

11 'AS LONG AS IT'S HALAL': ISLAMIC *PREMAN* IN JAKARTA

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1 INTRODUCTION

According to the United States Department of State, Indonesia is a very dangerous place teeming with terrorist activities. Personally, the terrorists I'm more worried about are the ones out and about on the streets, pretending to be parking attendants, buskers, etc. (Piting 2004).

This quote from the *Jakarta Post* encapsulates a grim daily reality faced by the residents of Indonesia's capital. Fear of extortion, harassment or violence at the hands of *preman*, a colloquial term for a street thug or gangster, is for many Indonesians a significant and recurrent threat to their personal security.¹ While Western governments and media continue to focus upon an 'Islamist threat' in Indonesia, it is a more mundane but pervasive form of everyday terror that has a greater impact on the lives of ordinary Indonesians. Street-level thuggery at the hands of *preman* is a ubiquitous part of life in urban centres throughout the country.

There has been a discernible increase in *premanisme* since 1998. However, *preman* are by no means a new phenomenon. Throughout the New Order, a symbiotic relationship existed between elements of the regime and *preman*, many of whom were 'institutionalised' within paramilitary

1 See 'Orang Bebas Yang Kian Mengganggu' [Free People Who Disturb All the More], *Tempo*, 20 May 2000. *Preman* is a normative term with a complex history that is beyond the scope of this chapter. For the purposes of this chapter, it will be used to refer specifically to individuals who employ violent and coercive strategies to achieve material reward, similar to what Blok (1988) and Volkov (2002) have referred to as 'violent entrepreneurs'. For more on the meaning of *preman*, see Ryter (1998).

and youth organisations such as the regime loyalists Pemuda Pancasila (Pancasila Youth). *Preman* were allowed to operate protection rackets with virtual legal impunity on the condition that a proportion of their profits made its way through the state bureaucracy, and that they were available to be mobilised when the state felt its hegemony to be under threat.

Towards the end of the New Order, as the image of a unified regime began to fracture, the ideology and symbolism of many of these 'entrepreneurs in violence' began to shift away from reactionary nationalism and loyalty to Soeharto and Golkar, and was increasingly derived from militant Islam. This shift reflected the changing political dynamics. Many *preman* gambled on which political force would come out on top. Some flocked to the *satgas* paramilitary wings established by political parties to mobilise support and raise revenue in the wake of the 1999 elections. Others joined the ranks of the plethora of militant Islamic organisations that emerged after 1998. Many of these groups were mobilised in November 1998 as part of the civil militias deployed by General Wiranto.² With Habibie as president, defence of the state was correlated with defence of Islam, and the groups acted as a state-sponsored bulwark against the demands of the student-based reform movement. However, with a new freedom to organise and political elites in disarray, many were able to make the transition from subsidiaries of state power to autonomous actors.

It has been well documented globally that gangsters often emerge as major beneficiaries of democratic electoral politics—as candidates, as revenue raisers, and as powerbrokers who are able to mobilise support, intimidate rivals and perform other services on behalf of clients. In this regard Indonesia has not been an exception (Trocki 1998). As eternal opportunists and ideological chameleons, *preman* were quick to 'shape-shift' into the uniforms that best suited the new socio-political environment. Organisations, regardless of their ostensible purpose, are useful only in so far as they provide a cover for gaining and maintaining territory. In some instances it was a matter of the military-style camouflage fatigues of nationalist youth groups being replaced with the white robes and turbans of Islamic radicals. As one *preman* convert to the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) candidly explained:

Now, in the *reformasi* era, nationalism, defending the state (*bela bangsa*) and all that shit don't cut it anymore. It's the groups that are about jihad and fighting vice (*maksiat*) that are the way to go (interview, Jakarta, 2005).

2 See Gunawan and Patria (2000: 58–63) and 'Pam Swakarsa: Actor atau Korban?' [Volunteer Security Force: Actors or Victims?], *Tempo*, 30 November 1998.

While older groups such as Pemuda Pancasila continued to portray themselves as defenders of national unity, the new breed of gangsters organised themselves along 'post-Pancasila' ethnic and religious lines (Ryter 2005). Criminal interests have become intertwined with the demands for rights and the political agenda of a reinvigorated political Islam. In this context militant Islam has become a new symbolic commodity in the turf battles for control of Jakarta's streets.

As an identifiable subculture, *preman* are predatory, opportunistic, and reliant for their livelihoods upon a combination of symbolic displays of machismo and a reputation for physical violence. Relationships with those in power are also crucial to the *preman's* survival and success, rendering them 'invulnerable' to the law and official sanction. Faced with the unpredictability of patronage networks since 1998 and a competitive, decentralised market in protection, new rationales and legitimisations had to be established. Ironically, it has been a perceived increase in crime rates that has presented the *preman* with the most lucrative opportunities for racketeering and extortion, most commonly in the guise of anti-vice vigilantism. Traditional staples of *preman*, such as prostitution, gambling, drugs and alcohol, are eschewed by this new breed of religiously inspired 'moral gangsters', part of their sales pitch to communities being that they will eliminate these kinds of illegal practices.

