

Muslim Education, Celebrating Islam and Having Fun As Counter-Radicalization Strategies in Indonesia

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Abstract

The paper refutes the linkage of Muslim education in Indonesia with radicalization, and addresses the commonly held, if incorrect, perception that theological conservatism has a causal relationship with violent extremism. Rather than a causal agent for extremism, Muslim education in Indonesia tends to operate as a protective mechanism against radicalization, as does participation in vibrant religious and cultural celebrations. Students attending the secular universities are most susceptible to extremist discourse, through the process of re-Islamization and the development of a stark and detached rational understanding of Islam.

Introduction

The July 17, 2009 bombings of the Ritz-Carlton and J W Marriot hotels in Jakarta rekindled suspicions that Indonesia's vast network of private Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and schools run by the modernist Muslim organization *Muhammadiyah* might be breeding grounds for radical Islamist ideologies, if not actual terrorist training centers.[1] Yet spokespersons for Indonesian Muslim organizations have consistently denied that there are links between Islamic education, radicalism, and terrorism, but the perception persists in Indonesia as well as in the West.[2] There are at least 17,000 *pesantren* in Indonesia, most of which are loosely tied to the theologically conservative, but politically progressive, Muslim organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). [3] *Muhammadiyah* operates a vast comprehensive educational system at instructional levels including kindergartens, primary, middle and secondary schools, colleges and universities that teach secular as well as religious subjects, and a small number of *pesantren*. If alarmist claims about Muslim Schools and radicalization were valid, there would be serious cause for concern. Fortunately, evidence suggests that they are mistaken.

The July 2009 bombings also led to increased concern about relationships between Wahhabi Islamic teachings, radicalization, and terrorism. The Indonesian commentator Saidiman observed:

Many observers argued that almost every militant Islamic movement today is part of, or at least influenced by, Wahhabism. Where trouble is found, Wahhabism may thrive. Both the Taliban in Afghanistan and Al-Qaeda, which have been launching attacks across the world for years, have officially adopted this ideology. Wahhabi extremism and terrorism continue to plague Indonesia, although real supporters in this country are few in number. [4]

The fact that most Indonesian (and other) Sunni Muslim extremists combine *jihadi* radicalism with Wahhabi teachings that define traditional Islamic devotional practices as unbelief has contributed to a growing perception among Indonesians that the two are interdependent. In Indonesian discourse, Wahhabism and terrorism are now clearly linked. The term “Wahhabi” is now often used conjointly with “*fanatik*” (fanatic) and associated with violence. These concerns have led to a series of books and seminars on university campuses and other public venues linking “Wahhabi” religious teachings, the violent campaigns that led to the brief Wahhabis occupation of Mecca in 1803-1811, the contemporary Saudi Arabian state and global Islamist terrorism. [5] They suggest a causal relationship. Some of these, especially *Ilusi Negara Islam* (The Illusion of the Islamic State), have not been well received by the Indonesian scholarly community because of their questionable historical claims and hyperbolic rhetoric. Some Muslim intellectuals describe them as counter-radical discourse that sinks to the same level as radical Islamist diatribes about conspiracies of Crusaders and Jews. They do, however, reflect heightened concern with violent extremism and with attempts to “Arabize” Indonesia. They are also components of a global discourse linking the teaching of al-Wahab, the Saudi State and Islamist terrorism. [6] If these alarmist claims about connections between terrorism and Wahhabi religious teachings were correct there would be very serious cause for concern because millions of Indonesians accept elements of Wahhabi religious teachings. Evidence suggests otherwise.

We have three purposes in this paper.

The first is to set the record straight about Indonesian Muslim schools in general and *pesantren* in particular. Indonesian Muslim schools, with a few noticeable exceptions, do not promote violent extremism no matter what their theological orientations. The opposite is true. They are one of Indonesia’s best defenses against it.

The second is to de-couple the religious teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahab (1703-92), the founder of what has come to be known as Wahhabism, from violent extremism. The relationship is one of correlation, not causality. While most Sunni Muslim terrorists follow his teachings, the huge majority of Indonesian and other Muslims who follow them oppose terrorism and other forms of religious violence.

The third is to describe the ways in which Indonesia’s secular universities *are* one of the sources of an emerging Islamist culture. It is the re-Islamisation of secularized elements of Indonesian society, not the development of radicalism in traditional Islamic communities, which poses the greatest risk of radicalization.

Muslim Schools and Radicalization

Concern about Muslim Schools in Indonesia and other countries represents a “spill over” from the fact that Wahhabi *madrasahs* funded largely by the Saudi government and wealthy Saudis provided bases and training sites for Afghan and foreign fighters during their war against the

Soviet occupation in the 1980s. [7] An unknown, but substantial number of Indonesians studied and taught at these *madrassahs* and at Jihad Academies inside Afghanistan. The “freedom fighters,” as they were known in the west at the time, were the ancestors of Al Qaeda, the Taliban and many other violent Islamist groups, including the Southeast Asian organization *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI). Jamal Malik and Muhammad Hassan have observed that these links have led many in the policy-making and policy studies communities to the conclusion that, wherever they are found, *madrassahs*, *pesantren*, and other Muslim Schools are terrorism factories and breeding grounds for intolerant exclusivist ideologies. Terrorism specialist Wayne Downing wrote:

In the past 24 years, the radical Wahhabi sect from Saudi Arabia has sponsored religious schools and *madrassahs* throughout the Islamic world. The Indonesians have seminaries called *pesantren*. Most of these schools spread a message of hatred and intolerance, radicalizing young Muslims and encouraging them to join the Holy War or Jihad. [8]

Some Muslim schools are centers of violent extremist teaching. Most are not. *Madrassahsh* is an Arabic term for higher-level Muslim schools. They have been important elements of Islamic civilizations since the ninth century and can be found everywhere in the Muslim world. Curricula vary greatly but usually include some combination of Classical Arabic grammar, Quranic exegesis, Islamic law, theology and sometimes mysticism. Fixation on *madrassahs* as sources of terrorism is extreme reductionism and distracts attention and resources for more important causal issues.

In Indonesia and elsewhere in Southeast Asia the term *madrassahs* is used differently than in other parts of the Muslim world. It usually refers to schools that are organized on Western lines in which there are formal classes and in which secular and well as religious subjects are taught. Schools resembling Middle Eastern and South Asian *madrassahs* are known in Indonesia as *pesantren*.

