



## Article

# Decolonising the Terrorism Industry: Indonesia

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**Abstract:** Over the last few decades, discussion of decolonisation and decolonial thinking has gained much traction in many countries. Scholars and students have called on their institutions to decolonise their curriculums and argued for why their respective disciplines need to be decolonised. They have recognised that the knowledge produced by the social sciences remains Western-centric. However, unlike the other social sciences, the terrorism industry, on the other hand, has not reflected on its Western centrism. This situation is especially the case with the security side of the terrorism industry, which is the most visible and arguably the most problematic side. By adopting a decolonial approach and Indonesia as a case study, this paper highlights some of the ways through which the terrorism industry reproduces Western centrism. The paper concludes by raising several issues regarding the role that the industry plays in Indonesia and urges scholars to research them.

**Keywords:** colonisation; decolonisation; terrorism; Western; non-Western; Muslim; securitisation; war on terror



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## 1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, intellectual imperialism has been challenged by Western and non-Western scholars. They have recognised that despite decolonisation, knowledge production (facts, information, theories and concepts) remains Western centric and underpinned by ideas about racial and cultural superiority (Kurzman 2017). Scholars such as (Alatas 2000, 2003; Agozino 2003; Connell 2007; Mignolo 2011) have challenged the West's knowledge supremacy in their fields of expertise by highlighting the connection between colonialism and the present day and intellectual dependency.

However, unlike the other social sciences, which, to some extent, have started to reflect on their Western centrism (Connell 2007), the terrorism industry, which is composed of many actors and is based mainly in Western countries, has not. The definition of the terrorism industry employed in this paper is based on the one developed by Herman and O'Sullivan (1989, pp. 55–213). It consists of powerful Western governments (Members of the Five Eyes (US, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) and Fourteen Eyes intelligence gathering networks) and their intelligence agencies, as well as their non-Western allies; think tanks, research centres, universities and scholars based in Western countries and in some non-Western countries; military companies and tech companies based in Western countries; NGOs, lobbyists and media organisations based in Western countries. Although all the different parts of the terrorism industry are in urgent need of decolonisation because of their role in perpetuating coloniality, this paper will focus on the relationship between actors from Western countries that are part of the terrorism industry and Indonesian actors like NGOs and scholars.

Given the impact of the 'War on Terror', it is remarkable that decolonial scholars have not paid much attention to the terrorism industry. Two examples will illustrate the point clearly. Firstly, a simple word search using the term decoloniality was used to look for terrorism articles in the *Critical Terrorism Studies Journal*, which is the most critically reflective journal among the many terrorism journals, but it brought up no results. Secondly, decoloniality was also used as a search term to look for terrorism articles on the Scopus and

Web of Science websites, but this also brought up no results. This situation suggests that there is a blind spot in terrorism research that needs to be addressed by scholars, especially by those that have non-Western heritage and Western scholars that are concerned with the coloniality of non-Western countries. Addressing the blind spot is a huge challenge and may require a non-Western epistemology because of the deep economic, political and scholarly entanglements that exist between different actors within the terrorism industry (Grosfoguel 2013; Mignolo 2011).

This paper aims to start a discussion among terrorism scholars, especially among those that have non-Western heritage and Western scholars that are concerned with the coloniality of non-Western countries. The paper takes Indonesia as a case study and argues that the relationship between actors from Western countries and Indonesia is one of dependency, where the latter are receivers of knowledge and funding, which is counterproductive for indigenous knowledge production about terrorism. The paper has several parts, with the first part discussing the history of terrorism and ethnic violence in Indonesia. The second part discusses the theoretical influences that inform the paper, and the third part details the methodological approach taken to conduct the research. The fourth and fifth parts discuss the structure of the CVE and PVE sector in Indonesia and NGOs and scholar funding. The sixth and seventh parts discuss research among NGOs and scholars and knowledge dependency among Indonesian NGOs and scholars. The eighth part discusses the problems associated with using terrorism Knowledge originating from Western countries, in the form of theories, models and concepts in the Indonesian context. The final part details some steps Indonesian NGOs and scholars can take to produce indigenous knowledge about terrorism. The paper concludes by making two points. Firstly, by suggesting that the Indonesian government needs to invest more in universities and support NGOs, which will enable scholars to produce knowledge about terrorism and reduce the impact of intellectual imperialism and coloniality. Secondly, it raises several issues regarding the 'possible' role that the terrorism industry plays outside of the scholarly world in non-Western countries and urges fellow scholars to research into them.

## 2. Political Violence in Indonesia

Islamist groups or groups that are organised around Islamic principles have a long history in Indonesia, initially being part of the anti-colonial struggle against the Dutch (Solahudin 2013; Abuza 2007). An excellent example of this struggle is the Acehnese people of northern Sumatra fighting the Dutch. The Acehnese were defeated after 30 years of conflict in 1873. However, this did not mean that all the resistance ended. Instead, the Acehnese chiefs tried to reorganise a sustained resistance against the Dutch but were unsuccessful, partly due to infighting (Dale 1988). The failure by the chieftains resulted in local Islamic leaders reorganising the resistance and unifying the Acehnese under the banner of Islam, which was termed as a jihad against the Dutch. The resistance was defeated after 15 years of fighting because the Dutch had a superior army. The failures led to guerrilla tactics being employed by the Acehnese against the Dutch, which was termed as a private jihad (Dale 1988).

