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ISLAMIC STATE IN IRAQ AND SYRIA (ISIS) 
AND ITS IMPACT IN INDONESIA

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Abstrak

Kata kunci:
anti-terrorisme, Indonesia, Irak-Suriyah, ISIS, Organisasi Islam.

Abstract
This paper presents a historical and qualitative study to examine the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) as a force in international politics and its impacts on the dynamics of violent extremism threat in Indonesia. The rise of ISIS was a turning point from the nascent progressive shift toward democratization in the Arab world represented by the “Arab Spring,” and its influence has spread beyond Syria and Iraq to threaten regional and global security. Like in other countries in the Islamic world, Indonesian society and politics have been significantly affected by the activities of ISIS. In addition to describing the origin of ISIS and spread of its ideology, this paper examines the responses from Indonesian extremist and mainstream community to ISIS’ agenda. It argues that the conflicting responses primarily revolves around the notion of whether ISIS actually has qualities of a functional state. The role of moderate Islamic mass organisations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah has also proven to be important in resisting the spread of ISIS’ ideology in Indonesia.

Keywords:
anti-terrorism, Indonesia, Iraq-Syria, ISIS, Islamic organizations.
INTRODUCTION

On March 2019, a United States-backed alliance of Syrian fighters announced that the jihadist group Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) had lost its last pocket of territory in Syria, bringing a formal end to the “caliphate” it proclaimed in 2014. Despite the defeat, however, the damage done by ISIS-inspired terror acts worldwide is considerable. For Indonesia, ISIS presents another case of international developments becoming a driver of domestic terrorism activities. Most of the intelligence, for example, associate the main actors behind terrorism acts in Indonesia with external parties; for example, both Azhari and Nurdin M. Top who masterminded major terrorist acts in 2000s were Malaysian by nationality, while Umar A. Faruq who played a role in linking Indonesian jihadists and Al-Qaeda is of Kuwaiti by nationality (Persis, 2006). However, the impact of external entities on Indonesian terrorism is not limited to the injection of individual personalities, since these parties bring with them ideologies such as Wahhabi, Salafi, and Shia, and spread them throughout Indonesia to recruit and influence extremist actors.¹

Since ISIS ascended onto the global stage in April 2013, the organization has spread its activities into many Islamic countries beyond its core territory, including Indonesia (Muhammad, 2014).² An Indonesian YouTube campaign exhorts people to journey to the Sham (Syria and Iraq) and execute jihad (Muhammad, 2014),³ and a wide array of propaganda tools has been employed to garner recruits and to socialize noncombatants regarding ISIS (VOA Indonesia, 2014). According to The Pew Research Center, approximately 10 million Indonesians have declared their support for ISIS (Kompas, 2016), and an estimated 500 have sworn allegiance to the group (Liputan 6, 2015; Liputan 6, 2016). In contrast, the organization has been rejected by the two largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah (Assad, 2014), as well as groups such as Forum Ukhuwah Islamiyah-Majelis Ulama Indonesia (FUI-MUI), which issued a press-release statement against ISIS early in its global campaign in 2014 (Ashrih, 2014). However, it was not until March 2015 that Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia spokesperson, Ismail Yusanto declared, “We (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia) neglect the existence of ISIS for it horrifies Islamic community. Through takfiri ideology, they have easily kufr within Muslims.” (Trianita, 2014)

Part of ISIS’s attraction for many Indonesians is that it is an Islamic State or Daulah Islamiyah, a political entity dedicated to the Islamic-based movement across the globe. The organization’s appeal increased further when Abu Bakar Al-Baghdadi declared his intention to form ISIS as a Caliphate. Furthermore, as evinced by their
continued occupation of key territories, ISIS’s triumph in the Iraqi and Syrian wars, as well as its promise to oppose the tyrant minority in Syria, are characteristics that appeal to the group’s supporters.4

This article examines the impact of ISIS in Indonesia. The aim of this study is twofold: (1) to assess the origin of ISIS and spread of its ideology, (2) to examine the responses from Indonesian extremist and mainstream community to the rise of ISIS.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK
Here, we offer several relevant concepts to analyze ISIS. The first important concept underlying the ISIS framework is that of the state. ISIS is a literal translation of Daulah Islamiyah fii Iraq wa Syam. Daulah originates from the term dal-alif-lam, which, as constituted on its denomination, has the literal meaning of “gradually changing,” “seizing chance,” “changing and rotating,” or “defending champion.” Other translations include “circulating,” “consulting,” and “getting opportunity” (As-Sufi, 2015). From a political perspective, Daulah corresponds to “dynasty,” “state,” “government,” and “kingdom.” (Sufistik, 2015). Hence, Daulah Islamiyah can be literally inferred as an “Islamic State” —a state which is governed by Islamic values and power.5

Besides land, government and citizen, sovereignty is another element related to the concept of the state. Sovereignty is the highest authority ruling a territory; it represents freedom from external authority and full power over its citizens and institutions (Frankel, 1979).

Islam has been critical in the development and appeal of ISIS. ISIS identifies itself as a Caliphate in the original style of the 6th century. The Caliphate, deriving from the word “caliph,” is a form of leadership acknowledged by the Islamic community all over the world. The Caliph has the responsibility of implementing Shari’ah law and disseminating Islamic treatise to the society: often, the title is used interchangeably with Imamah; both terms have the same meaning, and they are used within the Shahih Hadiths, which are among the Kutub al-Sittah, the six canonical books of Sunni Islam. The traditional aims of the Caliphate include: (1) creating a society in which religion permeates every aspect of life; (2) manifesting Islamic-based justice, security and prosperity in every fabric of society; and (3) developing Islam as a peaceful religion so that the adherent achieve eternal bliss as promised in Al-Qur’an, surah Al-Saba’ verse 10.
Another significant element of the Islamic state is its military capability as an organized armed group that performs a “continuous combat function.” (Watkin, 2010). Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab in Somalia preceded ISIS as examples of entities that defy traditional definitions of statehood in exercising authority over a territory as an organized armed group (Margulies, 2013); however, ISIS has exceeded the level of leadership organization and infrastructure established by those more loosely coordinated radical militants.