A small number of *pesantren* are known for extremist teachings and have been linked to terrorist organizations. JI is associated with *pesantren Al-Mukmin*, which is located in the village of Ngruki near Surakarta in Central Java. *Pesantren Al-Mukmin* was founded in 1972 by the charismatic, radical Islamist cleric Abubakr Ba'asyir who is also the spiritual leader of JI. Reports by the International Crisis Group describe it as being the center of a network of perhaps fifty *pesantren* that promote Islamist extremism.[9] Schools in this network share a common extremist ideology that is based on the religious teachings of Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328), al-Wahab (1703-1792), and other puritanical Muslim scholars, as well as the anti-state political philosophies of Hasan al-Bana (1906-1949), Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) and others associated with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. In a 2005 interview, Ba'asyir spoke at length on his understanding of Quranic teachings about *Jihad*, *Shari'ah*, and the relationship between Muslims and others. His view is that it is only possible to live a Muslim life in a society and state that are

governed exclusively by *Shari'ah* and that Muslims are obligated to fight all who oppose this view. This includes many who consider themselves to be Muslims, but who Ba'asyir declares to be *kafir*. [10]

The ideological if not logistical links between Ba'asyir, *pesantren Al-Mukmin* and violence are clear. JI has carried out numerous attacks on western targets in Southeast Asia including the "Bali bombings" of 2002. It planned others that were thwarted by security forces. The association of this one *pesantren* with attacks in Bali has led Australians to be especially concerned about extremist tendencies in Indonesian Islamic schools in general. To many Australians, the "Bali Bombings" are what 9/11 is to Americans because Bali is a popular destination for Australian tourists and 88 of the 152 people killed in the 2002 attack were Australians.

A JI splinter group led by Malaysian Noordin Top was responsible for the 2009 Jakarta bombings. Noordin was associated with *pesantren Al-Mukmin* and others in the Ngruki Network. [11] These associations have heightened suspicions about *pesantren* in particular, and Indonesian Islamic schools in general. The fact that a teacher in a Muhammadiyah school allowed Noordin to use his home as a hiding place and that other suspects have been traced to *pesantren*, including one described later in this paper, have increased the level of concern. Muhammadiyah reacted to this revelation by categorically denying that the organization is linked to terrorism. The fact that one out of the many thousands of teachers in Muhammadiyah schools was involved in a bombing does not suggest that the organization advocates or condones terrorism. [12]

Since the July 2009 bombings, right-wing Islamophobic bloggers [13] in the United States and elements of the mainstream Australian press [14] have once again focused on *pesantren* as the source of Indonesia's terrorist problem. C. Holland Taylor of the LibForall Foundation [15] and former Australian Prime Minister Alexander Downer both weighed in on the issue soon after the July 2009 bombing. Downer stated:

The problem with the schools is the curriculum is very narrow. They focus on religious education and not much else. People come out of those schools being great experts on the Koran, but they don't have knowledge of arithmetic, geography, language and physics. It's hard for them to get jobs and they get swept into this world of fundamentalist religion. [16]

Taylor went even further, linking Indonesia's second largest Muslim organization - *Muhammadiyah* - with: "extremists - who anathematize Australia, America and the secular system of Indonesia." [17] If either of these statements were correct, there would be cause for serious concern, but our findings refute these claims.

Our argument here is that *most* of what written about *pesantren* and radicalization in policy-oriented literature is wrong. Very nearly the opposite is true. The religious education young

people receive in *pesantren* does not drive them towards extremism; just the opposite. It helps to immunize them against it. Furthermore, most *pesantren* graduates are *not* ignorant of “secular” subjects. For many young people from pious, but poor families, *pesantren* are the gateways to higher education in the humanities, natural and social sciences, medicine, law, and technical fields because a substantial percentage of students at Indonesia’s Islamic Universities, which offer training in these fields, come from *pesantren* backgrounds. A related point is that students from secular backgrounds who study at secular and Islamic Universities are more vulnerable to radicalization than those from *pesantren* backgrounds.

Pesantren

Pesantren are traditional Islamic boarding schools.[18] They are also known as *pondok* or *pondok pesantren* (often abbreviated *ponpes*). Similar schools are found in Malaysia, Southern Thailand and the Southern Philippines where they are known simply as *pondok*. *Santri* is a Javanese term for Muslim student. A *pesantren* is a place for *santri*. *Pondok* is a Javanese/Malay/Arabic term that means hostel. Most *pesantren* are located in rural areas, though there are thousands in major cities, especially in East Java, the heartland of traditional Islamic scholarship in Indonesia. Some *pesantren* have only a handful of students. The largest, *Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo* in Kediri in East Java, has more than twenty thousand. Students are as young as four or five years of age. There is no upper age limit. In many traditional *pesantren* there are no admissions standards, no formal classes and no examinations or grades, at least in religious subjects. Students study particular texts under the tutelage of a recognized teacher, until they have mastered, and in many instances, memorized them. Some *pesantren* have fixed tuition. Most charge only what students or their parents can afford to pay. They also receive charitable contributions from alumni and supporters.

Until the late 1970s and early 1980s many *pesantren* taught only religious subjects. Some still do. But as secular education has become increasingly important, most have introduced non-Islamic or “general” subjects. The modernization of the *pesantren* education system began already in the 1930s. *Pesantren Tebuireng*, was founded in 1899 by Kyai Hasyim Asy’ari (1871-1947). Asy’ari was one of the founders of NU and is widely regarded as having been one of the most important Indonesian Muslim scholars of the twentieth century, and as a Sufi saint. He introduced instruction in secular subjects in 1929. Many other *pesantren* soon followed his lead, though a lack of qualified teachers hampered the reform process.

Pondok Darrusalam Gontor in Ponogrogo in East Java was the first *pesantren* to adopt “modern” instructional methods including formal classes and to emphasis instruction in secular subjects. Though the *pesantren* was founded in 1926 by scholars from both *Muhammadiyah* and NU backgrounds, it has never been directly tied to either of these organizations and has taken a decidedly nonsectarian approach to religious instruction. One of the school’s goals is to bridge

the gap between sectarian groups by teaching diversity. Gontor's motto is "Gontor Above and For Every Group." From the beginning, it attracted students from a variety of theological backgrounds. In addition to Islamic and "modern" education, it promotes values including independent and critical thinking, efficiency, and progress. The curriculum includes texts written by Ibn Tamiyyah and al Wahab. It also includes study of Ibn Rushd's (Averroes 1126-1198) *Bidayatul Mujtahid*. This extremely complex work explores the philosophical underpinnings of the diversity of opinion in Islamic jurisprudence. Students also learn about the diversity of Muslim religious practice; learning that there is more than one recognized way to perform the five daily prayers surprises many students, and for some, is a source of inspiration. The importance of learning about the diversity of Muslim religious thought and ritual praxis as a mode of counter-radical discourse cannot be over emphasized. It is exactly the opposite of the extremist position that claims: "Our Islam is the only Islam."

