reference To KPK And Baluchistan," *Baluchistan Review* 24, no.1 (2011): 1–13

<sup>6</sup> Ghulam Shabir, Muhammad Usman and Amant Khan, "Reforming the Madrassah System." *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences* 32, no.1 (2012): 147–156.

<sup>7</sup> Andreas Freytag, Jens Kruger, Daniel Meierrieks and Friedrich Schneider, "The Origins Of Terrorism: Cross-Country Estimates Of Socio-Economic Determinants Of Terrorism," *European Journal of Political Economy* 27, no 1 (2011): 5–16.



is perceived that a good number of students are enrolled in madrassas due to the unaffordability of modern education and for religious reasons. Madrassas are known to offer free education, food and lodging.

The madrassas are also related to some religious-political parties and their leadership in one form or the other. A survey study by Pak Institute for Peace Studies, a private think-tank, conducted in 2008, indicated that most madrassas in Pakistan have some form of political affiliation. The study showed that the Deobandi and Jamat-e-Islami (JI) madrassas were more inclined towards politics than others. Though most madrassa boards discourage madrassas' association with politics, some madrassas defy this rule and openly affiliate themselves with religious-political parties.<sup>8</sup>

On the issue of funding, a report of the Special Branch of Police notes that the government's funding for madrassas is negligible in contrast to private funds. According to Pakistan's Interior Ministry, 147 madrassas in Punjab received funds from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, UAE, Kuwait, and Iraq. Most of these madrassas belong to Deobandi and the Ahl-e-Hadith schools of thought. Iran in turn financed the Shi'ites madrassas in Pakistan.<sup>9</sup> In return for foreign funding, these madrassas promote the ideology of the financing country along sectarian lines.

Stan Crock, the Business Week commentator criticized the foreign interventions in Pakistan in these words:

"Politics played a major role in financing these schools. And nowhere has the growth of madrassas been more of an issue than in Pakistan. Saudi Arabia and Gulf States with majority Sunni populations wanted Pakistan to serve as a buffer against the *Shiites* who had come to power in Iran in the late 1970s. So, they bankrolled madrassas in Pakistan. The Saudis exported Wahhabism, a

particularly rigid expression of the Islamic faith that relies on strict interpretation of the Koran. But while religion plays an important role in the schools, jihadism by and large doesn't"<sup>10</sup>.

## Pakistan's Madrassa Education

The number of madrassas has increased sharply since Pakistan's creation in 1947. The number has risen from 245 madrassas to 13,405 as at 2013-2014. According to Pakistan educational statistics, 393 (3%) madrassas were in the public sector while 13,012 (97%) were in the private sector. The total enrolment in madrassas was 1.83 million -- 0.05 million (3%) in the public sector and 1.78 million (97%) in the private sector. 1.14 million (62%) of the students were males and 0.69 million (38%) females. The number of teachers were 58,600, of which 1,800 (3%) were in the public sector and 56,800 (97%) in the private sector. Around 45,000 (77%) of the teachers were male while 13,000 (23%) were female.

Not all madrassas in Pakistan are government-registered. Most of them are affiliated with their respective Islamic madrassa boards (Wafaq) in accordance with the different school of thoughts viz. Deobandi, Deobandi (Jamat-i-Islami), Ahl-e-Sunnat (Barelvi), Ahl-e-Hadith and Shiites.<sup>11</sup>

## Madrassa Curriculum

The duration of the religious course called the '*Dars e Nizami*' taught in the madrassas spans over seven years, where students are taught Islamic foundational subjects and advanced courses as well as Arabic language courses. Madrassa education has attracted criticism for adopting outdated educational techniques (rote memorization), and having a distinct curriculum that produces individuals

<sup>8</sup> Mohammad Amir Rana, "Mapping The Madrassa Mindset: Political Attitudes Of Pakistani Madaris." *Conflict and Peace Studies* 2, no.1 (2009): 1-13

<sup>9</sup> Raouf Kalasra (15-12-2015), Khabar se khaber tak. *News program*. Punjab, Pakistan: ARY

<sup>10</sup> Stan Crock, "Korans, Not Kalashnikovs at Madrassas," *Bloomberg*, October 27, 2004,

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2004-10-26/korans-not-kalashnikovs-at-madrassas>

<sup>11</sup> "EFA Global Monitoring Report: Reaching The Marginalized." UNESCO, 2010.

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001866/186606e.pdf> (accessed on July 27, 2013.)

who are neither skillful nor equipped for the modern workforce.<sup>12</sup>

Some researchers claim that, beyond instructions in basic religious beliefs, only a small group of radicalised madrassas are presenting a radical form of Islam, specifically those situated on the Pak-Afghan border.

