Violence in the Name of Islam: The case of 'Islamic Defenders Front' from Indonesia

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Abstract

Although, resorting to violence in the name of Islam is not an entirely new phenomenon on its own, its share in the international relations literature has steadily increased after the 9/11 attacks. Studies conducted about the appearance, goals, organizational structures, and the means frequently resorted by the organizations that regard violence as a justifiable means in the name of Islam, have sought to better understand these organizations and offer projections as to how they could be convinced to put an end to their violent acts. This article aims to shed light onto root causes of the existence of one of the largest Islamic groups, Islamic Defenders Front (FPI – Front Pembela Islam), in a country with the largest Muslim population of the world, Indonesia. A thorough analysis of the organization's discourse and its actions reveals three main reasons: the perception that Islam is threatened by global and local forces and therefore the faith should be protected, the demand that Sharia's 'universal' laws should be implemented and enforced by the state, and the claim that they, in essence, support the state's law enforcement officers in the fight against immorality, wrong deeds and heresy.

Keywords: Islamic Defenders Front, FPI, Indonesia, Islam, violence

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Introduction

Social, radical, militant, 'fundamentalist' Islamists or Islamic terrorist organizations… Even though the choice of words is said to reflect a certain ideology, it wouldn't be too far off to claim that these concepts have gained prevalence after the attacks of 9/11. In the aftermath of this unfortunate event, the number one global threat of the world is set to be 'transnational' terrorism and the 'victor' of the Cold War waged war against it. In an era where both benefits and inconveniences of globalization started to be brought to agenda; the on-going violence based on ideological, ethnic, religious or sectarian differences has emerged as new types of threats that states cannot directly address anymore, and it now necessitates a global and unconventional approach, understanding and solution seeking. This, in turn, has increased the share allocated to studies related with this issue in particular within the field of international relations.

What do these notions associated with terror really mean? Even terrorism itself bears many definitions and is a controversial topic. For instance, Schmid provides 109 different meanings for terrorism in his book.[1] Heywood, on the other hand, brings terrorism down to a more compact yet comprehensive definition by calling it as the attempt to reach desired political outcomes by means of creating an atmosphere of fear, anxiety and uncertainty. As opposed to its traditional definition, a more radical and destructive form of terrorism is called 'the new terrorism', in which religious motivations replaced secular ones such as nationalism, separatist movements, and Marxist-Leninist ideology.[2] According to the old perceptions of the concept of terrorism, it was thought to serve interests of one state over the other; however the new perception of terrorism undermines the modern state apparatus as well as the states system altogether. Thus, according to Hashem for instance, Islamic activism cannot be stated as being completely political or non-political. To the contrary, the goal is existential in nature and it is no different than any one of the other means of protest to which modern social activism resorts. In this sense, terrorism could be characterized as the continuation of politics through other means – the only means available to the powerless: violence.[3]

Putting aside such semantic discussions, the aim of this article is to better understand *raison d'être* of organizations that regard violence as a legitimate means to attain the goals prescribed by the faith of Islamic. From a social constructivist perspective, each concept and definition is created politically or socially in accordance with certain standards of judgment and norms held by those who introduced these concepts and definitions. As the cliché goes: one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. For instance Dedeoglu claims that the concept of terrorist is used by global powers to delegitimize their enemies in the eyes of the international community.[4] What is legitimate is far from being a scientific certainty, but is rather the result of a constructive process. This article, therefore, tries to make evaluations based on observed phenomena rather than making subjective preferences based on standards of judgment across the spectrum. As a result, instead of employing rather subjective terms such as 'radical Islamists', 'fundamentalist Islamists' or 'Islamic terrorist organizations', such organizations are denoted by 'organizations resorting to violence in the name of Islam'. However, in quotations, the notions used by the author of the authentic passage are kept instead of being replaced by 'organizations resorting to violence in the name of Islam'.

Rather than Al-Qaeda, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) or Hezbollah, the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), an organization not well-known internationally and on which little study has been conducted so far is taken to the heart of this article in order to make an objective analysis and not to fall into the conceptual gridlock described above. This study seeks answers to the question of what the *raison d'être* is of one of the largest Islamic organizations of the world, FPI, in the country of Indonesia, home to the world's largest Muslim population, from a social constructivist point of view. To this end, the focus will be on the FPI's discourse that is used to construct its own identity and to legitimize its existence and actions, as well as the actions to which it resorts in order to support said discourse. Hence, for the sake of scientific objectivity, FPI's official website, blog, banners, interviews with its leaders and members, as well as any material about the organization that has appeared in the press are utilized throughout the study.

Going from the general to the specific, a quick literature review will be outlined in the first part of this article together with the rhetorical and philosophical bases of the organizations resorting to violence in the name of Islam. Then, the second part will draw a general picture of Indonesia and Islamic organizations within the country. After this, the third part will focus exclusively on the FPI. The overall analysis points to the fact that three main reasons come to the front for the emergence and popularity of the organization through its discourse and actions: the perception that the tenets of Islam is threatened by global and local forces and the faith should be protected; the demand that Sharia's 'universal' laws should be implemented and enforced by the state; and the claim that the organization only supports and supplements state's law enforcement officers in the fight against immorality, misdeeds and heresy. The article will conclude by an overall assessment, the limited focus of this study, and suggestions for further research in this field.

1. Resorting to Violence in the Name of Islam

Even though he types, methods, goals, and or organizational structure of organization resorting to violence in the name of Islam vary significantly from one to the other, they all have one thing in common: they legitimize the violence, discourse, and various actions which would normally undermine the legal order shock general public morals. Such violent actions are usually eliminated by a strong 'fighting in the name of Allah' rhetoric and this divine justification forms a strong basis from an ontological standpoint. When we review the existing literature about the origins of such organizations and how they justify resorting to violence, we can talk about five different but rather interrelated factors: anti-Western mindset, protesting the negative side effects of globalization, domestic political and socio-economic factors, and underlying psychological factors.

