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ASIA PROGRAM



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## Piety and Pragmatism: Trends in Indonesian Islamic Politics

**ABSTRACT:** This Special Report explores the diversity in Indonesian politics. R. William Liddle gives an overview of parties, leaders, and ideologies, and suggests that Islam-based parties may be poised to make gains in the 2004 parliamentary elections. Survey data show increasing support for Islamic law—although average Indonesians have a looser definition of such law than do religious leaders and scholars. Mohamad Ihsan Alief, a founding member of the Liberal Islam Network, expresses concern about political disaffection in Indonesia, which he sees as more dangerous than religious extremism. He urges Westerners not to exaggerate the dangers of Islamic radicalism, since doing so could polarize society and hinder democracy building. Hidayat Nurwahid and Zulkieflimansyah discuss plans to expand the Justice Party (PK), based on its reputation for clean government and adherence to Islamic values.

### Introduction

*Amy McCreedy*

Long suppressed under authoritarian rule, Indonesian religious groups are now enjoying space granted them by democratic freedom. Nearly five years since Suharto's overthrow, a diverse range of parties and organizations are debating what role Islam should play in governance.

The question of whether Indonesia is a base for terrorists is inescapable after the horrific October 12 bombing of a Bali nightclub. But these essays discuss not so much the radical fringe of Indonesian society as what the average Muslim is thinking and feeling. What does it mean to express support for the *syariat* (Islamic law)? What is the "appropriate" response to extremism? Can religious activism help fight corruption? These essays illustrate the complexity of Muslim identity in a society occupied not only with the emergence of radicalism but with the difficult task of buttressing a new and fragile democracy.

In his far-ranging essay, **R. William Liddle** of Ohio State University overviews the cleavages, parties and leaders in Indonesian Islamic

politics, analyzes the current situation, and speculates about the future. Liddle points out that Indonesia remains moderate—far fewer voters supported parties with Islamic ideology in 1999 than in 1955 (the year of the previous democratic election). However, Liddle maintains that millions of voters may be receptive to switching to Islamist parties in 2004. One reason is that President Megawati and her allies are identified increasingly with the upper and middle classes, while parties based on Islam are staking a claim to represent the economically marginalized. An expanding populist movement could put useful pressure on corrupt elites, Liddle points out, but may also incite violence or worsen polarization in what is already a largely sterile economic policy debate between right and left.

To support his point that Islamist parties are poised to make gains, Liddle cites national opinion surveys in which 71 percent of respondents agreed that the state should require all Muslims to abide by the *syariat*. Moreover, 54 percent agreed that movements like Islamic Defenders Front and Laskar Jihad (considered lawless and extremist by mainstream national-level leaders) should be supported in their struggle to see the *syariat* implemented. Thus, Liddle argues that

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current rulers might find it difficult to retain the electorate's loyalty, especially if the economy deteriorates.

Liddle points out that while the survey results indicate growing piousness, it is important to remember that ordinary Muslims define *syariat* more loosely than do party leaders and scholars. People may favor Islamic law in the abstract without necessarily agreeing to its more controversial provisions. For example, only 30 percent of respondents support mandatory fasting during Ramadhan, and 33 percent believe that the punishment of amputating the hands of thieves, as stipulated in the Qur'an, should be enforced. At any rate, the ultimate success of parties based on an Islamic ideology will depend not only on channeling dissatisfaction but on coming up with viable policy alternatives. For example, in protest of fiscally-responsible cuts in electricity, telephone and fuel-oil subsidies, Muslim populists called for the president's resignation but proposed no meaningful strategy of their own.

Following Liddle's essay are two perspectives representing modernist Islamic thought. Modernists tend to be politically active, approve of Western-style as well as religious education, and favor bypassing the authority of traditional scholars and teachers to directly interpret the Qur'an and Hadith. However, liberals (represented in this report by Mohamad Ihsan Alief) believe that certain strictures that were suited to the early years of Islam no longer make sense. Adherents to a more literalistic Islam (represented here by Hidayat Nurwahid and Zulkieflimansyah of the Justice Party) consider reinterpretation unnecessary—the texts are clear—and

see a larger role for Islam in governance than do most other Indonesians.

As a founding and active member of the Liberal Islam Network (Jaringan Islam Liberal, or JIL) **Mohamad Ihsan Alief** believes in the importance of society-wide discussion on religious issues. His central point is that religious extremists are not a serious threat to democracy in Indonesia, and exaggerating their dangerousness only lends them importance. The key to overcoming radicalism is to stimulate reasonable debate and encourage the airing of grievances. In this spirit, JIL runs a lively website and chat group, and disseminates information through written materials, radio, and television. Ihsan explains how the JIL coordinator received a *fatwa* (death sentence) in December 2002 from a group of Indonesian clerics for publishing an article arguing that certain Islamic obligations are not relevant to all cultures and eras. Ihsan points out that the public generally supported the JIL coordinator, and the accusing clerics were put on the defensive. Through dialogue, the public came to what Ihsan considers a reasonable conclusion—and because of the controversy, liberals were able to widen their audience. According to Ihsan, the real danger to Indonesia is not radicalism but what Thomas Carothers calls “feckless pluralism”—apathy, political disaffection, and disillusionment with corrupt leaders.

Ihsan objects to Western criticism that moderate Muslim intellectuals should speak out more loudly against extremists. According to him, Westerners only hinder Indonesian democracy-building efforts by referring to the country as a terrorist “breeding ground.” In fact, Indonesian liberals do not need to waste time levying arguments against people like the Bali bombers, who “don't deserve any serious reaction” since condemning them merely wins them publicity. Ihsan maintains that a soft approach is most effective and rebukes some of his fellow JIL activists for an aggressive anti-radical stance that is understandable but ultimately counterproductive. He also criticizes many liberals for depending too much on Western sources and making themselves susceptible to identification with a foreign agenda. Ihsan fervently believes that democratically elected Islamist governments should not be demonized. The very existence of Islam-based parties—“long muted” voices—shows that the system is functioning properly and liberally.

The third essay in this Special Report is written by representatives of the Partai Keadilan (Justice

## THE ASIA PROGRAM

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Party, or PK), Party President **Hidayat Nurwahid** and Head of Economic Policy **Zulkieflimansyah**. PK is a small but growing party that is widely recognized as the cleanest in Indonesian politics. The writers underline PK's commitment to justice, non-violence and education and argue that the party's moral scrupulousness can be sustained—even in Indonesia's free-wheeling political arena—as long as its members are patient and content with slow and gradual growth. In time, PK will become a “magnet for disillusioned voters.”

The writers pay particular attention to the importance of resisting fragmentation, a problem that has plagued many Indonesian parties. They challenge the assumption that PK holds itself together only by virtue of remaining small, maintaining that Indonesian politics shows no correlation between size and cohesiveness.

While emphasizing unity of vision, Hidayat and Zulkieflimansyah also profess to support pluralism within the party: “Our members come from diverse backgrounds, intellectually, ethnically and culturally—and each has a contribution to make.” PK supports minority and women's rights, and denies any inherent contradiction between tolerance and strong religious solidarity. According to the writers, PK's main weaknesses are lack of financial resources and the relative youth of its members.

PK is an unusual party in many respects. Besides fragmentation, PK has avoided other typical pitfalls of Indonesian parties, such as moribund branch activity, clientelism and overreliance on a charismatic leader.<sup>1</sup> PK has attracted attention for engaging supporters on a continual basis—not only prior to elections—and showing up promptly to offer assistance in the wake of natural disasters. It is such machinery which may enable PK to prevail in the long term.<sup>2</sup> And though the platform presented in this Special Report may seem vague to some readers, PK's agenda of public service and anti-corruption activities is straightforward compared to that of other Indonesian parties. To survive in the long term, Islam-based parties must stand for something other than resistance to the status quo.

How has PK achieved such organization? One reason is that many of its leaders are former members of the tightly coordinated Indonesian Muslim Student Action Union (KAMMI). PK and KAMMI seem to have been inspired organizationally and conceptually by Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, but they have discarded the Brotherhood's belligerent ideology.

Hidayat and Zulkieflimansyah do not mention the *syariat* in their essay, and to implement Islamic law is not part of PK's current platform. As a small party, PK's growth is portrayed as a “journey of a thousand steps” and its agenda emphasizes education. Indeed, Islamist groups (should they come to rule) will be challenged not only in implementing but in *defining* Islamic law for a society with wide-ranging opinions on the subject. Even within parties, issues such as whether women should wear headaddresses are hotly debated. It is no wonder that so many parties prefer to remain vague on the subject of the *syariat*, at least for now.