ISIS represents certain Islamic characteristics. Some consider the Sunni to be the more purist of Islamic sects, since they follow Muhammad and his loyalist Abu Bakr’s prophecies in their observance, while the Shia support and prioritize Ali bin Abi Thalib over Muhammad’s loyalist (Tim Riset Majelis Tinggi Urusan Islam Mesir, 2015). In Syria and Iraq, ISIS gained traction among minority populations by positioning themselves as fellow Ahlul Sunnah Wal Jamaah (Sunni) opposing domination by the dominant Shia population. The Sunni sect is splintered further into sub-groups, including the Wahhabi and Salafi, both of which aim to purify the interpretation of Shari’ah law and implement it in the manner of Muhammad and the Caliphate’s era (Ali, 2014).

However, ISIS diverges from predominant Sunni beliefs and identifies more with Salafism, particularly Salafi-Jihadis (Assad, 2014). “Salafi” itself literally means “something that has already preceded” (Tim Riset Majelis Tinggi Urusan Islam Mesir, 2015). It refers to the paradigm that seeks to preserve and uphold textual understandings of Al Quran and Hadiths without attempting for esoteric interpretation of the texts or ta’wil. This paradigm aims to understand Islam, through Al Quran and Hadiths, as it was understood and implemented during the years of the Prophet Muhammad. The people who uphold salafi, the salafs, are thus often called the predecessors. This paradigm emerged as a movement to purify Islamic religious beliefs and practices. Jihad, meanwhile, is often associated with juhdun, literally means “struggle”, and jahada, or “to struggle”. Jihad has been then understood as efforts to seek truth through all-out struggle. Salafi-Jihadism is often considered among the most extreme in Islam in terms of interpreting Shari’a law on a daily basis. Consequently, Salafi-Jihadism often sparks conflicts among Sunni followers.7

The preference for armed struggle as the instrument by Islamic organizations such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda represents their certain interpretation of Islamic ideology. Ideology, in addition to shaping the behavior, also determines the objectives that its followers aim to achieve. For Salafi organizations like ISIS, these objectives involve defending God and
religion from insults and deviations. These insults and deviations also include religious practices that deviate from Shari‘a as upheld during the ages of the salafs. Tolerance is practiced only as long as it does not compromise Al Quran and Hadiths teachings. Otherwise, it would be considered as insults. This view justifies any means deemed necessary to achieve the objectives, including the use of force. The ultimate goal, as stated before, is the establishment of a community that strictly uphold and implement Shari‘a law.

An Islamic State in Iraq and Syria?
The emergence of ISIS into global prominence began with Abu Bakar Al-Baghdadi’s declaration of ISIS as a worldwide Caliphate, which occurred in close association with his forces driving Iraqi government forces out of key western cities, the capture of Mosul, and the Sinjar massacre. Abu Bakar Al-Baghdadi had been the leader of Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), after troops of the United States killed its former emir Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi and Minister of War Abu Ayyub Al-Masri in 2010 (Calrion Project, 2016). By its historical formation, therefore, ISIS is a reform of the previous ISI, as is another denomination, the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL). The Levant is a region comprising southern Iraq—Diyala, Baghdad, Kirkuk, Salahudin, Anbar, and Nineva—and northern Syria—Al Barakah, Al Kheir, Al Raqqah, Al Badiya, Al Halab / Aleppo, Idlib, Hama, Damaskus, and the coast of Al Sahel. ISIS and ISIL are essentially branches of the same organization that oversee the territories of Sham and Levant.

Origins of ISIS
The roots of ISIS date back to 1999, when Abu Mushaab Al-Zarkawi, founder of Jamaat Al Tauhid wa Jihad in Iraq first proposed the idea of Islamic state in Iraq as a vehicle to overturn Jordanian authority and accomplish jihad in Afghanistan (Calrion Project, 2016). In 2003, Zarkawi’s group became active in opposing the US invasion of Iraq, and he then allied with Al-Qaeda, which was then led by Osama Bin Laden, in 2004. At that point, Zarkawi’s group considered themselves a branch of Al-Qaeda based in the region between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers in Iraq.

In 2006, Zarkawi created Majlis Shura Al-Mujahedin (MSM) as a special jihadist force comprised of Sunni Muslim community, which merged his group with several other Jihadist armed movements such as Al Qaudafi Iraq, Jaish ath Thaifa al-Mansoura, Katbiyan Ansar al Tawhid was Sunnah, Saray al Jihad, Brigade al Ghuraba, and Brigade
al Ahhwal (Assad, 2014). Under the guidance of Al-Qaeda, the MSM established the infrastructure needed to enforce Shari’a law within a country. Not long after the establishment of MSM, the US Airforce killed Zarkawi.

Following Zarkawi’s death, Abu Ayyub and Abu Omar attempted to establish the ISI in 2006 through taking over areas with its armed forces and implementing Shari’a law in its territories, of which the most significant was the Sunni Islamic community in Anbar province.9 However, they made limited progress, and the organization did not begin to attract large numbers of supporters until Abu Bakar Al-Baghdadi transformed ISI into ISIS.

At the point that Abu Bakar Al-Baghdadi rose as the leader of ISI in 2010, the Shia government of Iraq, along with those of Iran and Lebanon, was engaged with multiple radical Sunni groups in addition to ISI, such as Al-Qaeda, Jaysh al-Fatiheen, Jund al-Sahaba, Katbiyan Ansar Al-Tawhid wal Sunnah, and Jeish al-Taiifa al-Mansoura.

