Summary

The development and consolidation of the Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Iraq have not only shown the weakness of one of the most important regions of the world, Middle East but its rise has also produced an important call to radicals from all over the world to strengthen their struggle. In the ranks of the Islamic State are fighters from countries as diverse as Spain, France, Belgium, Libya, Malaysia and Indonesia. This situation reminds us of the impact of the war in Afghanistan in the 80s, when thousands of radicals from different countries joined the war against the Soviets to fight them or to obtain training.

The objective of this paper is first to analyze the current presence of Indonesians in Syria and Iraq involved in combat activities with particular emphasis on the reasons to join IS. And second, to establish a possible scenario in the short and long term on the future of jihadism in Indonesia given the current presence of Indonesians in Syria and Iraq and taking into consideration the impact of the war in Afghanistan in the 80s in Indonesia.

Keywords: Terrorism; International conflict; Indonesia; Syria; Iraq
Introduction

The terrorist attack committed in central Jakarta in January 2016 by supporters of IS in Indonesia (Kompas, 2016) showed the far reaching consequences of the current war in Syria and Iraq. At the same time, the attack revealed the influence that IS had acquired in the largest Muslim country in the world with 200 million of believers and finally unveiled that despite huge improvements in the fight against terrorism; the threat of Islamic terrorism is still there demonstrating an incredible resilience. The January 2016 attack was a turning point in the history of terrorism in Indonesia because so far Islamic state had not committed a single terrorist attack in Indonesia soil. That attack was a serious blow to the Indonesia defense capabilities showing important vulnerabilities in the security of the country.

Since the rise of IS in 2013, Indonesia has witnessed a transformation in its islamist groups. Some of them have full supported IS, for example Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid, Mujahidin Indonesia Timur but other important groups as Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia has rejected the affiliation with IS showing the same disagreements and divisions between the two big contemporary international jihadist groups. On the one hand, Al Qaeda, the old brand expelled from Afghanistan, now with powerful branches in the Arabian Peninsula and on the other hand, IS, settled in the north of Syria and northwest of Iraq but with a growing support outside its stronghold as different jihadist all over the world have pledged allegiance to IS. Among them, one of the most significant is Boko Haran in Nigeria (The Guardian, 2015). Along with terrorist groups, lone wolfs are committing terrorist attacks inspired in the IS´s ideology. All in all, IS, affiliated groups and lone individuals are showing important offensive capabilities that should not be underestimated.

In the following pages, first I will explain briefly the rise of IS and the evolution of the two most important jihadist groups in the Indonesia, Darul Islam and JI. Then I will analyse the current presence of Indonesians in Syria and Iraq involved in combat activities with particular emphasis on the reasons to join IS. This paper also intends to establish a possible scenario in the short and long term on the future of jihadism in Indonesia given the current presence of Indonesians in Syria and Iraq and taking into consideration the impact of the war in Afghanistan in the 80s in Indonesia. Among others, I will consider the following questions: What are the reasons behind Indonesians involved in IS in Syrian and Iraq? Why war in Syria and Iraq is so attractive compared
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to the low attention given to closer conflicts like the ones in Mindanao and in the southern Thailand? Is Indonesians presence in Iraq and Syria driven by specific views?

Islamic State in Syria and Iraq: so far so close

In March 2003, after a long international campaign seeking collaborators, United States and United Kingdom with the support of third countries like Spain, began the invasion of Iraq with the triple objective of 1) stop and dismantle the production of weapons of mass destruction that could be used against the United States and allies 2) Oust a corrupt and despotic regime which among other things had used weapons of mass destruction, in this case sarin gas, against its Kurdish population in 1988 (BBC, 1988) and 3) disrupt the support and collaboration of Sadam’s regime with terrorism.