### Worldview and Career opportunities

The attitudes of madrassa graduates differ from those coming from universities and colleges. Madrassa graduates have their own specific approaches to different issues as compared to graduates of mainstream education.<sup>13</sup> A literature review indicates that students from Shi'ites and Ahl-e-Sunnat (Barelvi) madrassas are relatively less motivated towards extremist ideologies than that of Ahl-e-Hadith, Deobandi School and Jamat-e-Islami madrassas.<sup>14</sup>

The restricted nature of religious education limit the employment prospects of madrassa students to the religious sectors where they could be employed as "Imam Masjid (prayer-leader)", "Naib Imam (deputy prayer leader)", "Moa'zan (Mosque Attendant)" and preachers.<sup>15</sup> The lack of a career-oriented education and the stiff competition for limited employment opportunities render them vulnerable to exploitation. Various religious-political parties provide free transportation and food to madrassa students to participate in anti-government and anti-Western rallies.<sup>16</sup>

### Survey Findings and Discussion

To find out more about the state of madrassa education and issues concerning foreign funding and influence and political affiliations and involvement, a survey of madrassas was conducted in Punjab, the second largest province by area that is also the most populous in Pakistan. A total of 1094 returns were received from 415 students, 389 guardians, and 290 administrators/teachers

of madrassas. 509 (46.5 percent) of the respondents belonged to the Deobandi school of thought, 237 (21.6 percent) to Ahl-e-Sunnat (Barelvi), 233 (21.3 percent) to Ahl-e-Hadith and 100 (9.1 percent) to Shiites; 15 (1.3 percent) respondents did not indicate their school of thought.

### Madrassa Education

Critics argue that the madrassa education system is inadequate for contemporary needs. They maintain that madrassa graduates are more vulnerable to unemployment than graduates of universities and colleges and this makes them vulnerable for recruitment by militant and political organisations.

To explore the veracity of such criticisms, respondents were asked questions on the importance of modern education, science subjects and vocational training, the effectiveness of madrassa education, and job prospects of madrassa graduates. Some of their significant responses are documented below.

The study revealed that the vast majority (95 percent) of the 415 student respondents surveyed considered modern education important. Similarly, 53 percent of the students strongly agreed that vocational education was useful in increasing job opportunities for madrassa students. 86 percent of the students opined that the madrassa system was effective in training students to become better participants of modern social life. However, 52 percent of students from Deobandi madrassas did not think so.

In response to whether the students would be able to meet their living expenses fully after completing their madrassa education, 63 percent were confident of doing so. 26 percent of the students did not express their opinion on this statement. On the issue of whether

<sup>12</sup> Febe Armanios. "The Islamic Traditions Of Wahhabism And Salafiyya." *Congressional Information Service, Library of Congress* (2003).

<sup>13</sup> Mohammad Asadullah and Nazmul Chaudhury. "Religious Schools, Social Values, and Economic Attitudes: Evidence from Bangladesh." *World Development* 38, no. 2 (2010): 205–217

<sup>14</sup> Muhammad Arslan. "A Comparative Study Of The Attitudes Of Students Attending Urdu Medium,

English Medium And Seminary Schools In Pakistan." (Ph.D Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2015)

<sup>15</sup> Febe Armanios. "The Islamic Traditions Of Wahhabism And Salafiyya." *Congressional Information Service, Library of Congress* (2003).

madrassa graduates could compete with graduates of modern education system, around 55 percent were confident of doing so while 17 percent were less sanguine; 27 percent (mostly Bareilvis) did not respond on this statement.

The findings showed that madrassa students are generally aware of the need for modern education and vocational training. The madrassa graduates in Pakistan struggle economically because the jobs offered to them (such as mosque Imams and assistant Imams) are lowly paid. To meet their economic needs, they often become home tutors or get involved in other activities.

### **Poverty and Financial Support**

Sometimes parents compel their children to go to madrassas because of their own religiosity and/or their inability to afford the expenses of modern education. Because madrassas provide almost free education, boarding, food, and clothing, parents find it economical to send their children to madrassas. The following are some significant responses to these issues.

80 percent of the students denied they were compelled to enroll in madrassas while 20 percent claimed they were. 59 percent of the students received food and clothing from their madrassas; the rest (41 percent) were either day scholars or chose not to accept food and clothing. 20 percent of the students surveyed received financial assistance from their madrassas.

In response to whether the students paid any fee or not, 31 percent answered that they did pay a fee while 69 percent said they did not pay any fee. Among parents, 88 percent of them said they would send their children for modern education if they could afford to do so. The survey showed that two factors were responsible for madrassa enrolment: the parents' religiosity and unaffordability of modern education, with poverty being a major determinant for students being enrolled in madrassas.