Groups like JIL, which emphasize free debate and religion/state separation, are easier for many Westerners to understand than modernist Islamist parties like PK. The two Indonesian perspectives included in this report are dramatically different in tone and content, showing a diversity that often goes unrecognized in the West. But both are part of a major resurgence of creative activity in the Muslim world that is taking place outside the traditional clerical framework, and which is concerned with solving the concrete problems of governance. The mushrooming of new groups, parties, and schools of thought is something that will occur in other democratized Muslim societies as well, and should be welcomed in the West. The Wilson Center's Asia Program hopes that the essays in this Special Report will serve as one window into the complex story of Islamic politics.

## ENDNOTES

1. For pitfalls of Indonesian parties (especially Islamist parties), see Greg Fealy, “The Politics of Islam in Democratizing Indonesia,” paper presented at conference, “Islam in Modern Indonesia,” US-Indonesia Society, Washington DC, February 7, 2002, <http://www.usindo.org/pu.htm>.

2 Anies Baswedan, “Mapping Trends in Indonesia,” paper presented at conference, “Political Islam in Southeast Asia,” Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies, Washington, DC, March 25, 2003.

## New Patterns of Islamic Politics in Democratic Indonesia

R. WILLIAM LIDDLE

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**M**odern Indonesians are divided, sometimes deeply, by religion, ethnicity or regionalism, and social class. From the moment that independence was declared in 1945, religion has been a central source of conflict in the world's largest Muslim-majority country. At the most general level, the so-called "Nationalists," a diverse group of syncretic Muslim, traditionalist Muslim, and non-Muslim parties have opposed the so-called "Muslims," a group of parties led mostly by modernist Muslims.<sup>1</sup> Some parties in the "Muslim" camp do in fact have a radical or Islamist political agenda, but others are simply identified with modernist Muslim constituencies. President Megawati Sukarnoputri, head of PDI-P (Indonesian Democracy Party-Struggle), is currently the leading figure among the "Nationalists." People's Consultative Assembly chair Amien Rais, head of PAN (National Mandate Party), is the putative leader of the "Muslims."

Ethnic or regional and class distinctions have also been important, both in their own right and in the way they have reinforced or mitigated religious cleavages. Suppressed for three decades under the authoritarian rule of General Suharto, localized conflicts among religious and ethnic groups, often over economic resources, began to disturb the surface calm in the mid 1990s. They have since exploded in several regions but have so far remained localized. Strikes and other actions by factory workers also rose in the 1990s, but subsided after the collapse of much of the industrial sector at the end of the decade.

Democratization began in 1998, with the resignation of President Suharto and the accession of his vice-president, B. J. Habibie. Democratic elections were conducted in 1999, for the first time since 1955 (see Table 1 for a comparison of the results). They will be held again in 2004. At the national level religious tensions have peaked several times since 1998. They have been contained mainly



through the willingness of key party leaders and office holders, both "Nationalists" and "Muslims," to share power widely among party elites. Ethnic and regional demands for autonomy have been answered by a new policy of massive decentralization of governmental authority to nearly four hundred districts and municipalities, the administrative level below the province. Even greater autonomy has been offered to the provincial governments of Aceh and Papua to counter active independence movements in those two regions.

Class politics was almost absent from the 1999 election. One reason was the shrinking of the size and political capacity of the working class in the wake of the economic crisis that began in 1997. Equally damaging was the trauma resulting from thirty years of government terror against the left. In the 1950s, the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party), with 17 percent of the 1955 vote, was by far the largest party representing workers and other economically disadvantaged Indonesians. In 1966-67, all PKI leaders and hundreds of thousands of members and supporters were killed or put in prison, where



they remained for decades. Communist-affiliated and other leftist organizations were banned. Their leaders and members were watched and harassed to the very end of the Suharto period. In the 1999 election only one party, the PRD (Democratic People's Party), attempted seriously to fill the void created by the destruction of the PKI. It won fewer than 100,000 votes, in an electorate of more than 100 million, and no parliamentary seats.

Today, new patterns of political conflict may be emerging that will gradually undermine the status quo. Two dynamic forces appear to be at work. One is a renewed and intensified contest for the support of Muslim voters in a society that is much more uniformly and piously Islamic in beliefs and practices than ever before in Indonesian history. The second is a reinforcement or cumulation of religious with class cleavages. The "Muslims" now out of power are staking a claim to represent the working class, the informal sector, and other economically marginalized Indonesians. To the degree that they succeed, the "Nationalists" now in power will come increasingly to be identified with the established upper and middle classes. These could be dangerous developments. They might further politicize and freeze in place an already sterile left-right economic policy debate, raise sharply the level of tension between "Nationalists" and "Muslims," and/or move Indonesia closer to becoming an Islamic state.

Alternatively, they could create space both for innovative policy ideas and for greater accountability of the governing elite to the citizenry in a new democracy that is so far more democratic in form than in substance.

**RELIGIOUS CLEAVAGES**

Indonesian religious cleavages are complex and multi-layered (see Figure 1). Muslims comprise about 87 percent of the total population of 210 million, Christians (both Protestants and Catholics) about 9 percent, and Hindu Balinese about 2 percent. Christians play a disproportionately large role in contemporary Indonesian life, including politics and government. Under Dutch colonial rule, Christians were given more educational and other opportunities than Muslims. Their advantage has slowly eroded in the last half century, undermined by the spread of modern education, but has not yet disappeared. They are especially prominent in the party of President Megawati Sukarnoputri, the PDI-P, which was the plurality winner of the 1999 parliamentary election with 34 percent of the vote. Hindu Balinese also voted overwhelmingly for PDI-P. PDI-P (as PDI, Indonesian Democracy Party) was founded in 1973, early in the Suharto dictatorship, when the five existing nationalist and Christian parties were forced to unite. The largest of these parties was

**Table 1. Indonesia's Democratic Elections**

1955	%	1999	%
<b>PNI</b> (nationalist/Sukarnoist ideology, mass base syncretist/non-Muslim, Java, leadership in state bureaucracy)	22	<b>PDI-P</b> (nationalist/Sukarnoist ideology, mass base syncretist/non-Muslim plus, Java, chair Megawati Sukarnoputri)	34
<b>Masyumi</b> (Islamic ideology, mass base modernist and traditionalist Muslim, Outer Islands, leadership private traders, modernist Muslim intellectuals)	21	<b>Golkar</b> (universalist ideology, but mass predominantly modernist Muslim, Outer Islands, leadership in state bureaucracy, military, chair Akbar Tandjung)	22
<b>NU or Nahdlatul Ulama</b> (Islamic ideology, mass base traditionalist Muslim, Java, leadership traditional teachers and scholars, local landowners)	19	<b>PKB</b> (universalist ideology but mass predominantly NU, traditionalist Muslim, Java, leadership traditional teachers and scholars, chair Abdurrahman Wahid)	12
<b>PKI</b> (communist ideology, mass base syncretist/non-Muslim, Java, leadership lower level officials/teachers)	17	<b>PPP</b> (Islamic ideology, traditionalist and modernist Muslim, Java and Outer Islands, chair Hamzah Haz)	10
		<b>PAN</b> (universalist ideology, but mass predominantly modernist Muslim, Yogyakarta and West Sumatra, chair Amien Rais)	7
		<b>PBB</b> (Islamic ideology, mass modernist Muslim, successor to Masyumi)	2
		<b>PK</b> (Islamic ideology, mass base Muslim but neither modernist nor traditionalist, strong among university students)	1
<b>All other parties</b>	21	<b>All other parties</b>	12
<b>Total</b>	100	<b>Total</b>	100

PNI (Indonesian National Party), the bare plurality winner with 22 percent of the vote in Indonesia's first democratic election in 1955. In the 1950s PNI was closely identified with Megawati's father, then-President Sukarno.

Indonesian Muslims are virtually all *sunni* (no *syi'ah*) and historically followers of the school of jurisprudence founded by Imam Syafi'i in ninth century Arabia. The main line of cleavage within the Muslim community among the ethnic Javanese, who make up about half the total Indonesian population, is between **orthodox** and **syncretic** Muslims. The orthodox take seriously their Islamic obligations, particularly the five daily prayers, fasting during the month of Ramadhan, and, if they can afford it, the pilgrimage to Mecca. Historically the orthodox have been thought to constitute a large minority among the Javanese and the great majority among non-Javanese Muslims. For syncretic Muslim Javanese, indigenous animism and Hinduism, which came to the archipelago long before Islam, powerfully influence contemporary religious and political belief and practice. In the 1950s, as many as two-thirds of Javanese Muslims were thought to be syncretists. Recent research, including national opinion surveys to be discussed below, suggest that the percentage of syncretists today is much smaller than it may have been in the 1950s.