The anti-colonial struggle re-emerged during the 1940s after the Second World War because the Dutch came back to reclaim Indonesia, which led to some Indonesians organising themselves around Islamic principles, which took the shape of small groups that employed guerrilla tactics. Initially, these groups were independent but soon were brought together by Sekarmadji Meridian Kartosuwiryo under the banner of Darul Islam. Although Kartosuwiryo was the ideologue of Darul Islam and formulated a doctrine of jihad, he did not start his political activism as an Islamist. Instead, his background was secular, and he received his education in Dutch schools and was a nationalist until he moved to Jong Islamieten Bond, which was an Islamic youth organisation. It is here that he received his Islamic education (Solahudin 2013). The Darul Islam movement initially fought alongside the Indonesian army against the Dutch. However, later, Darul Islam fought the Indonesian army and the Dutch in a triangular war until its defeat in 1963

(Solahudin 2013; Abuza 2007). Despite the defeat, the movement resurfaced and spread to different parts of Indonesia and integrated ideas from other Islamists such as Qutb and Maududi into its ideology (Solahudin 2013).

In the 1980s, the Indonesian government passed a law obliging all political parties to adopt Pancasila as their sole ideological basis and targeted Islamic groups, including Darul Islam, which resulted in its members either going into hiding or fleeing the country. Two members fled to Malaysia and are called Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Ba'asyir. While in Malaysia, they regrouped and eventually, with other Darul Islam members, travelled to Afghanistan to take part in the war against the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s (Solahudin 2013). While in Afghanistan, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Ba'asyir, as well as other Darul Islam members, came under the influence of violent Islamist ideologues and fighters from other Muslim majority countries and embraced Salafi-jihadi ideas and worldviews (Solahudin 2013). Some of these men returned to Indonesia and started to recruit and train locals and participated in local ethnic conflicts, but avoided confrontation with the Indonesian government (Cragin 2017). However, all this changed when Osama bin Laden in the late 1990s declared war on the US and its allies. This declaration resulted in the Afghan veterans becoming involved in conflicts within Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries (Cragin 2017). The Afghan experience enabled Abdullah Sungkar, and Abu Ba'asyir to refine their Islamist ideas and establish networks with other violent Islamists that were fighting in Afghanistan (Oak 2010).

In 1992, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Ba'asyir returned to Malaysia from Afghanistan and founded Jema'ah Islamiyah (Oak 2010; Abuza 2007). However, not all the Afghan veterans joined the group, which attests to the split among the veterans (Cragin 2017). Jema'ah Islamiyah not only waged jihad against governments that they deemed as apostates, but also sided with al-Qaeda in its war against the US and its allies. The group had divisions across Southeast Asia and was involved in escalating religious tensions between Muslims and Christians by bombing churches and facilitating al-Qaeda attacks (Abuza 2007). Perhaps the most well-known attack carried out by Jema'ah Islamiyah, at least outside Southeast Asia, was the bombing of a nightclub in Bali in 2002, which resulted in 88 Australian and 38 Indonesian citizens losing their lives (Sunesti 2014).

One would have assumed that with the emergence of ISIS in Syria, Jema'ah Islamiyah would have pledged allegiance, but according to Jones and Solahudin (2015), the group took an anti-ISIS stance. This stance was a reflection of its 2007 decision, which forbids its members from engaging in violence because there was no community support. Jema'ah Islamiyah renouncing violence is part of a broader split among Islamist groups in Indonesia. Some groups supported violence, while others rejected violence. According to Jones and Solahudin (2015), the groups that supported violence are also those that supported ISIS. Groups, such as Mujahidin Indonesia Timur, included remnants of Mujahidin Indonesia Barat and Jamaah Anshorul Tauhid (Jones and Solahudin 2015). ISIS had considerable traction in Indonesia, especially among women (Nuraniyah 2018). The ISIS appeal was such that, it also led a small number of men, women and families travelling to Syria, and some returning after the collapse of ISIS (Soufan Group 2015; Schulze 2018). Although ISIS may have collapsed, the returnees present a risk to Indonesia's security because they may have embraced ISIS ideology and may radicalise fellow Indonesians and carry out attacks because of instructions from ISIS (Sumpter 2018). The resurgence of violent Islamist groups and global groups like al Qaeda and ISIS has resulted in the Indonesian and other governments that have a geopolitical and geoeconomic interest in Indonesia and in the Southeast Asia region, such as the US and Australia, as well as Indonesian and international NGOs, taking steps to prevent radicalisation and carry out de-radicalisation work (Sumpter 2017).

Aside from Islamist violence, Indonesia has also suffered from ethnic violence. In some cases, there were riots, and in other cases, all-out conflict. The most serious conflicts erupted in the late 1990s and lasted into the 2000s in Maluku, Central Sulawesi, and West Kalimantan (Schulze 2017). This period also coincided with the resignation of Surhato,

the Asian economic crisis and resurgence of violent Islamist groups. Although ethnic and economic tensions caused the conflicts, as [Aragon \(2001, p. 47\)](#) notes, “the political economy of being Protestant or Muslim” played a central role in framing the conflicts, which led to local and international support for the protagonists. These conflicts were not sudden. Instead, they were a consequence of a combination of Dutch colonial policy to divide and conquer through the Christianization of Animist populations to counter Muslim Indonesians, government policies, political provocation, inaccurate media coverage, change in ethnic demography, loss of ancestral land, and the lack of economic and political opportunities ([Trihartono and Viartasiwi 2015](#); [Schulze 2017](#); [Aragon 2001](#); [Nasrum 2016](#)). This situation led to much violence, and in some cases, religious terms being used to explain the conflicts. Since the conflicts, much has been done to restore peace between the groups, which has involved Indonesian NGOs, but tensions remain high ([Aragon 2001](#); [Al Qurtuby 2013](#)).

### 3. Social Science Knowledge Producers and Receivers

Over the last few decades, many scholars such as ([Schwab 1984](#); [Said 1978](#); [Connell 2007](#); [Agozino 2003](#); [Alatas 2000, 2003](#); [Mignolo 2011](#)) have detailed the negative impact that colonialism has had on the colonised world, which has resulted in the underdevelopment of colonised countries. These scholars and others like them, including political activists, have argued for historical wrongs to be put right. Some scholars such as [Tuck and Yang \(2012\)](#) have argued for decolonisation to go beyond the ‘academic world’ and engage in ‘practical decolonisation’. In the case of South Africa, this has been to call for redistributive justice, which means land reclaim ([Kepe and Hall 2018](#)). On the other hand, scholars have called for knowledge to be decolonised, meaning the decolonisation of universities ([Bhambra et al. 2018](#)).