In 2011, ISI, Jabhat Al-Nusra, and other armed organizations backed Sunni opposition groups in their confrontation with the Syrian government; ISI was also involved together with other Islamic armed group such as Jabhat Al-Nusra to topple Bashar Al-Assad (Calrion Project, 2016). The involvement of ISI in the Syrian war led to a significant expansion of Al-Baghdadi’s sphere of influence, since he was now engaged in a struggle against not one but two Shia governments, in addition to Shia opposition movements such as Fail Leb Tif Hizbullah, Kata’ib Hizbullah, Syrian Mujahidin Revolutionist, and Syrian Liberation Force.

After two years of war in Syria, Al-Baghdadi announced the transformation of ISI into ISIS on April 9th 2013. In his audio-taped speech, Al-Baghdadi sought support and obedience from Muslim across the world, and many listeners responded sympathetically and showed a willingness to join the movement (Muhammad, 2014). True to Al-Baghdadi’s word, ISIS soon created an Islamic state based on Sunni law and Salafi-Jihadist beliefs.10 This alteration, complemented by now legendary acts of violence and cruelty, was a double-edged sword for the group, both conferring legitimacy among extremists and fomenting friction among other Sunni Muslims. To address these divisions, Al-Baghdadi defined ISIS according to the more inclusive form of Caliphate or Daulah Islamiyah. In line with traditional conceptualizations of this universal Islamic state, the ISIS Caliphate purports to encompass not only Iraq and Syria, but also the entire Sunni community in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf countries (Gerges, 2016).
Fear and Ideology: Maintaining the Caliphate

One can identify several patterns in the approach of ISIS to establishing and maintaining hegemony. The membership of ISIS was initially very limited, and the intensification of the anti-US movement, which began during the invasion of Iraq, aided the group’s recruitment efforts significantly. However, the group’s members and sympathizers have expanded beyond the anti-US movement to include other Muslims who agree on the establishment of Islamic Caliphate. These people are skeptical of the imperialism of Great Britain and France, as well as the US, and they fondly reflect on the hey-day of Ottoman Empire. At the initial number of approximately 6000 people, ISIS member is growing up to 20,000 people (Muhammad, 2014).

ISIS has established a defined territory; however, the areas it has claimed are still under the authority of Iraq and Syria, and ISIS lacks any *de jure* recognition for its territory. Nonetheless, “citizens” within its claimed territory regard ISIS as their legal government, and they are classified even as having ISIS nationality. Citizens in the Islamic State are controlled rigorously through layers of coercion, which inculcates fear, forces obedience and dampens the resistance of followers.¹¹ ISIS terrorizes by executing its captives by guillotine and promoting such actions through mass media, and on a larger scale, ISIS advocates the utilization of weapons of mass destruction to create an even bigger scale of impact.

The supporters of ISIS also use ideology as a weapon to exacerbate differences and recruit support for its armed conflicts, addressing its opposition as infidels because of “the failure of implementing *Sharia* law or *bid’ah*.” (Assad, 2014). The goal of living under a state based on Islamic values has helped to expand the territory of ISIS, as proven by the annexation of northern Syria and certain areas of Iraq in 2013-2014 (Calrion Project, 2016). Non-Muslim citizens have the choice between paying a hefty tax, converting to Islam, or the death penalty, which has generated a vast refugee wave coming from ISIS-controlled territory. Yazidi, Assiria, Orthodox, and Catholic Christians are among the groups that have been forced to seek asylum (Muhammad, 2014).

ISIS established a special governing agency, Al-Idarooh Al-Islamiyah, to be responsible for administration and public services in its territories (Calrion Project, 2016), particularly necessities such as water, electricity, and infrastructure, which costs less for citizens than for non-citizen residents. ISIS runs an efficient, professional infrastructure, hiring qualified people in their respective fields to fill positions in various sectors. For example, former Baath party members occupy bureaucratic positions and receive decent
pay and ISIS hires professional physicians, teachers and school administrators to provide health and educational services. On the other hand, extreme force is employed frequently as a strategy to create fear within the citizens, and human rights violations are common (Calrion Project, 2016). ISIS applies Shari’ā law daily, and has created a law enforcement body specifically for this purpose. Violations of law such as robbery or adultery are dissuaded through inhumane punishments such as cutting off limbs or even the death penalty.

In addition to taxes, ISIS earns revenues from illegal and violent activities. While hostage taking is commonly touted as a major terrorist fund-raising activity, this measure often fails (Assad, 2014), and ISIS relies more heavily on illegal oil trading, which is among the most lucrative of ISIS’s endeavors, along with bank robberies and illegal trading in ancient artifacts, as well as donations from powerful supporters (Calrion Project, 2016). There have been multiple allegations that some of the Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, are involved in funding ISIS to support its involvement in Syria, where they seek greater regional influence to counter Iran (Assad, 2014). In addition to salaries and other aspects of infrastructure, these funds help the group to purchase weapons and other war-equipment on the black market. Furthermore, ISIS regularly obtains weapons and other equipment by seizing them from the Iraqi forces and similar opponents (Assad, 2014).