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*From the moment that independence was declared in 1945, religion has been a central source of conflict.*

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The orthodox are further divided into **traditionalists** and **modernists**. Traditionalists continue to adhere to the Syafi'i school of legal interpretation, which is taught by charismatic *ulama* (scholars and teachers) in thousands of boarding schools (called *pesantren*) throughout the archipelago. On Java and in a few other regions the largest and most politically influential traditionalist organization is Nahdlatul Ulama or NU (The Awakening of the Religious Scholars and Teachers), which claims more than fifty million members. Modernists, influenced by such nineteenth and early twentieth century Middle Eastern thinkers as Muhammad Abduh

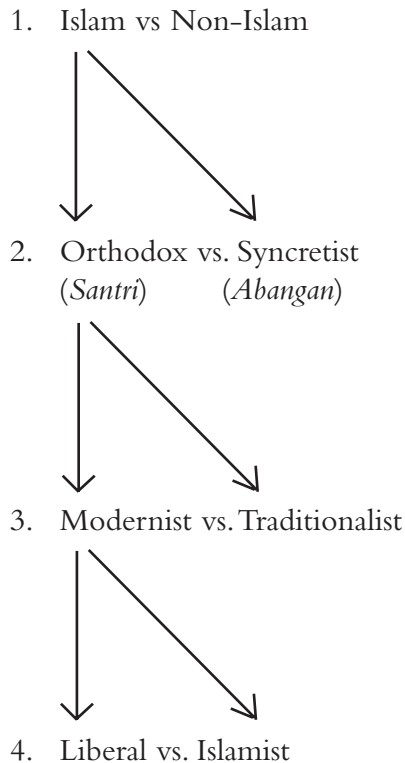
and Rashid Rida, abjure the Syafi'i and other classical schools in favor of direct reading of the Qur'an and Hadith, sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. Considerably fewer in number than traditionalists, modernists are scattered throughout the archipelago, with the greatest concentrations in Yogyakarta and West Sumatra. Their largest and most politically influential organization is Muhammadiyah, which claims thirty-five million members. Modernists tend to be more urban and Western-educated than traditionalists, but this distinction has lessened with the spread of Western education since independence.

Islamism, defined in religious terms as a literal reading of the Qur'an and Hadith and in political terms as the desire to have the state enforce all aspects of Islamic law (*syariat Islam*), is more characteristic of modernists than of traditionalists. Traditionalists view Islamic law as in principle subject to continuing reinterpretation by classically trained *ulama* to meet changing conditions of time and place. Moreover, NU leaders commonly assert that early Muslim proselytizers succeeded because they adapted their teachings to the norms and institutions of local societies instead of trying to force Indonesians into a one-size-fits-all Middle Eastern mold. Traditionalists are also political quietists. Like most *sunni* Muslims in other parts of the Islamic world throughout history, they tend to accept the authority of the government in power, whatever its religious coloration.

Modernist intellectuals and activists are divided into **liberals** or moderates and **Islamists**. Liberals or moderates want to reinterpret the Qur'an, Hadith, and other texts in the light of contemporary conditions and problems. For example, they regard the explicit Qur'anic injunction that daughters should receive half the inheritance of sons as appropriate for the Prophet Muhammad's time but not for today, when women's financial needs are often the same as those of men. Liberals or moderates also distinguish between sacred and secular. Many if not most aspects of social life, including the state, are outside the direct purview of religion. They are governed by rules chosen by all members of society, including non-Muslims. Islamists assert the opposite. The Qur'an and other texts are clear and need little interpretation today. No aspect of social life, most especially the state, is outside religion.



**Figure 1. Religious Cleavages in Indonesian Politics**



### RELIGIOUS CLEAVAGES, POLITICAL PARTIES, AND CONFLICT

Politically, Muslim syncretists are mostly found today in President Megawati's PDI-P. Among the orthodox, many traditionalists support PKB (Awakening Nation Party), which was founded in 1998 by the preeminent NU leader, Abdurrahman Wahid. PKB received 12 percent of the 1999 parliamentary vote. Abdurrahman subsequently became Indonesia's first democratically elected president, serving from October 1999 to July 2001. Though founded by NU, PKB's formal ideological base is not Islam but Pancasila, the famous five principles of belief in God, national unity, internationalism, democracy and social justice first enunciated by Sukarno in 1945. Its membership is open to non-Muslims, though few have joined. (See Table 1 for an overview of the parties' bases).

Other traditionalists support PPP (Development Unity Party), which won 10 percent of the 1999

vote. Like PDI, PPP was formed in 1973, during the Suharto dictatorship. It was a forced fusion of the four then-existing Islamic parties: NU, which had been a political party as well as a social and educational organization from the early 1950s; Parmusi, the short-lived successor to Masyumi (Council of Indonesian Muslim Associations), the principal modernist-led party of the 1950s, which had been banned in 1960; and two smaller parties. PPP's ideology is Islam. Some traditionalists have also joined Partai Golkar. Golkar, founded in 1964, was the state party during the Suharto era from 1966 to 1998. In the six heavily managed elections of that period, Golkar won between 60 percent and 75 percent of the vote. In the 1999 election, on a more level playing field, Partai Golkar came in second with 22 percent. Its ideology is Pancasila. All Muslim and other religious affiliations are represented among its leaders and members.

PAN, with 7 percent of the 1999 vote, is closely identified with modernists. It is led by Amien Rais, an American-educated professor of international relations, who also serves as chair of the People's Consultative Assembly, a kind of super-Parliament whose responsibilities until very recently included selection of the president and vice-president. In the 1990s Amien headed Muhammadiyah, the largest modernist social and educational organization. He is still the most prominent Muhammadiyah personality and modernist politician. Like PKB, PAN was founded in 1998 as an open party with Pancasila as its ideology. It initially attracted both liberal or moderate modernists and non-Muslims. The latter were prominent in the national leadership board and as party representatives in Parliament and the People's Consultative Assembly. Most non-Muslims and even some liberal or moderate Muslims have since left PAN on the ground that the party has been taken over by Islamists, or at least by modernist politicians who are cultivating only Muhammadiyah and other modernist voters in the run-up to the 2004 election. Amien himself appears to remain committed to PAN's original pluralist vision.

Other modernist-led parties include Golkar, PPP, PBB (Crescent Moon and Star Party), and PK (Justice Party). Golkar's ideology, as indicated above, is Pancasila, but the party has been controlled at the national level and in some important regions, such as South Sulawesi, by liberal or moderate modernists.

The most prominent example is national party chair Akbar Tandjung, who also serves as chair of Parliament. PPP's national leadership is about equally divided between modernists and traditionalists, although its voters throughout the Suharto period and in 1999 were probably mostly traditionalists. PBB and PK are the smallest of the seven major parties in the 1999 election, with 2 percent and 1 percent of the vote respectively.

PPP, PBB, and PK have all declared Islam as their ideology, although Islamists are more prominent in PBB and PK than in PPP. PPP leaders now claim that they are committed to making Indonesia an Islamic state, although the party did not campaign on that platform in 1999. Many observers believe that PPP's Islamism is half-hearted, a political calculation intended to distinguish it from the other big five parties, all of which support Pancasila as the state doctrine, in the upcoming 2004 election campaign. As evidence, they point to the willingness of party leader Hamzah Haz to serve as vice-president under Megawati, whose presidential candidacy he previously opposed on the literalist ground that Islam prohibits female leaders. PBB did campaign for an Islamic state in 1999. Many of its leaders have family connections with Masyumi leaders of the 1950s (the crescent moon and star was Masyumi's ballot symbol). Given its tiny vote, compared to Masyumi's 21 percent in 1955, PBB is considered by most observers to be a party of the past.

Finally, despite its even smaller size, PK is the most sophisticated and promising of the Islamist parties. A few of its top leaders were trained in religious studies in the Middle East, but many more have advanced Western-style education, often in foreign universities. Though their basic approach to Islam is modernist, in that they read the Qur'an and Hadith directly without the mediation of medieval scholarship, many PK activists do not have roots in any of the pre-existing modernist organizations, such as Muhammadiyah or the DDII (Indonesian Islamic Proselytizing Council), the main refuge for Islamists in the Suharto years. PK thus represents something new in Indonesian politics. Most of the party's voters are urban and are particularly concentrated in the neighborhoods around major universities, where many leaders are lecturers and researchers. PK campaigners in 1999 stressed not the Islamic state but opposition to official corruption, their professional

qualifications to govern, and an egalitarian economic policy balancing phased industrial development with self-sustaining agricultural growth. Their platform also proposed a sharper separation of executive, legislative, and judicial powers, with a Supreme Court no longer appointed by the president.

Tensions among these parties, and the religious affiliations they represent, have long threatened national-level political stability. President Suharto was a syncretist, and therefore a "Nationalist," as that term was defined above, although in the 1990s he had made his peace with the "Muslims," i.e., the modernists, bringing many of them into his government. Vice-President Habibie was of modernist background, and therefore to many "Nationalists" a "Muslim" who might attempt to make Indonesia an Islamic state.