1.1. Opposition to Western and 'Westernized' Identity

There is a rich literature about the anti-Western sentiment of the organizations resorting to violence in the name of Islam. These studies focus mostly on the historical background of a certain geographical region, the secularization process that they have gone through, the pressing feeling of 'new colonialism', anti-globalization, the clash of cultural identities, values, or civilizations. In addition to these, the thought that Muslims are deliberately treated unfairly in the current international system is also widely studied and discussed by many scholars from different backgrounds.

According to Lewis, to understand the current Islamic awakening, one needs to approach the topic from a historical perspective. Lewis claims that Muslims have turned to Islamic organizations since the 18th century with the hope of reviving their ideals in the wake of the rise of the West. Later, they found allegiance in such organizations to oppose, counter, and understand he collapse and falling apart of the Ottoman Empire, the fall of the Islamic world after World War I, increasing 'foreign' interventions, aspiration towards the glorious past, the tension resulting from the sense of humiliation, and finally the failure of Arab socialism.[5] Buruma and Margalit on the other hand, approach the issue of anti-Western sentiment in terms of the way Muslims perceive the Western society. To these scholars, 'Islamists' regard the Western society as a greedy, materialist, and mechanical civilization. Islamists, according to these writers, characterize the Western society as barbaric or savage by making references to the era of crusaders. In turn, they commit themselves to correct and counter this corrupt society only by an organic union strengthened with a morally different yet decisive stance.[6]

In Heywood's views, three elements have strengthened the 'religious fundamentalist' urges among Muslim societies: secularism with its Western origins and its destructive effect over the Islamic societies, a more sneaky but rather disguised post-colonialism of the West, and the fight against globalization. Firstly, Islam is presented as an antidote against the moral relativity, depression, and hypocrisy accompanying secularization, and the just order for all humanity can

only be reinstated by the only true religion. Secondly, 'Islamic fundamentalism' provided an alternative anti-Western identity for the disadvantaged people to counter the homegrown elites who became estranged from their own people by siding with the West during colonial era. Lastly, globalization has disrupted the established structures of traditional societies and made way for increasing immoral behaviors and corruption. Following these basic assumptions, to the chosen true believers who are following God's will and protected by Him, others are not only dissenters but they also constantly and systemically twist the God's message on earth; and as such, they represent the 'dark forces'. Therefore, political disagreement is ultimately a war, and in the end, either the believers or the infidels have to prevail.[7]

Approaching the rise of religious awakening in the Muslim world from a cultural perspective, Heywood[8], Murden[9] and Kiras[10] regard the Islamic movements since 18th century as defiance to the cultural hegemony of the West. According to these authors Muslim societies are convinced that their cultural and religious assets are constantly under threat and that resorting to violence is an ontological identity battle. They try to distance themselves from anything belonging to the West. With their unique cultural anti-Western identity, in fact, Islam is the only viable alternative to the West. The goal is to free and empower those underprivileged masses within the international system through identity politics through an uprising against the ongoing cultural imperialism. Huntington, on the other hand, regards the issue as a clash not only of the cultures but also identities based on civilizations. He claims that a clash between the two civilizations is unavoidable since traditional Islamic values and Western liberal values cannot be reconciled.[11] Huntington says that the universalist liberal values of the West are mostly opposed to on grounds that arguably they dissolve non-Western local cultural bonds and identities. This is done through individualism, freedom of choice, tolerance to the personal choice instead of obedience and hierarchy, moral degeneration, secularization, pluralism, and materialism. Against these values, approaches with religious underpinnings have been on the rise and they seek a purified, preserved, and fortified set of traditional values. According to Huntington, the current threat is an attempt based on a religious reading of the concept of legitimacy seeking to restore and purify one's self by using social or political violence with the ultimate purpose of resisting and challenging Western values. Religious legitimization of violence has been gaining momentum as the Western values cover considerable distance in the path of gaining universal legitimacy and acceptance. In this view, organizations resorting to violence in the name of Islam exist as a response to the elements of modernity construed by the West and imposed onto all humanity.

Another reason for the emergence of the organizations resorting to violence in the name of Islam is the perception that Muslims are not treated fairly in the international system. This reaction is particularly obvious in the general Muslim critique of the American and Israeli foreign policies. The fact that the US backed and supported Israel unconditionally and constantly during the Arab-Israeli conflict, the American security regime in Middle East and deployment of its armed forces in Saudi Arabia where the two Muslim holy cities are located, the Gulf Wars, the military interventions carried out with the pretext of fighting against terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq in the aftermath of the attacks of 9/11 are all interpreted as attacks on Islam.[12]

The argument that Muslims are under threat on a global level, that they are being targeted on the ground, and that they are being humiliated could also be supported by many instances of 'Islamophobic' actions and speeches at the individual as well as the state level. As a result, resorting to violence is justified as a means for the weak to rise against an already unjust system and unfair treatments against them.[13] In Altheide's view, terrorism, as well as the fight against it, are ideological constructs such that they are used to back the American military existence in the Middle East, that this situation is constructed intentionally in order to create a new enemy, and a new threat after communism. This will, in turn, create further solidarity in the Western world by spreading a new fear and thus, increasing public support for domestic political consumption.[14] On the other hand, the fight against terrorism after 9/11 and the rise of Islamophobia helped create the 'other' for Islamic organizations and justify their reactive existence both for themselves and in the eyes of the public among which they operate. For that matter, the Guantanamo Base and Abu

Ghraib Prison cases where the US personnel violated liberal values and forgot about the 'so-called universal human rights principles' for its own security have played a significant role in justifying resorting to violence against the West by Islamic organizations.