Since ISI’s establishment, the organization has striven to attract recruits. Their numbers initially grew based on the propaganda spread by members formerly of the Iraqi military service; however, the ISIS campaign has also spread through social media, and thousands of people have joined the armed group voluntarily. Frictions have arisen between ISIS and other Sunni groups because of its reputation for harshness and intolerance, and Jabhat Al-Nusra in Syria is one of the groups affected by the tension. Different interpretations of Islamic Shari’ā law are indicated as the primary reason for conflicts between ISIS and other Sunni groups (Antara, 2016). The tensions between ISIS and other jihadist groups in Syria have also shaped the dynamics of pro-ISIS movement in Indonesia as the following section will explain.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This paper presents a historical study and qualitative research method to examine the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) as a force in international politics and its impacts on the dynamics of violent extremism threat in Indonesia. Data collection
technique are retrieved from secondary data resources including relevant articles, books etc. By emphasizing historical study and qualitative research, we intend to seek the importance of consequential progress of events. This would delineate how phenomenon is shaped by various historical conjunctures.

DISCUSSION

ISIS in Indonesia

The Indonesian government perceives ISIS’s Islamic values as undermining Indonesian unity and values as represented in the Pancasila. Djoko Suyanto, Coordinating Minister of Politics, Law, and Human Rights, declared that the government “neglects and denies the beliefs of ISIS recently growing in Indonesia for it contradicts with Pancasila ideology and our unity as the Republic of Indonesia.” (Suara Islam, 2016). This policy is essentially a continuation of the approach adopted during the Soekarno era, which employed harsh tactics against Islamist militants, such as the group Darul Islam / Tentara Islam Indonesia (DI/TII; Darul Islam/Islamic Armed Forces of Indonesia), which sought to establish the Islamic State of Indonesia (Negara Islam Indonesia). With the defeat of DI/TII and the execution of its leader Sekar Marijan Kartosuwiryo, that movement was abolished in 1962; however, many of its veterans started offshoot groups that remained active, including Jemaah Islamiyah, and some non-violent religious groups continued to affiliate themselves with the dismantled organization through the 1970s and 1980s. Radical Islamist activities in the country appear to have been limited in the 1980s and 1990s; however, the violence began intensifying in the early 2000s, and Indonesia’s first anti-terrorism act was enacted under Megawati Soekarnoputri’s leadership (2001-2004) after Jemaah Islamiyah’s suicide-bomb attack in Bali in October 2002. Anti-terrorism efforts continued during the era of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, including the execution of Dr. Azhari and Nurdin M. Top, among other assassinations.

The Indonesian government monitors the activities of ISIS in the country through the National Counter-Terrorism Agency / Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme (NCTA / BNPT), National Military, and Immigration Agency. Measures implemented to prevent the influence of ISIS in Indonesia include tightening regulations for Indonesians traveling to the Middle East, monitoring the organization’s spread on the news, and enhancing operational intelligence. Related ministries such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Education and Culture cooperate on enhancing security and anticipating the
spread of ISIS in Indonesia. Nonetheless, as of 2015, 400-500 people had traveled to Syria, leaving from Poso, Central Sulawesi, Central Java, East Java, West Nusa Tenggara, and Southern Sulawesi (Liputan 6, 2015). As quoted from Main Secretary of NCTA, General Mayor Abdul Rahman Kadir, “All areas are prone to ISIS. Whenever we are ignorance, they sneak in.” (Liputan 6, 2015). According to NCTA, approximately 53 Indonesians who have joined ISIS are either dead or presumed dead as casualties of war (Liputan 6, 2015).

The Impact of ISIS in Indonesia: Conflicting Responses
As history shows, external development has played a significant role in shaping the dynamics of threat from violent extremist groups in Indonesia. The 1979 Iranian Revolution, for instance, gave the a new thrust for the political Islamic movement in the country. Moreover, the Soviet-Afghan War in 1980s attracted hundreds of Indonesian mujahideen that sought battle experience and military skills to be employed at home. A number of veterans from Afghanistan infamously took an active role in terror acts in Indonesia in late 1990s and early 2000s. Thus as a Muslim majority country with a long history of Islamic jihadist movement, Indonesia is a natural target for ISIS ideology. Not everyone agrees with ISIS, fortunately, as many in Indonesians, not only from the mainstream civil society groups but also from within the extremist community itself, have voiced strong negative responses.

Pro-ISIS Response
It did not take long after the appearance of ISIS for responses to come from Indonesia. The massive propaganda spread through social media had successfully gathered support from Indonesian extremist circles. At first, the support from radical Islamist groups in Indonesia were channeled primarily through the provision of material support such as medical assistance. Throughout 2012 until 2014, groups such as Hilal Ahmar Society Indonesia (HASI), the Jamaah Islamiyah’s humanitarian wing, as well as various Darul Islam factions sent delegations to Syria, bringing in cash and medical assistance to the Islamist resistance in a way apparently designed to open channels for more direct participation in the fighting (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2014a). Other extremist organizations that raised donations for Syria included Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT) and Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2014a).
As the appeal of ISIS were spreading out, Indonesian jihadists started to actually join the fight. As early as December 2013, around 50 Indonesians had gone to Syria to join ISIS (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2014a). The number kept growing that in 2017, Indonesian authority recorded that 671 Indonesians had tried to go to Syria, 99 of them were children (CNN Indonesia, 2019). Indeed, the conflict in Syria has captured the imagination of Indonesian extremists in a way no foreign war has before (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2014b). For the first time, Indonesians are going overseas to actually fight in the foreign war (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2014b).

On July 6th 2014, following ISIS’s declaration as a Daulah Islamiyah, an Indonesian group called Penegak Syariat Islam declared themselves as part of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria at Islamic State University of Syarif Hidayatullah. On the same day, Forum Aktivis Syariah Islam declared its support for ISIS and made a vow to follow Abu Bakar Al-Baghdadi as their leader.