This chapter argues that the phenomenon of 'Islamic *preman*' suggests that the desire to gain access to resources and instrumental advantage, that is, through racketeering and political patronage, is a significant and, in fact, frequently *the* principal factor for involvement in Islamic movements identified as militant—one that often supersedes assumed ideological commitment. Islamic militancy constitutes a political economy of its own. This proposition is examined through an analysis of the practices, politics and rhetoric of two groups to emerge in the post-New Order environment that combine militant Islamic rhetoric with *premanisme*: the Betawi Brotherhood Forum (FBR) and FPI.

2 PRIMORDIAL PREMAN: FBR

FBR was founded in Jakarta in July 2001 in response to increasingly violent territorial struggles between ethnic Betawi and Madurese *preman* in east Jakarta.³ A product of Jakarta's ethnic and cultural heterogeneity, the

3 These turf wars led to the establishment of a host of other Betawi groups as well, including the Family of Tanah Abang Association (IKBT), the Betawi Defence Movement of Indonesia (GKBI) and the Betawi Communication

creole Betawi claim the status of the capital's 'indigenous' population. Based in the semi-industrial area of Penggilingan in Cakung, east Jakarta, FBR cites the uncontrolled influx of migrants to the capital as not just the cause of economic disenfranchisement for indigenous Betawi, but also a source of moral decay.⁴ Non-Betawi migrants to the capital are blamed for high unemployment rates and crime, as well as a host of other social ills such as prostitution, gambling and a decline in religious piety, prompting FBR to undertake raids on what it identifies as 'dens of iniquity'. Behaviour considered offensive to Islam is attributed to outsiders. According to FBR's leader, Fadloli el-Muhir, Jakarta's rapid development has left the Betawi dispossessed and marginalised.⁵ FBR claims that, unlike other regions such as Bali, where local autonomy and decentralisation have seen indigenous populations gain seats in parliament and an improved standard of living, the nation's capital has not seen the same benefits.⁶

FBR's assertions of moral outrage, however, arise in the context of territorial disputes over protection rackets. The group uses weight of numbers and its reputation for violence to establish rackets, force businesses to employ its members, and gain a territorial monopoly over the informal economy in its stronghold areas on the pretext of 'empowering' ethnic Betawi. Drawing its membership largely from unemployed youth, *preman* and those working in the informal economy such as motorcycle taxi drivers (*tukang ojek*), FBR grew rapidly with its militant rhetoric, promise of jobs, and provision of social services such as legal aid, ambulances, job training and, in some instances, subsidised education for its members. With an aggressive catch cry of 'smart arses ... smash em!' (*yang kurang ajar ... hajar!*), by 2003 FBR's membership in the greater Jakarta area had grown to approximately 60,000. FBR is organised through a network of some 3,000 command posts known as *gardu*. These are usually situated at strategic hubs of economic activity, such as markets, transport terminals and busy intersections, from where members are well placed to scout for opportunities.

Fadloli el-Muhir is a former journalist and a former politician in the Soeharto-backed Soerjadi wing of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), and was a member of the Supreme Advisory Council (DPA) that advised

Forum (Forkabi). For more on FBR's background, see Widiyanto (2006), Wilson (2006) and Brown and Wilson (2007). See also colour plates 9 and 10.

4 Interview with Fadloli el-Muhir, Jakarta, 2005.

5 Interview with Fadloli el-Muhir, Jakarta, 2005.

6 Interview with Fajri Husen, head of the central Jakarta branch of FBR, Jakarta, 2006.

the president.⁷ He received his religious education at the Bani Latief Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) in Banten followed by seven years at the Lirboyo *pesantren* in Kediri, which is affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). He continued his studies at Asy-Syafi'iyah Islamic University in Jakarta, where he was active in the Islamic Tertiary Students Association (HMI). In 1997 he established the Indonesian Santri Movement (GSI), whose primary objectives included fighting vice and encouraging the adoption of an Islamic dress code for women. By the mid-1990s he had adopted the title of *kiai* (an informal title for a religious leader) and established the Ziyadatul Mubdtadi'ien *pesantren* and orphanage in Cakung.

Despite Fadli's extensive religious education and genuine Islamic credibility, his authority within FBR derives primarily from belief in the potency of his supernatural power (*ilmu ghaib*). In 2002, during a clash with Madurese *preman* in Cakung, Fadli is said to have emerged unscathed from a hail of machete blows. Word of his reputed invulnerability soon spread and built up to mythic proportions. In the world of *preman*, invulnerability (*ilmu kebal*) is a crucial element in the establishment of authority and those who possess it quickly gain a following. Fadli was believed to possess not just *kebal* but also a divine mandate to lead the most disenfranchised of the Betawi community towards a new golden age of prosperity. His invulnerability and his status as a *kiai*, together with his connections to those in power—including close relations with the Soeharto children and Jakarta's governor, Sutiyoso—made him an archetypal *jawara* strongman, and powerbroker.

The *jawara* has been a recurrent and ambiguous figure throughout the history of the region, acting as an agent of state oppression and social control, as a self-serving bandit and thug, and as an informal community leader and rebel against perceived injustice. Fadli has consciously linked himself to Betawi *jawara* folk heroes such as Si Pitung, a Robin Hood-like social bandit who is believed to have redistributed the spoils of his banditry to the poor. Fadli transposed this myth into the present, arguing that the rights of the Betawi had been stolen, and that restoring them would require jihad. If the law oppressed the Betawi, then they were obliged to resist it by any means necessary, so long as it was permitted (*halal*).⁸

7 In 1996 PDI split into two factions after the government, concerned at the increasing popularity of the party's elected leader, Megawati Sukarnoputri, backed a rival congress that appointed Soerjadi as party chair. Supporters of Megawati's faction were violently removed from the party's headquarters in Jakarta in what came to be known as the 27 July 1996 Affair.