Probably because it combines educational excellence with an emphasis on independent thinking, Gontor graduates include national leaders from across the religious-political spectrum. Hidayat Nur Wahid of PKS, Indonesia's most important Islamist political party, Din Syamsuddin of *Muhammadiyah*, Hasyim Muzadi of NU and Abu Bakr Ba'asyir are all Gontor alumni.[19] So was the late Nurcholish Madjid, the founder of Paramadina University in Jakarta and one of Indonesia's most important progressive Muslim intellectuals. So is Ali Amin, one of the authors of this paper.

Muslim poet, political activist and performance artist Emha Ainun Najib also studied at Gontor. His all night performances attract thousands of young people. They feature music fusing Javanese, Arabic and Western styles and instruments and female singers – an anathema to extremists. The message combines Sufi piety, Indonesian nationalism, and advocacy of democracy and social reform. Emha is bitterly sarcastic when it comes to Saudi Wahhabis. In a recent (December 17, 2009) performance he repeated the line "Welcome to Arab Saudi --- and have a nice day!" (English in the original) repeatedly, each time with increasing sarcasm.[20]

Clearly, it is not possible to link Gontor to a single religious or political orientation. It is a remarkable school that leads students in many directions. A few, including Ba'asyir have become extremists. Most are exactly the opposite. Gontor graduates have founded more than a hundred similar *pesantren* across the country.

The tradition of educational modernization accelerated after Indonesian independence in 1945 and especially after 1975 when the Indonesian government mandated six years of general education for all students and offered subsidies to *pesantren* that chose to offer a secular curriculum. There were, however, provisions for *pesantren*, to offer an entirely religious curriculum. Some chose this option, but a combination of secular and Islamic education became the norm. Many *pesantren* now include *madrassahs*, which often overshadow programs offering traditional religious education. Many offer middle school (SMP) and high school (SMA) programs that are the equivalent of those available from government schools. Some offer

vocational training as well. The 1975 reforms also enabled *pesantren* graduates to take college entrance examinations. A few *pesantren* now offer a mixed curriculum at the college level.

Muhammadiyah schools have been offering high quality secular education since the early decades of the 20th century. The organization was founded in part to provide education for Muslim children comparable with that available in Dutch colonial and Christian missionary schools, both of which were considered unacceptable by many Muslim parents.

Contemporary Indonesian government schools cannot be described as “anti-Islamic.” Religious education is required for all students, but it is very basic and does not expose students to the intellectual complexities of the Muslim tradition. Many Muslims parents choose to send their children to *pesantren* or *Muhammadiyah* schools for one or both of two reasons: (i) they are less expensive than government schools and, (ii) they also have a higher level of religious instruction than government schools. Like Roman Catholic and Protestant schools in the United States, they provide an explicitly religious environment for the educational process. Many religiously conservative Muslims would not consider sending their children to anything other than an Islamic school.

Most *pesantren* were founded a generation or more ago by charismatic religious leaders known as *Kyai*. Most of the oldest and most important *pesantren* are led by *Kyai* who are descendants of the founder. *Kyai* are, or are at least reputed to be, saintly figures. They embody and are repositories of religious knowledge and spiritual power. Some are known for their spiritual powers, including the ability to heal, control malevolent spirits, conduct exorcisms and prepare charms and amulets, as much as for their skill at interpreting Islamic texts. Many are believed to possess *Ngelmu Ludani*, the ability to acquire knowledge effortlessly and without study.

Students and other followers often accept their *Kyai*'s judgment and guidance concerning religious, social and political issues without question. The *Kyai*'s status in the *pesantren* is often compared with that of the *raja* (king) in a traditional Javanese state. They are thought to be sources of blessing (*barakah*) as well as knowledge. It is customary for followers to kiss a *Kyai*'s hand on greeting him or to touch his sleeve in hope of securing blessing through physical contact. Even the dishes from which he has eaten and the water with which he performs ablutions is thought to be holy. *Kyai* families are widely regarded as aristocrats and as holy families. The wives, children and even grandchildren of prominent *Kyai* are also thought to be sources of blessing and are treated with respect and deference. Even members who do not choose to become religious scholars are highly respected members of their communities. *Ngelmu Ludani* is believed to run in these families. The graves of important *Kyai* are major pilgrimages sites. Thousands of people attend annual ceremonies (*haul*) commemorating the anniversaries of their deaths. In many *pesantren* *santri* are required to congregate at the founder's tomb to pray for him and seek his blessing on a regular basis.

The respect with which *Kyai* are regarded has significant implications for understanding counter-radical discourse in Indonesia. A simple statement denouncing radicalism and violence by a prominent *Kyai* carries more weight among traditional Indonesian Muslims than elaborate educational programs designed by government ministries, NGOs and international donors.

Every *pesantren* is unique. The Islamic texts pupils study and the devotional practices they are required to observe vary considerably, reflecting the learning religious orientation and practices of the *Kyai*. The religious subjects taught in *pesantren* include various combinations of classical Arabic, *Qur'an* recitation and exegesis, Islamic law, theology and, in many cases, mysticism. A study of texts taught in *pesantren* and other Indonesian Islamic schools by Martin van Bruinessen revealed that jurisprudence is the most common subject, followed Arabic grammar and theology.[21] Most of the texts used are “classics” written in the pre-modern era. He does not mention a single Islamist text. To the extent that such works are read, it is outside the formal curriculum.

Each *pesantren* also has a unique set of devotional practices, often including some combination of prayers in addition those required by Islamic law, fasting one or two days per week, *tahlilan* (prayers for the dead) and pilgrimage to holy graves. Many are associated with one or more Sufi brotherhoods.