1.2. Negative Impact of Globalization

Those claiming that violence in the name of Islam results from globalization base their arguments on three things. Firstly, according to Roy, 'Salafi Jihadist organizations' strive to create and spread a global Muslim identity for everybody, an identity that is independent of national borders, culture and context.[15] Those Muslims who do not share the same ideals create an identity conflict for them.[16] In Jürgensmeyer's view, the party seeking to have the upper hand in this conflict might resort to violence to make its identity more popular, and to gain supporters worldwide. In order to legitimize violence, they claim that a war is fought for an indisputable and certain cause. This symbolic and cosmic cause is formulated in *jihad*, an ultimate path to reach the omnipotent creator, Allah.[17]

Another effect of globalization is that, by virtue of developing communication and transportation technologies, Muslims from all around the world constantly stay informed about the fact that other fellow Muslims are dying, suffering, or being humiliated in Iran, Afghanistan, Palestine and elsewhere, and develop a global identity of *ummah*[18] against those responsible for this injustice.[19] Pursuant to this interpretation, the underlying causes of the problems that Muslim communities face are of external nature and they are not responsible. The proof of this claim lies in the history of these once peaceful lands. Thanks to new and fast means of communication, while deepening the sense of humiliation, globalization also carries such feelings to the most remote corners of the Muslim world.

Lastly, in parallel to the destructive effects of globalization on the nation state, Islamic organizations position themselves as non-state political but grassroots actors finding a rich niche in cultural and religious fields, and therefore, they are harder to deal with. They have an agenda to create an alternative political organization that is more inclusive, centered on Islamic values, and resorting to violence for them is based on the improvidence of the nation states.[20]

1.3. Political Factors

Looking at the reasons giving birth to violence in the name of Islam from a political perspective; it appears that the forces of modernization and the emergence of modern state since 18th century was interpreted rather extravagantly in the Muslim world in the 20th century. The modernization process has created a different political structure, which turned into secular, nationalistic, and authoritarian regimes across the lands of the Islamic faith. The new states have only adopted the bad sides of the three processes into their perception of the modern state. Internally, the Islamic society insisting on sticking with the traditional values were gradually marginalized from the political arena, banned, and even sometimes oppressed by violent means.[21] However, 'Westernization' with the goal of modernization has often resulted in failures. For Hashemi, the revolutionary force that sought social justice against these failed regimes was Islam.[22] The forgotten, the despised and the oppressed because of the modernization process, especially urban, lower-middle class youngsters who want to revive their self-esteem constitute the grassroots of Islamic organizations. 'Islamic Renaissance' is seen as the solution to frequent corruptions, elitist authoritarian regimes, social injustice, economic failures, and unemployment.[23] 1979 Iranian revolution is a victory of Islam over the modern secular and authoritarian state, and regarded as an important turning point, an example which gave courage and hope to the Islamists.

The collapse of socialism, the trusted harbor of the oppressed and the underprivileged, is another important consideration. After those trying to make Islam and socialism meet on a common ground have stepped down, it created an ideological lacuna in the minds of the Muslim masses. While capitalism tried to fill the gap after the fall of socialism, it only paved the way for the

revival of Islam. Consequently, 'Islamic revival' or 'Islamist organizations' have been on the rise since the end of the Cold War. Their goal is to overthrow the puppet governments that are the Trojan horses of the West in order to bring the Islamic *Sharia* law so that the real state can be reinstated. Some even intend to gather under one single political entity by reinstating the Caliphate. The goal is not to modify the current moral fabric of the society, but to retrieve the original Muslim society by revolutionizing it completely.[24] This, according to them, is not obscurantism but an attempt to get rid of the obscurantism of the past two centuries.

1.4. Socio-Economic Factors

The primary economic claim to justify violence in the name of Islam is that the capitalistic Western economies spread with the help of globalization and that the periphery has rightfully reacted to this resulting vicious economic imperialism. Therefore, the violence is not an attack, but a defense. Additionally, Ali[25] and Wolfensohn[26] assert that economic exclusion, poverty, and underdevelopment together with lack of education, unemployment and social injustice fuel terrorism. However, the claim that violence in the name of Islam is a reaction to the inequality created by the global capitalistic economy is rather weak argument given that the violence does not usually originate from the most disadvantaged or the poorest regions. The fact that majority of those resorting to violence in the name of Islam do not come from the poorest, uneducated lower class but from middle or upper class European Muslim communities or from Saudi Arabia who received their graduate school education in Western universities is a strong indicator of this claim.[27]

In some academic circles this phenomenon is evaluated in the context of equal opportunity that Muslims cannot have in certain capitalistic societies where they may be happy and easily integrate if they are given the chance. For instance, according to Sageman, the general sense of being alienated, and of not being able to enjoy equal opportunities has significant impact on the psychology of Muslim males, who resort to violence to protest such inequalities. However, the improved level of education as well as better living standards lead to higher expectations in the middle and upper-class Muslims, which in turn causes them to resort to violence if these expectations are not met within the corrupt state structure or the international community where unfair competition persists.