Without undertaking any evaluation of this military operation, the fact is that over the time the security situation in Iraq after the intervention in 2003 deteriorated rapidly facilitating and crafting a friendly environment for the consolidation of the insurgency. Among the groups that opposed the US/UK presence, Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) emerged fiercely and became the frontrunner of the current IS, one the deadliest terrorist group of the history.

At present, IS dominates much of northern Syria and eastern Iraq. It administers a territory where it has implanted sharia as a source of law. It has proven significant offensive capabilities in both Syria and Iraq and beyond its conquered territories through the collaboration of supporters in countries such as Afghanistan, Libya, Egypt, Tunisia and through the collaboration of lone wolves like Omar Mateen, the terrorist, who killed 50 people in Orlando in a gay club (Burke, 2016).

The Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in 2003 opened the Pandora box and the negative consequences are still visible and affecting the regional security panorama. One of the most important reactions to the invasion was the inception of Al Qaeda in Iraq, headed by Al Zarqawi, a Jordanian who became notorious for launching a bloody suicide campaign against foreign troops and at the same time for starting the sectarian conflict in Iraq targeting Shia communities. (Ghosh, 2014)
Significantly and opposite to the US/UK goal of eradicating terrorism, the US/UK invasion was a golden opportunity for Al Qaeda to resettle in a new country, establish a new base after the defeat in Afghanistan and wage a new jihad. In Zarqawi words “We are not fighting for illusionary borders drawn by Sykes-Picot. Nor are we fighting to replace a western tyrant with an Arab tyrant. Our jihad is more honorable than that. We fight to raise God’s word on earth” (Hafez, 2007, 72)

Over the time, and despite some statements quoted by American officials in 2008 regarding Al Qaeda in Iraq as "strategically defeated" (Quivooij, 2015) AQI took advantage of the chaos provoked by the civil war in Syria and it expanded to Syria opening new and deadly opportunities for the group. The long war period in Iraq and the difficulties to consolidate a strong state with a powerful army, capable intelligence and a reliable administration laid the foundation for the inception of Al Qaeda in Iraq and then after the beginning of the civil war in Syria the establishment of ISIS and subsequently of IS as separate organization from Al Qaeda.

Since 2013, the international community has witnessed the consolidation and expansion of maybe one the most dreadful terrorist groups in the history of humanity with a long list of abominable acts against the humanity. Besides that, there are few examples of terrorist or insurgent groups all over the world that have controlled portions of territory like the Tamil Tigers in the north of Sri Lanka and the talibans in Afghanistan.

The emergence and consolidation of IS as a political player in Middle East is remarkable for several reasons. One of them is their proven capacity to conquer territories. IS has also become a center of attraction for foreign fighters from around the world. IS has inspired people not only from the Muslim world but also from latitudes beyond it, for instance Spain, France and UK. Syria and Iraq represent today the perfect location to fight, obtain training, combat experience, develop personal networks like Afghanistan and Pakistan that were the main battlefield of jihadism in the 80s (Gunaratna, 437, 2007).
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IS has also demonstrated over the years a strong capacity to generate revenues through different channels as extortion, oil sales, taxes and powerful capabilities to communicate and transmit ideals. (Quivooij, 2015)

As mentioned above, the current Civil war in Syria like the Afghanistan war in the 80s has attracted thousands of foreign fighters from different regions. Some of them are from Muslim countries in the Arab world, especially Tunisians and Libyans. Some of them are European Muslims who have abandoned their lives in London, Berlin or Paris to win a cosmic war. A small but significant group comes from Indonesia. A country geographically separated from the Middle East and with relatively weak religious, educational ties with the region. It’s worth to note that historically Indonesians have attended Egyptian, Syrian or Iraqis universities and religious institution to gain education. And it’s also true that over 200 Indonesians were in Afghanistan in the 80s and 90s. Despite that, ties were not powerful compared to Malaysia and Philippines.