One of the reasons why ISIS was so appealing to the extremist community in Indonesia was that it appeared to fulfill the religious prophecies that forecasted the return of caliphate in the greater Sham (Syria). The fact that ISIS actually controlled territory and strictly applied Islamic law in those areas it controlled also convinced Indonesian extremists that ISIS was just a state in name (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2015). During a pro-ISIS demonstration on March 2014, Bahrum Syah, one of the earliest Indonesian ISIS supporter, explained that:

We want everyone to understand that there is a far better option for the prosperity of all Muslims. This is not an empty offer but a genuine one that Allah is offering, a Muslim State. We have come to promote this state so that people will understand that the State already exists. At the same time, we want to tell the State that we, the Muslims of Indonesia, are with you, and that if you ask us to pledge allegiance, we are ready to do so.” (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2014b)

On April 2014, when announcing his allegiance to Al-Baghdadi, Aman Abdurrahman called invited “all those committed to the purity of the faith in Indonesia and all over the world to defend this State in any manner possible, whether by sending personnel, contributing wealth, spreading true news about the State, its religious precepts and its achievements, as well as exposing the conspiracies to undermine it through denials and lies.”(Muhammad, 2016)
Social media provides ISIS with the global reach to achieve its objectives, particularly in recruiting members; however, the group commonly utilizes the mosque as a means for socialization (BBC, 2016), and it recruits through seminars. For example, a seminar called “Unveiling Caliph Al-Baghdadi” on December 7, 2014 at Kendal, Central Java, which purported to oppose ISIS, was in fact unmasked as a recruitment campaign that actually spread the organization’s values. The International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research in Nanyang Technological University Singapore estimates that 19 Indonesian groups, including Mujahideen Indonesia Timur (MIT), Mujahideen Indonesia Barat (MIB), and Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), currently support ISIS. In addition to recruiting individuals, ISIS has also engaged in outreach with Indonesian religious and political groups, and there are currently 19 Islamic groups in the country loyal to ISIS, including the MIT, MIB, and JAT.

Many adherents support ISIS because of its promised benefits to their economic livelihood. According to Abdullah Mustafa Rahhal, a Syrian cleric residing in Turkey, ISIS propaganda guarantees considerable pay to every individual participating in its activities in Iraq and Syria. In addition to economic considerations, other reasons for ISIS’s success include western skepticism, jihadist aspirations (Husain, 2014), and the Islamic dream of a Caliphate overseeing the application of Islamic law.

Anti-ISIS Responses

However, the rise of ISIS has also triggered resistance in Indonesia. Many groups reject ISIS’ methods, if not its ideology. The tensions between ISIS and the al-Nusrah Front in 2013, for instance, have forced Indonesian jihadis to choose sides (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2014a). People such as Aman Abdurrahman and his followers have been the strongest supporters of ISIS. Support for al-Nusra comes from people like Muhammad Jibriel who runs the www.arrahmah.com that has been critical of ISIS’ takfiri stance. There was also a brief period during which the tensions between ISIS and other jihadi groups in Syria fueled the disagreeeent between salafi and salafi jihadism followers in Indonesia. The salafi groups, appaled at ISIS brutality, began to use the label khawarij against ISIS and cited a hadith saying that at the end of the world, the khawarij would side with Dajjal. The pro-ISIS groups, on the other hand, accused the salafis of trying to obstruct the restoration of the caliphate in Syria (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2014a).
Prior to ISIS’ caliphate declaration, Indonesian jihadi community had split over the doctrinal issue of whether security forces of an idolatrous state (*ansharut thaghut*) should be condemned as kafir institutionally, or whether they should be judged as individuals (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2014b). Those who supported the first stance was later known as *takfir mu’ayyan* group while the later *takfir am*. Aman Abdurrahman was the primary proponent of *takfir mu’ayyan*. As the debate grew hotter, each side declared members of the rival side kafir (Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict, 2014b).

Other organizations have rejected ISIS and its values. Even Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, which shares ISIS’s ambition to establish a Caliphate, has aligned its stance with those of other major groups (CNN Indonesia, 2016). NU and Muhammadiyah are two major Islamic organizations that have strongly positioned themselves against ISIS. (Santrinews, 2015; Detik, 2017). A NU leader, Said Aqil Siroj, went further, exhorting the group’s followers to oppose ISIS (Assad, 2014): “ISIS is declined by Islamic leaders across the world. Therefore, NU invites the society to go against ISIS.”

MUI and FUI also exhibit a robust stance toward ISIS. The leader of the MUI, Din Syamsuddin, dismissed ISIS as being opposed to Islamic values, and on August 7, 2014, (FUI) MUI released a statement declaring that (Ashrih, 2016):

1. Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is a radical movement claiming to be Islam in Iraq and Syria yet not upholding Islamic values—*rahatan lil’ alamin* (Islam is for all). Instead, ISIS is using a coercive approach to innocent people, destroying holy places by Islam, and violating nation state that Muslim has struggled for.
2. Islamic community in Indonesia rejects the very existence of ISIS in Indonesia. It has the potential to disintegrate Muslim and Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila.”

Majelis Intelektual dan Ulama Indonesia (MIUMI) expressed a similar opinion in a 2015 declaration (Muttaqin, 2015):

“4. The ascension of ISIS leader into Caliph is not going through the proper deliberation, neither the vague identity of Ahli Syura nor the leader’s identity. Therefore, the ascension itself is not syar’i.”
5. There has been a refusal in authorizing the Caliph stated by Islamic world-leader community as stated by *Ittihad ‘Aalamy li ‘ulama al Muslimin* led by Syekh Dr Yusuf Qardhawi, Rabithah World Islamic Ulama Association, Syekh Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Sulaiman Al Muhaisini, Rabithah Ulama Syrian leader Syekh Usamah Rifa‘I, and Syekh Abdul Muhsin bin Al ‘Abbad.