Life in most *pesantren* is austere and discipline is strict. As many as twenty students live together in a small room. Food is simple and often not at all tasty. There are two reasons for these austerities. The first is to minimize expenses. The second is that living simply and eating unappealing food is understood as a form of asceticism that turns attention away from worldly matters and towards God. In many *pesantren*, televisions, radios, computer games and cell phones are prohibited. At some of them students are allowed to leave the campus only one afternoon per month. In most *pesantren* that accept female students there is strict gender segregation. At *Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo*, for example, female students live and attend classes in a walled compound. The only males allowed through the gate are teachers, grandfathers, fathers and brothers. The purpose of this regimen is to keep worldly temptations from distracting students from religious learning and devotions.

At many *pesantren* there are informal study groups in which students discuss topics they are interested in that are not included in the formal curriculum. These sometimes include extremist political and religious topics. Similar groups can be found at secular and Islamic secondary schools and in universities as well as in many mosques. These groups are most often the vehicles through which extremist teachings are spread. There are closed, highly secretive groups known as *pengajian tertutup* (closed religious lessons). The presence of these closed discussion groups is a key indicator of extremist activity. Even at *Pesantren al-Mukmin*, extremist teachings are not part of the formal curriculum. What distinguishes extremist *pesantren* from others is that closed discussion groups are organized by the teaching staff. These groups are very difficult to monitor, much less regulate, especially at large *pesantren* or on university campuses. Mosque-based

discussion groups are among the most important vehicles for spreading extremist teachings among less educated and less privileged young people. They are even more difficult to monitor or control than those conducted in *pesantren* or on university campuses. Mosques are public spaces and are open to all believers. While there are regularly scheduled events at many mosques in addition to the Friday congregational prayer, most are unoccupied most of the time. This makes them ideal places for informal religious gatherings of all kinds. The presence of an extremist discussion group does not, therefore, necessarily suggest that the mosque community, as a whole, has extremist tendencies. There are however, some mosques, that are known to sanction extremist activities, though usually only informally.

Wahabbism and Islamic Education in Indonesia

In Indonesia, the term Wahhabi is used in very imprecise ways. It can be used for individuals and organizations that follow the theological teachings of Abd al-Wahhab. It is more commonly used in a much wider sense for those who denounce interpretations of Islam other than their own as unbelief and who regard Javanese and other Indonesian cultural traditions as unbelief. Political change is only one part of a broader Islamist agenda. They also seek to radically transform Indonesian Islam and cultures, using Saudi Arab cultural and religious praxis as their model. Some do not accept the legitimacy of the Indonesian state and think that nationalism and laws other than *shari'ah* are unbelief. They imagine an Islam that is free from local elements and seek to substitute what they believe to be *sunnah* (the social and religious practice of the Prophet Muhammad and his close companions) for indigenous culture. Abu Bakar Ba'asyir's political views were mentioned previously. He has spoken at mosques and on university campuses across Indonesia. On these occasions, he spoke more frequently about these religious issues than about explicitly political topics. In a sermon delivered at a Yogyakarta mosque during Ramadan of 2009, he explained that he has nothing against Javanese culture - except those parts of it which are "unbelief". In his view at least 90% of Javanese culture is "unbelief." He went so far as to claim that the Javanese language is unbelief because of its extensive use of honorifics. He peppered his remarks with frequent assertions that only "true Muslims" would go to heaven and that most Indonesians will burn in Hell. There are, however, clear links between his political and religious agendas. In a question and answer session after his address he called Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono a *kafir* but explained that the time is not ripe for violent struggle in Indonesia. He stated that Muslims are obligated to fight against the United States and other NATO countries because they continue to wage aggressive wars against the Muslim community. In a similar, but far less extreme vein, the Islamist political party PKS (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* – Justice and Prosperity Party) denounced the much beloved tradition of holding torch light processions (*Takbir Keliling*) on the final night of Ramadan as being "not Islamic." The rhetoric was softer, but the message was the same – local cultures are among the enemies of Islam.

Religious aspects of this movement and efforts to establish a Saudi-style Islamic state are supported by the Saudi government, charities and individuals through scholarships, development aid, subsidies for schools that teach Saudi style Wahhabi Islam as well as other financial enticements. Since the late 1970s, there have been enormous flows of funds from Saudi Arabia to Indonesia in support of this agenda. A substantial portion of this funding has been channeled through *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* (The Indonesian Society for the Propagation of Islam). Saudis have fostered the belief that simply because they control access to the holy places of Islam in Mecca and Medina that Saudi Arabs are somehow more “Islamic” than other Muslims. This is why we have called this movement “Wahhabi Colonialism.”[22]

Most individuals and groups that hold such religious views are not violent. Some, including PKS operate within the democratic political system. Their goal is to transform the state and society by peaceful means. Others, known as the *tarbiyah* (education) *Salafi* groups are completely apolitical.[23] They seek to establish islands of Islamic purity in what they believe to be a sea of unbelief. They choose to ignore the state instead of fighting it, to practice Wahhabi-style Islam in closed communities and to spread their beliefs through peaceful means. Many wear distinctive “Arab” style clothing: calf-length trousers (*isbal*) or robes (*jakabiyya*) for men and usually, though not always, black face veils (*niqab*) for women. Many *Salafi* men also have long beards. It is a common, and unfortunate joke to link “*celana pendek, jenggot panjang*” or in English – “short pants, long beard” to Wahhabism and political extremism.

In Indonesian discourse, a distinction is sometimes made between violent Wahhabis and pacifist Salafis. There is, however, a tendency to group the two together as *Salafi-Wahhabi*. The tendency to associate either or both with violence is an inaccurate and extremely regrettable overreaction on the part of some Western observers as well as mainstream and progressive Indonesian Muslims. It is true that most violent extremists hold Wahhabi religious views. But it is also true that only a very small percentage of the people who hold Wahhabi religious views are violent extremists. In a more general sense, to suggest that Wahhabi teachings are *necessarily* related to, or cause, violent extremism is *simply wrong*. The political orientations of Indonesian Muslims who share these religious beliefs include progressive democrats, violent extremists and everything in between.