Megawati is a syncretist and therefore a "Nationalist" who it was initially feared would discriminate against "Muslims," as had both her father and Suharto for most of his presidency. Though her party had won 34 percent of the June 1999 parliamentary vote, she was denied the presidency at the October 1999 session of the People's Consultative Assembly by a coalition led by "Muslim" parties and leaders. She became president twenty months later only after President Abdurrahman Wahid had been widely condemned as a failed leader and the "Muslims" were assured that she would not discriminate against them. Her first acts as president were to encourage the selection by the Assembly of a "Muslim," Hamzah Haz of PPP, as her vice-president, and to appoint cabinet ministers representing nearly all the major parties in the Assembly. Only PK demurred, preferring to remain independent of the government.

## THE 2004 ELECTION AND BEYOND

### Toward a New Islamic Politics?

Indonesian Muslims are widely reputed to be among the most moderate in the world. They are also thought to have become more moderate over time. In the 1955 parliamentary election two political parties, Masyumi and NU, representing 40 percent of the electorate, favored replacing Pancasila with Islam as the foundation of the Indonesian state. Muhammadiyah, then and now the preeminent modernist organization, provided the core leadership



**Table 2. Islamic Political Orientations among Indonesian Muslims (%) in 2001 and 2002\***

	2001	2002
Agree that Islamic government, i.e. government based on the Qur'an and Sunnah under the leadership of Islamic authorities, such as <i>ulama</i> or <i>kiai</i> , is best for a country like ours.	57.8	67.0
Agree that religion and the state should be separated.**	36.4	NA
Agree that the state should require all Muslim men and women to abide by the <i>syariat</i> .	61.4	70.8
Agree that the ideals and struggle of Islamic movements or organizations (like Islamic Defenders Front, Laskar Jihad, Darul Islam, and others) to implement the <i>syariat</i> in the government and society must be supported.	46.4	53.7
Agree that in the national election one should vote only for candidates who understand Islamic teachings and attempt to fight for their implementation in national politics.	46.7	46.1
Agree that in the national election one should vote only for Islamic parties.	22.6	21.1
Agree that the government should prohibit banks from charging or paying interest in all banks in Indonesia.	25.8	NA
Agree that the law of cutting off the hand of a Muslim thief, as stated in the Qur'an, must be implemented by the government of this country.	28.9	33.0
Agree that the law of stoning that is ordered in the Qur'an, that is throwing stones at a married Muslim adulteress, must be prohibited in our country.***	42.4	NA
Agree that the police must ensure that Muslims carry out their five daily prayers.	9.9	NA
Agree that the police must ensure that Muslims fast during Ramadhan.****	12.9	30.2
Agree that the inheritance of daughters should be half that of sons.	46.7	50.1
Agree that men may have more than one wife (polygamy)	NA	37.9

\*The 2001 survey covered the population of sixteen provinces (all provinces on Java plus North Sumatra, West Sumatra, South Sumatra, Lampung, Jambi, Riau, South Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, South Sulawesi, and West Nusa Tenggara). The 2002 survey covered the national population minus Papua and Maluku.

\*\*Disagree, 40.6%; No opinion, 23%.

\*\*\*Disagree, 39.2%; No opinion, 18.5%

\*\*\*\*Wording of the 2001 and 2002 surveys is different. The key change is from arrest (*menangkap*) Muslims who do not fast in 2001 to ensure, or watch over in the sense of active surveillance (*mengawasi*), that Muslims fast in 2002.

of Masyumi. Today, both Muhammadiyah and NU, as an autonomous social and educational organization and through its sponsorship of PKB, strongly oppose state enforcement of Islamic law, the *syariat*, as conceived by the Islamists. Of the big seven political parties in 1999, only PBB, which won 2 percent, campaigned in favor of state enforcement of the *syariat*. If PBB's votes are combined with those for PPP and PK, the other two parties whose official ideology is Islam, the pro-Islamic state total rises to 13 percent, a 27 percent decline since 1955.

These figures may not, however, tell the whole story of contemporary Indonesian Muslims' political views. National opinion surveys conducted in 2001 and 2002 by the PPIM (Center for Study of Islam and Society) at the State Islamic University in Jakarta appear to show that large majorities of Indonesian Muslims favor the Islamic state (see Table 2 for the complete breakdown). Sixty-one percent of respondents surveyed in 2001 and 71 percent of respondents in 2002 agreed "that the state should require all Muslim men and women to abide by the *syariat*." Fifty-eight percent in 2001 and 67 percent in 2002 agreed that "Islamic government . . . under the leadership of Islamic authorities, such as *ulama* or *kiai* [Indonesian term for *ulama*], is best for a country like ours." Perhaps most disturbing, 46 percent in 2001 and 54 percent in 2002 agree "that the ideals and struggle of Islamic movements or organizations (like Islamic Defenders Front, Laskar Jihad, Darul Islam, and others) to implement the *syariat* in the government and society must be supported." By contrast, most national-level Muslim politicians and social leaders believe that these three organizations represent an extremist fringe of vigilante activists who must be brought under state control.

Several caveats to these findings must immediately be entered. First, scientific opinion polling in Indonesia is still in its infancy. The national sampling frame constructed by PPIM is the best available and its results the most reliable. Nonetheless, many more iterations are necessary to establish an accurate picture of Muslim political attitudes. Second, there are indications in the PPIM results and from other research that the popular understanding of *syariat* is looser, more abstract, than that of the Islamists. Many Indonesian Muslims may favor the *syariat* without agreeing to its more controversial provisions. For example, only 29 percent of respondents in 2001 and 33 percent in 2002 agree "that the law of cutting off

the hand of a Muslim thief, as stated in the Qur'an, must be implemented by the government of this country." In 2001 only 26 percent believed that "the government should prohibit banks from charging or paying interest in all banks in Indonesia." And only 13 percent in 2001, though the figure rose to 30 percent in 2002, agreed "that the police must ensure that Muslims fast during Ramadhan." Third, many Indonesian Muslims, particularly traditionalists who revere their *ulama*, may believe that the *syariat* is already being properly enforced under the guidance of the teachers and scholars. That is at least a plausible interpretation of the large majority cited above in support of the leadership of the *ulama* in an Islamic government.

My own reading of the PPIM findings is that millions of Indonesians may be more receptive to the appeals of the Islamists than observers have previously thought. Muslim voters could be persuaded to switch their votes in 2004 or in subsequent elections from parties based on Pancasila, which received 87 percent of the 1999 vote, to those based on Islam. Put differently, a majority, perhaps a large majority, of Indonesian Muslim voters do not see implementation of the *syariat* as an Islamist threat to be averted at all costs. Instead, they are already members of a Muslim culture in which the *syariat*, as they understand it, is positively valued. Given this openness or flexibility, what concerns or events might make large numbers of Muslims join or vote for Islamist parties at some future election? The most likely answer is dissatisfaction with one's personal economic situation plus a conviction that the government in power, due to corruption and incompetence, will not or can not solve those problems.

### **Toward a Convergence of Religion and Class?**

In many Muslim-majority countries, from Algeria to Pakistan, Islamist movements and parties have built strong bases of support on the failure of secular governments, typically the inheritors of the European colonial mantle, to deliver on their promise to create prosperity for all. The Islamists have appealed particularly to the poor in the informal sector, the working and lower middle classes, and to other victims of economic stagnation or decline. They represent a new kind of left, in opposition to an old right of upper and middle class groups and state officials that have benefited from the rule of the secularists. In some countries their movements have grown quite large,



becoming the principal opposition or even, as in Iran and Turkey, taking over the government. Indonesia may now be at the beginning of a similar trajectory.

For many decades Indonesia did not seem comparable to countries like Algeria, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan. The government of President Suharto was secular and authoritarian, like the governments of many other Muslim-majority countries, but it was also developmental. Indonesia enjoyed nearly three decades, from the late 1960s to the late 1990s, of steady 6 percent growth that built the foundation of a modern economy. The benefits of growth were spread widely throughout society, reaching even remote villages with markets, schools, health centers, and roads. Job opportunities expanded and poverty shrank. This was not fertile soil for Islamist movements, which in fact won few supporters in this period. Suharto was eventually brought down by the most severe economic crisis, not entirely of his own making, in independent Indonesian history. The industrial economy was devastated, throwing millions of people out of work and pushing many below the poverty line. Suharto's successors have not been able to restart the growth engine, making today's Indonesia more comparable to the failed or stuttering economies of other Muslim-majority countries.