1.5. Psychological Factors

A central argument in the studies about the psychologies of the members of the organizations resorting to violence in the name of Islam is that such organizations brainwash their members through mosques, educational institutions or charismatic religious leaders.[28] These arguments have equal number of supporters and critics. Those who dismiss such analyses claim that they are too superficial, lack qualified evidence, and have intent to criminalize certain Islamic institutions and personalities. In fact, those who claim that radicalization is caused by socialization, peer pressure, inter-group interactions and dynamics are just as numerous. Being a member of a group, sense of belonging to the group, replacing family ties with group solidarity, justifying the fanaticism as outsiders, and creating a common defense mechanism could be counted among the social and psychological factors.[29]

The feeling that religion offers clarity of mind as to the ultimate meaning and goal of human life is also frequently noted regarding the inner world of the members of such organizations. Religion provides an unquestionable certainty and safety as its rules come from a divine authority. In a world of increasing relativity and uncertainty where all the wheels turn in sync with secularized standards, Islam manifests itself as a safe harbor to the members of the organization.[30]

Without justifying the acts, suicide attacks could be evaluated from two rather unrelated perspectives. From a religious perspective suicide attacks cannot be equated with nihilism as they

are carried out in the name of Islam, for Allah's sake and with the idea that such a sacrifice will be rewarded by martyrdom and heaven.[31] From a secular standpoint suicide is merely an end. From a radical reading of Islam, however, it is another dimension of existence. Secondly, suicide attacks can be regarded in terms of one's search for significance and reputation and this has nothing to do with Islam. The suicide bomber gets the opportunity to become an important and valuable person by sacrificing the most valuable asset of his/her life. If a member of the organization gives up on this path, he will have let down his cause, his group, or his leader and will have shamefully lost all importance he aspired for in the first place.[32]

The validity of the five factors mentioned thus far may be different for each Islamic organization resorting to violence for religion. Causes motivating each organization may consist of different combinations; making each organization unique in and of itself. That is why an in-depth analysis is necessary to fully comprehend the root causes of their existence.

2. Islamic Organizations in Indonesia

When Indonesia declared its independence, during the preparation of the 1945 constitution, President Sukarno ignored the Jakarta Declaration[33] and proclaimed *pancasila[34]*, which is still in effect today. After Sukarno, during the 30-year authoritarian military regime of General Suharto, Islamists were oppressed so much that they had to go underground.[35] Throughout this process, many of these Islamists were exiled, received their education abroad, and were influenced by the Iranian revolution as well as by the Salafi movements. In the mid-1980s, with the economic downturn and loss of popular support, Suharto turned to Islamists to take advantage of their popular support in order to continue his political authority. Moreover, police and armed forces received significant support from Islamist groups in suppressing pro-democracy protests against corruption. However, Islamist organizations turned their back on Suharto in 1990s after realizing that they were taken advantage of for political purposes.[36]

When the authoritarian regime started democratizing in 1998, political Islamists gained more visibility in the political sphere as they had more room to express their opinions freely and received more popular support. Civil society as well as non-civil elements had more room to function during this transition period. Against the disorder of the *reformasi* period, Islam emerged as a viable alternative to fill in the power vacuum.[37] Contextual reasons paving the way for the increase in violence after Suharto are diverse. A very fragile democracy and a weak state that was left behind after the collapse of a highly centralized authoritarian regime, the accompanying high level of corruption in the same period, social injustices, the transfer of some of the authorities of the central administration to the local administration in the process of transitioning into a democracy, the insufficiency and inexperience of local administrations to fulfill these responsibilities, insufficiency of state in carrying out public services especially in maintaining the order and safety of the community, and the competition between the armed forces and police forces in accessing public resources are among the most fundamental reasons of post-Suharto turmoil.[38] The problems under these conditions laid the groundwork for operations of the organizations shouting out the slogan 'Islam is the solution!' and demanding Islamic law. With ample room to move freely during the *reformasi* period, some of these organizations wanted to incorporate Jakarta Declaration into the constitution, while some others wanted to reach the same goal, though not necessarily by altering the constitution.[39]

According to O'Rourke, since the independence of Indonesia, military has manipulated the gangs for doing some 'dirty works' for them.[40] Wanandi and Rahim points to the fact that Islamic groups started to appear among this network of gangs in the late Suharto period as well as right after the Suharto period ended. Suharto opted to silence the opposition with the help of Islamic organizations in order to avoid Western criticism about human rights violations.[41] Organizations like Laskar Jihad and FPI appeared after the fall of Suharto.[42] There are numerous evidence supporting the above-mentioned arguments: acts of violence were not condemned by state officials, political figures influence the courts to reduce their penalties, no action was taken to

eradicate the source of their funds and recruits within the society, and Islamic organizations were freely committing acts of violence and giving hate speeches.[43]

Under these circumstances, then, what are the main characteristics of the Islamic organizations that emerged in Indonesia? The chart below depicting the Islamist groups in Indonesia in terms of their goals as well as tactics may provide some clues for our analysis.[44] Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) falls to the middle of the scale as an organization carrying out acts of limited violence committed to damage private property and which aims at implementing Islamic Sharia laws within a pluralistic democracy.
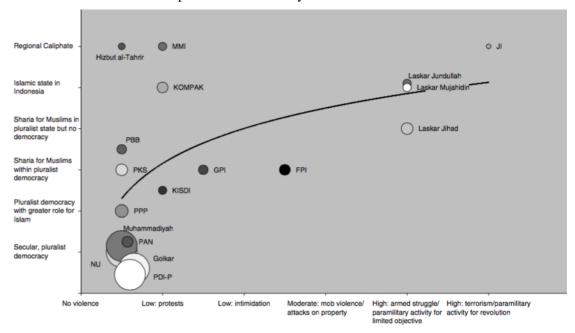
Figure1: Abuza's chart of Islamic Organizations in Indonesia

To better understand the chart, a comparison between Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and FPI in the ICG report would be useful. Whereas JI is a secret organization, FPI operates publicly. JI aims to topple the secular state and reinstate an Islamic state whereas FPI manifests itself as an extension of the security forces of the state and is ultra-nationalist in nature. Jihad is at the very core of the ideology of JI whereas the acts of FPI could be summarized as having an agenda of 'spreading the good and avoiding the bad'[45]. To become a member of JI, one needs to go through a very difficult training; but FPI harbors uneducated citizens, who usually have a background as a gang member. While the training of JI includes using armed weaponry and making bombs, FPI uses sticks and stones to attack pubs.[46]

3. Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and Its Origins

Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) wants Sharia law and Islamic values to be implemented within the society. It was founded in August, 1998 by Misbahul Alam and Habib Rizieq and has become the largest radical Muslim group in Indonesia with its 100.000 members from 22 regions.[47] In his book, Abuza speaks of FPI as follows:

> *"These organizations have shown a willingness to find political patrons and supporters within the body politic, and have in some cases resorted to violence. First and foremost among these are the Islamic Youth Movement (GPI) and the Defenders of Islam (FPI), known for attacking nightclubs and bars. While many commentators write these groups off as "amateurish" or "thuggish," pointing to*

> *their simplistic use of religion and less political stance, they nevertheless present a serious security threat. They have been active in leading anti-American demonstrations and, most troubling, they have become a pool of recruits for Jemaah Islamiyah. Some of these groups have a clear tie to the military and police.'[48]*

Pursuant to the ICG report, FPI has over 15 million sympathizers. They were founded in 1998 with the help of top level military and police officials in order to balance out the student riots toppling the Suharto regime. Majority of their uneducated members have gang-related backgrounds while their leaders consist of more educated activists that are knowledgeable about Islam. Based on the information gathered from the public, they locate 'immoral behaviors' and report them to the police forces. If the police fails to take the necessary precautions, they proceed to act on their own to resolve the issues. Business owners who are threatened and lose their customers in the meantime, and realize they are being targeted by FPI either pay the police for extra security or try to make a deal with the FPI.[49]

According to Wilson, the very first reason for FPI's emergence was to support the United Development Party (PPP). After that failed, they redefined themselves as a movement against immoralities at the street level, occasionally resorting to violence.[50] For many, FPI is a local terrorist organization with no ties to the extreme Salafi or Wahhabi interpretations of Islam. It simply seeks the enforcement of the rule of Sharia; but they manifest themselves as allies of the state's security forces in the fight against sins and immoralities, and they are known mostly for their physical attacks and hate speeches against groups they characterize as deviant and sinful such as Christians, the Shi'a, Ahmadiyya, and Liberal Muslims.[51] They legitimize resorting to violence with the *fatwas* of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI)[52]. It seems that security forces are more successful in stopping organizations like JI, which have a bigger and rather international agenda as they are also threatening the state. Menwhile, the same police force seems hesitant in reacting accordingly to the violence caused by FPI and thus failing to protect the rights of minorities for fear of being portrayed anti-Islamic.[53]

In Wilson's view, the leader of the organization, Rizieq, is very likely to have allies among the high ranks of the government and the parliament. FPI, therefore, is either punished moderately at best or not punished at all for their actions. This argument can be supported by the speeches of certain political figures claiming that FPI is merely trying to better Indonesian society's moral values.[54] Furthermore, one side of FPI provides a defense shield and is a source of sympathy as it functions more like a charity organization. For example, with the help of the government FPI provided disaster relief to the people of Aceh after the 2004 tsunami and to the locals after the earthquakes in Yogyakarta and Padang.

According to Abuza, following the imprisonment of their leader Rizieq in 2003, once an organization resorting to acts of violence, FPI started acting more strategically, highlighting their religious and ideological side, thus getting less media coverage and facing less opposition from the public. It basically turned into an organization pursuing its goals through political and social pressure.[55] The organization's leader, Habib Rizieq, stated during his visit to the Ministry of Religious Affairs that they were pro-justice and fighting corruption, and that they were also undergoing a paradigmatic change whereby they could no longer be characterized as violent.[56]

The way in which FPI defines itself is quite different from what are written about it. In the English blog of FPI, the organization's leader Habib Rizieq says: 'FPI has positioned itself as a pressure group in Indonesia and has contributed in influencing country's leaders to take an active role in improving and maintaining Moslems' morale and faith as well as to take initiative in building social, political, and legal infrastructure which is in line with Islamic syariah.'[57] In their official website, they claim that their mission is '*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar',* meaning 'doing the good and avoiding the bad' as advised to all Muslims in Koran.[58] Again in their blog in English, FPI's vision is stated as such:

> *''An implementation of syariah Islam in Indonesia, whether in substantial or formal output, is the main vision of FPI. Among available alternatives to achieve the vision, FPI strategy is firm and stands clearly toward the implementation of amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, i.e systematic effort to remind and encourage Moslem to apply their Islamic values comprehensively, and to guard Moslem not to be involved with any activity that would potentially influence their morale and faith. This strategy is adopted as in 1998 when FPI was founded there was no any Islamic movement/organization ever involved, in principle and/or conceptual approach, to the area of amar ma'ruf nahi munkar implementation.*
>
> *Effort to fill up the gap in this movement is using a systematic and organizational action to fulfill Moslem collective responsibility in eliminating crimes and social issues. This is according to Mighty Allah statement in Al Quran in surah Ali Imran (3):104 : "Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong : They are the ones to attain felicity".*
>
> *In order to maintain FPI movement to stick to its original value and vision, FPI will not be involved to political practices or supported any political organization in the country. FPI is also not affiliating or cooperating in structural manner with any other organization either local or international. The motive to achieve for an implementation of Sharia Islam is a justifiable target, while the action steps to fight for it shall be done according to law and regulation of the country.''* [59]

While realizing its agenda FPI utilizes different types of actions: by acts of violence such as pressuring opposing groups, threatening, and damaging their properties, targeting Christians, members of Ahmadiyya, liberal and pluralist Islamists, sinners (e.g. transsexuals, prostitutes, etc.) nightclubs, bars, discos, liquor stores, and restaurants serving food during the holy month of Ramadan.

Having said all about FPI so far, the discourse as well as the actions of the organization will be analyzed throughout the rest of this article. It can be summarized that there are three major causes for its emergence and strengthening: the perception that Islamic faith is threatened by global and local forces and the faith should be protected, the demand that Islamic Sharia's 'universal' laws should be implemented and enforced by the state, and the claim that they support state's law enforcement officers in the fight against immorality, misdeeds and big sins.