The Domestication of Wahhabi Islam: Pondok Pesantren Madrassahs Wathoniyah Islamiyah and Muhammadiyah

Muhammadiyah schools and a small number of *pesantren*, including Pondok Pesantren Madrassah Wathoniyah Islamiyah (PPMWI), teach texts written by al-Wahab or texts summarizing his theological views. His works on the core Islamic doctrine of *tauhid* (The Unity of God) are especially influential. Theologically, these schools stress a literalist understanding of *tauhid*. Most Indonesian, and other, Muslims interpret this doctrine in ways that allow for the intercession of saints on behalf of their devotees; they also believe in the efficacy of prayers for the dead. Al-Wahab taught that there could be no intercessors between humans and God. He was

also harshly critical of many aspects of popular Islamic devotionism - especially of *ziyarah* (visiting graves) and prayers for the dead. In this respect, his views were similar to those of the Christian reformer Martin Luther and other leaders of the Protestant Reformation. Like European Protestants, Indonesian followers of al-Wahab reject practices of saint veneration and visiting tombs. Most, however, do not reject local cultural traditions and praxis to nearly the extent that Ba'asyir and others like him do. Most are also Indonesian nationalists. To associate them with extremist, anti-state political views does them a great injustice.

Al-Wahab's teachings have been known in Indonesia since the early nineteenth century. While clear evidence is hard to come by, it is likely that they were brought to what is now Indonesia by pilgrims returning from Mecca during the first Wahhabi occupation of the Holy City (1803-1811). *Pondok Pesantren Madrassahs Wathoniyah Islamiyah* was established in 1828 and is a legacy of these early influences. A second wave of Wahhabi influence reached Indonesia in the early twentieth century. *Muhammadiyah* was founded in 1912 and combines Wahhabi understandings of the Unity of God and ritual practice with modernist social and educational agendas. Both reject the appellation Wahhabi and distance themselves from the third wave of Wahhabi influence that began the 1960s. This third wave differs from its predecessors in that it is supported by a foreign state with enormous resources and seeks to establish cultural hegemony as well as religious orthodoxy. In this respect *Muhammadiyah* and PPMWI could not be more different from the "New Wahhabism" because both have integrated al-Wahab's religious teachings and Indonesian, and more specifically Javanese, culture. Neither would claim that 90% of local culture is based on unbelief. Both understand themselves as being a part of, not distinct from culture and tradition.

Muhammadiyah

With approximately thirty million members, *Muhammadiyah* is Indonesia's, and the world's, largest Muslim modernist organization. Its social teachings concerning modernity and education build on those of the nineteenth century Egyptian reformer Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905). On religious matters *Muhammadiyah*'s teachings closely resemble those of al-Wahab. It shares his understanding of the doctrine of the unity of God and vigorously opposes what it considers to be innovation (*bid'ah*) in ritual matters. It stresses strict conformity with what the organization considers to be the practice of the Prophet Muhammad and his close companions. Opposition to the practice of visiting tombs is one of *Muhammadiyah*'s most important and best known teachings. [24]

At the same time Javanese traditions and customs play very important roles in the lives of many *Muhammadiyah* people. The organization is remarkably tolerant towards elements of Indonesian and especially Javanese Islam, it officially condemns. It was founded inside the walls of the Yogyakarta palace by *Kyai* Achamad Dahlan who was an official at the state mosque of the Sultanate. *Muhammadiyah* members continue to participate in palace rituals, including elaborate celebrations of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, which Indonesian Islamists denounce as

unbelief. The *Pengulu*, the chief Islamic official of the Yogyakarta Sultanate, is responsible for the administration of hundreds of holy graves. The office has been held by *Muhammadiyah* members since the 1930s. Some *Muhammadiyah* members continue the practice of praying for the dead, but make it clear that they are not seeking blessing from them in the way that more traditional Indonesian Muslims do.

Muhammadiyah has always been strongly nationalist, but as an organization has refrained from involvement in electoral and other forms of “practical” politics. When *Muhammadiyah* members speak politically, they speak for themselves, not the organization. Like other mainstream Muslim organizations *Muhammadiyah* strongly denounced the July 2009 Jakarta bombings.

Muhammadiyah leaders and the vast majority of rank and file members oppose all acts of violence committed in God’s name. They also defend al-Wahab’s theology and deeply resent its appropriation to justify violence. Writing in one of *Muhammadiyah*’s official publications, Haedar Nashir acknowledges the similarities of *Muhammadiyah* and Wahhabi understandings of *tauhid* and their shared objective of restoring Islam to its pristine condition by purging it of unbelief (*kufrat*) and polytheism (*shirk*). He does not whole-heartedly endorse Wahhabism and explains that *Muhammadiyah*’s theology is more closely related to that of Muhammad Abduh. [25]

In response to the recent tendencies in the Indonesian and international press to link al-Wahab’s religious teachings with terrorism, *Muhammadiyah* leader, Dr. Yunahar Ilyas, explained that al-Wahab was not a “fanatic” and that his goal was only to purify Islam. [26] *Muhammadiyah* has shared this goal since its founding in 1912. It is, at the same time, a movement that remains deeply committed to the idea of Indonesia and to the diversity of Indonesian cultures. This clearly sets it apart from transnational Wahhabism.

Pondok Pesantren Madrassahsh Wathoniyah Islamiyah (PPMWI)

PPMWI is a mid-sized *pesantren* located in Kebarongan in the Banyumas region of Central Java. It is of limited national significance but provides an especially cogent example of how the appropriation of al-Wahab’s teachings by violent groups has sullied the name of progressive organizations that share his understanding of the Unity of God. PPMWI has been mentioned in the Indonesian press as a center of radical teachings because a handful of people who subsequently became terrorists studied there in the late 1980s and early 1990s. [27] Ahmad Bunyan Wahib makes similar accusations in his MA thesis from the National University of Malaysia [28] and other writings that are broadly disseminated online in English and Indonesian. [29]

These accusations are not correct. [30] According to family tradition, a *Kyai* who had spent more than twenty years studying in Mecca founded PPMWI in the mid-nineteenth. Originally, only religious subjects were taught. PPMWI was reorganized as a *madrassahs* in 1878. This makes it

one of the oldest *pesantren* in Java. Today it is run by members of his family and has approximately 1,300 students. It is known for educational excellence and theological conservatism. Many alumni have gone on to study for advanced degrees at secular universities in Indonesia, Malaysia and the United States (including Arizona State University). Some now hold important positions in education, public service and government.