However, for this paper, the work of Raewyn Connell and Syed Hussein Alatas is essential because of the conceptual tools that both provide, which compliments the decolonial approach that the paper adopts. Collectively, they shed light on how the terrorism industry perpetuates colonial knowledge production relations in Indonesia through fostering dependency and exporting knowledge about terrorism produced by Western scholars, often based in powerful Western countries to Indonesia. Connell, in her book titled ‘Southern Theory’, traces the relationship back to colonialism and argues that sociology is a product of modern imperialism and embodied an intellectual response to the colonised world ([Connell 2007](#)).

What is striking about the early sociology and its authors is how they constructed the world along racial hierarchies, where the coloniser was deemed as a superior race and the colonised as inferior and incapable of self-rule and producing knowledge ([Connell 2007](#), pp. 16–17). However, more relevant for this paper is what Connell says about the relationships between Western and non-Western countries. She notes that data were gathered from non-Western countries and theorised by scholars in the centres of knowledge production in Western countries, especially in former colonial powers. Thinkers from non-Western countries were and are excluded from the canon of social science subjects, such as sociology. There is no mention of Ibn Khaldun (14th-century Muslim sociologist from modern-day North Africa), Syed Hussain Alatas (Malaysia), Jose Rizal (Philippines) and Ali Shariati (Iran). This situation has resulted in scholars from Western countries theorising about the world, such as the work by Marx, and their work dominates the sociological canon. In contrast, the work of non-Western scholars is excluded and deemed as local and empirical, rather than theoretical or Global.

The next author who is relevant to this paper is Syed Hussain Alatas. He was a scholar from Malaysia who was ahead of his time. In his work, he discussed the knowledge production relationship between Western and non-Western countries and the need to decolonise knowledge. In an article titled “Intellectual Imperialism”, which was initially published in 1972 and republished in 2000, he discusses the impact of imperialism on non-Western countries. He introduces the idea of intellectual imperialism and argues that

it not only operates in the same way as political and economic imperialism, but does so at a deeper level and in a more devastating way because it penetrates the mind and influences the behaviour of the colonised people. It has a long-lasting impact on the colonised, in that, it conditions and controls the mind of the colonised long after independence has been won. Examples of the impact are found in education, economics, culture, politics and security, which replicate Western countries. In more concrete terms, intellectual imperialism constructs a mental architecture in the minds of the colonised to think that they and their culture are inferior to that of the coloniser and, as individuals, they cannot produce knowledge at the same level as the coloniser, which is clear in the case of Indonesian scholars that were interviewed for this paper. By extension, this leads to dependency, where the colonised uncritically embrace all the ideas of the coloniser, including religious ones. Alatas (2000) did not see intellectual imperialism as somehow disconnected from the other types of imperialism. Instead, he argued that imperialism should be seen as a cluster, operating at different levels from structure and agency. Alatas (2000) forwards two terms that provide a lens through which we can see how Western countries operated in the past, and continue to do so today, in non-Western countries in the areas of knowledge production, culture, economy, politics and security. The two terms are *compradore* and the *captive mind*. A *compradore* is someone that works against the interests of his or her group or nation. In the past, firms from Western countries would use locals to extract raw material, which would be sent back to their home countries, where it would be converted into products. These products would be sold at huge profits and often back to nations that supplied the raw material. Alatas (2000) argued that a similar relationship exists in intellectual imperialism, where scholars from Western countries employ scholars from non-Western countries to gather data, which is analysed and theorised by the former, which is evidenced by the Indonesian NGOs and scholars that were interviewed for this paper. Although the *compradore* is a useful concept to begin to understand the complex relationships between actors from Western and non-Western countries, it does not account for individual agency. The scholars and NGOs may be involved in the relationship knowing that it is exploitative, but have no choice because of the economic situation, which makes them dependent on actors from Western countries for employment. The *captive mind*, on the other hand, describes how an individual's thinking and behaviour replicates that of people living in the West. As Alatas (2000, p. 37) notes, the "captive mind is one that is imitative and uncreative, whose thinking is based on Western categories and modes of thought". Good examples of this are the use of the English concepts "radicalisation, extremism and terrorism and the radicalisation models" by Indonesian NGOs and scholars, which will be discussed later in this paper.

#### 4. Methodological Approach

The paper is interested in the relationship between actors from Western countries that are part of the terrorism industry and actors from Indonesia that work in academia and the NGO sector. As such, the paper employed the semi-structured interview method. The data were gathered using semi-structured interviews. The interview sample size consisted of eleven NGO representatives and four scholars, and the interviews took place in Jakarta. All the interviews were recorded, and the names of interviewees and their organisations have been anonymised to protect their identities at the request of the interviewees. Before the interviews took place, all the interviewees were asked to complete a consent form that explained to them the nature of the research. Ethics approval was gained from the Islamic University of Jogjakarta.

Research participants were gained by using snowball sampling because the participants researched into and worked with extremists and terrorists on de-radicalisation programmes. Although the subject of this paper does not infringe any legislation, it is nevertheless sensitive, because some Muslims in Indonesia view Western countries and Western organisations, especially those that were once colonial powers and those that participated in the War on Terror as Islamophobic. They also view Indonesian organisations



that work with them as collaborators, informants, spies, and in some cases, enemies (NGO Interview 8, 2020; Scholar Interview 2, 2020). This opinion is similar to what [Alatas \(2000\)](#) describes as the role of a 'compradore'. Consequently, working with actors from Western countries such as Western embassies can result in stigma, which was a cause of concern for the interviewees. Aside from the concerns around stigma, for some interviewees working with the embassies and actors from other Western countries raised critical ethical issues. Firstly, the interviewees were aware of the benefits their research could bring to actors from Western countries, especially economic and political benefits. Secondly, actors from Western countries provide work for them, which makes it difficult for them to be too critical of the former because they were worried that they could lose funding or not be funded again.