6. Calling all Muslim not to join the sect without logical and responsible fundamentals and to stay alert not to be provoked by the issues spread by irresponsible parties trying to disintegrate Islam in Indonesia. Bearing the good will and justice to fellow Muslim who are fighting for dignity of Islam in Iraq, Syria, and other places as instructed in Al-Maidah verse 8: “O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do.”

The MUI is a non-governmental organization that gathers Muslim scholars to deliberate and remain in contact to mobilize *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic fraternity), *Ukhuwah Wathaniyah* (national fraternity), and *Ukhuwah Insaniyah* (fraternity of humankind), thus, protecting and keeping the ummah to achieve a harmonious, safe and prosperous society in Indonesia (Assad, 2014). Hence, the views of the Chairman of the MUI or MUI reflect the views of many Islamic groups in Indonesia, particularly those composed of Sunni who adhere to Shafi‘i beliefs.

The community of Islamic scholars in Indonesia has also rejected ISIS. In a joint statement, Komarudin Hidayat and Azyumardi Azra, the Rector and Director of the Universitas Indonesia post-graduate program, respectively, declared, “fundamentally we have to condemn ISIS and sterilize Indonesia from its influence. ISIS and its ideology will dismantle Indonesia and Islam.” This view, shared by many scholars in Indonesia, reflects the character of Islam in Indonesia that dominated with Shafi‘i beliefs.

Besides the stance of the Indonesian government, many members of Islamic civil society reject ISIS as an Islamic entity. The leader of Istiqlal Mosque stated that

“ISIS movement is not an Islamic movement, instead an external party aspiring to split Islam into disunity. Therefore, ISIS did things that are
against Islamic teaching whatsoever. Islam does not encourage killing non-Muslim without proper reasoning, let alone killing the Muslim community.” (Muhammad, 2016)

Many Indonesians believe the teachings of ISIS such as engaging in sexual activity during jihad, forcing people to convert to Islam, evicting and executing innocent people and opposing different opinions on Islam is antithetical to Islam and condemn these activities.21 The group’s perceived arrogance has also contributed to negative responses. The importance of a centralized Islamic Caliphate also appears to be accepted less by the Islamic society in Indonesia. For instance, MIUMI asserted that the proposed Caliphate system was erroneous, as evidenced by Abu Bakar Al-Bahgdadi’s appointment as Caliph without deliberation among other Islamic leaders.22 According to MIUMI, ISIS system of appointing the Caliph is not the proper way, such as the vague identity of Ahli Syura who designates the Caliph or even the Caliph itself. Hence, the system itself is not in accordance with the Shari’a law. According to Azyumardi Azra, NU and Muhammadiyah would rather focus on discussing Indonesian national development instead of religious nationalism (Muhammad, 2016).

ISIS has encountered stiff resistance from these Indonesian Islamic community organizations, which perceive ISIS as being too rigid and fundamentalist in their understanding of the principles and implementation of Islamic law, as well as their stance in labeling those with divergent beliefs as infidels and heretics.23 As Islamic “purists,” ISIS does not accept groups with different understandings and will commonly attack fellow Muslims on issues regarding religious beliefs and implementation, including those from the same sect. In Indonesia, NU is included on ISIS’ “unfaithful” list, and based on its modern approach to understanding Islam, Muhammadiyah is also subject to the group’s disapprobation (Ali, 2014).

NU and Muhammadiyah have millions of members and are very influential in the Indonesian Islamic society. According to Hasanuddin Ali, NU affiliates number approximately 79.04 people, including 57.33 million members, while Muhammadiyah claims some 22.9 affiliates, including 9.39 million members (Ali, 2017). NU influence is strongest in Java, with 63.5 affiliates, including 49.52 million members, followed by Sumatra (9.14 million affiliates and 3.8 million members) and Kalimantan (2.89 affiliates and 1.98 members). In addition, the area of Bali, East and West Nusa Tenggara contains
1.56 million adherents, including 740,000 members; Papua has 699 thousand members among 923,000 affiliates; and Sulawesi has 1.47 affiliates and 588,000 members.

Muhammadiyah has a similar coverage area, with 13.43 million affiliates and 4.91 members in Java; 6.08 million affiliates and 3.38 members in Sumatra; and 1.23 million affiliates (351,000 members) in Kalimantan; followed by Bali, West and East Nusa Tenggara (823,000 affiliates, 411,000 members); Papua (593,000 affiliates, 132,000 members); and Sulawesi (294,000 affiliates, 196,000 members).

The attitudes of NU and Muhammadiyah toward ISIS are based largely on doctrinal differences. These groups derive their strength from their enormous memberships, and any external group offering information or ideology that differs from the prevailing opinion of those organizations will be opposed and rejected. NU and Muhammadiyah follow the beliefs attributed to Imam Shafii, whose adherents comprise approximately 28% of the total number of Islamic worshipers in the world (Ali, 2017). Shafii beliefs are entrenched in Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei and the Philippines, and outside of Southeast Asia, adherents are dispersed across Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran, Egypt, Yemen and Somalia.

In contrast, ISIS’ existence in the Arabian Peninsula is associated with the Wahhabi and the Salafi, who generally follow beliefs of Imam Ahmad bin Hambal. Hambalists comprise a small minority of approximately 5% of all Muslims, and they are especially dominant in the Arabian Peninsula, including Saudi Arabia, which is mostly Wahhabi (Hambali) (Ali, 2017).24

Shafii and Hambali scholars generally advocate “mutual recognition of differences and respect also tolerate for each other”;25 however, conflicts do arise between followers. In essence, the beliefs of different views in certain matters in the teachings of Islamic religion, actually located in a group named Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah (Sunni).26 Therefore, it is a fact that the beliefs on the one hand are different but have the same basic unity.