Change and continuity: from the Padri movement to Islamic State in Indonesia

Jihadist terrorism in Indonesia is not a new phenomenon. In fact, the first time that a particular group used violence in the name of Islam was the Padri movement in 1803. After Padri movement other groups in Indonesia have carried out acts of violence justifying it in the name of Islam. The two most important groups have been Darul Islam that was the most significant jihadist group during the 40s and 50s until its end in 1962 and Jamma Islamiya, the former armed wing of Al Qaeda in Indonesia. Jamma Islamiya since its tragic appearance in 2002 with the double suicide bombing in Bali, led a long campaign of terror across the country carrying out terrible attacks like the second attack in Bali in 2005 carried out by three suicides, the attack on the embassy of Australia in 2004 and the Marriot hotel bombing in 2003.

At the same time, it is worth noting that despite the good work and increasing capacities of Indonesian security forces, an evident fact proven by the loss of capacity of islamic terrorist groups in Indonesia since 2000, the issue is far from being resolved.
Looking back at the Indonesia’s history, it's possible to say that there have been three different stages in the history of Islamic terrorism in the country. These three stages correspond to the inception, development and the end of the DI insurgency. The second stage was characterized by the participation of Indonesian citizens in the Afghan war of the 80s against the Soviets. The third stage started in 1998 with the fall of Suharto and the gradual return from abroad, mainly from Malaysia, of people linked to jihadist violence to a country in despair affected by a deep economic crisis, in a period of political transition and suffering an unstable security situation manifested in the sectarian conflicts of Sulawesi and Maluku archipelagos. The combination of these factors, led to the development and consolidation of Jemma Islamiyah as the leading organization in Indonesia until the beginning of its decline since 2005. The last stage corresponds to the phenomenon of the emergence of the influence of Islamic State in 2013 in Indonesia and the participation of Indonesians in the Syrian civil war. This stage shares similarities with Indonesian participation in the Afghanistan war in the 80s. The participation of Southeast Asian fighters in the Islamic State is represented by the establishment in September 2014 of Katibah Nusantara which is formed by nationals from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines (Kompas, 2014). Katibah Nusantara has shown important military capabilities. For instance, it took five Kurd held territories in 2015. According to different sources, the number of Indonesia’s in Syria is around 700. Compared to the Muslim population in Indonesia it is an extremely low percentage but qualitatively relevant.

Now it is to be seen if the return of these fighters to Indonesia will provoke a new terrorist campaign similar to the one carried out by JI in the past.

There are four types of terrorist and insurgent groups based on Tan's classification. The first type is the separatist groups seeking either more political autonomy or full independence. Examples of these groups in Southeast Asia are abundant especially in Myanmar and Indonesia. For example the independence movement in Papua, in southern Thailand or Myanmar. The second category consists of the anti-government armed opposition groups such as the historical communist insurgents groups in the Philippines. The third category is made up of jihadists groups and the fourth of groups supporting the islamist ideology but not using violence. (Tan, 11-13, 2007)
Darul Islam and JI correspond to the third category. The insurgent group Darul Islam embodied the main threat to the security and the very existence of Indonesia since its founding in 1942 till its end in 1962. This group emerged as a reaction to the failure to establish Indonesia as an Islamic state ruled by the sharia law. Their struggle lasted for more than two decades and it was a major handicap for the consolidation of a new Indonesia. Moreover, Darul Islam struggle is seen today as an example for jihadists in Indonesia.

Once the Japanese Empire was defeated in August, 1945, Indonesian leaders declared the independence and the birth of a new country, a fact opposed by the former colonial power. In response, ulamas throughout Indonesia declared jihad against Holland and fought hand in hand with the Nationalist forces. But a small part of these Islamist militias broke the unity of action in 1948 after the Renville agreement between Indonesia and the Netherlands that was considered very negative for Indonesian interests (Van Bruinessen, 2002, 117-154). This separate group was led by Kartosuwiryo and he followed his own jihad against the Dutch and later, once Indonesia reached the total freedom in 1949, against the Government of the new Republic of Indonesia. The areas under the control of Kartosuwiryo were governed by its own constitution and indeed there was an own system of justice (Hosen 2007,65) The continuation of the struggle by Kartosuwiryo after full independence had its reason of being in the irreconcilable differences between the two major groups (nationalistic and islamist) that exist until today in Indonesia.