## 5. Data Analysis

The interviews were analysed by using content analysis. Content analysis is a method that allows a researcher to systematically examine text data, which allows the researcher to recognise patterns, themes, and meaning of the information gathered ([Hsieh and Sarah 2005](#)). The analysis process started by comparing the interview data with the literature on colonialism and decoloniality.

## 6. Reflexive Dialogue

This process led to a reflexive dialogue between the interview data, literature on colonialism and decoloniality and the author. The reflexive process resulted in several questions regarding the author's role, as a scholar from a Western country, but residing in and researching a topic that concerns a non-Western country. Although there is no space to have a full discussion on the reflexive journey that the author took, it is nevertheless essential to highlight a few points. Firstly, why are scholars from Western countries afforded a great deal of privilege in non-Western countries? Secondly, are scholars from Western countries researching in non-Western countries perpetuating intellectual imperialism and reproducing coloniality? Finally, is there a way for scholars from Western countries researching in non-Western countries to escape reproducing intellectual imperialism and coloniality?

## 7. Structure of the Indonesian CVE and PVE Sector

At the top of the CVE and PVE sector in Indonesia is the Indonesian government and its counter-terrorism agencies like Detachment 88, National Counter-Terrorism Agency, Indonesian State intelligence and the Indonesian Military Intelligence. Following the government are the many NGOs such as IPAC, PAKAR, YPP, C-Save, PSPR, AIDA, Whaid Foundation and AMAN. Following the NGOs are the research centres such as the Habibie Centre, which are followed by the universities. Only the University of Indonesia and Defence University have dedicated terrorism degrees, whereas other universities discuss terrorism and counter-terrorism as part of their international relations, political science and sociology degrees. According to one NGO representative, the reason why there are so few dedicated terrorism degrees is due to the country not having many scholars on terrorism (NGO Interview 8, 2020). Although there are many Indonesian NGOs and scholars working on counter-terrorism, not all of them are specialists on terrorism and counter-terrorism. Some of the leading scholars on terrorism are Noor Huda, Prof Hamdi Muluk, Dr Mirra Noor Milla and Sidney Jones (USA), who also act as advisors to the Indonesian government (Scholar Interview 2, 2020). Other scholars also act as advisors to the government, but they are from Islamic studies and religious studies.

## 8. Western Actors and Funding

In a previous section, it was mentioned that Indonesia had experienced ethnic violence and terrorism in the past. In order to deescalate and prevent future violence and terrorism, Indonesian NGOs (religious and non-religious) have taken up this challenge

(Al Qurtuby 2013; Trihartono and Viartasiwi 2015; Duncan 2016; Hwang 2018). Although Indonesian NGOs engage in much needed preventative work, sustainable funding is always a source of concern. One NGO representative mentioned that the Indonesian government inadequately supports them to do their work. What is meant by this is that the Indonesian government does not financially support the work of the NGOs, and if it does, it is on an ad hoc basis (NGO Interview 3, 2018).

This situation has left many NGOs looking for alternative sources of funding. In the case of some NGOs, this has resulted in them relying on foreign actors for funding. Representatives of two NGOs mentioned that this situation had led their NGOs and other Indonesian NGOs to rely on funding from actors from Western countries, such as embassies, NGOs, universities and think tanks. That said, the two biggest funders of Indonesian NGOs and scholars are Australian, and the US embassies but embassies from other countries such as the Netherlands, Canada, Singapore and Norway, and international organisations like the UNDP and EU also fund them (NGO Interview 3, 2018; Scholar Interview 5, 2020; Australia-DFAT 2020; US Department of State 2020). The reason why Australia and the US are the biggest funders of Indonesian NGOs and scholars is primarily driven by economic concerns and then by regional security (NGO Interview 8, 2020). However, both economic and security concerns are interdependent and raise the issue of coloniality of Indonesia.

Western actors fund Indonesian NGOs and scholars to carry out research on issues such as the radicalisation of Indonesian schoolchildren, radicalisation in prisons and Indonesian women's involvement in terrorism and to roll out CVE and PVE programmes (NGO Interview 1, 2018; Scholar Interview 5, 2020). However, this type of funding in some cases is short term but also has conditions attached to it (Hwang 2018; NGO Interview 8, 2020). The conditions, according to one NGO representative, exert control and place restrictions on how the funding can be spent on CVE and PVE programmes (Scholar Interview 5, 2020). He mentioned that the funders exert control over CVE and PVE programmes by employing what he calls the 'top-down approach', by which he means that funders control all aspects of the CVE and PVE programmes (NGO Interview 8, 2020). These comments suggest that the funders like to maintain control over the CVE and PVE programmes from conceptualisation to execution. The same NGO representative further added that some funders do not fund the right type of CVE and PVE programmes. He added that some funders only fund CVE and PVE programmes for moderate Muslim Indonesians, but for him, such funding was not productive because moderates are less vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism. The funders should fund de-radicalisation programmes because they will prevent recidivism and reduce the protentional extremists who have left extremism from radicalising others and re-joining extremist groups (NGO Interview 8, 2020). From these comments, it seems that the NGO representative thinks that funders have got their priorities wrong about what type of CVE and PVE programmes that they should fund, because for him, moderates are not vulnerable to radicalisation because they are moderates. For him, funding should go towards disengaging and rehabilitating extremists (prisoners and former prisoners), because if they are not helped to disengage then the chances of re-joining their former extremist groups and radicalising others increase (NGO Interview 8, 2020). By some funders wanting fund CVE and PVE programmes that target moderate Indonesian Muslims implies that they are working on the assumption that moderate Indonesian Muslims are already 'pre-radicalised'. This assumption raises several issues concerning the Western centrism about radicalisation, which will be discussed in later sections.