### **Foreign Influence on Madrassas**

The report about madrassas presented in the National Assembly of Pakistan confirmed that many madrassas receive financial aid from

different countries and that many foreign faculty were teaching in the madrassas.

On the issue of receiving overseas scholarships, 38 (9 percent) students confirmed it while the rest (91 percent) replied in the negative. A majority (29) of the 38 (76 percent) who received overseas scholarships belonged to Deobandi madrassas. Responding to the question on foreign faculty members, 25 (6 percent) students reported that foreign teachers taught in their madrassas. On the question of foreign aid, 129 (33 percent) madrassa teachers and management agreed that madrassas received foreign aid. 84 teachers (22 percent) also confirmed that their madrassas had affiliations with other Muslim countries. About overseas scholarships for madrassa students, 17 percent of the madrassa teachers confirmed this.

The study confirms there is foreign influence on a few madrassas in Punjab, mainly through scholarships, funding and foreign teachers; a majority of these madrassas are Deobandis.

The survey was unable to provide the names of countries funding some madrassas but a report presented in Pakistan's National Assembly had disclosed the names of madrassas in Punjab which continuously received funding from foreign countries. Saudi Arabia tops the donor list by funding 103 madrassas in Punjab, followed by Qatar which is funding 24 madrassas. The other two top financiers of madrassas in Punjab are Iran and the UAE, providing financial assistance to 20 and 15 madrassas respectively.

### **Political Influence and Participation**

Various madrassas in Punjab allegedly have links with different religious-political parties that result in political influence on these madrassas and their participation in politics. The following are some of the significant responses on these issues.

45 percent of the 415 students agreed that madrassas took part in political activities; 43% disagreed and 12 percent did not give any response. 37 percent of the students said madrassas should not take part in political activities. On the other hand, 32 percent were

in favor and 31 percent did not give any response. Deobandi madrassa students strongly favoured (66 percent) participation of madrassas in politics, while only 5 percent Bareilvi students were in favour. Among the Ahl-e-Hadith, 19 percent viewed madrassas' participation in political activities positively. 55 percent of the students said they never took part in any political activity, whereas 35 percent partook in some form of political activity. The largest percentage of students who took part in political activity were Deobandis (46 percent) and Bareilvis (36 percent). Regarding membership of political parties, 13 percent of the students said they were members of some political parties, while 87 percent said they had no political affiliation. 15 percent of Ahl-e-Hadith madrassa teachers said madrassas were affiliated with a political party; 71 percent however disagreed. Among Deobandi teachers, 15 percent said madrassas had some affiliation with a political party while 85 percent disagreed.

The survey results confirm that madrassa students participate in political rallies and activities. 50 percent of them participated in political rallies as per the wishes of the madrassa administrators. However, only a handful of madrassas are under strong political influence; most of them and their students concentrate on religious learning and teaching.

### **Extremist Behavior**

The respondents were asked about the involvement of madrassas in extremist and terrorist activities.

A significant 42 percent of the students believed madrassas were involved in extremist activities, whereas 43 percent thought otherwise. A majority of the students (71 percent) were against participation in extremist activities. 13 percent however were not opposed to such participation while 16% of the students did not give any response. Most of the students (47 percent) who participated in extremist activities were from Deobandi madrassas whereas 21 percent came from Ahl-e-Hadith, 11 percent came from Shi'ites and 9 percent came from Bareilvi.

Among the madrassa teachers and management, 38 percent from the Deobandi school said their madrassas took part in

extremist activities; 28 percent of Ahl-e-Hadith, 36 percent of Shi'ites and 16 percent of Bareilvi teachers responded likewise. On whether madrassa education created extremist behavior in society, 50 percent of the Ahl-e-Hadith madrassa teachers affirmed so. The responses of the teachers indicate that madrassas and their education system in some way are involved in promoting extremist activities. However, only a small number of madrassas and their students are involved in extremist activities.

### **Conclusion**

Pakistan's madrassa education system faces many challenges and controversies. Several madrassas in Punjab are found to be propagating extremism and some of them have links with local and foreign militant organisations.

The affiliation of madrassas with political parties and 'jihadi' groups, to some extent, remains intact. The sectarian linkage of the madrassas is also deep rooted because of sectarian divisions among them. Foreign funding and interference in madrassas of Punjab is another reason for sectarian violence; the influence of international and domestic non-state actors also play a major role in the radicalisation of madrassas.

Divisive religious and political views, sectarianism, 'jihadi' ideas, poverty and unemployment are being used to indoctrinate extremist ideas among madrassa students in Punjab.

Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith madrassas are found to be more inclined towards political struggle or so-called 'jihad' whereas Ahl-e-Sunnat (Bareilvi) and Shi'ite madrassas are found to be less interested.

The de-politicisation and de-radicalisation of madrassas in Punjab require concrete actions from the government and all stake holders. Among the steps that could be taken include reforms in the curriculum and identification and removal of any extremist ideas in the syllabi; economic development of under-developed areas to eliminate factors contributing to extremism and terrorism; provision of quality education and health services; review of funding sources to madrassas; close monitoring of foreign influence on madrassas; banning political affiliations of madrasahs; prohibiting fatwas

declaring other Muslims as infidels; banning publications that promote extremism, sectarianism and terrorism; prohibiting extremist organisations and political parties; and setting up a Reconciliatory Committee to settle disputes and issues between different schools of thought.

***Hussain Mohi-ud-Din Qadri is an Associate Professor at the School of Economics and Finance, Minhaj University Lahore and a research fellow at the Asia Institute, University of Melbourne, Australia. He can be reached at [hmqadri@hotmail.com](mailto:hmqadri@hotmail.com).***

# Analysing Use of Sharp Weapons in Terrorist Attacks in Indonesia

V. Arianti

*In recent years, an upsurge in the use of sharp weapons as a tactic in terrorist attacks has been witnessed in Indonesia. The online propaganda by the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group and its Indonesian affiliates on the urgency of using sharp weapons to kill their enemies and seek recognition from IS Central partly contribute to this trend. This article also assesses the propensity of using sharp weapons for future attacks by pro-IS elements in Indonesia.*

## Background

Since 2014, as many as 14 terrorist attacks involving the use of sharp weapons – such as machetes, swords, knives – have been recorded in Indonesia.<sup>1</sup> Of these, eight attacks were carried out by the Santoso-led IS group Indonesia Timur (Mujahidin of Eastern Indonesia, MIT) in Poso, Central Sulawesi. Most of MIT's victims had their throats slit, three of who were fully decapitated. After MIT's disintegration following Santoso's demise in July 2016, there have been at least six stabbing attacks outside Poso. The stabbings targeted a priest in a church in Medan, the capital city of North Sumatra province in August, and three police officers in Tangerang, a suburb of Jakarta, in October. Moreover, the three stabbing attacks observed in 2017 were all against police officers in Medan, Jakarta, and Banyumas, regency in Central Java. Similarly, four church congregants and a police officer were stabbed in Sleman, Central Java, in February 2018.

The use of sharp weapons by Indonesian Islamist militants is not a new trend. Between 2004 and 2013, sharp weapons were used at least in five terrorist incidents, targeting Christians and police officers. The post-2014

resurgence in use of sharp weapons could be attributed to IS and its affiliates' propaganda on the importance of knife attacks, and the need to gain recognition from IS Central.

## Analysing IS Propaganda (in Indonesian) Material Emphasising on Stabbing

Data reveals that after 2014, all the perpetrators of knife attacks in Indonesia outside Poso consulted IS online propaganda material. The extremist literature in Indonesia, mostly translated from English and Arabic, has been encouraging militants to use stabbing (including beheading) against their adversaries.

Before the advent of IS, stabbing as a terrorist tactic was promoted in Indonesia through Middle Eastern jihadi ideologue Abu Abdillah Al-Muhajir's paper "Disyari'atkannya Ightiyalat Terhadap Kafir Harbi" (Justification of Secret Assassination against the Infidels). It was translated and published by the extremist forum Al-Busyro in 2012.<sup>2</sup> The IS' Indonesian affiliates recirculated the same article to encourage the use of sharp weapons. The article justifies beheading the adversary by sword until it is completely decapitated.

The production and translation of extremist material intensified after the rise of IS. More Indonesian extremists started using social media and encrypted platforms on their mobile phones to access and share information as compared to the past. They have abandoned internet "forums" such as At-Tawbah and Al-Busyro which were prominent mediums to share their propaganda material and tradecraft manuals.

The September 2014 message of IS' deceased spokesperson Abu Muhammad Al-

<sup>1</sup> This data is based on the number of violent incidents compiled by the author based on media monitoring.

<sup>2</sup> Abu Abdillah Al-Muhajir, "Disyari'atkannya Ightiyalat Terhadap Kafir Harbi," *Forum Islam Al-*

*Busyro*, October 2012; Al-Busyro Forum was manned by Arif Wicaksana Aji alias Handholah Al-Khurosaniy, an MIT member in charge of the media.