President Megawati, in office since July 2001, has chosen for the most part to follow International Monetary Fund and World Bank prescriptions, as did Suharto in his best years. She has appointed internationally respected professional economists to key macro-economic policy positions, maintained the commitment to a fully convertible rupiah, and reduced the state budget deficit and debt burden by cutting subsidies on consumer goods, privatizing state enterprises, and selling assets acquired from bankrupt companies at the time of the crisis. It is too early to tell if these policies will be successful. Growth of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2002, her first full year as president, was only about 3.6 percent, but 2002 was also the year of the devastating bombing in Bali. Unfortunately, foreign direct investment, once a critical force for growth, shows no sign of returning.

In following the recommendations of her neo-classical economic policy advisers and their backers in international institutions, Megawati has made herself vulnerable to criticism across a wide spectrum of public opinion, including adherents to both "Nationalist" and "Muslim" political currents. Neither capitalists nor foreigners have been popular

in Indonesia at least since the time of the pre-World War II nationalist movement led by her father, whose goals were both to expel the Dutch and to establish "*sosialisme a la Indonesia*." In the 1950s, the United States earned the lasting suspicion of nationalistic Indonesians by supporting regional rebels against the central government. Many Muslim Indonesians have long believed that the United States discriminates against Muslims world-wide. They see this belief confirmed by current Bush Administration policies toward Afghanistan and Iraq, not to mention Israel. Many "Nationalists" and "Muslims" alike view U. S. economic policy, directly or via international institutions like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, as designed not to help Indonesia develop but to serve narrow U.S. trade and investment interests. In this world-view, Megawati is the witting or unwitting puppet of a foreign capitalist Jewish-Christian-secularist cabal led by the United States.

In 2004, Indonesians will directly elect for the first time in their history a president and vice-president. Megawati, the principal candidate of the "Nationalists," is the clear front runner. Her principal opponent may be Amien Rais, putative leader of the "Muslim" bloc of parties that denied Megawati the presidency in the October 1999 Assembly election. Amien has been open about his presidential ambitions and has already positioned himself ideologically. He is a populist, meaning broadly anti-capitalist and anti-foreign, not an Islamist. He inveighs against the government's sale of state enterprises, which he calls giving away the national patrimony. He defends the common people against those who exploit them, as for example when the government recently cut

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***Many Indonesian Muslims may favor the syariat without agreeing to its more controversial provisions.***

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subsidies on electricity, telephone service, and fuel oils in order to reduce the budget deficit. At the same time, he is careful not to go too far in opposing government policies, probably because he understands that if he becomes president he may feel constrained to make similar policy choices.

While Amien is not an Islamist, Islamists and most other members of the "Muslim" constituency are

comfortable with the candidate and his strategy. As the head of Muhammadiyah and a fledgling national politician in the 1990s, Amien was an aggressive promoter of Muslim causes at home and abroad. He pushed the Suharto government to take a more active role in support of Palestine, and proposed that ministerial and other government appointments be made on the basis of religious “proportionality,” meaning that Muslims should be preferred over Christians. Islamists and other members of the “Muslim” constituency also share Amien’s economic populism. They would like to see fewer links with the capitalist and Christian West, which would make it easier for them to build an Islamic economy, including interest-free banking, at home. Finally,

should have the support both of PKB and Golkar in addition to her own PDI-P (68 percent in 1999 terms).

Although neither “Muslims” nor Islamists can expect to win in 2004, that election may provide a template for future elections in which Islamism and populism increasingly and powerfully reinforce each other, as has happened in many Muslim-majority countries. Because of Megawati’s pro-market economic policy choices, which can be traced back to her days as vice-president under President Abdurrahman Wahid, she and her party are already stamped as pro-capitalist at home and a U.S./IMF puppet abroad. She is also vulnerable to the charge of sacrificing Indonesia’s historic “independent and active” foreign policy on the altar of President Bush’s war against terrorism, which many Indonesian Muslims consider a war against Islam. By 2009, the PDI-P and its allies may be irretrievably identified as the parties of capitalism and cooperation with the West. If her policies succeed, particularly in restoring economic growth, the “Nationalists” may continue to dominate Indonesian politics. If they fail, a strengthened “Muslim” coalition, with conceivably a significant Islamist component, may be much closer to taking power than it is today.

*Islamic movements have built bases of support on the failure of secular governments, typically the inheritors of the European colonial mantle, to deliver on their promise to create prosperity for all.*

Amien’s PAN, once a truly pluralist party at least at the national level, is now controlled by modernist politicians who are seeking only Muslim votes in the 2004 election.

Amien is not likely to win the 2004 presidential election. Megawati’s PDI-P begins with a huge advantage, 34 percent to 7 percent, over Amien’s PAN in the 1999 election. Pre-election polls suggest that the various parties’ percentages of popular support remain about the same today. Megawati’s incumbency carries with it many symbolic and material advantages. Amien’s principal base, Islamic modernism, is probably the smallest of the three major Muslim constituencies as described above—syncretists, orthodox traditionalists, and orthodox modernists. Though he is today a genuine pluralist (or at least a genuine politician, seeking votes from many constituencies), “Nationalist” voters remain suspicious of his true intentions. His likely partisan coalition will probably be limited to PAN, PBB, PK, and perhaps PPP (a total of 20 percent in 1999 terms), if Megawati does not ask its leader, current Vice-President Hamzah Haz, to be her vice-presidential nominee. Megawati, on the other hand,

## CONCLUSION

The principal cleavage in Indonesian politics is religious, pitting “Nationalists,” a large and diverse group of non-Muslim, syncretic Muslim, and traditionalist Muslim parties against “Muslims,” a smaller group of parties led mostly by modernist Muslims. This cleavage has deep roots in the nationalist awakening at the beginning of the twentieth century and in the Revolution for national independence at mid-century. Under President Suharto’s authoritarian rule from 1966 to 1998, the religious and all other cleavages, notably ethnic or regional and class, were suppressed. Suharto himself was a syncretic Muslim and therefore a “Nationalist,” suspicious of and hostile to the “Muslims” for most of his presidency. In the 1990s, however, he made his peace with the “Muslims,” incorporating many of them into his government.

Suharto was forced from office in 1998 and succeeded by his vice-president, B. J. Habibie, a mod-



ernist Muslim and at that time leader of the “Muslim” group within Suharto’s government. Democratic parliamentary elections were held in June, 1999. In October of the same year, the traditionalist Muslim Abdurrahman Wahid was elected president in the People’s Consultative Assembly by a group of mostly “Muslim” parties. They were led by the modernist Muslim Amien Rais, who wanted to forestall the election of the syncretic Muslim, and therefore “Nationalist,” Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of Indonesia’s founding father and first president Sukarno, also a “Nationalist.” Megawati became president twenty months later, after all players were convinced that Abdurrahman’s presidency had failed and Megawati had assured the “Muslims” that she would not discriminate against them. She encouraged the Assembly to choose a “Muslim,” the PPP’s Hamzah Haz, as her vice-president, and appointed a rainbow cabinet containing representatives of most major parties. She is expected to remain in office until 2004, when a direct presidential election will be held for the first time in Indonesian history.

For the 2004 election and beyond, two powerful new forces may be at work. The first is an intensified struggle for the support of Muslim voters in a society that now appears to be much more deeply and uniformly pious than it was a half century ago. In this struggle, ideologically Islamic or Islamist parties like PPP and PK would seem to have a natural advantage over the “Nationalist” parties, according to the results of two surveys of Indonesian Muslims by the respected Jakarta research center PPIIM. The second is a reinforcement or cumulation of religious with class cleavages, as Megawati’s “Nationalists” are increasingly identified as pro-capitalist and willing to cooperate with Western governments, particularly the United States, and international financial institutions such as the IMF and World Bank. Should her policies succeed, especially in restoring the rapid economic growth of the Suharto period, the “Nationalists” may preside over a long era of good feeling. Should they fail, both “Muslims” and Islamists may soon come to play a much larger role in Indonesian politics than they have since the 1950s.

The emergence of a powerful “Muslim” opposition, containing a large number of Islamists, could be a dangerous development. Rising tensions between “Nationalists” and “Muslims” could boil over, as they

did in Algeria when the Islamic Salvation Front won a national election. Less violently but equally damaging to Indonesia’s future, the cumulation of class with religious cleavages could freeze in place for many years to come what has already long been a sterile economic policy debate between a pro-market “right” and a pro-state or sometimes anarchist “left.” A good example is the recent unhelpful response of the left, including Muslim populists, to the government’s fiscally responsible cuts in electricity, telephone, and fuel oil subsidies. Instead of blanket opposition and calls for Megawati to resign, leftist politicians and activists might have proposed new government programs to provide direct assistance to the poor.