The religious curriculum centers on very conservative interpretations of *tauhid*. *Fathul Majid*, which is one of al-Wahab's clearest statements concerning the doctrine of the Unity of God and which strongly denounces modes of religious practice including visiting graves that are common in Java, is one of the core texts. PPMWI is one of the very few *pesantren* at which the veneration of graves is not allowed. One of the factors that distinguish PPMWI from radical groups is that they teach only the Arabic original *Fathul Majid* while many extremist Islamists rely on an Indonesian translation of an Arabic commentary by the Saudi Islamist scholar Syaikh Abdul Aziz Abdullah bin Baz. Teachers at PPMWI consider that version of the text to be highly suspect because of bin Baz's extremist views. Jihad is *not* part of the curriculum nor is anti-state Islamist globalism. In addition to religious subjects, PPMWI teaches an Indonesian government-approved secular curriculum and has a strong nationalist orientation. Students wear uniforms similar to those required at other Indonesian schools and are not allowed to adopt the "Arabic" dress and mannerisms characteristic of Islamist extremists.

PPMWI is deeply involved in the local community. It is the community school and has provided basic education for local children for generations. It has a much larger enrollment than the local government school. It depends almost exclusively on tuition payments and donations from the local community for financial support. It is a center for the collection and distribution of charity in the region. More than a thousand people participate in communal prayers on *Id al-Fitri*, the holy day at the end of Ramadan. In his 2009 *Id* sermon, the current *Kyai* spoke of democracy, religious and social harmony and the importance of education for girls and women. There is a *bedug*, a large drum played to accompany the call to prayer at the *pesantren* mosque. It is played throughout the night at the end of Ramadan. This is important because the *bedug* is widely recognized as an important symbol of Javanese Islam and because many Indonesian Islamists consider it to be an unlawful religious innovation. [31]

Members of the family that has managed PPMWI for more than a century visit and pay respect to all members of the local community, including those who have very different understandings of Islam, on the morning of the *Id*. They are actively involved in conversations about social and religious issues with leaders of other Muslim organizations as well as with Christians, and Buddhists since they regard all human beings as God's creations and the children of Adam and Eve.

PPMWI and most other *pesantren* not only do not promote extremist views, they actively oppose them and expel students and teachers who hold them. At PPMWI, students who wear the calve length trousers and have long beards (men) or *burqah* (women), that many Indonesians associate

with religious and political extremism, are interviewed concerning their extracurricular activities and especially the types of religious study groups they participate in. Those suspected of harboring radical political views are first asked to discontinue participation in Islamist groups and if they refuse, are not allowed to continue their studies and asked to leave. This does not, of course, remove them from extremist circles, and some have subsequently found their ways to *Pesantren Al-Mukmin*. Ahmad Bunyan Wahib mentions the fact that some former teachers went on to found extremist schools and foundations. He does not mention the fact that they had been asked to leave PPMWI. He confuses combating extremism with promoting extremism. Muhammadiyah and NU have adopted similar tactics in attempt to take back schools as mosques that have come under the influence or control of extremist groups. [32]

Muhammadiyah PPMWI and the Domestication of Wahhabi Teachings

Muhammadiyah and PPMWI are rooted in thoroughly domesticated version of al-Wahab's teachings. By "domesticated" we mean that his teachings about the Unity of God and ritual performance are taught and lived in the context of local culture, tradition and Indonesian nationalism. In neither case did the import of novel religious teachings lead to the wholesale abandonment of the existing cultural order. Only those practices which were clearly in conflict with the newly received interpretations of the doctrine of the Unity of God were abandoned. Neither attempted to replace Javanese with Arab cultural praxis in the way that New Wahhabis do. In both cases there was never an attempt to change linguistic terminology, kinship and marriage systems or even more easily transformed identity markers such as clothing. As far as clothing is concerned *Muhammadiyah* has moved away from tradition in the opposite direction because it has long allowed men to wear trousers when at prayer. Both reject limitations on women's rights as supported by many of the New Wahhabis.

One of the reasons for the seamless integration of Javanese and other Indonesian cultures and al-Wahab's theology is that the process was driven by local religious concerns and was not linked to foreign political, financial or military power. The founders and subsequent generations of leaders of *Muhammadiyah* and PPMWI have relied on the power of persuasion and the financial resources they could garner from the Indonesian Muslim community.

Theological conflicts between these and similar organizations and traditional Muslims have been intense, at times even bitter – with charges of unbelief and apostasy made by all parties. Disputes between *Muhammadiyah* and NU have figured prominently in Indonesian religious discourse for nearly a century. What brings them together today is a common dislike and fear of the political and religious extremism which both now call Wahhabis. PPMWI is a local religious movement that began to attract national attention only when it was falsely linked to Wahhabism and terrorism. There are Muslims in Kebarongan who do not accept its religious teachings and will not pray at the *pesantren* mosque. This theological conflict mirrors those between *Muhammadiyah* and NU at the national level.

Neither attempts to use an Arab blueprint for the transformation of local culture. Both have strong nationalist and democratic orientations and oppose the cultural colonialism of the New Wahhabism.

Pesantren Education as Counter-Radicalism

Pesantren education works against extremism because it provides students with knowledge of, and appreciation for, the complexities of Islamic thought. Former Australian Foreign Minister Downer's claim that *pesantren* graduates are, "great experts on the Koran" is an overstatement. A few are, most learn only the basics of Quranic exegesis, Islamic theology and law. But what they do learn makes them far more resistant to extremist propaganda than Muslims who have only secular educations. Extremist propaganda relies heavily on *dalil'* (religious proofs) consisting of short passages from the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* (traditions concerning the speech and behavior of the Prophet Muhammad) concerning *jihād*. These are often quoted out of context, in isolation from immediately preceding or following verses, which limit their application. They usually ignore the ways in which the verses cited are explained in classical exegetical works (*tafsir*) which emphasize the social and political contexts in which they were revealed in the case of the *Qur'an*, or in which the Prophet Muhammad spoke, in the case of *Hadith*. Most are not familiar with the complexities of classical Arabic grammar, which is of central importance in Islamic hermeneutics. Many do not know Arabic at all and rely on a combination of Indonesian translations and extremist oral tradition about what the *Qur'an* allegedly says. Young people who do not have solid Islamic educations can easily be misled by appeals to seemingly clear textual references to violence. Students who have been schooled in *Qur'an* and *Hadith* scholarship are not so easily fooled. They tend to view *jihadi* rhetoric as simplistic distortions of Islamic teachings because they have the theological tools necessarily to deconstruct it. The more people know about Islam, the less likely they are to become radicals. *Pesantren* are among the most important sources of this knowledge.