Another NGO representative stated that some funders are exploitative because they expect NGO researchers to be available 24 h a day. For example, they call researchers at midnight and expect them to either give them information about the project or do some research for them, which means that the researcher gets no rest (NGO Interview 9, 2020).

## 9. Western Actors and Research

Western actors ask Indonesian NGOs and scholars to research for them on a range of issues, such as community conflicts in Indonesia, Islamic institutions in Indonesia, the Indonesian education system, the Indonesian government's counter-terrorism policies and radicalisation among Indonesian children and women (NGO Interview 6, 2018; Scholar Interview 6, 2020). The NGOs are employed to gather data in a similar way to how data was collected during colonial times. During colonial times, the relationship was exploitative because it benefited the scholars from Western countries, in terms of profit, knowledge production and publications at the expense of locals. A few examples from the NGOs will sufficiently illustrate the continuity of the aforementioned type of relationship. The first example is of an NGO representative who stated that her NGO has carried out research and written reports on the effectiveness of CVE programmes run by leading Islamic institutions in Indonesia for funders but does not know how the research has been used (NGO Interview 1, 2018). The second example is of an NGO representative who mentioned that his NGO researched on radicalisation in Indonesian schools for a funder, but like the previous NGO, he does not know how their research has been used (NGO Interview 2, 2018). A third example is of an NGO representative who said that his colleague had been recruited as a researcher by a funder to gather data on extremism in Indonesia because he has access to hard-to-reach extremist groups (NGO Interview 3, 2018). A fourth example is of an NGO representative who said that his NGO has researched extremism in Indonesia for funders because they have access to extremists and former extremists, but he does not know how his NGO's research has been used. Furthermore, the representative added that he does not feel that Indonesian NGOs get enough credit for the research that they do, despite the research process being emotionally and labour intensive (NGO Interview 8, 2020). A fifth example is of an NGO representative who explained that most funders that fund his NGO do not join in the research. According to him, not taking part in the research means that the funders do not fully understand the situation on the ground because the only way to understand the phenomena entirely is to join in the research. (NGO Interview 8, 2020). A final example is of an NGO representative who said that the funders sometimes offer short-term and long-term research scholarships and short-term training courses on different areas of CVE and PVE (NGO Interview 1, 2018; Scholar Interview 6, 2020). She mentioned that she turned down a scholarship from a funder because the conditions and momentary value of the scholarship were exploitative. The scholarship was designed in such a way that made her feel like if she would be doing intelligence gathering on her own country or being a native informer, which she ethically and morally found very problematic (NGO Interview 9, 2020).

In all the above examples, the research and reports produced by the NGOs are passed onto the funders for analysis and theorisation, without any further input from the NGOs or knowledge about how their research will be used (NGO Interview 6, 2018; NGO Interview 7, 2018). All the examples above reflect [Alatas's \(2003\)](#) sixth dimension of academic dependency, which is 'brain drain' because the NGOs do all emotionally and labour-intensive work and, in some cases, dangerous work. This situation raises the question of whether the funders or the NGOs themselves carry out risk assessments or monitor the mental health of their researchers.

Although it may seem that the NGOs have no reflective thinking about working with actors from Western countries, in reality, this is not the case, and the contrary is true. All the NGO representatives were aware of the unequal relationship between them and their funders, and for some, it raised ethical and political issues. One NGO representative mentioned that funders are interested in Indonesia because of their economic interests and our research helps them to achieve their economic goals (NGO Interview 5, 2018; NGO Interview 8, 2020). However, due to a range of economic problems, NGOs are forced to rely on actors from Western countries, and this situation has meant that some NGOs do not think about the consequences of how their research may be used and how detrimental it could be to Indonesia's future (NGO Interview 6, 2018; NGO Interview 8,



2020). According to one NGO representative, for NGOs to move forward and have greater control over the research and about how their research will or could be used, they need to have some agreement in place before the research starts on issues, such as how the research will be used (NGO Interview 8, 2020). The current situation that Indonesian NGOs find themselves in is one of dependency, which they can only escape if the Indonesian government sufficiently funds Indonesian NGOs and for this matter scholars to carry out research and build effective indigenous CVE and PVE programmes.

## 10. Knowledge Dependency

As mentioned by [Connell \(2007\)](#) and [Alatas \(2000\)](#), the relationship between Western countries and non-Western countries is one of dependency, where the latter is always in a weaker position. This dependency is due to two things. Firstly, coloniality, and secondly, a broader problem with the social sciences, where the West is regarded as the home of innovative and creative knowledge production ([Bhambra 2007](#)). In contrast, the rest of the world is seen as backwards and unable to produce knowledge. This situation, as [Alatas \(2000\)](#) points out, has led to the marginalisation of knowledge produced by former colonised societies because they are considered as backwards, and as such, have become dependent on Western knowledge. The dependency that [Connell \(2007\)](#) and [Alatas \(2000\)](#) highlight is indicative of the relationship between Western and non-Western countries with regards to the flow of knowledge and the production of knowledge on terrorism, including Indonesia. This relationship is evident in how the knowledge about terrorism produced by scholars from Western countries such as the UK, Australia and the US is exported to non-Western countries as part of the global fight against terrorism, in the form of workshops, seminars, training courses, academic publications, reports and specialised lectures ([Seniwati 2016](#); [Kundani and Hayes 2018](#); [Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee 2017](#); NGO Interview 9, 2020).