Adnani – translated in Indonesian – encouraging knife attacks, among others, is still widely circulated in the online domain of pro-IS Indonesian militants. For instance, the 198-page e-book “biography” of Al-Adnani consisting of his speech, many editions of IS e-magazine *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah*, all translated to Indonesian, justify beheadings and the usage of swords to attack the enemy. This kind of propaganda by IS is supplemented by visual images including numerous IS official beheading videos.

For instance, IS’ first series of beheading videos released between August to October 2014, depicted the beheading of two American journalists and two British workers.<sup>3</sup> Following MIT’s pledge of allegiance to IS, the first MIT “beheading” (slashing the neck of the victim) took place in September 2014. Three other executions – two throat slittings and one beheading – occurred in late 2014 and early 2015.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, the IS’ Philippines Media Office issued a 21-minute video entitled “Solid Structure” in June 2016 showing beheadings, and urging IS-supporters in Southeast Asia to carry out lone wolf attacks that include stabbing.

Bahrn Naim, the most prominent IS Indonesian foreign fighter in the online domain who is believed to have died in Syria in 2017, also promoted stabbing and beheading. In a 335-page e-book (which he called a “manifesto”) titled “Sebuah Perjalanan, Rahasia...” (A Journey, Secret), Bahrn Naim believed that IS supporters – who pledged allegiance to Abu Bakar al-Baghdadi – must be aware of the obligation of *bai’at*, which is to obey the so-called Caliph’s instructions.<sup>5</sup> Bahrn Naim’s manifesto mainly consists of tradecraft manuals such as conducting cyber-attacks, procuring home-made explosives as well strategies for attacks and espionage. Besides tradecraft manuals, Bahrn Naim’s blogs also motivated IS-supporters to replicate the attacks in Paris (November

2015) and Dhaka (July 2016) in Indonesia as well.<sup>6</sup>

Other than Bahrn Naim, the Indonesian pro-IS community does not lack media savvy propagandists who are capable of repackaging IS’ extremist narrative and remoulding it for domestic consumption. Besides posting official information from IS, the Indonesian IS supporters also heavily quote IS-related reporting from mainstream media. In fact, in the absence of or decreasing volume of IS official material; mainstream news material are heavily repackaged to provoke attacks in Indonesia.

With regards to stabbing incidents, for instance, there have been instructions by Indonesian IS extremists instigating attacks against Christians during Christmas and New Year Eve 2018, and to behead the leader of a district penitentiary in East Java. A video produced in November 2017 by Ansar Khilafah Fi Indunisy (Supporters of the Caliphate in Indonesia) titled “Asahlah Pisau Kalian Wahai Muwahideen” (Sharpen Your Knife Oh Muwahideen) encouraged viewers to mount stabbing attacks; the video, which also highlights previous stabbing incidents in Indonesia, remains in circulation.

The novel attack tactics used by major terrorist groups in high-profile attacks create a domino effect whereby smaller terrorist outfits imitate the same tactics. For instance, Ivan, the perpetrator of the Medan church attack in Indonesia, copied the modus operandi of the church attack in northern France that occurred in July 2016, a month before the Medan attack.<sup>7</sup> In the French attack, two terrorists stabbed the priest in the chest and slashed his throat. They also carried fake suicide vests, a timer device and took five worshippers

<sup>3</sup> “Majority of Americans Think Watching ISIS Beheadings is Disrespectful to the Victims,” *The Huffington Post*, November 21, 2014, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/11/21/isis-beheading-videos\\_n\\_6194498.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/11/21/isis-beheading-videos_n_6194498.html).

<sup>4</sup> Indictment of Unul alias Muhammad Unul Usman Paise, *Op. Cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Bahrn Naim (BN), “Sebuah Perjalanan, Rahasia...”, (no date) 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Bahrn Naim, “Belajar dari Junud Khilafah di Bangladesh,” *Bahrn Naim*, August 3, 2016,

<http://www.bahrnaim.website/2016/07/belajardarijunudkhilafahdi>.

Html; Bahrnaim, Pelajaran dari Serangan Perancis, November 18, 2015, <http://www.bahrnaim.xyz/2015/11/pelajarandariseranganperancis.html>. Both blogs are currently defunct.