There are also more encouraging possibilities. To many observers, Indonesian politics under Megawati looks less like a new democracy than it does like a continuation of Suharto’s authoritarian regime. Most of the old officials and many of the old politicians are still in place. What is worse, they are still making policy (not to mention in many cases stealing the state blind) in splendid isolation from the now ostensibly sovereign people. More equal and intense conflict between “Muslims” and “Nationalists,” with the added ingredient of class competition, might force the contestants to be more responsive to demands from below. It might also create more space for innovative solutions to seemingly intractable policy dilemmas like the conflict between popular demands for equality and the state’s need for fiscal responsibility. In a worst case scenario, Indonesia’s political destiny could be like that of Algeria, especially if the economy declines sharply or even continues to stagnate for many years. But perhaps a more likely comparison is with Turkey, where after decades of travail an Islamist party committed to equality and social justice has been elected and has peacefully taken control of the government.

#### ENDNOTES

1. The terms syncretic Muslim, traditional Muslim, and modernist Muslim are defined in the next section. I will put “Nationalist” and “Muslim” in quotation marks when I mean the large political groupings that are so identified in Indonesia.

## Political Islam and Democracy: A Closer Look at the Liberal Muslims

MOHAMAD IHSAN ALIEF

In this essay, I was asked to address liberal trends in Indonesian Islamic thought and their relation to the future of democracy. I assume that my duty includes discussing the recent controversy concerning the so-called “Liberal Islam Network” (Jaringan Islam Liberal, or JIL), the most outspoken liberal Muslim group in Indonesia today. Late last year, the coordinator of this network, Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, wrote an article on the need to renew Islamic thought in Indonesia, and was accused of defaming Islam and the prophet Muhammad. Because of his article, a group of local Muslim clerics (*ulemas*) issued a death sentence (*fatwa*) against him and appealed to the Indonesian court to disband the entire Liberal Islam Network he coordinates.<sup>1</sup> This is not the first open disagreement among Muslim groups in Indonesia, and we may reasonably suggest that it will not be the last.

This assignment is a difficult task for me, and I accept it with a degree of reluctance—but not because I don’t share with my liberal colleagues their struggle for plural and tolerant Islam. (In fact, before coming to this country to continue my studies, I was a founding member of JIL and I have been an active participant since.) My main concern with my colleagues and other liberal activists in Indonesia is that they are sometimes too direct in their approach, insensitive in many cases to the feelings of their fellow Muslims, and too selective in the themes and subjects they address.<sup>2</sup> And, I should add (at the risk of offending some of my colleagues abroad and some non-Indonesians), they depend too much on Western sources in defending their ideas, and therefore are susceptible to identification with a Western agenda. These two factors reduce the influence of their appeals and the promise of liberal Islam in Indonesia.

In this examination of liberal activism, I invite readers to reflect on the issues of Islam and democratization in a way to which they are may not be



wholly accustomed—that is, by avoiding what Indonesian scholar Moeslim Abdurrahman calls the “Western stereotype of fear”<sup>3</sup> of Islamic radicalism and (as often happens these days) its automatic association with terrorism. Put differently, we need to move beyond the simple question of “Are there enough Muslim democrats in the country?” I believe that the answer to this question is positive, but other important issues are the sustainability and quality of democracy—especially since the fragile democracy is only a few years old, and the economy is still recovering from the Asian financial crisis. Moreover, for better or for worse, religion matters greatly and politicians are ready to manipulate religious issues in their own interest. Thus those who are promoting Indonesian democracy face great challenges. Liberals such as JIL activists and other domestic groups would find it more useful to extend friendly appeals than to condemn certain beliefs. Similarly, democracy promoters abroad would contribute more constructively by offering healing and supportive statements and policies than by criticizing.

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## THE LIBERAL ISLAM NETWORK (JIL)

Let me begin by quickly outlining a portrait of JIL, which has had a relatively short, but meteoric career. Established in Jakarta in early 2001, JIL is a loose intellectual forum where the ideas of Islamic liberalism are discussed and then promoted through books, syndicated columns, radio talk shows, and televised public service announcements (PSA). Vital to JIL is a small number of young, urban, well-educated liberal Muslims who believe that the entire corpus of Islamic teachings needs to be contextually reinterpreted. This is what Abshar-Abdalla called for in his controversial article mentioned at the opening of this essay. As he suggests, reworking the necessary Islamic foundation for Indonesia's democracy would be difficult, if not entirely impossible, without a radical reinterpretation.

JIL is not the only group saying such things—and it is not even the best organized. To name only one example, the well established Paramadina Foundation in Jakarta has been actively promoting Islamic pluralism since its inception in 1985. And in Yogyakarta, the second most important city in the country, groups such as the Institute for Interfaith Dialogue (Interfidei), established in 1992, and the Institute for Islamic and Social Studies (LKIS), established in 1993, advocate inter-faith dialogue and peaceful resolution to conflict.<sup>4</sup> Beyond these institutions, there are the traditionalist Muslim organizations Nahdlatul Ulama (the Awakening of the Religious Scholars, NU), which claims more than 50 million members, and the modernist Muslim organization Muhammadiyah (the Followers of Muhammad), which claims 35 million members. These two mass social organizations are well known for their moderate stance of Islam. Politically speaking, these two organizations are also known for opposing any attempt to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia, as are the other institutions mentioned above.

On this last issue, as on certain other politically significant issues, JIL indeed stands out as the most outspoken group. This aggressive—even outraged—stance of JIL activists (which can be easily found in the mission statement on their website) has to be understood in the context of their understandable perception that discourse on Islam is dominated by literal and conservative Muslims. The conservative camp includes the particularly radical and hardline

Muslim groups that have emerged during the last few years and support violent means to achieve their ends. These are voices that, to quote a posting on JIL's listserv (December 2, 2002), “dominate every inch of the public sphere, from sermons in mosques, on buses, and on the radio to [religious programs] on television, eagerly flaunting their ideas every morning.” The listserv contributor goes further, maintaining that the domination of discourse on Islam by extremists is “more important than merely a problem of the economy and [people's] stomachs.”

## THE PROPER PERSPECTIVE

Although I support JIL's agenda in general, I believe that a more gradual and sympathetic approach would be more effective. Looking at Indonesian Muslims today, I do not have such a gloomy picture as the listserv contributor mentioned above. To suggest that the appearance of Islamic radicalism is more important than the increasing number of jobless and starving people in Indonesia is unwise at best, if not entirely wrong. For one thing, the most

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popular preacher these days is not the threatening Abu Bakar Baasyir or anyone of his sort, but the sympathetic Sundanese Abdullah Gymnastiar (popularly called Aa Gym) who, in a sermon at the Istiqlal Grand Mosque in Jakarta a few days after the Bali bombing, said the bombers were “uncivilized, had lost their minds and had no religious faith.”<sup>5</sup> When I was in Indonesia during Ramadhan last year (November and early December), he appeared frequently on television stations throughout the country, and his columns were published in almost every newspaper in Jakarta, from prestigious ones such as *Kompas* and *Koran Tempo* to yellow papers such as *Pos Kota* and *Rakyat Merdeka*.

More importantly, however, overstating the role of radical Muslim groups in Indonesia (as did the

listserve contributor) lacks a historical and long-term perspective. It is true that a great number of Islamic parties, with Islam as their ideological basis, have been established during the last few years. Also, certain Muslim groups have stepped up demand for the official adoption and implementation of the *syariat* (Islamic law), particularly the reintroduction of the so-called “Jakarta Charter” in the preamble of the 1945 constitution.<sup>6</sup> But it is imperative to realize that these are long muted and repressed voices in Indonesian politics. Their recent articulation only indicates that, since the fall of Suharto, democratic principles have been implemented—at least to a minimal degree. That is, citizens of all ideological bents are exercising their constitutional freedom of expression. The system is functioning liberally, so to speak. And we know the rest of the story: generally speaking, radical groups remain on the fringe in Indonesia. To disband them arbitrarily is to repeat Suharto’s authoritarian approach, which entirely repressed all Islamic groups that opposed the government and anyone of leftist sympathies, including the famous Pramoedya Ananta Toer (our contender

sermons of religious leaders such as Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell, and to their hostile sermons about Islam and the prophet Muhammad. The professors responded along the lines of, “They’re stupid, and they don’t deserve any serious reaction.” Such an answer reminded me of comments made by moderate Muslim leaders in my country on the Bali bombers.