8 Interview with Fadli el-Muhir, Jakarta, 2005.

Islam has been an integral component of FBR's construction of Betawi identity, one that also draws heavily on the machismo culture of the *jawara* and *preman* and traditions of indigenous martial arts (*pencak silat*), in combination with the moral leadership of religious leaders such as *kiai* and *ulama*. Membership oaths require followers to swear to adhere to sharia law and commit to battling vice (*maksiat*). FBR emblemises its program as the three 'S's' of *shalat* (prayer), *silat* (martial arts) and *sekolah* (school), invoking an idealised traditional Betawi order, a world dominated by the *kiai* and the *kiai*'s enforcer the *jawara*, and the institutions of the *pesantren* and *gardu*.

In practice, religiosity within FBR follows conservative-traditionalist NU lines, reflecting Fadli's background as well as religious norms found within the Betawi community. He gives interested members instruction in the Arabic *kitab kuning* texts that are used widely in *pesantren*, alongside regular Qur'anic recital sessions. A significant number of FBR's members are illiterate and hence unable or unwilling to participate. The atmosphere at these sessions is relaxed, and they often appear to be a pretext to chat, hang out and smoke cigarettes. Most members are nominal Muslims at best, and piety is assumed to be integral to their 'Betawi-ness', defined in opposition to demonised outsiders rather than constituting something to be actively pursued through study, instruction or routine fulfilment of religious obligations.⁹ The group's communal events invariably juxtapose displays of devoutness through collective prayer with physical prowess in the form of martial arts displays, both of which are a precursor to the main attraction, erotic versions of the popular music form *dangdut kampung*.¹⁰

FBR's mission to fight sin and iniquity has become intertwined with its claim to exclusive economic rights for the Betawi, and has been a key strategy for expanding its territory. In practice, *maksiat* is defined largely in relation to who controls it. Accusations of prostitution and gambling have been used as a pretext to wrest control of areas held by rival *preman*, such as in the Pasar Minggu market district. In locales where FBR is dominant, however, bars and clubs, including those renowned for

9 This was clearly demonstrated at an FBR meeting I attended in 2005. Fadli closed the meeting, requesting the several hundred members in attendance to join together for sunset (*maghrib*) prayers. While Fadli and several other officials went to the mosque, rank and file members fought each other over the free food on offer.

10 At these events *dangdut* singers need to be protected by assigned security guards from the amorous advances of FBR members, who attempt to place tips in the singers' cleavages.

prostitution, operate largely undisturbed so long as regular donations are made to the group.¹¹

From late 2004, the desire to further expand its territory and integrate itself with political elites led FBR to take two contradictory directions. On the one hand, it began to loosen its criteria for membership. Initially it did not accept non-Muslim members, and non-Betawi were given only provisional membership status. However, as FBR expanded its turf into south and central Jakarta, it faced the difficulty that predominantly Christian Ambonese and West Papuan *preman* controlled many of these areas. In order to 'integrate' these *preman* without having to resort to protracted violent confrontation, FBR radically revised its membership criteria. An alternative, non-Islamic pledge was formulated and 'Betawiness' was redefined to a more ambiguous 'those whose fate is tied to that of Jakarta'.¹² As a result FBR became more ethnically and religiously heterogeneous, but its social grounding in the world of Jakarta's *preman* was also consolidated.

At the same time as larger numbers of non-Muslim *preman* were joining FBR, Fadloli's religious rhetoric was becoming increasingly uncompromising. The strong support in Jakarta for the Islamist Prosperity and Justice Party (PKS) in the 2004 elections, during which FBR supported the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) and Golkar, prompted the FBR leadership to rethink its political alliances. A decision was made to court what was interpreted as the newly emergent Islamist political force in Jakarta. FBR's previous attacks on NGOs critical of the Jakarta governor gave way to joint actions with PKS, the Indonesian Liberation Party (HTI), the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (MMI), the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) and FPI protesting US intervention in the Middle East and supporting a host of other causes championed by hardline Muslim groups.¹³ Fadloli also joined these groups in publicly calling for the introduction of Islamic law in Jakarta and lobbying for the release of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir.

The shift towards a more publicly militant stance did not sit easily with all of FBR's members. Recent non-Muslim recruits in particular felt that it could threaten their position within the group and undermine

11 This includes the cheap bars and hotels of Jalan Jaksa in Kebon Sirih, control of which is divided between Ambonese *preman* affiliated with FBR and *preman* linked to Forkabi.

12 Interview with FBR official, Jakarta, 2006. Previously members were required to show a family lineage in Jakarta extending back at least two generations.

