

American Foreign Policy Council

INDONESIA

QUICK FACTS

Population: 253,609,643

Area: 1,904,569 sq km

Ethnic Groups: Javanese 40.1%,
Sundanese 15.5%, Malay 3.7%,
Batak 3.6%, Madurese 3%,
Betawi 2.9%, Minangkabau 2.7%,
Buginese 2.7%, Bantenese 2%,
Banjarese 1.7%, Balinese 1.7%,
Acehnese 1.4%, Dayak 1.4%, Sasak 1.3%, Chinese 1.2%, other 15%

Religions: Muslim 87.2%, Christian 7%, Roman Catholic 2.9%, Hindu 1.7%,
other/unspecified 1.3%

Government Type: Republic

GDP (official exchange rate): \$867.5 billion

Map and Quick Facts courtesy of the CIA World Factbook (Last Updated August 2014)



Indonesia is the most populous Muslim country in the world and the largest Muslim-majority democracy. Approximately 87 percent of its population are Muslims of different doctrinal and eschatological persuasions. Indonesia is also one of the most pluralistic societies in the world in terms of the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious affiliations of its population. Much of this diversity is attributable to the country's topography and geography. The Indonesian archipelago consists of more than 17,800 islands and islets.

The Indonesian government officially recognizes only five religions—Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. While the pluralism of the archipelago has meant that for much of history, Indonesia has been given to conflict and pogroms, from 1966 on much of this was contained by the repressive authoritarian regime of former Indonesian President Suharto. The end

of Suharto's thirty-two year rule in 1998 was accompanied by intense jockeying on the part of various social and political groups and organizations—including Muslims—for newfound political space in Indonesia.

In Indonesia, Islamism is not a monolithic phenomenon.¹ While the virulent brand of Islamist activism epitomized by the ideology and agenda of both jihadi and paramilitary groups is undoubtedly a feature of the broader social-political terrain in post-Suharto Indonesia, they form but a small faction of the wider Muslim community. And while trends of religious conservatism are clearly evident in the social and cultural sphere in recent years, this has not translated to significant support for the Islamist agenda of the implementation of Islamic state and Islamic law.

ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

Since Indonesia's struggle for sovereignty and its independence from the Dutch in 1945, Muslim leaders, Islamic political parties, and Muslim groups have been divided over the legal status of Islam in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious state. While the issues of adopting *sharia* into the Indonesian Constitution and the establishment of an Islamic state are still hotly contested, Islamic political parties have begun to adopt a more inclusive political agenda, promoting a pluralistic ideology and focusing on the implementation of universal Islamic values. Following the collapse of Suharto's New Order regime in May 1998, new electoral laws were passed, spawning the creation of additional political parties. The sole-principle policy of *Pancasila* was lifted and many organizations claimed Islam as their ideology.

Political parties

PKS - Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Prosperous Justice Party)

PKS, originally named *Partai Keadilan*, PK (Justice Party), was founded in July 1998. It was a new party that emerged from the *Lembaga Da'wah Kampus* (LDK, or University Students' Body for Islamic Predication) of the early 1980s.² The suppression of student movements in 1977-1978 had resulted in the proliferation of Muslim student activists inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, who carried out their *dawah* (proselytization) activities in mosques. The movement is linked to the educational system developed by the Brotherhood. By the early 1980s, LDK had expanded into a large organization and its alumni subsequently entered the political arena by establishing the Justice Party.³

In the 2004 elections, PKS secured 7.3 percent of votes, and 45 out of 550 seats, in the country's parliament, making it the only Islamic party to improve its position over the previous election. The party then retained a similar level of popular support in the 2009 elections. PKS's success has in part been due to a political agenda that emphasized not the implementation of *sharia* or the creation of an Islamic state, but the broadly popular theme of "clean and caring government" in opposition to incumbent parties—both Islamist

and secularist—that were widely perceived by voters to be corrupt and elitist.⁴ Nonetheless, PKS is still considered a religious party, with its primary focus the promotion of Islamic values.