The attitudes of organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah are very important in analyzing ISIS opportunities to influence the Islamic society in Indonesia. NU and Muhammadiyah are strong institutions in the Indonesian state, and they have shown their strength in conflict with their opponents.27 During the war of independence, NU and Muhammadiyah fought against the Dutch alongside the Indonesia National Army / Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI). Similarly, when there was a conflict with the Indonesian Communists Party / Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), NU and
Muhammadiyah together with the TNI. NU has a political channel called the National Awakening Party / Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB). Although Muhammadiyah does not have its own official political party, many members and sympathizers are part of the National Mandate Party / Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN). In addition, many affiliates of both groups are members of the United Development Party/Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP). All of these factors indicate a strong base for opposing ISIS among Indonesian civil society.

CONCLUSION
As analyzed above, contention against ISIS in Indonesia derives not only from its status as a state or organized armed group, but also in response to its notoriously inhumane reputation, which allegedly correspond to the organization’s Islamic beliefs. ISIS is engaged in conflicts with both governments and non-governing Islamic groups, particularly among other Sunnis in Iraq and Syria. ISIS holds its beliefs as exclusive from other Islamic group; thus, the Salafi-Jihadis reject non-Salafis as infidels. In addition, ISIS engages in conflicts with other purist groups, even when they share the same intentions.

In Indonesia, preachers influence the existing Islamic groups with various adaptations to local wisdom. This condition implies that ISIS is not compatible with the Islamic movement in Indonesia, and it is likely that ISIS’s presence will result in contention, particularly if ISIS behaves as it has in Syria or Iraq. ISIS beliefs are highly likely to clash with the prevailing Islamic values in Indonesia, as evinced by the NU and Muhammadiyah organizations. The contention would intensify as ISIS continues with its erratic behavior and its practice of coercing adherence to Islam.

ISIS is likely to face strong contention from Indonesia’s government, which will hinder its movements in the country. In spite of some earlier difficulties, the Indonesian government’s efforts to combat radicalization have been consistent. Since the enactment of the anti-terrorism act, the government’s stance on combating radical movements has been clear, firm, and measurable. Therefore, ISIS will face a difficult time extending its operations to the Indonesian society.

Furthermore, since the group has had to face opposition from other Sunnis in addition to its main Shia adversaries, the presence of ISIS in Iraq and Syria has been shrinking over the past two years. Due to its notoriety, many Gulf countries have discontinued support for ISIS, which could reduce its power and popularity to the point...
that ISIS reverts to a typical organized armed group akin to Boko Haram or Al-Sabaab, thus, crippling its influence within its territory and hindering its ability to target distant countries such as Indonesia.

However, Indonesia must stay alert. Islamic radicalism may be limited; yet, it does exist, and it is constantly growing. The physical presence of ISIS in the Middle East might have been diminished, but the notion of establishing Daulah Islamiyah will linger. If Indonesia were to end its commitment to religious tolerance, the number of Islamic extremists would likely grow exponentially. The government needs to monitor people returning from the Iraqi and Syrian war; however, it is also necessary to deal peacefully and wisely with any people allegedly associated with extremist movements. Therefore, the government should devote further effort toward deradicalization by addressing the root problems of the disaffected. Empowering moderate Islam is another measure to overcome radicalism. Engaging moderate Islam as the main Islamic power in Indonesia could prove effective in socializing similar beliefs among the public. A powerful moderate group could then assist Indonesia in preventing the spread of extremist beliefs, even by as big a player as ISIS.

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**NOTES:**


2 In his book, Reno said that April 17th was the declaration day of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). While Muhammad Haidar Assad said that the declaration day of ISIS was April 9th (see Muhammad H. Assad, *loc.cit*).

3 Reno quoted, Salim Mubarok Attamimi Al Indonesiy, which originally came from Pasuran (p. 61), as stating, “Ikhwani Fillah (Islam Women), ‘Please Go, very soon to Syria’”. In his book (p. 62), Reno also quoted the statement of Abu Muhammad Al Indonesiy (an alumni of Tandzim Jihad Aceh which was led by Abu Roban), which quoted from Surat Al Taubah, Al Quran, “Say if it be that your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your mates, or your kindred; the wealth that ye have gained; the commerce in which ye fear a decline; or the dwellings in which ye delight-are dearer to you than Allah, or His Messenger, or the striving in His Cause-Then wait until Allah brings about His decision: Allah guide not the rebellious” (verse 24)…”.
“Go ye forth, (whether equipped) lightly or heavily, and strive and struggle, with your goods and your persons, in the Cause of Allah. That is best for you, if ye (but) knew” (verse 41).


Theories on the state classify polities into categories based on their citizen-government relations and citizens’ rights. Ideocracy is a state in which citizens feel threatened, act passively and willingly loyal to the government. Democracy is a state in which citizen as an individual has equal power as the government does. Aristocracy is a state in which citizen is differed by class – upper class as the government and lower class as citizen. Monarchy is a state in which a group of citizen considered as a government and the rest is being faithful to them. For more on the theory of state see Johan Kaspas Blunstchli (2000), The Theory of the State, Ontario: Batoche Book, p. 278-284.


7 For example, ISIS attacked Syrian Islamic Fighters or Syria Mujahidin from other Islamic Groups such as Jabhat Al Nusra or JN (formal branch of Al Qaeda in Syria), Ahrar Syam, Jabhah Al Islamiyah and some other Syrian Islamic Armed Group. When attacking the Syrian Islamic Fighters (as Mujahidin), ISIS also uses suicide bomb tactics. These actions had broken the concentration of all the Sunni (Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah) fighters in their efforts to fight President Bassar Assad and the Russian Army who helped the Assad regime. See, “Sejarah ISIS, Asal Mula dan Deklarasi Khalifah-Siapa”, retrieved January 31st, 2016, from http://www.bebibums.com/2014/08/sejarah-isis-asal-mula-deklarasi.html.