13 Fadloli and HTI's leadership co-finance *Suara Islam*, a monthly newspaper that focuses primarily on topics related to Middle Eastern politics, such as the Palestinian struggle, the Zionist conspiracy theory and the threat of US imperialism. It can be viewed at <<http://www.suara-islam.com>>.

their authority in the streets. The new alliances also exposed a social and cultural divide between the educated middle-class religious activists of PKS and HTI and FBR's street *preman*, who in conversation described the former as 'wannabe Arabs' and 'no fun!'. At FBR events at which HTI and PKS representatives were present, *dangdut* performances were replaced with *qasidah rebana*, a performance art consisting of adaptations of classical Arabic poetry sung in Malay and accompanied by rhythmic drumming, performed by the wives of FBR members. Non-Muslim FBR members generally avoided participating in rallies with HTI, MMI and PKS.

In reality, the new non-Muslim FBR members have little to worry about. Ultimately it is factors such as 'toughness' (*kejagoan*), control over turf and acceptance of Fadloli's authority that determine positions within the organisation. For FBR's leadership, alliances with hardline groups are ultimately strategic and aimed at compensating for diminishing support for the group within the Jakarta administration, which has grown increasingly impatient at FBR's embroilment in controversy and demands for concessions. In this respect the new strategy does not correlate with an internal shift in values or priorities.

3 SYMBOLIC RADICALS: FPI

In contrast to FBR, FPI has a much more clearly articulated Islamic 'mission'. Its stated purpose is to carry out the Qur'anic edict of *amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar* – commanding good and preventing evil. In order to achieve this goal, FPI is organised into two divisions, each reporting to a central advisory council that reports directly to FPI co-founder and head, Habib Rizieq Shihab (see colour plate 11). The *Jamaah* (Community or Congregation) division is responsible for *amar ma'ruf*, enjoining good, which manifests in proselytising (*dakwah*) and encouraging the local community to participate in FPI prayer sessions and fulfil their basic religious obligations. *Nahi mungkar*, avoiding evil, is the task of FPI's militia, *Laskar Pembela Islam*. This principle has provided the rationale for numerous vigilante actions by FPI against Jakarta's bars, clubs and pool halls since 1998.¹⁴

FPI argues that the Islamic community (*umat*) in Indonesia is under serious attack from Western decadence, secularism, liberalism and immorality, accelerated by rapid democratic reform. It asserts that while leading to greater political freedom, *reformasi* has been corrupted by these

14 For a more detailed account of FPI's vigilante actions, see Wilson (2006) and al-Zastrouw (2006).

'excesses', and has been accompanied by a more general breakdown in the moral fabric of society. This is evidenced by the uncontrolled spread of businesses 'peddling in vice', such as discos, bars, entertainment centres and other fronts for pornography, prostitution and illicit drugs.¹⁵ Due to corruption and complicity with organised crime, state law enforcement agencies, especially the police, are considered to be either unwilling or unable to enforce existing laws, making it the obligation of pious citizens to do so. From within its own ranks, Islam is also believed to have been 'betrayed' by liberal reformers such as Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid and 'deviationists' such as the Ahmadiyah sect and the Liberal Islamic Network (JIL).¹⁶

According to Rizieq, the Prophet Muhammad never discussed the specifics of an Islamic state and was concerned only with the creation of a society based on sharia (al-Zastrouw 2006: 114). FPI has interpreted this as a call to reform public morality, promoting sharia rather than directly challenging the existence of the nation-state. In Rizieq's opinion, 'if the morals and character are not reformed then it is useless to talk about reform in economy, political affairs, and law' (Guerin 2004). FPI has been a vocal advocate for the reinsertion into the Constitution of the Jakarta Charter, which obliges the application of sharia to all Muslims. Islamic political parties proposed the inclusion of the Charter in the original version of the 1945 Constitution, but it was dropped after objections from Christian nationalists.

FPI describes its religious orientation as Ahlus Sunnah wal-Jamaah, the long form for conventional Sunni Islam. It differentiates itself from the mainstream understanding adopted by Muhammadiyah and NU, citing its interpretation as being closer to a Salafist one.¹⁷ However, unlike other Salafist groups such as Laskar Jihad, FPI does not adopt an exclusivist attitude towards the local community or make its members adhere to rigorous codes of behaviour or dress. FPI's Salafism is largely symbolic; it manifests not in everyday practice but in the Islamic identity it presents to the public through its vigilante actions and public demonstrations. That this kind of engagement with politics is not a characteristic of orthodox Salafism serves to underscore its strategic nature. Through the assertion of this 'purist' identity in the public realm, FPI attempts to create an aura of religious legitimacy for itself.

15 Interview with Habib Rizieq Shihab, Jakarta, 2005.

16 Interviews with FPI officials, Jakarta, 2005.

17 Salafis claim that true Islam was practised by the Prophet Muhammad, his companions and the succeeding two generations, the 'pious ancestors' or *as-salaf as-saleh*. Hence they seek to practise Islam in a way that closely follows the practices of the early period.

