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If Australia Wants to Wage War on Terror, it Needs to Nurture Peace in Indonesia

It goes without saying that Australia's largest terrorist threat to date lies in Indonesia, with the 88 Australians killed in the 2002 Bali bombing representing the largest loss of life Australia has suffered in any one terrorist attack. If Australia is serious about its new national security reform agenda, it must involve cooperation with its northern neighbor. A safer Indonesia means a safer Australia.

In its recently published "Counterterrorism White Paper 2010," Australia divides its new counterterrorism strategy into four key elements: analysis, protection, response and resilience. Analysis is defined as an "intelligence-led response to terrorism driven by a properly connected and properly informed national security community." To make good on this, it is imperative that the Australian Secret Intelligence Service help Indonesian security agencies improve their skills in human intelligence, a crucial component of any counterterrorism operation.

In particular, the ASIS should share infiltration techniques and methods to better aid mass infiltration of Indonesian radical groups, which could play an important role in helping Indonesian authorities become more adept in intelligence analysis. In doing this, Australia would have a professional Indonesian counterpart with a broad intelligence gathering network spread throughout Indonesian radical groups. Australia would be better informed about possible terrorist attacks, and would likely be able to avoid a repeat of the Bali tragedy.

As for protection, the Rudd administration intends to take "all necessary and practical action to protect Australia and Australians from terrorism at home and abroad." A first step would be to realize that rather than investing \$69 million in a new biometric-based visa system for certain non-citizens aimed at preventing terrorists from entering Australia, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship needs to tighten its visa application process. For example, the department must not just trust a visa applicant's documents, like the relatively easy to obtain police checks (at least in Indonesia) issued by local authorities. Some immigrants attempt to evade the system by supplying misinformation. If ordinary people can successfully beat the DIAC's current visa application screening, it should present no problem for well-trained terrorists. The department should conduct thorough background checks of visa applicants, working, in this case, with trusted authorities in Indonesia. While expensive and complicated, it is worthwhile for Australian national security.

In response to terrorist attacks, the white paper suggests "an immediate and targeted response to specific terrorist threats and terrorist attacks should they occur." The government should be commended for its success in this regard, both at home and

overseas. However, some in Australia might doubt the government's ability to respond quickly and fairly to terrorists threats or attacks because they see the government as racist or incapable of solving more minor issues such as the recent allegedly racist attacks on Indian students. While the government must not allow Australians to forget its successful response to the Bali bombings, it must also work with Indonesia to ensure Indonesians maintain a healthy fear of Australian expertise in this area.

For resilience, the Australian government wants to build "a strong and resilient Australian community to resist the development of any form of violent extremism and terrorism on the home front." In doing so, the government needs to first tackle the problem of racism which can potentially create marginalization and local grievances, both of which can be important factors in driving people toward extremism and terrorism. Today racism is a serious problem, as is reverse racism, a very strong anti-white Australian attitude. Extremists may exploit reverse racism, recruiting people with such grievances to join terrorist groups and potentially attack white Australians. Though addressing racism and reverse racism is primarily focused within Australia, the Australian government could show the world, and especially its closest neighbor, that Australia is not an enemy of Islam, and that many Australians are indeed Muslims. On a practical note, the government may choose for instance, to show Australian Muslims' lives on Indonesian TV during Ramadhan.

In addition to a resilient Australian community, it is just as vital to Australian interests that Indonesia also be resilient. Here, Australia could help Indonesia stop, or at least slow, the spread of violent Islamic teachings. Technical and financial assistance to help Indonesia monitor, filter and block radical Web sites and publishing houses would be a major blow to recruitment and the spread of radical ideologies.

Also, Australia through AusAID can help Indonesia develop education and the economy in areas where radical groups conduct militant Islamic education programs and military training. A good economy and better education will make people in these areas more resilient to extremist teachings and recruitment.

Economic development should be monitored by moderate Islamic NGOs with national credibility so as to allow such programs to be seen as credible and not foreign. As for education, AusAID should work with the Religious Affairs Ministry and moderate Islamic organizations, such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, to design and develop school and pesantren curricula that teach peaceful Islam. To date no such program exists, though one progressive NGO, the Wahid Institute, has a project underway to develop such a curriculum. AusAID should keep a close eye on its results.

Finally, joint cooperation between Australian and Indonesian universities could one day see Indonesian universities establish a highly regarded counterterrorism course. No Indonesian universities offers either undergraduate or postgraduate studies in counterterrorism, and despite Indonesia's success in addressing terrorism, there are no renowned Indonesian counterterrorism scholars of the likes of Singapore's Rohan Gunaratna. The establishment of such programs at Indonesian universities would produce

many future Indonesian counterterrorism experts, to the benefit of citizens at home and abroad.

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