The second major group to highlight is Jamma Islamiya. JI is extremely important for three aspects. First, its birth and development is linked to the Afghan conflict in the 80s against the Soviets, where Indonesian citizens went to fight the Soviet infidels and after returning home some decided to implement their domestic jihad. An example of this is Hambali, who was one of the leaders of JI and was in Afghanistan in the jihad against the Soviets (Abuza, 2007, 38)

A good example of Indonesian participation in Afghanistan is the experience of Mukhlas in Afghanistan from 1986 to 1989. He stated: “It is the kind of pleasure that cannot be described, let alone understood by those who
have never experienced it. I had a wife, I had my first night, but the pleasure is nothing, not even close, compared to the pleasure of the war. It was very, very pleasant. Especially when you see your friends who have died bravely in the holy war. They smelled fragrance, they were laughing, and often made me wonder, it is not I who die so peacefully, in the given death” (Ramakrihna, 2009, p. 107).

Another example of the radicality of JI member is the statement of Imam Samudra "Akhi [my brother], fill your life with the murder of kuffar [the unbelievers]. Has not Allah ordered you to kill them all, as They Have killed our fellow Muslims? Aspire to be an executioner of unbelievers. Teach your grandchildren to become executioners and terrorists for all unbelievers. Truly ahki, This designation is better for us than to be a Muslim pays no attention to WHO the blood of His fellow muslims murdered by the cursed unbelievers ... ...if you hate and Oppose the titles bestowed on us by the enemies of Allah, then a by what other path we will enter heaven?” (Solahudin, 1, 2013)

Padri Movement, Darul Islam, Jamma Islamiayh and other contemporary groups supporting IS reveal that Islamic fundamentalism in Indonesia dates back to the beginning of the XIX century, characterized by the bitter reaction and campaign promoted by the Padri Movement in Sumatra. Since then, Indonesia with different intensity has suffered the bites of Islamic terrorism. Understanding this situation is paramount to analyze and to foresee the future of Islamic terrorism in Indonesia. As reflected in IPAC's report Lamongan Indonesia's network: how east Java, Poso and Syria are linked, the support to the IS in that particular region was not originated from nothing but from the previous jihadist organizations of the area( IPAC, 2015). All things considered, it seems reasonable to assume that the support to IS now in Indonesia is connected to the long history of jihadism in the country.

This idea is connected to the resilience of the jihadist movement in Indonesia. One important variable emerging from the impact of IS in Indonesia is how deep and enduring is the resilience of the jihadist movement. As defended by Solahudin "The resilience of the Indonesian jihadi movement is impressive. It has survived under varied political circumstances, from authoritarism to democratic rule. The Resiliency of the
movement reflects the persistence within of the Islamic community sections in Indonesia of the notion of upholding Islamic law " (Solahudin, 201, 2013)

This is very important, because since the outbreak of the long terrorist campaign of JI in Indonesia in 2000 more than 400 terrorists have been arrested, more than 50 are on the run, about 100 have been killed in police operations and there have been 15 suicide bombings in the country some of them with very little international attention but with a powerful symbolism like the suicide bombing at mosque At-Taqwa in Java (Kompas, 2011) being the first targeting a mosque and replicating the suicide attacks on mosques in countries like Iraq and Syria.

The reasons for the resilience in Indonesia underlie the ideological battle. As defended by Rohan Gunaratna is his book *Inside Al Qaeda*, "the fight is an ideology and not against a physical force" (Gunaratna, 237, 2002)

Significantly, Gunaratna points out the reason of the resilience of the Indonesian jihadist movement and one of the problems to cope with. How to win the war of ideas? How to eradicate Islamic fundamentalism though in Indonesia?