Born in 1965 to parents of mixed Betawi and Yemeni descent, Rizieq began his religious education at the Saudi-funded Institute for Islamic and Arabic Studies (LIPIA) in Jakarta. Considered by neighbours to be a troublesome youth with a penchant for getting into fights, he was sent by his family to study at King Saud University in Saudi Arabia in order to 'straighten him out'. There he completed a degree in Islamic law. Rizieq returned transformed and, together with a number of other members of Jakarta's Habib community, established FPI soon after.¹⁸

FPI made its first public appearance during the political turmoil of 1998 as part of the pro-Habibie Pam Swakarsa militia established by General Wiranto to curtail the pro-reform student movement. Soon after, the group was involved in a bloody confrontation with Ambonese gangsters in Ketapang that left 15 dead. According to Jakarta's police chief at the time, Noegroho Djajoesman, the police initially supported FPI as a counter to the 'extremes' of the student-based reform movement. This support was both logistical and financial. Noegroho states that in the post-1998 environment, the previous 'iron fist' approach to dealing with civil militias was no longer feasible. Instead, the police attempted to 'control' and compromise FPI (and similar groups) by channelling funds obtained largely from Jakarta's business community to its leadership.¹⁹ The plan soon backfired. In the new democratised and decentralised political environment such 'backing' arrangements were no longer binding, and over time FPI grew increasingly independent of its state benefactors.

Rather than constituting the entire organisation as in FBR, in FPI *preman* form a particular and significant segment. The Jamaah division consists primarily of university students, religious activists and others who are attracted to FPI's mission of enjoining good and preventing evil. Many are members of the local community who join in FPI prayer sessions at local mosques. They have not gone through any formal initiation but are nevertheless counted by the organisation as Jamaah members. The bulk of the membership consists of *preman*, street kids and unemployed youth who have been recruited into the group's Laskar Pembela Islam militia.²⁰ Unlike members of the Jamaah division, Laskar members

18 The Habib are a community of Middle Eastern ancestry who trace a family lineage to the Prophet Muhammad (see Mohammad, Perdana and Haryadi 2000). Rizieq claims to be descended from the Quraishi tribe in Yemen, the same tribe as the Prophet Muhammad.

19 Interview with Noegroho Djajoesman, Jakarta, 2006.

20 Often this recruitment occurs in the context of vigilante actions, with Laskar members asking the *preman* who are protecting the targets of their raids to join the group. In this respect affiliation with FPI affords local *preman* protection from future raids.

do not receive religious instruction and rarely attend prayer sessions or sermons. Their training focuses primarily on martial arts and the development of the physical skills required to conduct raids.²¹ During training it is drilled into Laskar members that their task is to combat evil and that their actions are for God. It is imbued in them that FPI's leadership is a reflection of true Islam. Devotion and piety manifest in unquestioning obedience, and those who question the leadership are labelled *bughat*, 'one who rebels against religious authority' (al-Zastrouw 2006: 107). Like Fadli, Rizieq is the undisputed source of religious and temporal authority. Much is made of his Middle Eastern heritage, which is equated with religious authenticity. A charismatic and animated orator, he is held in saint-like reverence. As one member has said:

Habib Rizieq is truly loved by God. He doesn't use money to achieve his goals. His simple, modest lifestyle reflects the characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad: relaxed yet firm, prepared to stand up and make sacrifices for what is right (interview with FPI militia member, Jakarta, June 2006).

Despite the appearance of being uncompromising in its street campaign for *amar ma'ruf nahi mungkar*, FPI's choice of targets is calculated and highly selective. According to Alawi Usman, the head of the FPI investigations unit responsible for uncovering 'places of vice',²² the group follows 'strict procedural guidelines' in identifying targets, investigating reports from local residents and then, after confirmation, lodging a formal complaint with the police. Violent action is taken only as a last resort if the police fail to respond. While the police rarely act on FPI's complaints, this does give them the opportunity to forewarn businesses on FPI's hit list, which can then pay for police protection, strengthen their own security or make FPI an offer. Bars and nightclubs are a traditional domain of *preman*, and when planning an attack, FPI gives serious consideration to the relative strength and connections of its target as well as the potential symbolic value. For example, the lucrative local pornographic video industry has escaped FPI's wrath due to the involvement of high-ranking military figures. The potential repercussions of disrupting military business interests would appear to outweigh any symbolic or material gains.

21 Initially they received training in invulnerability (*ilmu kebal*), with the group also offering 'invulnerability training packages' aimed at Jakarta's executives and middle class. This ended when Misbahul Anam, a co-founder of FPI, left the group in 2003. When questioned on *ilmu kebal*, Rizieq stated that it was idolatry (*syirik*) and not compatible with Islam (interview with Habib Rizieq Shihab, Banda Aceh, January 2005).

22 The investigations unit is a specially trained division within the central committee of FPI.

Apart from bars, clubs and brothels, targets of FPI's moral outrage have included the Miss Indonesia and Miss Transvestite competitions, the rock band Dewa, Mexican soap operas, the Ahmadiyah and Wahidiyah sects, JIL and the so-called illegal churches (*gereja liar*) (Wilson 2006). FPI has also mobilised large demonstrations against the US interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq; threatened to conduct 'sweepings' of foreign nationals in Jakarta; and recruited 'holy warriors' to fight in Iraq, Lebanon and Southern Thailand.²³ Targets are chosen to maximise public exposure for the group and draw attention to its existence, and for this reason FPI's actions often appear to be almost scripted. Outside these actions, FPI has few structured activities apart from its weekly sermons. Through its calculated use of low-scale violence and thuggery, it has managed to magnify its own influence, being careful not to cross the line into the more extreme kind of violence that is identified with terrorism or that could provoke the government to shut it down.