<sup>7</sup> “Terduga Pelaku Serangan di Gereja Medan ‘Terinspirasi’ Teror Perancis,” *BBC*, August 29, 2016, <http://www.tribunnews.com/regional/2016/08/28/ivan-uji-coba-bom-di-loteng-rumah>.

hostage.<sup>8</sup> Copying these tactics, the Medan church attacker Ivan Armadi Hasugian also stabbed the priest, and carried a home-made bomb which did not explode.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, on 11 February 2018, the Sleman church attacker, Suliono, also stabbed the neck and back of the head of a priest and a worshipper.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile the Banyumas attacker Ibnu Dhar, was likely inspired by the Westminster attack in London in March 2017, where the perpetrator rammed a vehicle into pedestrians followed by multiple knife attacks.<sup>11</sup> The attacker who targeted the Banyumas District police headquarters, rammed a motorcycle into a police officer before stabbing two other police personnel.<sup>12</sup> The Banyumas attack took place three weeks after the Westminster attack in London. Likewise, the two attackers of the police's post at North Sumatra Provincial Police Headquarters in June 2017 were also possibly inspired by the Westminster attack. The perpetrators stabbed the police officer multiple times.<sup>13</sup>

Outside the Poso area, the stabbing incident against police officers in Tangerang, a suburb of Jakarta in October 2016, was the only stabbing incident in Indonesia acknowledged by IS Central through its publications – *Amaq*, *Dabiq*, and *Rumiyah*. This could be attributed to the perpetrator's close connection to Jamaah Ansharud Daulah (JAD), as two other terrorist incidents that were published by IS

official publications – the Jakarta Thamrin attack in January 2016 and Kampung Melayu Bombings in May 2017 – were also perpetrated by JAD. Some of MIT's executions were recorded and might have been sent to IS. Given the scale of MIT's beheading attempts, it could also serve as MIT's accountability towards IS that allegedly had provided assistance to the group.

### The Recognition by IS Central

One possible reason for mimicking the IS-style execution of beheading by MIT could be to secure IS Central's recognition and assistance. A few days after IS was declared on 29 June 2014, MIT launched a video where its leader Santoso declared a pledge of allegiance to IS.<sup>14</sup> The video stated that MIT was waiting for IS' instruction as well as seeking the latter's assistance for money and weapons. Following this, MIT's military capability was replenished as it eventually obtained not only logistic assistance, but also manpower assistance, facilitated by Indonesian fighters in Syria/Iraq and their accomplices in Indonesia.

By October 2014, Santoso had already forged links with Ansharul Khilafah Philippine (AKP), a pro-IS group based in the Philippines.<sup>15</sup> Bahrumisyah, then the leader of Katibah

<sup>8</sup> "Hollande: Deadly Church Attack in France Carried Out in Name of ISIS," *CNN*, July 27, 2016, <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/07/26/europe/france-normandy-church-hostage/index.html>.

<sup>9</sup> "Ivan Uji Coba Bom di Loteng Rumah," *Tribun News*, August 28, 2016, <http://www.tribunnews.com/regional/2016/08/28/ivan-uji-coba-bom-di-loteng-rumah>; "Serangan 'Bom' dan Pisau di Gereja Medan Digagalkan Jemaat," *BBC*, 28 August 2016, [http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita\\_indonesia/2016/08/160828\\_indonesia\\_medan\\_serangan\\_gereja](http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita_indonesia/2016/08/160828_indonesia_medan_serangan_gereja); "Ivan Hasugian Divonis 5 Tahun Penjara," *Sumut Pos*, October 16, 2016, <http://sumutpos.co/2016/10/10/ivan-hasugian-divonis-5-tahun-penjara/>.

<sup>10</sup> The two other victims suffered injuries in other parts of the body. See: "Serangan di Gereja St Lidwina, Yogyakarta: Pelaku 'asal Banyuwangi' Berhasil Dilumpuhkan," *BBC*, February 11, 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-43021264>.

<sup>11</sup> "Westminster Attack: PC Keith Palmer Named as Police Officer Killed – As It Happened," *The Guardian*, March 22, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/blog/live/2017/mar/22/peers-say-brexit-with-no-trade-deal-would->

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<sup>12</sup> "Ini Kronologi Penyerangan Mapolres Banyumas Versi Densus 88," *Kompas*, February 15, 2018, (<http://regional.kompas.com/read/2017/06/20/14505331/ini.kronologi.penyserangan.mapolres.banyumas.versi.densus.88?page=2>).

<sup>13</sup> "Polisi Tetapkan Tiga Tersangka Penyerangan Polda Sumut," *Tribun News*, June 26, 2017, <http://www.tribunnews.com/nasional/2017/06/26/polisi-tetapkan-tiga-tersangka-penyserangan-polda-sumut>; "Attack on Parliament March 22: The Westminster Rampage at the Heart of Britain's Democracy," *The Telegraph*, March 22, 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/03/22/man-shot-police-outside-parliament-officer-reportedly-shoots/>.

<sup>14</sup> Robi Sugara, "Santoso: The Terrorist Leader from Nowhere," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analysis* Vol. 6, Issue 10, November 2014.