Coupled with the battle of the ideas, political stability, strong security forces and economic development are also fundamental to combat terrorism. History in Indonesia shows that a weak Indonesia is the perfect victim for terrorism. The words of the expert Greg Fealy in 2007 are clear and could be replicated again at present "Indonesia is unlikely to rid itself of terrorism and other forms of violent Jihadism in the near future. The porosity of Its borders, the widespread corruption within its customs and immigration services, the ready availability of arms and explosives, and the continuing presence of deeply aggrieved Muslim groups create an environment which is conducive to continuing militant action" (Fealy, 74, 2007)

**From Indonesia to Syria and Iraq: reasons to join**

One of the most important factors connected to the IS emergence in Syria and Iraq is the strong power of attraction that IS has provoked within the Indonesian jihadist world. This aspect is not new, as mentioned before, Indonesians went to Afghanistan in the 80s to combat the Soviets and in the 90s to seek training in al Qaeda camps. But beyond
Afghanistan, only the southern Philippines has been frequented by Indonesians to fight and train. At the same time, it should also be noted that although there are bloody conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims in closer latitudes, mainly in Thailand (Abuza, 2015) where more than 6,000 people have died since 2003 and in Myanmar where violence against the Rohingya minority is tragic. Indonesian nationals have not gone to these battlefields and merely have denounced the situation, but without military involvement.

So, the question is, why Syrian conflict is so attractive? To answer this question I will use two vital documents; Joining the ranks, a video released by IS targeting Indonesian audience and an IPAC report Indonesians and the Syrian conflict.

Based on the arguments exposed by Abu Muhammad al Indonesi in the viral Join the ranks video calling for Indonesians to come to Syria, it’s possible to draw the following reasons to join IS:

1) It is religious mandate. “To wage jihad and to emigrate to the Islamic state is obligatory”.
2) A tool to stop the humiliation infringed by Taghut “oh brothers for the sake of Allah, are you pleased with being humiliated, oppressed and ruled by the tawaghit?”
3) IS has established a real Islamic state ruled by the sharia law “IS implements the sharia law in the entire land”
4) Deeply Anti-western: “united Muslims lands and demolished the Sykes picot borders that were made by the Kuffar” (Al Hayat media Center, 2014)

According to the second source, IPAC’s report, Indonesians and the Syrian conflict, there are four reasons that explain the current flow of Indonesians into Syria.

The first reason is the epic associated to the war in Syria. Based on Islamic eschatology there will be a battle at the end of the time in SHAM, current Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Israel.

That Syria had become the epicenter of the final battle is a perfect reason to attract jihadists around the world. It’s worth noting that the idea of the final battle or Armageddon is similar in its symbolism confronting the good and evil to the prophecies
developed by Asahara in Japan. Asahara, founder and leader of the sect and terrorist group *The supreme truth* was the first non-state actor developing and using weapons of mass destruction against their fellow citizens. It’s attack with sarin gas in the Metro of Tokyo in 1995 gained global attention but before and after that tragic attack the sect carried out different terrorist attacks using both biological weapons and chemical weapons.

The Armageddon or final battle between the forces of good and evil (FAS, 1995) has terribly been used long time before IS with destructive consequences for instance by Hitler, Bin Laden, Asahara, Pol Pot, etc. In the case of Indonesian in Syria, this argument is in my opinion strong enough to explain why some hundreds of Indonesian jihadists abandoned Indonesia and embarked themselves into the war in Syria.