3.1. Protecting the Islamic Faith

As the subtitle suggests, the fundamental reason for FPI's emergence is the perception that Islam is under threat and needs to be protected against these threats. In their discourse and actions, two types of such threats stand out: global and local threats. Global threat refers to the perceived worldwide injustice against the Muslim communities and they exemplify such threats with the American foreign policy and through criticizing the treatment of Palestinians by Israel. Due to the aforementioned reasons, they deem liberal values spreading with globalization as another threat against Islam. Local threat, on the other hand, refers to the increasing number of the followers of Christianity through missionary activities, Islamic sects not following the Sunnah and distorting the true faith, and 'liberal' Muslims.

3.1.1. Global Threats

FPI, in its own web blog, bases its own cause upon the following ground:

> *''Islam movement started to exist due to un-justice treatments faced by moslem and the increasing numbers of local and global movements which directly or indirectly are damaging Islamic Faith. An effort to protect moslem values in more structural manner in the form of stronger organization is very crucial as present globalization has turned up to become a new form of colonialization, i.e. in the form of political, cultural, and social pressure to implement a new system/value that is clearly not suitable to be introduced to Indonesian society as the majority of our population is moslem.''*[60]

In line with this view, FPI organized a protest march in October 2001 in Jakarta with more than 10.000 participants to protest the American operations in Afghanistan and its intervention in Iraq leading the coalition forces. Additionally FPI's Aceh branch announced in January 2009 that they would provide military training for those willing to fight against Israel in Gaza Strip.[61]

When FPI's discourse and actions are analyzed, however, it can be said that the emphasis on global threats is kept at a bare minimum. As an Islamic organization, since it is impossible for them to remain silent against global threats concerning all Muslims, it is the case that FPI contents itself with discourse against the injustice and non-violent protests against these global matters. Therefore, FPI mostly positions itself to take action against local matters.

3.1.2. Local Threats

As much as the fact that liberal values threaten Muslims in Indonesia by way of globalization has to do with the above topic, FPI uses the following statement against liberalism and pluralism in its own web blog:

> *¨Nevertheless, an internal efforts among 'unclear' or 'dishonest' or 'fake' moslem to damage Islam from within is another critical aspect which we need to correct and rectify, such as an effort to expand the plurarity concept into religion and an effort to liberate Islam or/and to interpret Islam wrongly in order to confuse moslem. Islam is very much appreciated the existence of plurarity in social relationship between races, nations, and religions BUT Islam clearly against plurarity approach in an effort to find principle similarity among religions, as we believe our religion is the only One and Unique for Moslem. Living in harmony with and among other people and society whom hold different religions should be focused on finding the basis to respect each other differences without any anger, suspicious and hate feelings, and this is clearly stated in Islam Holy-book, Al-Qur'an, in surah Al-Kafirun, "To you be your Way, and to me mine"* ·[62]

FPI's actions, though, conflict with the last sentence of this statement. FPI threatens different ways of interpreting Islam and other ways of living, and does not show much tolerance and respect for minorities. In fact it engages in acts of hate speech, harassment, threat, intimidation and physical attacks against Christians, and other religious minorities including Shiites and followers of Ahmadiyya sect. It also attacks nightclubs, bars, and liquor stores which it thinks are bothering Muslims.[63]

According to news in Jakarta Globe, a June 2008 FPI attacked on representatives of the interfaith National Alliance for Freedom of Faith and Religion (AKKBB) in Jakarta and injured dozens.[64] Following the attack, FPI's leader Rizieq and the head of the militia Munarman were both sentenced to 18 months in prison.[65]

FPI targets Christian minorities on the grounds that they are carrying out missionary activities and as such, threatening Islam. FPI carried out five attacks on the followers of the HKBP Philadelphia Church in Bekasi and injured twenty people in their last attack in 2010. The nearby police forces failed to respond to the incident. In their interview, FPI claimed that the society was uncomfortable with this Christian community and they were warned not to carry out their missionary activities yet they continued to do so.[66] In May 2012, FPI militants in Singkil protested the churches they declared illegal and demanded that they should be closed down. Subsequently, those demands were met within less than a week and these churches as well a place of worship belonging to a local faith were shut down.**[67]**

FPI sees the spread of Ahmadiyya sect, which it declared to be an apostate, as a threat disrupting the Islam faith. Pursuant to the report of ICG, FPI attacked the annual Ahmadiyya conference on July 9th, 2005, injuring eight people with sticks and stones. Head of the State, Yudhoyono, inaugurated the 7th National Congress and MUI gave the following fatwa: 'Ahmadiyya is outside of Islam and its followers are apostates; state should ban Ahmadiyya and all of their operations'. Additionally MUI has given fatwas against pluralism, secularism, and liberalism.[68] MUI also published a notice in 2008 and 2011 to prevent Ahmadiyya from spreading.[69] State's declaration limiting the activities of Ahmadiyya sect goes to prove how successful the pressure of the civil society and how much they embrace certain Islamist groups like FPI. Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia and FPI, encouraged by the fatwas of MUI whose administration also includes members of FUI (Islamic People's Forum), have together organized many protests against Ahmadiyya.[70]

In October 2013, an Ahmadiyya prayer room in West Java was shut down after being threatened by FPI. Yudhoyono government did not openly take a stand against FPI; on the contrary, the Minister of Religious Affairs gave a speech at the annual FPI conference and spoke of FPI as a national value.[71]

Lastly, FPI could be said to target the Shiites as well. For instance, at the protests in April 2014 where the Anti-Shia Alliance called for declaration of jihad against Shiites, FPI members were present, dressed in camouflage jackets and carrying signs as 'Heresy Hunters'.[72]

All of these findings indicate that any interpretation of Islam other than the one FPI believes is considered to be a threat against Indonesian Muslims and that FPI endeavors to keep them from spreading and operating by means of political connections, hate speeches and acts of violence. Governments, let alone protecting the rights of minorities, overlook FPI's actions to a large extent and let them go with impunity. This, in turn, creates the impression that the minorities are left unprotected. As a matter of fact, they clearly give support to the organization by praising it during FPI's gatherings and by meeting its demands.