The knowledge about terrorism travels in a unidirectional way, meaning that it flows from Western to non-Western countries through organisations that have been directly set up by the UN, the US, the EU and EU member states. One such organisation that has been set up for global counter-terrorism purposes is the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF). It was set up by the EU and twenty-nine other countries, including Indonesia, the UK, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the USA, the Netherlands and France ([GCTF 2019a](#)). GCTF closely follows the Ankara memorandum, which is a comprehensive approach to CVE and PVE. It involves the tech companies, governments, NGOs, private sector organisations and community leaders, including moderate Muslim groups. Ultimately, the aim appears to be to change societies, and in the case of Muslim societies, it is to make Muslims moderate, with the RAND organisation, a US government-aligned think tank proposed for Majority Muslim countries in the early 2000s ([Rabasa et al. 2006](#); [GCTF 2019b](#)). The GCTF organisation has several working groups, and the CVE group is co-chaired by Indonesia and Australia but is led by Switzerland and the UK through the British-based counter-terrorism think tank, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) and the Geneva-based Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF). According to [Kundani and Hayes \(2018, p. 9\)](#), the reason behind setting up GCTF was to strengthen counter-terrorism and capacity-building in Muslim countries such as Indonesia that were invested in the War on Terror. Moreover, other organisations, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASAN), have also adopted CVE and PVE programmes proposed by GCTF ([Kundani and Hayes 2018](#)).

The knowledge about terrorism accumulated by GCTF is also exported through, but not restricted to, organisations that have been set up by the GCTF. One such organisation is called Hedaya Counter Violent Extremism, which is based in Abu Dhabi. Hedaya aims to be the leading centre for expertise on counter-violent extremism ([Hedaya 2012](#)). However, as [Kundani and Hayes \(2018\)](#) note, these organisations have not paused to question if the knowledge about terrorism and the CVE and PVE programmes that they are exporting is actually suitable or will work in the countries that are importing them. Neither have

they paused to think about the long-term impact that such knowledge and programmes could have on local scholarship and stability of countries. This situation is similar to what [Agozino \(2003\)](#) and [Cohen \(2017\)](#) have argued regarding criminological theories and crime prevention models that are exported to non-Western countries.

One good example of a counter-terrorism strategy that does not work in its home country but has been exported to other countries like Indonesia is the UK PREVENT strategy (NGO Interview 8, 2020; [Kundani and Hayes 2018](#); [Grierson and Dodd 2019](#); Scholar Interview 4, 2018). The PREVENT strategy is based on the premise that extremism, radicalisation and terrorism among Muslims are directly caused by Islam, which British Muslims, British NGOs, human rights organisations, British critical terrorism scholars and British politicians have strongly criticised because it has resulted in the securitisation and stigmatisation of Muslims, as well as increasing Islamophobia in the UK ([Kundani and Hayes 2018](#); [Awan 2012](#); [Abbas 2019a, 2019b](#); [McAuley 2020](#); [CAGE 2015](#); [HAC 2017](#); [Taylor 2018](#)).

Another way that knowledge about terrorism travels in a unidirectional way is through scholarly publications by Western scholars. Indonesian NGOs and scholars tend to rely more on knowledge about terrorism produced by scholars from Western countries, than knowledge produced by local scholars. According to scholars and NGOs interviewed for this paper, more than 70% of literature about terrorism consumed or taught in Indonesia universities is authored by scholars from Western countries (Scholar Interview 1, 2020; Scholar Interview 4, 2020; Scholar Interview 6, 2020). American scholars such as Martha Crenshaw and Arie Kruglanski from the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) centre at the University of Maryland and Mia Bloom from George State University are the most popular (Scholar Interview 4, 2018; Scholar Interview 1, 2020; Scholar Interview 2, 2020; Scholar Interview 3, 2020; NGO Interview 9, 2020). The reason for the scholars from SART being popular is not only because of their scholarship, but also due to the centre having many collaborations with NGOs and universities in the Southeast Asia region. That said, Indonesian NGOs also rely on workshops and short training programmes organised by embassies of different countries, universities and NGOs, to either learn about or to gain advanced knowledge about counter-terrorism (NGO Interview 2, 2018; NGO Interview 6, 2018; NGO Interview 9, 2020).

This situation indicates three issues. Firstly, what [Alatas \(2003\)](#) has called “dependence on ideas”, which is one of his six dimensions that constitute academic dependency. Secondly, this situation has resulted in Indonesian NGOs and scholars being knowledge receivers, rather than producers ([Alatas 2003](#)). Thirdly, this situation is increasingly creating a “mono-culture of terrorist thinking and minds”. Finally, the knowledge dependency among Indonesian scholars and NGOs is contributing to the continued dominance of knowledge about terrorism produced by Western scholars, which also continues the intellectual imperialism in Indonesian scholarship ([Alatas 2000, 2003](#); [Connell 2007](#)).

## 11. Terrorism through the Western Lens

Indonesian Muslims adhere to various interpretations of Islam, such as Islam Nusantara (indigenous Islam), Sufism and Salafism, Shi’ism, liberal Islam and the Ahmadi interpretation of Islam (Ahmadi Muslims are not considered as Muslims by many Muslim). However, on social issues such as homophobia and abortion, they hold conservative views (Scholar Interview 3, 2020; Scholar Interview 4, 2020). That said, according to one NGO representative, Indonesians that adhere to the Salafi or conservative interpretations of Islam are deemed as ‘pre-radicalised’ and as such considered as ‘at risk of being radicalised’, even if they do not hold ideas that go against or act against the Pancasila (national philosophy of Indonesia).

Although Indonesian NGOs and scholars largely depend on knowledge about terrorism developed by Western scholars in the form of theories, models and concepts, this knowledge, in some instances, is poorly understood, and in others, not suitable for the Indonesian context and has to be adapted (Scholar Interview 3, 2020; NGO Interview

5, 2018). That said, this situation reflects several deeper problems, which are connected to viewing terrorism through the lens of knowledge produced in Western countries, as discussed below.