Another factor is the chaotic situation in Syria and Iraq that has created the perfect scenario for developing a jihadist campaign. This idea has been quite popular in the Indonesia jihadist world due to the book *The two arm-strategy* published in Indonesia in 2013. In fact, the situation in Syria since 2011 till present and the situation in Iraq since 2003 till today are quite similar. Both have important security deficits, standard of living are quite low and the state is extremely weak. Both scenarios remind us Afghanistan since the 80s till today. Another factor exposed in the report is the easy away to reach Syria from Indonesia. Personally, I consider this point quite weak because Thailand and Myanmar are closer and the Indonesian involvement there is irrelevant. The last reason is the impact of the atrocities on Sunni population in the country. (IPAC, 1, 2014)

After putting all the aforementioned reasons together, it is reasonably possible to comprehend the conglomerate of reasons and motivations that are pushing Indonesians into Syria ad Iraq.

**The perfect scenario**

The American and British invasion of Iraq in 2003 caused in general huge criticism within Indonesian society and in particular within the Indonesian jihadist. The war itself and the failure to find weapons of mass destruction were perfect causes to justify the abundant theories of conspiracy in the Indonesian jihadist movement regarding United States. To give an illustration of what I mean let’s look at the conspiracy theory that
argues that the real perpetrators of 9/11 terrorist attack were the CIA and/or Israel secret service, Mossad, but deliberately they blamed Osama bin laden and Al Qaeda to discredit Islam (Hafidz, 2003, 385).

The chaotic situation both in Syria and Iraq was a golden opportunity to participate in a new jihad. Both scenarios remind us of the situation in Afghanistan since 1978 till present and in some areas in the Pakistan-Afghan border during the same period, in Somalia, Yemen and Libya today. To put it another way: weak or failed states, poverty, wide circulations of arms, bankrupt economies, etc. This situation is connected to another important publication in Indonesia, two-arm strategy by a former member of Al Qaeda Abdullad bin Muhammad. In this book, the author stated that the Arab spring was the perfect environment to start a revolt. And he was right. This idea is supported by the member of JI Abu Rusybian who stated "Why Should we expend so much energy by thinking small and undertaking a local jihad as we've done experiment up till now? This is not to demean the martyrs, may Allah accept their actions and the families they left behind. But it's only sapping our strength "(IPAC, 10, 2014)

Stronger Indonesia

Opposite to the situation in Syria and Iraq, the IS rise has been a driving force to boost and revitalize once again the resilient jihadist movement in Indonesia after a long period of real weakness undermined by the good job of the Indonesian security forces. In other words, Indonesian jihadists have gone to Syria to wage a war that can’t be won and carried out in Indonesia. This point is relevant as the war in Syrian Iraq could has been perceived as perfect battlefield to continue a war that is almost over in Indonesia. As Singh states the actions of Katibah Nusantara in Middle East “gives hope and support to the local outfits in the region by legitimizing this cause, which have suffered from security operations since 2002 Bali bombings” (Singh, 2015). With this in mind, terrorism in Indonesia is still a threat but compared to the past, especially with two major terrorist groups in the history on Indonesia, Darul Islam and JI, terrorist threat in the country is much weaker than in the past and secondly it doesn’t have the capabilities proven by Darul Islam, ruling some part of Indonesia territory or JI launching a deadly
terrorist campaign with the arrival of the new political period. In fact, the trend in the number of attacks and in the number of casualties is a compelling argument to state that *Indonesia is winning the war on jihadist domestic terrorism.*

**Middle East attraction**

Till the rise of IS in Syria and Iraq and the Indonesian participation in combat activities, both countries were weakly connected to Indonesia with the exception of some ties in the educational sector, where historically Indonesians have attended Islamic universities (Abuza, 20003, 11). In the jihadist world, the main link with the middle east for Indonesians lied mainly in the ideological arena. As pointed by Fealy the “indonesian jihadi thought is derived from Middle eastern sources” (Deol and Kazmi, 2012, 301)

In fact as stated by Azra, the Indonesian Islam has been categorized as a peripheral Islam, being the Islam in the heart of Middle East the real one. (Azra, 2002, 212)