Some *pesantren* now explicitly address issues of extremism in their curriculum. Pondok *Pesantren* Pabelan in Magelan in Central Java is one example. At this school students are required to take a class on comparative religion. Because Christianity is Indonesia's largest minority religion, it receives the most attention. The texts used in this class are simple, but accurate and free from polemics. They are comparable with those used in World Religions classes at universities in the United States. To encourage inter-religious communication and harmony, the *pesantren* also sponsors "inter-faith" soccer matches with the local Jesuit school.

Celebrating Islam and Culture as Counter-Radicalism

Teaching young people about the complexities of Islamic thought is one way to immunize them against radical propaganda. It is an arduous and demanding intellectual task. Most people have neither the inclination nor the desire to become *ulama* (Muslim scholars).

Fortunately there are other vaccines against extremism that are easier to administer. The devotional practices cultivated in *pesantren* are one, if for no other reason than Wahhabis think that they are unbelief and that people who engage in them will go to Hell. People who believe in Hell, and most Indonesian Muslims do, *do not like being told that they are going there*. Celebrating Islam and Muslim cultures is also immunization because most extremists oppose local, culturally specific Muslim celebrations and think that people who participate in them will go to hell.

Public celebrations of Islam also help to build a sense of community and promote social ties which transcend theological differences. They are also fun. That is important, especially for young people. Promoting these celebrations is one of the ways in which *Muhammadiyah* and PPMWI have domesticated al-Wahab's teachings and resist the "Arabization" promoted by others who share these beliefs. Their enthusiastic participation in *Takbir Keliling* celebrations at the end of Ramadan, on the eve of *Id al-Fitri*, or Lebaran as it is more commonly known, is a clear example.

Lebaran is the most important Muslim holy day in Indonesia. Millions of people travel long distances to spend the holiday with relatives in their native towns and villages. *Takbir Keliling* is one of the culturally specific ways in which Indonesians celebrate Lebaran.

Takbir Keliling are torch light processions held the night before Lebaran throughout Indonesia. They are sponsored by towns, villages, Muslim organizations, and of course *pesantren*. *Takbir* is the Arabic term for the expression "Allah Akbar" (God is Great). This expression is used in the call to prayer and in the performance of the obligatory five daily prayers. Informally it is often used as an expression of joy or other strong emotion. Unfortunately, in the West it is now associated with Muslim extremism because it is often used as an Islamist battle cry. The best known Indonesian example is that of Imam Samudera, who, when sentenced to death for his role in the Bali bombings smiled and shouted "Allah Akbar!" [33] Extremists *do not* "own" the expression "Allah Akbar!", as much as they might like to. Muslims of every theological and political persuasion use it all the time.

"*Keliling*" is an Indonesia word meaning to walk around. In *Takbir Keliling* processions young people walk, or ride in trucks or on motorcycles, through the streets of villages, towns and cities, chanting "Allah Akbar!" to celebrate completion of the fast of Ramadan. In Kebarongan it is a community affair in which Muslims of all religious orientations participate. Groups of young people including a contingent from PPMWI converge on the local government offices where the end of Ramadan is officially announced. There are vendors selling snacks, drinks and fireworks. For adults, and especially those who have returned home for the holiday, it is a chance to meet and catch up with old friends. It is a relatively simple affair, but one which symbolizes the unity of the Muslim community on the most important religious holiday. On this occasion, theological differences mean almost nothing – people meet simply as friends, neighbors, relatives and fellow Muslims. It is also fun. The next morning they also visit relatives and neighbors and ask

forgiveness for any harm they may have caused in the past year. Again, theological differences do not matter on this occasion; social relationships, and especially family relationships, are more important than theology or politics.

In Yogyakarta *Muhammadiyah* stages an elaborate Ramadan Carnival. Groups of students from *Muhammadiyah* schools spend the entire month constructing elaborate illuminated floats that are carried around the city. The procession begins and ends at the Great Mosque which is the sacred center of both *Muhammadiyah* and the Sultanate of Yogyakarta. In 2008 there were floats depicting the *Qur'an*, *Muhammadiyah* symbols, the Great Mosque, and even a Chinese mosque. Marchers were dressed in costumes resembling those of Yogyakarta palace guards, desert Arabs, Pharaonic Egyptians and Chinese Dancers. There were numerous drum bands which are enormously popular with young Indonesian Muslims. People explained that the purpose was to celebrate Lebaran and the unity of the local and global Muslim communities. The mayor of Yogyakarta awarded trophies for the best bands and floats and in a short address explained that *Takbir Keliling* is an Islamic celebration that is also part of Indonesian culture.

This is an annual event. Tens of thousands of people gather in the center of the city to watch the parade. Just as in Kebarongan there are vendors and opportunities to meet old friends. *Muhammadiyah* sponsors the event, but that does not matter very much. Just as in Kebarongan theological differences mean almost nothing – people meet simply as friends, neighbors, relatives and fellow Muslims. It is also fun.

Takbir Keliling is an Indonesian tradition that is greatly valued by Muslims of almost all kinds. It is not mentioned in the *Qur'an* or in the *Hadith*; there is no evidence that the Prophet Muhammad staged such festivals. For these reasons, some of the New Wahhabis consider it to be *haram* (forbidden). Most Indonesians, including those who accept many of al-Wahab's religious teachings could not disagree more.

There is a very basic fact about extremist Islam that is almost never mentioned in the scholarly literature. It is *not fun* and extremists seek to eliminate most parts of Muslim cultures that are. Having fun in a Muslim way is not counter-radical discourse. It is counter-radical action.

Both *Muhammadiyah* and PPMWI are committed to spreading reformed theology. At the same time are actively engaged with others who have quite different understandings of Islam. This tells us two very important things about al-Wahab's theology. The first is that it is not inherently violent. The second is that it does not necessary lead to intolerance or religious chauvinism. *Muhammadiyah* and PPMWI show very clearly that there are mainstream, progressive Muslims rooted in "Wahhabi teachings."

If not Islamic Schools: What is the Problem?

It is easy to lay the blame for the rise of violent extremism and terrorist bombings at the feet of Islamic schools. It is also easy to complain that if only the Indonesian police were more efficient, it would be possible to capture or kill terrorist leaders and “roll up” extremist networks. Actually, Indonesian security forces have become quite adept at capturing or killing terrorists. Noordin Top was killed in a police raid on September 16th. Responding to this event, Sidney Jones of the International Crisis Group, a leading expert on JI, stated: “It means the leadership of the one major group dedicated to attacks on foreign targets is weakened. But it doesn’t mean an end to terrorism.” [34] That is correct. It is also correct to state that closing *pesantren* such as al Mukmin would decapitate Indonesia’s subculture of Islamist extremism but would not eliminate it.