3.2. The Demand for Sharia Law

The implementation of the laws set forth by Islam lies at the core of FPI's vision and its main goal. In its blog, FPI speaks about the universality of Sharia and expresses its demands regarding the implementation of Sharia in Indonesia as follows:

¨In Indonesia, as country with moslem as majority, then it is fair and clearly acceptable for moslem to deserve for having a majority and higher bargaining position. This higher bargaining position ought to be reflected into a more significant's moslem collective right, such as moslem right to have social environment which is free from various social issues against Islamic values like

pornography, gambling, drugs, etc. It is a fair request too as majority if moslem are asking and demanding for their collective right from government such as to adopt some of the Islamic values (Syariah) which is universal and not against the other religions, into country's social and law regulations.

Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) is a Pressure Group to country's leader to make initiative in implementing Islamic values into country and social life.

We must be aware that the Indonesian Law and Political system tends to be secular and is not accomodating properly an Islamic value into country's law and regulations.[73]

FPI looks to establish Sharia law, but chooses not to topple the secular democratic state and change the system through a revolution; but instead it aspires to achieve political and social change as part of the civil society or as a pressure group within the system itself. It can be stated that FPI does not engage in anti-state acts and does not rise against the Muslim state, no matter how oppressive it may be, as this is strictly forbidden in Islam.[74]

In its actions in the name of Sharia, it is not so easy to come across signs of violence. The organization, for instance, actively campaigns in colleges to gain popular support in favor of incorporating Jakarta Declaration into the constitution.[75]

In their demonstration at Aceh in October 2014, FPI members demanded from Aceh government to declare Sharia law.[76] During their protests in West Java, they also supported the implementation of Sharia law and claimed that their demand was compatible with the constitution and should be implemented immediately.[77] In addition, FPI's prerequisite to support the candidacy of Prabowo before the general election was the declaration of Sharia in many more regions.[78] Lastly, during a modest protest of about 1000 participants in 2014, they wanted the local governor of Java, Basuki, to step down on the grounds that he was a Christian and ethnic Chinese and FPI consequently named one of its own as an unofficial governor of the city. FPI generally opposes the idea that governors from other religious faiths could rule Muslim territories.[79]

3.3. Helping the State in the Fight Against Heresy

The relations of FPI with security forces have been extensively covered in many sources such as Wikileaks documents, academic articles, Human Rights Watch reports, and the reports of International Crisis Group. As detailed below, FPI manifests itself as an extension of the law enforcement; and the police forece think of FPI as a partner. To what extent and how deep this relation goes is not quite clear.

In its blog, FPI describes its own role in protecting public decency with the following words:

¨In the area which far from the control of proper law regulations as such, then FPI will play role to do various solution approach so that Islamic values can be applied in comprehensive way. Other social issues such as pornography industry and gambling must be treated firmly both through a legal approach and political pressure. Ignorance toward this social crimes and issues would be potential to generate social issue, which eventually is damaging various basic principles of morale values and moslem faith. All kind of social issues will become FPI priority to rectify and correct it in structural way.

FPI position as member of society is to assist law enforcement officer in an active or pro-active approach through information, direct support, law and political pressure, and a clear agenda to encourage a better law enforcement and implementation in this country.

The better of law & regulations quality and enforcement in the country then the lesser FPI role to control and fight for improvement and implementation of social law & regulation within our vision and mission. [80]

FPI's top officials openly express how they will keep an eye on the citizens in the fight against immoralities and heresy, urge the police to take action, and how they will conduct their own raids should they see that the police and authorities are failing to do their job.[81] Not only does FPI urge everybody to 'respect one another', but it also says FPI will take action if they come across entertainment venues and food vendors serving food, alcohol, or hotels serving unmarried couples. As a result of interventions into the lifestyles of people in line with these statements, several people were killed during clashes between local residents and members of the hard-line group.[82] According to a Jakarta Post report, the government and local authorities said that FPI had committed those crimes, but they had not even questioned any of the attackers.[83]

Consumption of alcohol has always been a hot debated topic in Indonesia, home of the largest Muslim population. Pursuant to a decree passed in 1997, sale and consumption of alcohol was legalized in the country. Following the attacks on small businesses selling alcohol and FPI-sponsored protests, the organization filed a suit in 2012 asking the annulment of the decree and to allow local administrations to have the final say about the sale and distribution of alcoholic beverages in their jurisdiction. The Supreme Court has accepted a judicial review filed by the hard-line group.[84] This situation is yet another proof of the fact that FPI has a strong influence over domestic politics as well as the legal circles.

Lastly, FPI members assert that according to Islam it is not only legal but also a duty to intervene in heretical behaviors such as homosexuality if the government does not want to do anything about it.[85] In the same manner, FPI rallied with hundreds of people against the gay film festival in 2010 and demanded an immediate end for it.[86] Likewise, Lady Gaga's show, which was planned to take place in June 2012, had to be canceled over security concerns after FPI threatened to react violently.[87]

The self-proclaimed role that FPI assumed is not an unfamiliar situation as far as Indonesia's history is concerned. Throughout the reign of Suharto, the country got accustomed to the use of violence within the state and with the help of paramilitary groups to ensure political control. After the collapse of the New Order in 1998, organized crime and violence took a new turn. Organized crime rings came up with a new discourse rooted in ethnic, class-based or religious ties in order to justify committing violence. They legitimize themselves by claiming that they are filling in for the state, which has failed at providing security, delivering justice, and creating jobs.[88]