After the Bali bombings in October 2002, increased scrutiny and suspicion of militant Islamic groups led to many of FPI's financial donors abandoning it. This placed a greater burden on members to find their own sources of income, which in turn increased the temptation to accept pay-offs and bribes. For example, one proprietor of a bar targeted by an FPI raid stated that before the attack, he was approached and offered a deal that would have required him to make a substantial one-off payment.²⁴ The FPI leadership has taken the accusations of racketeering by its members seriously. After Rizieq's release from prison in 2003, where he had served seven months for inciting hatred, the group undertook a tightening of its membership criteria, expelling several clerics and rank and file members accused of receiving pay-offs. Rizieq claimed that it had been infiltrated by *preman* working for those running gambling and prostitution rackets, along with others intent on 'destroying Islam'.²⁵ According to FPI's co-founder and former secretary-general, Misbahul Anam, 'the organisation grew so fast and with so little attention to the quality of its recruits that, before we knew it, it was full of all kinds of misfits' (interview, Jakarta, 2003).

23 Several dozen jihadis were signed up, but due to a lack of funds and a failure to obtain passports, none ever left the country.

24 Confidential interview, Jakarta, 2006. In other instances the process has been reversed and victims pay after the attack to guarantee that they will not be targeted again. The attack thus acts as proof of FPI's ability to inflict damage.

25 Interview with Habib Rizieq Shihab, Jakarta, 2005.

4 THE ANTI-PORNOGRAPHY MOVEMENT AND PLAYBOY: AN ISLAMIC FRONT?

The establishment of a special parliamentary committee to discuss a draft anti-pornography bill in September 2005 saw FPI and FBR move back into the public limelight. In its wide-ranging but ambiguous definition of 'pornographic activities' (*pornoaksi*), the draft bill had far-reaching implications for the policing of public morality, going beyond the regulation of print and electronic media. Its critics saw it as 'sharia by stealth', and as a major attack on women's rights and freedom of expression that threatened to criminalise expressions of sexuality and censor culture and the arts (Suryakusuma and Lindsey 2006).

For FPI and FBR, the bill held the potential to provide concrete legal grounding for their anti-vice campaigns, and they soon hit the streets as its most vocal advocates. Shared support for the bill became the catalyst for renewed alliances between FBR, FPI and a host of other groups on the fringes of Indonesian Islam – including HTI, MMI and the Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council (DDII) – under the moral guidance of MUI and with the political muscle of PKS.

By May 2006 public debate over the bill had grown increasingly heated and polarised, turning into a battle between secular, pluralist and liberal groups on the one hand, and a conservative Islam that encompassed both mainstream and radical groups on the other.²⁶ However, behind the demonstrations and rhetoric, a more familiar politics concerned with the pursuit of money, influence and power was at play. For FPI, the anti-pornography debate facilitated a strategic strengthening of its relationship with MUI, motivated by both financial and ideological considerations. A product of the New Order's attempts to co-opt Islam, MUI has a quasi-official status that gives it access to government funding.²⁷ It also raises significant revenue of its own by issuing *halal* labels to food manufacturers (Sijaba 2006). MUI was able to request 'socialisation funds' for its support of the anti-pornography bill from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, some of which it distributed to Islamic organisations that supported its agenda.²⁸

26 The Islamists were ultimately to lose this debate, as the bill was later withdrawn and considerably revised. The new draft bill is currently still awaiting ratification by parliament.

27 For more background on MUI, see Ichwan (2005).

28 Interview with Ahmad Suaedy, director of the Wahid Institute, Jakarta, 2006. These organisations face heavy costs. A typical 'demo' can cost anywhere from Rp 15,000 to Rp 100,000 per person, covering fuel, food, drink, banners and placards, and 'cigarette money'.

In MUI, FPI found its perfect partner. Through a fatwa issued in 2005 condemning everything from liberalism, secularism and pluralism to pornography and mixed marriage, MUI provided an external source of theological legitimisation for FPI's *nahi mungkar* campaign; through its financial backing, it provided the access to funds to make the campaign happen. MUI also benefited from the alliance. With no authority to enforce the fatwa (or push through the anti-pornography bill) itself, MUI could rely on FPI to exert political pressure on its behalf. The support of militant groups like FPI has helped MUI establish itself as an independent Islamic institution while remaining on the government payroll, akin to what Ahmad Suaedy has described as a 'state-owned company' (Sijaba 2006). In June 2006 it declared the formation of a 'unified Islamic front' of 40 Islamic organisations that pledged their commitment to 'synchronise' their respective programs under the guidance of MUI.²⁹ These organisations included FPI, FBR, MMI and HTI. The resulting synchronised relationship operates on one level in a manner not far removed from the dynamics of a protection racket: FPI uses MUI's fatwa to legitimise violent vigilantism such as its attacks on the Ahmadiyah sect, while MUI uses this violence to justify the need for its fatwa to be followed in order to ensure 'religious harmony' (Sijaba 2006).