Today, Indonesian secular universities are centers of what Oliver Roy calls “Neo-Wahabism.” [35] Regarding both religion and culture, its adherents look towards the Middle East and especially Saudi Arabia for guidance and financial support. Culturally and religiously this social movement is a complicated amalgam or what in Indonesian is often called *Gado-Gado* (mixed salad) of religious teachings, symbols and ideologies from which individuals and communities pick and choose. It is not a coherent theology and in this respect is very different from *Muhammadiyah* and PPMWI. The “Muslim Fair” we described in an earlier publication is an example of this diversity.[36] Products range from explicitly *jihadi* books and videos, to the writings of al-Wahhab, contemporary Islamist thinkers including bin Baz, Hasan al-Bana and Sayyid Qutb to books on business management, Islamic marriage and child care. There are even books on how to improve TOEFL scores. What these diverse groups have in common are advocacy of some form of Neo-Wahabism as religious belief, ritual performance and life style and perception that this “pure” Islam is threatened by internal and external enemies, including *jahiliyah* (ignorance), *bid’ah* (innovation) and *kufarat* (unbelief) from within the Muslim community and some combinational of “Global Capitalism” and cabals of “Crusaders and Jews” who allegedly seek to destroy it from without.

Large numbers of formal and informal groups crystallize within this cultural-religious milieu. Some grow out of informal study groups that are important elements of Indonesian campus life. Others center on charismatic teachers. In both cases the young people most likely to find Islamist teaching attractive are those who know not the most, but the least about Islam. Many are the children of middle and only “culturally Muslim” upper class families. This is a very diverse social category that can only be characterized in negative ways. They are Muslims who have minimal religious knowledge or education. Many are much less than fully observant and pray only occasionally, if at all. Many celebrate Muslim Holy days in much the same way that secularized American Christians celebrate Christmas. Most are students in the hard sciences or technical fields including Computer Science and Engineering. Once they discover Islam, they bring highly “rational” positivistic epistemologies to their study of it and have little patience with theological subtleties that are characteristic of traditional Muslim discourse. Few are students

from humanities or social science departments, and fewer still are serious students of Islam or comparative religion.

Like young people everywhere, many Indonesian students arrive on campus lonely, frightened and as much in search of identity as education. Many know that they are Muslim, but are not entirely certain what this means. Campus mosques (almost all of which are controlled by Islamists) and other religious organizations are well prepared to tell them what is, and what is not Islam, what to think, and how to behave. The religious environment on many campuses is such that Islamists of one variety or another have an open recruitment field. Their recruitment strategies are simultaneously simple and sophisticated. They offer young people friendship, identity, and community. Recruitment techniques include sports and martial arts clubs, study groups, free meals, outings and other recreational activities. Some even give cell phones to students who do not already have them. For an Indonesian university student not to have a cell phone is too embarrassing for words.

Anyone who remembers being a college freshman knows exactly how important these things are. Of course Islam is always part of the package. For people who know very little about their own faith, Neo-Wahhabi teachings can be very appealing because they are very simple. They provide clear guidelines for what one must do and think to be a “good” Muslim. They also provide clear criteria for distinguishing “good” Muslims from heretics and unbelievers. These usually take the form of things that are “*wajib*” (obligation) and “*haram*” (forbidden) that far exceed those accepted by most Indonesian Muslims. This fosters a strong sense of communal identity and a tendency to view people outside the boundaries as less than fully Muslim, if not actually *kafir* (unbelievers).

As people are drawn more deeply into these communities, they are told what they must read (or watch) and what and who they must shun. Extremist teachings are introduced gradually and only to those who are considered likely targets and good catches. Often, the final step in the recruitment process is an arranged marriage, which for women may be polygamous. This establishes complex networks of social relationships and obligations. It also constitutes a very clear break with the past because the young person’s family is often not involved in the planning. These marriages also serve to strengthen identity and group solidarity. They establish a network of social relationships based on family and religion – which are the two most important sources of identity in many Indonesian cultures. These bonds are so strong that even people who have left communities based on them are generally very reluctant to do anything that would betray them. No matter what they may do, members of these communities are “family.” In Indonesia, these ties are very strong and often transcend politics. The strength of these bonds makes it very difficult for people to leave extremist communities.

Most of the people involved in these networks do not participate in, or advocate, violence. Most live quiet, if not normal, lives. Neighbours and relatives often remark that they are extremely religious, and that they tend to keep to themselves, but generally speaking they are pleasant and

polite. Many are active in local mosques, and because of their determination and intense religious commitments often assume leadership positions that enable them to spread extremist religious teachings. Other become involved with, or “infiltrate” established social and religious organizations. Some continue their studies at Islamist schools in Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt, or Saudi Arabia. Many of these young people become teachers in secular or religious schools when they return home. Many of the women do not complete their educations. In the vast majority of cases, they do not engage in any activities that would draw the attention of the authorities or make them subject to prosecution under any but the most repressive security regimen imaginable.

Some of these groups are politically active. All or almost all of those who are, support PKS. Others are entirely a-political. Only a small minority endorses violence and even fewer participate in it. This being said, the degree to which they view existing religious, social and political institutions as illegitimate and accept religiously and culturally extremist views heightens their susceptibility to political extremism.

There is no easy answer to this problem. It is possible, and indeed likely, that over time that elements of Neo-Wahhabism will be domesticated and become stable elements of the mosaic of Indonesian Islam. It is also clear that Islamic education is one of the keys to halting, or at least slowing the spread of extremist ideologies. Those who fear *Muhammadiyah*, PPMWI and similar groups committed to this mission because they follow al-Wahab’s teachings concerning the Unity of God are sadly mistaken.

The 9/11 Commission Report stated that: “*Education that teaches tolerance, the dignity and value of each individual, and respect for different beliefs is a key element in any global strategy to eliminate Islamist terrorism.*” [37] This is what almost all *pesantren*, including PPMWI, and *Muhammadiyah* do.

Celebrating Islam in ways that transcend theological differences is also important. People from PPMWI and *Muhammadiyah* do this too – and have fun doing it. That is also important.

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Notes

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