Finally, those who overstate the danger of Islamic radicalism in overtaking moderation in Indonesia undermine the huge contribution of parents and grandparents of liberal Muslims and their long struggle for a plural and democratic Indonesia. To abandon this intellectual and activist tradition might well be demoralizing and ultimately self-defeating. In the 1920s (two decades before becoming Indonesia’s first president), Sukarno strongly appealed to fellow Muslims to separate the “essence” of Islam from its Arabic, Middle Eastern “form,” and to take the former as the basis for developing a Islam relevant to Indonesia and not simply to imitate the latter. Moreover, the entire course of the nation’s history would have been different had not Mohamad Hatta, our first vice president, tirelessly worked to convince Islamist groups to accept the pluralist principles of Pancasila<sup>7</sup> and to give up the agenda of an Islamic state at a crucial stage of our struggle for independence. Finally, we must remember at least two names from the 1970s: the late Ahmad Wahib for his strong statement of the principles of Islamic liberalism in his diary; and Nurcholish Madjid, especially for his appeal “Islam, yes; Islamic party, no.”<sup>8</sup> These men, and many others, have made real-life sacrifices in the belief that a democratic and plural Indonesia is as Islamic as so-called “Islamic” countries, if not more so. It is on the shoulders of these giants that we now stand firmly.

The most appropriate and promising approach to Abshar-Abdalla’s case (mentioned above) is by way of this long historical perspective. In such an approach lies vision and hope for democracy activists in Indonesia. In contrast to the killing of the liberal Egyptian writer Faraj Fouda, for example, the Indonesian clerics who accused Abshar-Abdalla of defaming Islam have to, first of all, bring their case to court. And there is a blessing in disguise here: the *fatwa* sparked public debate in the Indonesian media, and discussion for most part supported Abshar-Abdalla’s (and hence the liberal Muslims’) cause. The

*Western countries could better help democracy activists through supportive policies rather than severe and judgmental statements that the country is a new-founded terrorist camp.*

for the Nobel Prize), who was not allowed to publish his fine works of literature.

Besides, to exaggerate the danger of radical streams of Indonesian Islam will not help the Indonesian democracy activists much. If anything, it only cloaks the fact that the real underminers of Islamic radicalism are moderate Muslims, in Islamic organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah or in major political parties such as PDI-P (Indonesian Democracy Party-Struggle) and Golkar. Those who overemphasize the danger of Islamic radicalism indirectly help the radicals to “hijack” the image of (generally moderate) Indonesian Muslims. I once asked some American professors why there has been no strong reaction from moderate Americans to the





accusing clerics were put on the defensive. I am reminded of Amartya Sen's observations on the "constructive role of democracy in the formation of values and in understanding of needs, rights, and duties."<sup>9</sup> The more JIL was condemned and attacked in a peaceful way, the more it could bring its discourse (typically limited to an highly educated circle) to a wider audience.

### THE INCAPACITATED REGIME

Rather than Islamic radicalism, a more dangerous threat to the consolidation of Indonesian democracy is what Thomas Carothers recently called "feckless pluralism." Democratizing countries with this syndrome have some positive democratic features, such as political freedom, but (as he writes) "[P]olitical participation, though broad at election time, extends little beyond voting." Indonesian newspapers these days resound with characterizations of "feckless pluralism": "Political elites from all major parties are widely perceived as corrupt, self-interested, dishonest, and not serious about working for the country. The public is seriously disaffected from politics, and while it may still cling to a belief in the ideal of democracy, it is extremely unhappy about the political life of the country."<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, many observers interpret the rising tide of Islamic politics as a sign that Islam and democracy are incompatible, rather than a sign of an incapacitated regime. As shown by the experience of other countries, a state incapable of bringing about justice and prosperity is the best breeding ground for primordial sentiment, including Islam, to emerge. Unless the issue of social justice is addressed adequately, the specter of Islamic radicalism will always haunt the country.

This is by no means to suggest that an Islamic party or Islamic state, as leaders and promoters frequently claim, is "the solution." However, an interesting development in the last few years of Indonesia politics suggests that Islamic parties do have a role to play. This development is the emergence of the "Justice Party" (Partai Keadilan, or PK), which is known for self-discipline; a gradual, peaceful approach to meeting reformist goals; and commitment to end corruption. Although I didn't vote for this party—as I was a founding member and, briefly, an officer of the secular National Mandate Party (PAN)—I believe that its participation in

Indonesian politics should be welcomed. In addition to being a channel for Islamist voters, its commitment to clean government helps apply pressure to politicians of the majority secular parties, who are widely perceived as corrupt and self-interested. If PK were to win an election (although this is improbable in the near future), I believe there should be no "Algeria" in Southeast Asia. To refuse to acknowledge the democratic victory of an Islamic party is to betray the very principle of democracy, and is seriously counterproductive to democracy promotion.

In fact, a growing number of young, well-educated Indonesians object to the way Algeria was demonized, which they say shows the hypocrisy of so-called democracy promoters, especially (to be honest) the United State government. People who hold such views are not necessarily Muslims, much less radical Muslims, or the adherents of Lee Kuan Yew's "Asian values" rhetoric. They are even joined by scholars, such as the Burmese historian Michael Aung-Thwin. He holds that, for those who criticize election outcomes in Algeria and other countries, "neither dictatorship nor authoritarianism per se are primary concerns," but rather "whether these countries happen to serve the interests of the United States (real or imagined) ... or whether their leaders are malleable."<sup>11</sup>

### THE NEED FOR SUPPORT

A certain number of elections must occur before a democratizing country can be considered trapped in Carothers' "feckless pluralism." In Indonesia, such a diagnosis would be premature. However, democracy activists at home and their allies abroad need to take this syndrome seriously and set their agendas accordingly.

Since most Indonesians are suffering increasing difficulty, Western countries could better help them through healing words and supportive policies rather than severe and judgmental statements that the country is a new-founded terrorist camp. Why has there been no promotion for a "heaven on earth" Bali after the October 12 bombing, as happened so wonderfully for New York after the September 11 attack? Instead, as I personally witnessed, Ohio University's conflict-management programs in Indonesia, which were scheduled long before the Bali bombing, had to be cancelled because of that tragic incident. Another personal

experience is also telling: starting on February 24, we Indonesians in the United States (and also others from Middle Eastern and some African countries, but not Malaysians), have to be interviewed under oath by U.S. immigration officers. News of this requirement spread quickly around Indonesia, commented on by even President Megawati Sukarnoputri and creating consternation among relatives of Indonesians in the United States.

Any sympathetic effort from the camp of democracy promoters will strengthen the belief in democracy of Indonesian Muslims and will help the Indonesian government fulfill its economic recovery program. But sympathetic efforts will also affect the Indonesian Muslims directly and make them less susceptible to radical and violent elements in society, who justify their actions by pointing to Muslims' suffering. After all, they are human beings like anyone, whose main concern is how to feed their children. In this way perhaps radical violence can be reduced, if not eliminated altogether.

Please note: it is moderate Indonesians who have suffered most from the repercussions of the Bali bombing. My Balinese Muslim friend, who lost his job because of the dying tourism industry, sent me an email two days after the bombing, suggesting that Indonesian Muslims should be the first group to learn most from that costly lesson. He quoted from our prophet Muhammad: "*Al-shihhah tâj la yadrikuhu illâ al-mardhâ*," "Health is a crown that only the sick man knows." Western poet Theodore Roethke gives the same message: "In a dark time, the eye begins to see."<sup>12</sup> I cannot agree more.

## ENDNOTES

1. Andreas Harsono, "Clerics Issue Death Sentence against Indonesian Scholar," *The American Reporter*, December 22, 2002.

2. As I am a part of JIL, perhaps it would be fairer to use "we" and "our" instead of the detached "they" and "their." However, I write here a personal opinion, which does not necessarily reflect the line of argument that JIL generally adopts. Moreover, I am currently studying abroad and unable to make any substantive contribution to JIL. Therefore, this essay should be read as the refraction of a detached JIL participant.

3. Quoted in Mark R. Woodward's introduction, "Talking across Paradigms: Indonesia, Islam, and Orientalism," in *Toward a New Paradigm: Recent Developments in Indonesian Islamic Thought*, ed. Mark R. Woodward (Tempe, Arizona: Program for Southeast Asian Studies, Arizona State University, 1996), 2.

4. On Paramadina, see, among others, Bahtiar Effendy, "Islam and the State: The Transformation of Islamic Political Ideas and Practices in Indonesia," Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1994. On Interfidei and LKIS, see Mohtar Mas'ood, S. Rizal Panggabean, and Muhammad Najib Azca, "Social Resources for Civility and Participation: The Case of Yogyakarta, Indonesia," in *The Politics of Multiculturalism: Pluralism and Citizenship in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia*, ed. Robert W. Hefner (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), 119-140.

5. See, "Nation Unites in Condemning Bombing," *The Jakarta Post*, October 14, 2002.

6. On this and related issues, see Azyumardi Azra, "The Megawati Presidency: Challenge of Political Islam," in *Governance in Indonesia: Challenges Facing the Megawati Presidency*, eds. Hadi Soesastro, Anthony L. Smith, and Han Mui Ling (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003), 44-69. The "Jakarta Charter" is the seven words (*dengan kewajiban menjalankan syari'at Islam bagi pemeluknya*, "with the obligation to carry out Islamic law for its adherents," that the Islamist group insisted be incorporated in the preamble of the drafted 1945 constitution.