<sup>15</sup> "Polisi: Sebagian Besar Senjata Kelompok Teroris Santoso Dipasok dari Filipina," *Detik*, April 3, 2016, <http://news.detik.com/berita/3178649/polisi-sebagian-besar-senjata-kelompok-teroris-santoso-dipasok-dari-filipina>; "Persenjataan Santoso Dipasok dari Filipina," *Benar News*, April 6, 2016, <http://www.benarnews.org/indonesian/berita/senjata->



Nusantara, the Indonesian-Malaysian IS affiliate in the Levant, allegedly channelled MIT's weaponry and other logistic assistance through his Indonesian associates – Brekele and Hendro Fernando – for terrorist attacks.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, IS' assistance also enabled MIT to recruit more personnel to join the fight in Poso. In 2015, it is estimated that there were around 78 MIT members, although 50 of them were eventually arrested. By January 2016, MIT personnel stood at around 45, including the Uighurs.<sup>17</sup>

### Future Trajectory

Indonesian IS-supporters may continue to use stabbing as an attack tactic in future but may stop short of beheading. Thus far, beheadings by MIT required a group effort, some of which require capturing or paralysing the victims before executing them. Since April 2016, no beheading incident has been reported in Indonesia. The stabbing incidents in Medan and Jakarta (2017) and Sleman (2018) could be categorised as amateur beheading attempts because the perpetrator slit the throat, injured the head, neck, or cheek of the victims. However, the beheading could not take place because the perpetrators were generally outnumbered by the victims' colleagues who came to rescue the victims. This is unlike the Poso beheadings that took place in a secluded area.

It is more likely that Indonesian militants will employ IED and shooting tactics instead of

stabbing because they achieve mass casualties. However, in cases where bombing or shooting fails, stabbing could be used as the alternative method. This was reflected in the Banyumas case, where the perpetrator initially tried to use an IED but dropped the plan as he failed to assemble it, and the Medan 2016 church attack where the perpetrator stabbed the victim after the bomb he brought failed to explode. Assembling IED requires bomb-making ingredients and technical expertise. Obtaining firearms is also difficult amid tightened sea patrols in the tri-border area of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines around the Sulu Sea, the traditional source of firearms for Indonesian militants. Knives, swords, and machetes remain among the “popular” items sold in pro-IS online domain, and can be used as weapons to conduct attacks, *id'ad* (preparation for attack/training), or for defence purpose.

Future stabbing incidents may also feature combined attack tactics including stabbing and vehicle ramming. The possibility of Indonesian women resorting to stabbing tactics in the future cannot be discounted. Although no stabbing incident had been carried out by Indonesian women, they were involved in other forms of violence perpetrated by pro-IS groups/cells such as in combat, suicide bombing plots, and assembling bomb.<sup>18</sup> Other countries, such as Australia, Bangladesh, and Germany, have witnessed pro-IS women conducting stabbing attacks.<sup>19</sup>

[santoso-dipasok-dari-filipina-04062016143133.html](http://santoso-dipasok-dari-filipina-04062016143133.html); “[Menguak Jejak Teroris Santoso dan Kelompok Radikal di Moro Filipina](#)”, *Detik*, April 4, 2016, <https://news.detik.com/berita/3178710/menguak-jejak-teroris-santoso-dan-kelompok-radikal-di-moro-filipina>.

<sup>16</sup> Indictment of Hendro Fernando. No. PDM-73/JKTM/05/2016.

<sup>17</sup> “Polisi Merilis 17 Nama Baru Teroris Poso,” *Tempo*, January 20, 2016, <https://m.tempo.co/read/news/2016/01/20/078737928/polisi-merilis-17-nama-baru-teroris-poso>; “DPO Teroris Poso Bertambah 17 Nama, Tiga Orang Perempuan,” *Kompas*, January 20, 2016, <http://regional.kompas.com/read/2016/01/20/10372871/DPO.Teroris.Poso.Bertambah.17.Nama.Tiga.Ora.ng.Perempuan>; “Satgas Tinombala Rilis 31 DPO Kasus Terorisme, Termasuk Santoso dan Istrinya”, *Detik*, April 3, 2016, <http://news.detik.com/berita/3178630/satgas-tinombala-rilis-31-dpo-kasus-terorisme-termasuk-santoso-dan-istrinya>.

<sup>18</sup> “Istri Kedua Santoso Ini Ternyata Ikut Angkat Senjata dan Latihan Perang,” *Tribun News*, July 23, 2016, <http://bangka.tribunnews.com/2016/07/23/istri-kedua-santoso-ini-ternyata-ikut-angkat-senjata-dan-latihan-perang>; “Indonesian Duo in Terror Plot Face Death Penalty,” *The Straits Times*, March 13, 2018, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/indonesian-duo-in-terror-plot-face-death-penalty>; “Jail for Indonesian Woman Who Planned Suicide Strike,” *The Straits Times*, August 29, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/jail-for-indonesian-woman-who-planned-suicide-strike>.