Another example of the opportunism underlying support of the anti-pornography bill is FBR's public attack on popular *dangdut* singer Inul Daratista. Renowned for her provocative *ngebor* 'drill' dance, Inul was a prominent member of the Unity in Diversity Alliance (Aliansi Bhinneka Tunggal Ika), which opposed the bill. Despite FBR's fondness for equally erotic versions of *dangdut*, the group claimed that Inul's hip gyrations threatened to 'destroy the moral character of Indonesia's youth'. As well as picketing her residence and forcibly closing down some of her karaoke bars, FBR demanded that she be prohibited from performing and, as an ethnic Javanese, 'go back where she came from'.³⁰ FBR's opposition to Inul was framed in moral terms, but the background to this opposition is less virtuous. Before the debate on the anti-pornography bill, FBR had lobbied Inul to employ its members as security at her chain of *dangdut* karaoke bars. She turned down the offer. FBR's apparent 'moral outrage' had less to do with Inul's hip gyrations than with her refusal to give its members jobs.³¹ Through the anti-pornography debate it found an

29 See 'Ormas Islam Satukan Barisan' [Islamic Organisations form a United Front], *Jawa Pos*, 22 June 2006.

30 Interview with Fadloli el-Muhir, Jakarta, 2006.

31 In the homes of FBR members, posters of Inul and other well-known *dangdut* stars are a common decoration, and the daughters of several members work as *dangdut* singers at community celebrations. The immense popularity

opportunity to exact revenge and reassert its claim of territorial rights over Jakarta's nightlife.³²

Similar discrepancies between public positions and private deal making surround FBR and FPI's opposition to the publication in 2006 of the Indonesian edition of *Playboy* magazine. As news spread of *Playboy's* impending application for a publication licence, rumoured to be worth US\$200,000, Jakarta's underworld clamoured for its share. The magazine was besieged by requests for pay-offs, including from organisations that later publicly opposed it.³³ FPI spearheaded the campaign against the magazine, attacking its Jakarta office, intimidating its employees and conducting sweepings of local newsagents for copies of the magazine. Despite its relatively tame content in comparison with local publications like *Lampu Merah* [Red Light], FPI proclaimed *Playboy* to be 'more dangerous to Indonesia's youth than illicit drugs'.³⁴ As an 'icon of pornography' *Playboy* was an irresistible target, embodying FPI's characterisation of Western culture as morally corrupt. As Alawi Usman from FPI explained:

Why did we attack *Playboy* and not other publications such as *For Him Magazine* and *Lampu Merah*? Because they were prepared to compromise and adopt a low profile. But *Playboy*, it was arrogant. As an American icon it assumed that it could bully Indonesia and spread its filth freely without consequences (interview, Jakarta, 2006).

Playboy's high profile, political symbolism and refusal to make concessions to FPI guaranteed that it would not be left alone. FBR also joined in demonstrations demanding the magazine be banned. However, in true *preman* fashion, FBR managed to profit from the furore behind the scenes: several of its Ambonese members were contracted by the magazine as private security, using their connections to help staff evade FPI and MMI in Jakarta before the magazine moved its office to Bali. The seeming contradiction between FBR's stance towards Inul and its stance

of Inul among FBR members perhaps explains the ferocity with which they responded to her snub.

32 On national television Fadloli continued the vitriol, claiming that the women involved in the alliance were 'immoral' and 'devils'. This led to former first lady Sinta Nuriyah filing a libel suit against him. The case was eventually dropped after the intervention of Sinta's husband, Abdurrahman Wahid. Despite this, publicly Wahid has been a consistent critic of both FBR and FPI and an advocate of revisions to laws regulating social organisations.

33 This was rumoured to include both FPI and FBR (confidential interview, Jakarta, 2006).

34 Interview with Habib Rizieq Shihab, Jakarta, 2006.

towards *Playboy* is easily reconciled by what could be called the 'preman world view'. As a senior FBR member explained:

Any stance towards an issue is permissible so long as it facilitates benefits for our members and the organisation as a whole. In this respect we have and will remain consistent (interview, Jakarta, 2006).

Ultimately the organisation's public moral and political stance is determined by strategic considerations about which stance will bring the biggest rewards.

5 REDEMPTION OF THE PREMAN

The motivation for *preman* to join or be recruited into organisations like FPI and FBR is not totally reducible to a cynical desire for material reward. Within each group there exists an identifiable core of 'idealists' and ideologically motivated activists, and for some involvement is a transformative experience. FPI and FBR reject the common accusation that they are 'preman organisations' but openly proclaim the virtue of recruiting *preman* into their ranks. *Preman* are considered 'lost souls', neglected by the government and other Islamic organisations, who require guidance, religious instruction and the opportunity to reform themselves. If these recruits occasionally transgress against the law, social norms or religious proscriptions, this is attributed to 'rogue individuals' (*oknum*) who have failed or are yet to complete the conversion process. The organisation itself remains untainted. On the other hand, *preman* perform a particular utilitarian role within both groups, as the foot soldiers and muscle necessary for their anti-vice campaigns.

For those who make a living through violence, extortion and petty crime, religion does potentially perform a redemptive function and provides a framework through which internal contradictions can be reconciled. Members of FPI's Laskar division often describe joining the group as a transformative experience. As one recounted:

I first joined FPI as a way of getting inspiration, especially as I had no work and until I joined my life wasn't really going anywhere. I only finished primary school; realistically there isn't much I can do. Now I know I am a fighter for Islam, and feel like I have some kind of purpose and direction. Instead of just getting into fights over some little thing, now I fight for Islam (interview, Jakarta, 2005).