7. The Pancasila are five principles of state ideology announced by Sukarno in 1945: (1) belief in one Supreme God, (2) just and civilized humanitarianism, (3) Indonesian unity, (4) popular sovereignty governed by wise policies reached through deliberation and representation, and (5) social justice for the entire Indonesian people.

8. Ahmad Wahib is a young magazine reporter who struggled with his Islamic beliefs in a moving diary published after his death, and Nurcholish Madjid is the leading liberal Muslim intellectual of the New Order period. On their Islamic thought and their



place in the Islamic reform movement in Indonesia, see Effendy, "Islam and the State," and Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslim and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000).

9. See his "Democracy as a Universal Value," *Journal of Democracy*, 10 (July 1999), 11.

10. Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy*, January 2002, 10.

11. Michael Aung-Thwin, "Parochial Universalism, Democracy Jihad and the Orientalist Image of Burma: The New Evangelism," *Pacific Affairs*, winter 2001-2002, 491.

12. Quoted in Kanan Makiya, "Can Tolerance Be Born of Cruelty in the Arab World?" *New Perspective Quarterly*, February 2001, 53.

## The Justice Party and Democracy: A Journey of a Thousand Miles Starts with a Single Step

HIDAYAT NURWAHID & ZULKIEFLIMANSYAH

Recent years have seen a marked expansion of democratic government in developing countries, and Indonesia is no exception. The end of authoritarian rule began in 1998 with the resignation of President Suharto and the accession of his vice-president, B. J. Habibie. After more than four decades of authoritarian rule, a parliamentary election was held in June 1999. Forty-eight parties competed, with 21 winning at least one of the 462 contested seats in parliament. Simultaneous elections were held for legislatures in 26 provinces and more than 300 districts and municipalities. In October, the People's Consultative Assembly chose a new president and vice president for the 1999–2004 term.

At the national level, the seven most popular parties were: PDI-P (Indonesian Democracy Party–Struggle), which won 34 percent of the vote and 153 seats; Golkar, with 22 percent of the vote and 120 seats; PKB (National Awakening Party), 12 percent and 51 seats; PPP (Development Unity Party), 10 percent and 58 seats; and PAN (National Message Party), 7 percent and 34 seats; PBB (Star and Moon Party), 2 percent and 13 seats; and PK (Partai Keadilan, Justice Party), 1.4 percent and 7 seats.

### THE JUSTICE PARTY

As shown by the election result above, the Justice Party (Partai Keadilan, or PK) is still a small party. It won 1.4 percent of the vote and seven seats in parliament. But with our fresh vision and solidity, we believe that we will play a significant role in the future Indonesian political arena.

Many larger political parties are now splitting apart. But PK appears solid, with no internal rifts. According to many observers, we are able to hold together because we are modest in size. But is there necessarily a correlation between solidity and size? After all, the first party to break apart in the era of



*Zulkieflimansyah*

reform was the small PRD (Democratic People's Party). Another small party, PDKB (Love Nation Democratic Party) also split up. PDKB has had five legislators in the DPR (House of Representatives) and only 50,000 supporters; PK, by contrast, has seven legislators and 14 million supporters. Despite being small, PDKB could not maintain its unity. Besides size, there are other factors in maintaining solidity, such as vision and platform.

For 2004, PK intends to campaign on a platform of combating corruption, violence and injustice. We will work hand in hand with all Indonesians to prevent the country from breaking apart, and from descending into chaos and insecurity. PK also wants to be a pioneer in upholding Islamic values within a framework of national unity and integrity. We must work hard to ensure the real voice of Islam is heard in Indonesia and even in the world at large. We must speak out boldly in defense of a dynamic, moderate Islam—an Islam that upholds the sanctity of human life, reaches out to the oppressed, respects men and women alike, and insists on the fellowship of all humankind. Such is the true Islam of the Prophet, we believe, that some are now seeking to destroy.

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*Hidayat Nurwahid is party president and Zulkieflimansyah is head of economic policy of the Justice Party, Indonesia*



To realize our dream is not easy. It is a journey of thousand miles. We understand that PK is only one tiny element within the many components of Indonesian society. So we must offer special values. If we don't have unity and integrity within our own party, how can we offer it to the people of Indonesia?

For Muslims, political activity is not to gain power but to serve the people. Power is not an end in itself. So we aim not to twist arms or stab in the back those who aspire to serve, but to cooperate. Our members come from diverse backgrounds, intellectually, ethnically and culturally—and each has a contribution to make. Diversity is from God and natural, characteristic of Indonesia's own diversity. We direct our own diversity to achieve positive synergy that can benefit the country and help our party to grow.

The next question is: What should we do with this synergy? We will not co-opt or oppress people, or repeat the tragedies of Suharto's New Order, but aim for the prosperity and dignity of the nation as a whole. We do not aim to lead the nation to poverty and backwardness. Good causes are achieved through good means. Through the mistaken belief that ends justify means, parties dissolve into infighting and fracture. As the public can observe, parties that cannot maintain unity can hardly bring Indonesia together as a country.

### WEAKNESSES

In spite of the above strengths, we face certain challenges. First, we are a new party, but to win we must be known across the entire country. Most Indonesians still know nothing about us, or they tend to have strong historical allegiances to certain parties—they are inclined toward what is familiar. Second, PK is supported mostly by young people, and Indonesians do not really trust the young. Many elder people still don't have faith in us, no matter what we tell or show them.

Third, PK is a party that is very strict about morals and morality, and we will reject those who will tarnish the party. A branch that is cut from a tree and planted to produce quick harvest will quickly die. Similarly, popular leaders who are involved in corruption and collusion will crumble sooner or later. To consistently uphold morality in Indonesian politics is a major struggle for us, because

the political culture is accustomed to corruption, collusion, money politics and political terror. To some people, politics is a means to cheat and to use terror and money to get their own way. Many consider us to be a good party because we avoid such practices, but also are afraid of our winning—they are not ready for clean leaders. Thus our strength, our cleanness, is also a weakness, because people are afraid to vote for us.

Fourth, our financial condition poses a challenge. We are supported mainly by young people, who do not have ample financial resources. Moreover, unlike many parties, PK does not accept money from corrupt donors and certainly does not use people as "cash cows." To do so would not only be immoral, but religiously we believe would not bring goodness. Such financial constraints hinder us from visiting all areas of Indonesia to spread our message.

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*Studies have found that many people—disillusioned by the fragmentation of larger parties for which they voted in 1999—are open to transferring their support in 2004.*

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Finally, it is unfortunate that in some places many people won't vote for you unless you pay them. Large parties with huge financial resources know how to exploit this situation. But we won't change our vision and our mission just to overcome this difficulty.

### PK'S REALISTIC TARGET FOR THE 2004 ELECTION

To set a "realistic" target, we judge from both our own growth and the external situation. First, we can see that the number of cadres (of which we keep careful records) has grown considerably, which will lead to an increase in voters. Also, PK members of parliament have proven their high standards of morality and integrity, and thereby achieved recognition from society. As late as 1999, PK had no representatives in parliament to make known the party's aspirations, identity and qualities.

Studies have found that many people—disillusioned by the fragmentation of many of the larger



parties for which they voted in 1999—are open to transferring their support in 2004. This phenomenon has occurred across the board, with one exception: PK. PK is still seen as the most solid party and thus will subsequently become a magnet for disillusioned voters.

Therefore, barring unforeseen circumstances (e.g., a major political upset such as a military coup), the number of PK voters will increase. If the electoral threshold in the 2004 election is 3 percent, we are very sure that we can pass it.

### MILITARY IN POLITICS

PK is a modern party, and desires to see Indonesia as a modern and democratic country in the future. PK is one of the staunchest proponents of military reform. We are firm that the military's socio-political role must end, and the military and police must return to their roots as professional institutions. The military and police are needed—but militarism is not. A person holding both military and civilian positions can do neither job well.

### CONCLUSION

The Justice Party is still a small party, but with our fresh vision and solidity we believe we will play significant role in Indonesia. Because of our cadres' quality and professionalism, we are ready to lead Indonesia in 2014. We will continue to campaign on a platform of fighting corruption, violence and injustice, and to uphold Islamic values—the values that have been abused—within a framework of national unity and integrity.

To realize our aspirations is a journey of thousand miles. Such a journey begins with a single step, and we have taken that step by establishing the Justice Party as a community of learning and practice. As mentioned by the other contributors to this Special Report, Indonesia's political destiny could be like that of Algeria. But it could also be like that of Turkey, where an Islamist party committed to equality and social justice has been elected and has peacefully taken control of the government. We at the Justice Party are sure this is going to happen, *Insyah Allah. Wallahuálam Bis Showab.*



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