<sup>19</sup> “Sister of ‘ISIS-Inspired’ Students Attacks Bangladesh Cop,” *The Australian*, February 14, 2018, <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/sister-of-isis-inspired-student-attacks-bangladesh-cop/news-story/9f1cd922be98ce7b7e51ec5f2a5a6a88>; “Islamic State-Inspired: Woman Charged Over Stabbing in Melbourne,” *ABC*, February 10, 2018, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-02-10/mill-park-stabbing-court-appearance-islamic-state->

## Conclusion

The propaganda by IS and its supporters in Indonesia as well as the need for recognition from IS has partly contributed to the emergence of a number of terrorist incidents using sharp weapons in Indonesia. There is a great body of extremist literature that emphasises the use of sharp weapons to kill the enemy prior to the advent of IS. However, IS has extensively emphasised on stabbing/beheading as a tactic not only in written form but also through visual images. This propaganda is further amplified by both Indonesian IS fighters and supporters who mould it to local Indonesian contexts. At the same time, the increase of sharp weapons as killing tools suggests that the Indonesian authorities have degraded, to some extent, the procurement of IED and bomb-making capabilities of pro-IS Indonesian groups – and access to illegal firearms. The use of sharp weapons will continue to pose a serious challenge to counter-terrorism agencies as such attacks are difficult to detect and prevent.

*V. Arianti is an Associate Research Fellow with the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.*

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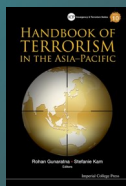
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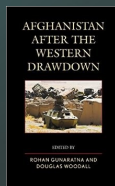


The International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) is a specialist research centre within the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. ICPVTR conducts research and analysis, training and outreach programmes aimed at reducing the threat of politically motivated violence and mitigating its effects on the international system. The Centre seeks to integrate academic theory with field research, which is essential for a complete and comprehensive understanding of threats from politically-motivated groups. The Centre is staffed by academic specialists, counter-terrorism analysts and other research staff. The Centre is culturally and linguistically diverse, comprising of functional and regional analysts from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America as well as Islamic religious scholars. Please visit [www.rsis.edu.sg/research/icpvtr/](http://www.rsis.edu.sg/research/icpvtr/) for more information.

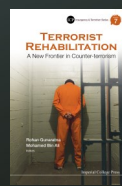
## STAFF PUBLICATIONS



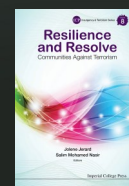
**Handbook of Terrorism in the Asia-Pacific**  
Rohan Gunaratna and Stefanie Kam (eds)  
(Imperial College Press, 2016)



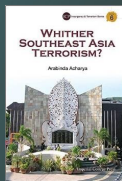
**Afghanistan After the Western Drawdown**  
Rohan Gunaratna and Douglas Woodall (eds)  
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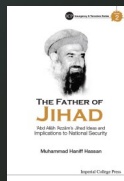
**Terrorist Rehabilitation**  
Rohan Gunaratna and Mohamed Bin Ali  
(Imperial College Press, 2015)



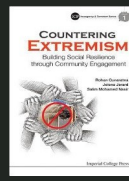
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(Imperial College Press, 2015)



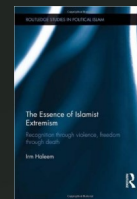
**Whither Southeast Asia Terrorism**  
Arabinda Acharya  
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**The Father of Jihad**  
Muhammad Haniff Hassan  
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Rohan Gunaratna, Salim Mohamed Nasir and Jolene Jerard  
(Imperial College Press, 2013)



**The Essence of Islamist Extremism**  
Irm Haleem  
(Routledge, 2011)

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Global Pathfinder is a one-stop repository for information on current and emerging terrorist threats from the major terrorism affected regions of the world. It is an integrated database containing comprehensive profiles of terrorist groups, terrorist personalities, terrorist and counter-terrorist incidents as well as terrorist training camps. This includes profiles from emerging hubs of global terrorism affecting the security of the world, as well as the deadliest threat groups in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Caucasus. The database also contains analyses of significant terrorist attacks in the form of terrorist attack profiles. For further inquiries regarding subscription and access to Global Pathfinder, please contact Ng Suat Peng at [isngsp@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:isngsp@ntu.edu.sg).

Nanyang Technological University

Block S4, Level B4, 50 Nanyang Avenue, Singapore 639798

Tel: + 65 6790 6982 | Fax: +65 6794 0617 | [www.rsis.edu.sg](http://www.rsis.edu.sg)