Another described a similar 'awakening':

In those times when I was a *preman*, deep in my heart I was looking for a positive way to channel my spirit of struggle (*daya juang*). That is what I have

found in FPI. I used to drink, gamble and basically be a menace, until one day I was confronted by FPI members, who told me I had to stop my sinful behaviour. At first I resisted. I thought, who do these guys think they are? But when FPI confronted us, you could feel that their 'power' came from their faith in God. ... I was moved. It didn't take long before I followed my conscience, and joined with them (interview, Jakarta, 2005).

Redemption in this respect does not involve disavowing violence, but redirecting it towards an ostensibly religious end. FPI's Laskar and FBR's *preman* continue to profit from drugs, prostitution and pornography, but as their public adversary rather than their protector.

FPI has responded to accusations of extortion and *premanisme* by expelling members and blaming infiltrators, but FBR has sought to rationalise the practice. As representatives of the indigenous population of Jakarta, its members claim an ethical and legal right to demand 'tax'. If in the course of combating vice, members exact or receive payment, then that is only 'natural' and a legitimate recompense for the valuable social service they are providing. FBR members are, in the words of Fadli, 'free to improve their welfare by any means necessary, as long as it *halal*'. *Halal* in this context is defined not by specific reference to the Qur'an, Hadith or scriptural traditions, but by Fadli himself in his authority as a *kiai*. Fadli invokes Islam as a transcendent moral and extra-legal order that supersedes civil and state law.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Vigilantism, as Abrahams (1998) has stated, exists at the 'frontiers of legitimacy' of the state, appropriating the notion of popular sovereignty in order to create a parallel order. The development by vigilante groups of large organisational structures also necessitates regular income. This creates the momentum for anti-vice movements to move closer to racketeering, as a racketeer is both a protector and an exploiter.³⁵

FPI and FBR, and 'Islamic *preman*' more generally, practise what I refer to as 'morality racketeering'. Morality racketeering manipulates altruistic sentiments and ideals found in both marginal and mainstream Islamic discourse and takes advantage of gaps in state power to gain economic and political concessions. Both FPI and FBR have been strategically opportunistic, championing notions of Islamic law and virtue based on political and economic expediency. Like those running a classic protection racket, Islamic *preman* create a threat, in this case a 'moral

35 Consider, for example, the evolution of the Muslim vigilante group Pagad in the Cape Flats region of South Africa (Nina 2000).

crisis', which they are strategically placed to resolve. By eschewing many of the traditional staples of the *preman*, such as prostitution, gambling and drug trafficking, the new breed of Islamic gangsters attempt to gain a moral high ground that situates them as a morally virtuous vanguard. For street-level *preman*, this symbolic militancy provides a cover and legitimisation for the continuation of predatory behaviour. Virtue and self-interest, rather than being diametrically opposed, are in practice meshed in ways that allow members to easily reconcile the pursuit of criminal livelihood strategies.

Within FBR, Islam operates as an adjunct to a largely territorially defined sense of identity. Its anti-vice stance and championing of the anti-pornography bill provided a means by which to expand its control over turf. FPI has a more committed core of ideologically inspired religious activists. However, its loose organisational structure and focus on violent vigilante actions has provided a safe haven for *preman* whose commitment to its objectives is often weak. At the same time, both groups have articulated a populist notion of Islamic militancy that has struck a cord with many disenfranchised youth. Both offer the symbolic trappings of radicalism without the requirement for intensive study, asceticism or long-term commitment. For the leadership of both groups, the ability to mobilise a militant mass has improved their bargaining position with political elites in the dynamic and unstable post-New Order political environment. During the New Order, organised *preman* operated as 'loyal nationalists for hire' (Ryter 2005). Similarly, the current crop of Islamic *preman* are available for hire and mobilisation to defend another imagined and contested community – the *umat*.

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12 **INDONESIAN TERRORISM: FROM JIHAD TO DAKWAH?**

Ken Ward

In this chapter, I will try to predict the future evolution of the jihadi movement in Indonesia. Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) has been the best known of several jihadi organisations operating in Indonesia and neighbouring countries, and my focus will largely settle on it. The task is a hazardous one, not least because, in several respects, the conditions facing jihadism now differ vastly from when JI was set up as a successor to Darul Islam, which continued to exist, though shorn of some of its membership, after JI emerged in 1993. In the decade and a half between 1985 and 2000, the jihadi movement was free to expand with relative impunity, the more so as JI leaders were secure in their self-imposed exile in Malaysia. Now, however, confronting a vigilant police apparatus deployed by a government for which combating terrorism has high priority, Indonesian jihadis seem to be no nearer to achieving their goals of first an Islamic state and then a caliphate embracing several Southeast Asian lands. Many have paid heavily, through prison sentences or death, for the violence they or their comrades have wreaked over the last eight years. The likeliest outcome for the near future is that veteran jihadis will fall back on *dakwah*, or spreading peacefully their understanding of Islam, while some of their juniors, bound together in small cells or even acting individually, continue to carry out violence. But, as we will see, drawing a boundary between *dakwah* and jihad will be no easy task.

1 **YUDHOYONO'S BALANCE SHEET**

Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's government has won high praise in the West for its thoroughness in fighting terrorism. Several major terrorists