**War 2.0**

IS is a perfect example of the adaptation of a terrorist group to the new information technologies to implement different tasks like recruitment, propaganda, networking, etc. The case of Indonesia is especially remarkable. Indonesia is one of the countries of the world enjoying highest levels of internet penetration and the IS's media operations branch knew and took advantage of it. As stated by Thomas Rid and Marc Hecker, one of the main functions of media operations is to recruit through the use of "pamphlets, press articles, videos, memoirs, sermons, forums internet, and social networks" (Rid & Hecker, 137, 2009)

Internet has become a powerful tool for IS and the traditional functions of internet as data mining, instructions, networking, coordination fund raising (Weimann, 2006, 111-145) are widely exploited by this group. IS doesn’t have a structure in Indonesia. Several groups support its fight from Indonesia raising funds and sending fighters. As Stated in IPAC'S report *Online activism and social media usage Among Indonesians extremists* "recruitment in Indonesia was always far more personalized, through direct face to face interaction, and it was one Recruited Friends and family, not strangers" (IPAC, 2015, 16).
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In conclusion, internet is one of the key platforms to reach Indonesians but it is not the only one.

**Beyond imagination: a mesmerizing reality**

Another reason to explain the Indonesians presence in Syria and Iraq is and as defended by Saifudeen the “demonstrable results-military achievements, territorial conquest and implementation of sharia-based governance in conquered territories” (Saifudeen, 2015) This ideas is also supported by Charles Lister, "Taken globally, the younger generation of the jihadist community is becoming more supportive of ISIS, largely out of fealty to its slick and proven capacity for attaining rapid results through brutality." (Tran, M and Weaver, M 2014)

The establishment of a new Caliphate has been one of the most important drivers of the Indonesian jihadist in Syria and Iraq. According to Azra the caliphate is “a single and universal Islamic political entity transcending the existing Muslim nation states in one single country” Azra, 2006, 8). As pointed by Azra the idea of the revival of the caliphate in Indonesia is more romantic than realistic but the truth is that the idea of restoring the caliphate has always been present in a small fringe of the Indonesian society promoted in contemporary times by groups as Hizb al Tahrir and the Jammah Tarbiyah. To give an illustration of what I mean, in august 2007, Hizbut Tahrir organised a massive meeting in the Bung Karno Stadium with 80 000 participants (Hizbut Tahrir, 2007) calling for the restoration of the Caliphate. So, the idea of a new Caliphate was slowly but gradually growing. Since the end of the caliphate in 1924, its restoration has been a common objective of several Islamic groups ranging from the Islamic brotherhood in Egypt to Al Qaeda and IS. To put it another way, to restore the Caliphate is for many to recover the greatness of Islam. Thus, the establishment of the caliphate in July 2014 was remarkable and of course attracted followers from different parts of Sunni Muslim world.

The words of Al Baghdadi, the current leader of the new established caliphate are a perfect example of this positive achievement for many in the muslin Sunni world.

“As for you, O soldiers of the Islamic State, then congratulations to you. Congratulations on this clear victory, congratulations on this great triumph. Today the kāfirīn (infidels) are infuriated in such a manner after which there will be no similar
infuriation. Many of them almost die from anger and sorrow. Today the believers rejoice with victory from Allah, feeling great happiness. Today the hypocrites are degraded. Today the rāfidah (shia), sahwāt (awakening councils), and murtaddīn (apostates) are humiliated. Today the tawāghīt in the east and west are frightened. Today the nations of kufr in the west are terrified. Today the flags of Shaytān (Satan) and his party have fallen. Today the flag of tawhīd rises with its people. Today the Muslims are honored. Today the Muslims are honored. Now the khilāfah has returned, humbling the necks of the enemy. Now the khilāfah has returned in spite of its opponents. Now the khilāfah has returned; we ask Allah (the Exalted) to make it to be upon the methodology of prophethood. Now hope is being actualized. Now the dream has become” (Al Bagdadi, 2014).