The first example is how radicalisation is understood in Indonesia. In Indonesia, many NGOs are working on countering terrorism (Sumpter 2017), and they employ many models and concepts developed by Western scholars to understand how one becomes an extremist, radicalised and a terrorist. For example, they use a model such as the “staircase to terrorism” model developed by Fathali M. Moghaddam, “Model of Jihadization” developed by Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt and Thomas Prechet’s “Typical Radicalisation Pattern” model (Borum 2011a). Although all the models are similar, the most popular model seems to be the Model of Jihadization. Like the other models, the Jihadization model describes the point of origin for radicalisation as starting at the ‘pre-radicalisation’ phase and Islam. There are several problems with this phase and the models at large. The first criticism is that the ‘pre-radicalisation’ phase is so vague and general that it describes the average person, who has little or no criminal history, as being pre-radicalised. The second criticism of these models is that they construct the Salafi and conservative interpretations of Islam as precursors to radicalisation (Aly and Striegher 2012). According to Roy (2008, p. 2), “the process of violent radicalisation has little to do with religious practice, while radical theology, as salafisme, does not necessarily lead to violence”. Kundani (2012, p. 21) makes a similar argument and states that “while a Salafi semantic register might be part of the way that groups articulate their narrative, this alone is not evidence that religious ideology is causing violence, but merely that, within this milieu, legitimacy is secured using theological references”. Sageman (2014) is another scholar that is critical of what he has called the “blame Islam” narrative and argues that ideology may play a role in political violence, but we do not know-how. A third criticism of these models is that they are underpinned by a combination of cultural, theological and psychological essentialism, which encourages security services to believe that they can pre-empt future terrorist attacks through extensive surveillance (Kundani 2014). Such an understanding of radicalisation is problematic because it deems millions of Indonesian Muslims as being pre-radicalised and needing pre-emptive intervention to “modernise” their understanding of Islam. Moreover, as Aly and Striegher (2012) note, radicalisation models that give primacy to religion conflate a range of motivations, issues and historical events and present them as religious. A fourth criticism of the models is that they conflate cognitive and behavioural radicalisation (Sageman 2017). A fifth criticism of these models, which can also be applied to other theories and concepts, is mentioned by one NGO representative and a scholar. Both mention that Western theories, models and concepts are built by using data from the Western context, while the Muslim and the Southeast Asian context is very different from that in the West and consequently there is a mismatch (Scholar Interview 4, 2018; Scholar Interview 3, 2020). A final criticism concerns the dominance of Western scholars using a blend of psychological, cultural and theological approaches to identify the causes of extremism, radicalisation and terrorism among Muslims (Kundani 2014). In doing so, they privilege Islam as being the cause. This dominance “directs” Indonesian NGOs and scholars to reach the same conclusions as some of their Western counterparts (Scholar Interview 4, 2020).

The second example is the use of popular terrorism industry concepts such as extremism, violent extremism and terrorism. The confusion over what these concepts mean has been well documented in the works of scholars such as Borum (2011b); Sedgewick (2010); Schmid (2004); Sageman (2017); Hoskins and O’Loughlin (2009); Lowe (2017); Richards (2017); Lambert and Githens-Mazer (2010); Silva (2018); Kundani (2014) and Schuurman and Taylor (2018). In the case of Indonesia, the confusion over the aforementioned concepts is a reflection over the broader contestation over the concepts in terrorism literature. Indonesian NGOs and scholars tend to use the aforementioned concepts interchangeably to mean engaging in violence, but this does not distinguish between holding ideas and engaging in violence (NGO Interview 10, 2020; Sageman 2017). For example, one NGO representative mentioned that extremists are those that believe in intolerance and

are far away from moderates (NGO Interview 11, 2020). A second NGO representative stated that for him, extremism is like radicalism (NGO Interview 11, 2020). A third NGO representative mentioned that for her extremism, and violent extremism is the same, extremism is when thoughts are acted on (NGO Interview 10, 2020). Moreover, the Indonesian government, according to a fourth NGO representative, does not use violent extremism; instead, they use terrorism (NGO Interview 9, 2020). The likely reason for this is not that the Indonesian government does not understand what violent extremism is but rather they recognise the difficulty in defining extremism, as well as the need to tolerate some ideas held by some religious and political groups that are deemed as extremist but do not sway too far away from the Pancasila.

Aside from the conceptual contestation in terrorism literature over what extremism, violent extremism and terrorism are, there is also another reason for the confusion among some Indonesian NGOs and scholars. The other reason is the numerous workshops, conferences and short CVE and PVE training courses that NGOs and scholars attend, which are organised by the embassies of Western countries like Australia and the US and Western universities. As one NGO representative mentioned, the terminology that we learn from workshops and two-week short training courses also confuses us because most of us have not studied terrorism before and English is not our first language. The representative gave an example of how her colleague learned about 'gender mainstreaming' at a counter-terrorism training course she attended, but she was unable to explain what it was (NGO Interview 9, 2020).

Despite Indonesian NGOs and scholars primarily being consumers rather than producers of knowledge about terrorism, some do see concepts like extremism and terrorism as bias and Western-centric (Scholar Interview 4, 2020; NGO Interview 4, 2018). The type of Western centrism that the scholars and NGOs are referring to is articulated by one scholar, who mentioned that if we apply a religious fundamentalism questionnaire that has been developed by Western scholars, then every Indonesian will be a religious fundamentalist and pre-radicalised or radicalised (Scholar Interview 3, 2020).