8 Levant is the English name for Sham country (Syria now). See, “Sejarah ISIS asal mula & deklarasi Khilafah - Siapa”, retrieved June 28th, 2015, from http://www.bebibums.com/2014/08/sejarah-isis-asal-mula-deklarasi.html. Muhammad Siddiqi stated, “the Levant is an old term referring to countries of the eastern Mediterranean.” However, some scholars include in it Cyprus and a small part of Turkey. However, basically, throughout history, the Levant has meant Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. This means Jordan, the West Bank (now under Israeli occupation) and Israel itself are part of the Levant,” see What is the Levant?, retrieved June 28th, 2015, from http://www.dawn.com/news/1113209.

9 Although most of Iraqi Muslim follows Shia Islam, Sunni adherents dominate the desert of Anbar province.

10 This changing attitude caused opposition from local tribes or original fighter group in Iraq as in Fallujah. See, The Islamic State, Calrion Project.


In his book, Assad (2014) stated that a Syariah Islam Up Holder Group distribute pamphlets that informed all Islam women to do ‘jihad sex’ (Jihad sex means to serve sexual desire of some mujahiddins). Haidar also pronounced the statement of Vice President for Student Affairs of State Islamic University in Jakarta, that is: In that pamphlet it was stated that all ‘akhtih’ (Islamic woman who apply for jihad sex) can contact the ISIS Secretary in Indonesia at Fathullah Mosque in State Islamic University in Jakarta”.13

According to Reno (2016), there is an image showing that Abu Bakar Ba’asyir (Founder of Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid together with other detained jihadists supported the Islamic State); however, on November 17, 2015, Ba’asyir argued that the problem of the Islamic State no longer exists and has ended.14


According to Muhammad Haidar Assad, the leader of Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid, Abu Bakar Ba’asyir confessed that he did not do baiat to the leader of ISIS although he once supported ISIS (see Muhammad H. Assad, 2014., p. 175).16


This is pull-factor caused some Indonesian Muslims to join ISIS according to M Iqbal (Syrian Islamic Cleric). See “Ini Penyebab Banyak Orang Indonesia Ingin Gabung ISIS Menurut Ulama Suriah” retrieved January 26th, 2016, from http://news.detik.com/berita/2929891/ini-penyebab-banyak-orang-indonesia- ingin-gabung-isis-menurut-ulama-suriah.18

It can be seen from the reason given by the terrorist detained by the Indonesian Police that connected their struggle with the Indonesia Government not being based on Sharia Law. Including Sharia Law is the form of Daulah Islamiyah (Islamic State).19

About takfiri practice, which are not aligned with ISIS supporter groups, see Ali M.S. Putra, “ISIS dalam Tinjauan Alussunnah”, retrieved January 27th, 2016, from Dzikra.com. See also Miftach Husain, 2014.20

According to MUI that is “The implementation of a nominee leader for Caliphate of all Muslim (baiat) must follow the procedure of musyawarah (discussion and consensus) of Ahlul Halii wal Aqdi (representative of all Ulama over the world), as stated by Caliphate Umar Ibn Khatab R.A (The Second
Islamic Caliphate) in Shahih Bukhori. Shahih Bukhori explained that if somebody be baiah without musyawarah from all Muslim, do not be obeyed or be followed. …as well as the man who do baiah in order to not fall into murder”. See A. Z. Muttaqin, 2015.  


26 Besides Sunni, there is Shia group. In understanding deeply about *Ahlul Sunnah Wal Jamaah*, see Tim Riset Majelis Tinggi Urusan Islam Mesir, p. 154-172 and about Shia see, p. 546-581.

28 Muhammadiyah’s stance against Indonesia Communist Party in the beginning of New Order (Orde Baru), See Muhammad Munawar Kholil (2009) “Sikap Muhammadiyah terhadap PKI: Periode Yunus Anis dan Ahmad Badawi (1960-1966),” Skripsi Jurusan Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Islam, Fakultas Adab UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga. See also "Dahnil Tak Kaget Dokumen Soal 1965 Sebut Muhammadiyah Terlibat” retrieved from https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1026450/dahnil-tak-kaget-dokumen-soal-1965-sebut-muhammadiyah-terlibat. About NU see,”Dokumen Rahasia AS, Bagaimana Peran Anshor Saat 1965?” retrieved from http://nasional.tempo.co/read/1026388/di-dokumen-rahasia-as-bagaimana-peran-ansor-saat-1965. See also, "Dokumen Rahasia AS Sebut Pihak-Pihak yang terlibat di Kasus 1965” retrieved from: //nasional.tempo.co/read/1026226/dokumen-rahasia-as-sebut-pihak-pihak-yang-terlibat-di-kasus-1965; Besides NU and Muhammadiyah, there are Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah Indonesia, Sarekat Islam, Al Qashitiyah, Math’laul Anwar, GUPPI, PTDI, DMI and Al Ittihadiyah. Then, there is Hizbut Tahrir and Forum Pembela Islam (FPI). Between them, Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah Indonesia and Serikat Islam have a strong position and role in the Indonesia’s social and political’s life. Based on Sharia Law, these two organizations include the conservative but have difference with NU and Muhammadiyah like fiqh. Based on its membership, these two organizations are not as big as NU and Muhammadiyah but have quite a significant position. Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah Indonesia and Sarekat Islam have their own political channels such as Perti (for Tarbiyah Islamiyah) and PSII (for Sarekat Islam). In the New Order, NU, Muammmadiyah, Tarbiyah and Sarekat Islam have ever been united in the same political channels inside Development Unity Party / Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP). Even until now, individuals and groups from those organizations are still being members of the party. This political channel can be used to ignore other different Islamic group and those considered harmful to political life.