Along with the establishment of the caliphate, the establishment of IS in some parts of Syria and Iraq have become a strategic base for international jihadism, similar to the role of Afghanistan in the 90s (Hafez, 2007, 74)

A cosmic war: the final Armageddon

Abu Muhammad al Indonesi states in the join the ranks video that joining IS is a religious mandate. In his own words “To wage jihad and to emigrate to the Islamic state is obligatory”. This is connected to the idea of cosmic war as defined by Juergensmeyer. According to Juergensmeyer, one of the most reputed scholar in religious terrorism, a cosmic war has three important features: the fight is perceived as a necessary defense of the identity and the dignity of the group. To lose the war is impossible as the victory is sacred and third the victory is possible only in a sacred scenario where the victory or not depends on the god´s will (Juergensmeyer, 2001, 188-189) The current conflict in Syria and Iraq involving IS is a cosmic war by definition and the power of attraction is never-ending. Along with this, the IS has established a real Islamic state ruled by the sharia law. To protect and defend the Islamic state is to defend the Allah´s will.

New wave of terrorism?

What will be the future of terrorism in Indonesia after the collapse of the Islamic State terror group as a non-state actor and the return of Indonesian fighters into Indonesia? As
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expressed by General Moeldoko, the commander of Indonesia’s armed forces, one of the most important challenges that Indonesia has to confront is the activities of the former Indonesian fighters in Syria and Iraq. “When they return to their countries…it is not easy to predict what actions they might conduct. This why we need to think about scenarios to anticipate what might happen when they return.” (Hashim, 2015, 10)

Indonesia and the rest of countries with nationals operating in Syria and Iraq under the command of the Islamic State are potential perpetrator of terror acts in their home countries. But not only Indonesia is menaced, European countries like Spain, France, Belgium, United Kingdom and others share the same problem. That is the reason why more collaboration and cooperation is one the keys to minimize and reduce terrorism activities. Particularly Indonesia, with a long history of Islamic terrorist activities, among others, is facing the possibility of experiencing the same pattern that suffered with JI and the impact of Afghanistan in Indonesia. Indonesians militants gained combat experience, training, networking in Afghanistan during the 80s and especially in the 90s and after the collapse of the Suharto regime took advantage of the instability to launch a deadly campaign of terrorist attacks.

Will former Indonesian militants in Syria and Iraq organize new terrorist organizations replicating the success of JI in the beginning of the new millennium?

The answer is no. Despite the fact that “IS seems to have more grandiose plans for its Malay Archipelago fighters” (Singh, 2015) in the sense that these fighters would support the establishment of the caliphate in Southeast Asia. Indonesia at present is much stronger than in the recent past. (Reid, 2012) Politically speaking, Indonesia is now a consolidated democracy. Security forces have a vast experience dealing with terrorism activities. The economic situation is better and Indonesia is ready to be the natural leader of Southeast Asia. The religious environment is moderate despite terrorism (Reid, 2012).

However, despite of all these important improvements, terrorism will remain. What history teaches in the case of Indonesia is that terrorist groups using violence for conquering political goals operate and grow during period of turmoil. Darul Islam during the initial years of Indonesia independence and JI after the collapse of Suharto and before the consolidation of the country are perfect examples of terrorism friendly
environments. A future Indonesia in turmoil is highly improbable. With this in mind, Indonesia will continue reducing the terrorism threat. Political stability, democracy and a strong and experienced security forces are the best tool to cope with terrorism. The reduction of terrorist activities in Indonesia since 2005 till present is the best manifestation of a stronger Indonesia. Having said that, we should bear in mind that new threats and groups will emerge. In this context, the words of Greg Fealy are remarkable “The Islamic state has yet to pose a significantly increased threat to regional security, though it clearly has the potential to do so.” (Fealy, 2016, 1)

I would like to conclude with the following words “Non-state foes can be subdued for periods of time but, if the same grievances persist, others are likely to take up arms again for the cause” (Hough, 2008, 86-87).
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