Although this situation necessitates the need for Indonesian NGOs and scholars to develop Indigenous theories and concepts to understand the Indonesian context, there has been little movement in this direction. Among the NGOs and scholars, there is a recognition that indigenous theories and concepts need to be developed, but for several reasons, this has not happened (NGO Interview 8, 2020; Scholar Interview 2, 2018; Scholar Interview 3, 2020). The first reason according to an NGO and scholar is that Indonesian NGOs and scholars only use Western concepts like radicalism, extremism and terrorism or their direct translations of them such as *ekstremisme* and *terorisme*, because there are no indigenous concepts (Scholar Interview 3, 2020). The second reason given why no Indigenous theories and concepts exist according to Indonesian NGOs and scholars is because the Western theories and concepts are very popular among Indonesian people, NGOs and scholars (Scholar Interview 3, 2020; Scholar Interview 5, 2020). The third reason is connected to the second, and according to one scholar, if indigenous theories and concepts were developed, then Indonesian people and Western scholars would not be able to understand them and us (Scholar Interview 3, 2020). The reasons for not developing indigenous theories and concepts are products of a combination of two things. Firstly, this situation reflects what Alatas (2000) calls the captive mind and intellectual imperialism, which is imitative and not creative. Secondly, the global dominance of the terrorism industry and the impact that it has had on Indonesian NGOs and scholars make it challenging for them to think outside the theories and concepts produced by Western scholars. This situation reduces the potential of indigenous theoretical and conceptual development to occur and reinforces intellectual dependency and coloniality.

## 12. Producing Indigenous Knowledge

Indonesian NGOs and scholars have to follow three steps to decolonise the terrorism industry and produce indigenous knowledge about terrorism. The first step is to adopt



border thinking (Mignolo and Madina 2006). The second step is to de-link from the Western episteme that Western scholars use to produce knowledge about terrorism. The final step is decolonisation (Mignolo 2011). Employing border thinking is essential because it is the epistemology of the exteriority created by modernity and is grounded in non-Western epistemes. Without border thinking, de-linking and a new horizon cannot be imagined or take place (Mignolo and Madina 2006; Sayyid 2014). By not employing border thinking, coloniality will continue because the Western episteme will continue to be used, rather than de-linking and decolonising, and empowering non-Western epistemes. Given that Indonesia has many cultures, ethnicities and religions, there is no shortage of indigenous epistemes, which Indonesians call 'local wisdom' for NGOs and scholars to draw upon to produce knowledge, not only about terrorism, but also about other socio-political issues. By effectively using indigenous epistemes, Indonesian NGOs and scholars can overcome intellectual imperialism and the cumulative impact of colonialism and coloniality that has fostered a colonised and captive mind among some NGOs and scholars (Thiong'o 1986).

The knowledge produced through indigenous episteme could provide alternative ways to theorise and conceptualise terrorism in Indonesia, as well as to develop more effective CVE and PVE programmes that are more suitable for the Indonesian and possibly Southeast Asian context. Given that Indonesia is a Muslim majority country, Indonesian indigenous epistemes could be used to understand terrorism better and help to develop more suitable and effective CVE and PVE programmes for other Muslim majority countries. Moreover, Indonesian indigenous episteme could also inspire NGOs and scholars from other Muslim majority countries to develop their episteme to understand terrorism better and develop context-relevant CVE and PVE programmes. In doing so, they can also be intellectually independent.

### 13. Conclusions

The aim of this paper is not to take up the challenge of decolonising the whole of the terrorism industry, which does need to happen. Instead, the paper has a modest focus on one aspect of the industry, which is the relationship between actors from Western countries and Indonesian NGOs and scholars.

The paper has argued that the relationship between Indonesian NGOs and scholars and actors from Western countries working in the area of terrorism is a continuation of colonial 'knowledge production' relations. This situation has resulted in academic dependency and a lack of interest among Indonesian NGOs and scholars to produce indigenous knowledge about terrorism. The dependency is maintained because the Indonesian government inadequately supports or encourages the NGOs and scholars to produce indigenous knowledge to develop indigenous CVE and PVE programmes. This situation means that NGOs and scholars continue to rely on knowledge produced by Western scholars that are part of the terrorism industry on funding from actors from Western countries to carry out CVE and PVE work. However, this situation does not mean that NGOs and scholars lack the ability to produce indigenous knowledge about terrorism or are unaware of the unequal relations between them and their funders.

The relationship between Indonesian NGOs and scholars and actors from Western countries raises several important geo-economic and geopolitical issues connected to coloniality, which are listed below and need researching into by using a decolonial approach. (1) Why are actors from Western countries interested in funding Indonesian NGOs and scholars to carry out research on extremism and radicalisation? (2) What benefits do Western actors gain from funding Indonesian NGOs and scholars? (3) How do Western actors use the data collected by Indonesian NGOs and scholars on extremism and terrorism? (4) How is the knowledge generated from the data gathered by Indonesian NGOs and scholars on extremism and terrorism used by Western actors? (5) Is there a relationship between the knowledge produced by actors from Western countries on extremism and terrorism connected to Indonesia's fossil fuel and mining industries? (6) Is there a relationship between the knowledge produced from the data gathered by Indonesian NGOs and scholars by



actors from Western countries on extremism and terrorism connected to gaining or furthering economic and political influence in Indonesia? (7) Is the knowledge generated from the data gathered by Indonesian NGOs and scholars on extremism and terrorism by Western actors, including social media companies such as Facebook and Twitter, shared among Western countries and their regional allies to further marginalise and securitise Indonesia? (8) What type of relationship exists between actors from Western countries? (9) The final issue concerns what is termed as “digital data colonialism”, which reproduces coloniality, which is connected to issue 7 (Chouldry and Mejias 2019). Indonesian NGOs and scholars need to adopt a decolonial approach and research into digital data colonialism and be vigilant and push the Indonesian government to legislate against digital data colonialism by tech companies like Facebook, technology corporations, media companies and foreign governments.

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