According to a report published by Human Rights Watch supporting the above claims, FPI has always had ties with the police and armed forces.[89] Despite the fact that the police and FPI deny Wikileaks documents,[90] there are allegations in these documents claiming that Indonesian police has used FPI as an 'attack dog', provided them with financial support, which helped security forces in distancing themselves from alleged human rights violations.[91] The police stated that they treat FPI no differently than they treat other groups of civil society, and describe FPI as a part of the society as well as a good partner.[92] Pursuant to the report of International Crisis Group, governor of Jakarta, national police chief, Minister of Religious Affairs have all taken part in FPI-organized events; and the police chief stated that they regarded FPI as a partner in ensuring law and order in Jakarta.[93] Similarly, Indonesian Minister of Internal Affairs described FPI as a 'potential national value'.[94]

The above examples and discourse suggest that FPI is far from regarding its actions as criminal. It rather claims that it is a duty of a law-abiding citizen to act against immoralities and heresy, and it feels obliged to interfere whenever necessary, and resorts to violence selectively against such acts. Even though government officials and leaders of local administrations occasionally condemn the actions of FPI and demand them to be punished, security forces rarely

take actions against FPI. Therefore, demands against the banning of FPI go unmet.[9596] Such interventions are regarded as being problematic in Western democracies; however, they are not regarded as being anti-democratic by Indonesian governments as they are widely welcome among the moderate members of society.

Conclusions | 47

Based on this analysis, we can conclude that among all the factors facilitating the emergence of organizations justifying violence in the name of Islam – i.e. anti-Western sentiment, effects of globalization, domestic political and socio-economic factors, and psychological factors- FPI uses only some of them. When the literature, its discourses, as well as its actions are taken into account, FPI owes its existence and popularity to domestic political factors, anti-Western sentiment, and the negative effects of globalization, in descending order.

One important finding of this article is that FPI owes its existence mostly to the fragile democracy of Indonesia and to the weak state, which is the ghost of Suharto's legacy. Since its foundation in 1945, the country was ruled with a secular / authoritarian regime. As a result, organizations with Islamic sensitivities have been oppressed and they gradually embraced and justified illegal activities. Even though steps were taken for democratization during the *Reformasi* period after Suharto, there are still close relations between Islamic organizations and the security forces that were in power for a long time. Given the fact that politicians need the popularity and support of Islamic organizations for being elected, none of them could show the courage to break this chain of relations embedded in Indonesian bureaucracy. As a result, the task of 'maintaining the order and the safety of the community and fighting against crimes' falls within the field of activity of organizations such as FPI. From the analysis of this article, it can be suggested that FPI overstepped many legal boundaries while the democratization process in Indonesia tried to create additional space in order to meet the demands of the civil society. FPI has often committed verbal and physical crimes of violence publicly; but was only mildly punished by the authorities and even supported by them in some cases. This situation undermines the claim that Indonesia is a democratic constitutional state respecting the rule of law.

Secondly, secularism within the context of anti-Western opposition, challenging liberal Western values, and unfair treatment against Muslims in the international arena are among the top reasons motivating the organization. FPI openly challenges values such as liberalism, pluralism, and individual freedom of choice. It claims that such Western values got into Indonesia through globalization, threatens the faith of Muslims, and it is at the heart of many heresies and immoralities. Moreover FPI stands against the secular state and believe that people have the right to live by Sharia law in Indonesia, where Muslims are the overwhelming majority. As far as FPI is concerned, the organization should undertake the mission of *'Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar'* whenever the state fails to take necessary precautions to protect Muslims from non-Islamic lifestyles, immoralities, and heresies, which are the by-products of globalization. Despite the fact that FPI's limited discourse and actions are said to be against the worldwide injustice that Muslims suffer from, this do not constitute the popularity of the organization in Indonesia. In other words, analyzing the organization within the context of 'global Jihadism' that is on the rise in the Western literature would be an exaggeration.

Lastly, a more significant and overarching evaluation should be noted for a comprehensive future study about Islamic organizations regardless of their violent choices. The fact that FPI assumes certain governmental responsibilities, and its influence on national politics run quite parallel to the effect of globalization's transnational factors that are gradually challenging the nation-state more than ever before. Islamic organizations manifest themselves as non-state political actors acting upon cultural or religious identities, very much like environmentalist organizations that sometimes make their protests as violent as bringing down the windows of certain coffee shops to protest unfair world trade regulations. Understanding the circumstances that created FPI, and popular support it enjoys will not only shed light onto the

possible solutions to bring similar violent organizations within the boundaries of the rule of law, but it will also contribute to strengthening of fragile democracies such as Indonesia's.

NOTES

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[6] Ian Buruma, Avishai Margalit, **Occidentalism: A Short History of Anti-Westernism**, London, Atlantic Books, 2005.

[7] Heywood, **op.cit.,** p. 240. The resemblance between the anti-Western discourse of certain Muslim organizations and 'You are either with us, or against us' slogan of George W. Bush when he declared war on global terror is noteworthy.

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[12] Murden, **op.cit.**, p. 428.

[13] Heywood, **op.cit.**, pp. 248-250.

[14] David L. Altheide, **Terrorism and the Politics of Fear**, Lanham, MD, AltaMira Press, 2006, pp. 113-132.

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[16] The mindset of the Salafi-oriented factions, which labels other Muslim groups as heretics rather than Muslim brothers in the Syrian civil war, may be explained through same rhetoric. One's moderate Muslim may well fall in the category of 'heretic sinners', who must be eradicated before the infidels.

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[19] Dirk Staunton, ¨The Clash of Identities: An Analysis of the Causes of Salafi Jihadi Terrorism with Reference to Jemaah Islamiyah¨, **Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism**, 8, 1, 2008, p. 156, (Online), http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1754-9469.2008.00004.x/abstract, 21.12.2014.

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