PKS is also the most organized of all Indonesian Islamist parties, with some 400,000 carefully-selected and well-trained cadres. It has also cultivated an image of collective decision-making in which no individual leader stands out. Additionally, PKS has been able to contain its internal differences and prevent public schisms. The party is popular with the modernist Islamic constituency, especially among students and educated middle class Muslims. Apart from representing its members' aspirations in parliament and engaging in *tarbiyah* (educational) activities, PKS provides public services. For example, PKS set up a *Pos Keadilan* ("Justice Post") from which its members could provide assistance to affected communities in ethnic/religious conflicts or natural disasters. In December 1999, this was institutionalized into the *Pos Keadilan Peduli Umat* (Justice Post Concerning Muslim Society), and expanded to include assistance to farmers in selling their underpriced crops.⁵

PKS is rooted in the powerful *tarbiyah* movement found in secular state universities.⁶ Campus activism is one of the main conduits of Islamic political communication in Indonesia. That activism is also in line with the party's advocacy for a transformation of society. The *tarbiyah* movement engages its members through hundreds, if not thousands, of regular gatherings. These meetings are not only attended by party elites but also by ordinary members. Such regular contact allows the party easy access to thousands of its followers. These meetings do not necessarily focus on substantive political issues; often, they are geared more towards the advancement of religious understanding. Furthermore, these meetings also become catalysts for member interaction, establishing party discipline and new recruitment. Given this extensive political machinery, the PKS is well placed to mobilize members quickly during election times.

The image of PKS as a clean party free of corruption has in recent years been undermined by several controversies. This included the imprisonment of PKS lawmaker Muhammad Misbakhun for fraud and resignation of another PKS lawmaker, Ariefintanto, for watching pornography during a parliamentary sitting. In addition to these internal crises, PKS's position in the coalition was struck a blow in 2011 when President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono replaced the party's research and technology minister, Suharno Surapranata, with environment minister Gusti Muhammad Hatta, in a cabinet reshuffle. The move was purportedly a response to several occasions when the Islamist party's departure from coalition positions on policy issues. Subsequently, in February 2013, party president Luthfi Hasan Ishaq was detained on corruption charges that shocked the party membership. He was jailed for sixteen years.

Despite these controversies, however, the party suffered only a 1 percent dip in support at the April 2014 parliamentary elections. Analysts have argued that the fall-out from these corruption cases was contained by strong campaigning, particularly by secretary-general Anis Matta, and by an efficient party machinery.

PKB – Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (National Awakening Party)

The PKB, whose stronghold lies in East Java, was established specifically to contest parliamentary elections in June 1999 in the wake of the political downfall of former president Suharto in May 1998 and counts East Java as its stronghold. It was set up established as the political arm of the *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), a rural-based Islamic organization of thirty million adherents with a liberal pluralist agenda, which that withdrew from active politics in 1984. Chaired by Matori Abdul Djilil, its effective leader was Abdurrahman Wahid, who headed the NU. In the election of June 1999, it secured third place with 17.4 per cent of the vote and fifty-one out of 462 elective seats behind *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan* and Golkar with 17.4 per cent of the vote and fifty-one out of 462 elective seats. Following the election, Abdurrahman Wahid was elected into the presidency party president by the People's Consultative Assembly after Megawati Sukarnoputri's aspirations to high office were blocked in October. The PKB has, however, been unable to sustain its momentum, managing to secure only 10.5 percent of the votes in 2004 and five percent in 2009 on the way to fifty-two seats and twenty-eight seats respectively. The poor performances can be attributed to internal conflicts and intra-family despites arising from Abdurrahman Wahid's decision to sack a string of party chairmen, including his own nephew.

The party has however experienced a change in fortunes when Rusdi Kirana, a successful non-Muslim businessman and owner of Indonesia's largest airline, Lion Air, joined the party and became deputy chairman,. Later, and when the chairman of the NU, Said Agil Siraj, openly endorsed the party during its 2014 campaign trail. At the 2014 election, the PKB proved to be the most successful of the Islamic parties when it secured about nine percent of the vote on the back of because of strengthened relations with the NU and strong campaign funding.

PBB – Partai Bulan Bintang (Crescent Star Party)

The PBB, which claims to be the descendant of the largest Islamic party of the 1950s, Masyumi, was founded in July 1998. Masyumi was banned in the 1960s by President Sukarno, and its leaders were jailed. After they were released, former Masyumi leaders decided to establish the DDII (*Dewan Da'wah Islamiyah Indonesia*) to maintain its members and leadership networks as well to insulate themselves from further political gridlock and turbulence. The DDII is a modernist Islamic organization and has close relations with other similar bodies such as the Muhammadiyah and Persis.⁷ The PBB was eventually formed from this corpus.

As heir to the Masyumi legacy, PBB espouses a classic Islamist political agenda including the adoption of *sharia* into the constitution. Both the PBB and PPP (elaborated below) advocated the formal adoption of *sharia* into the constitution in the 2002 annual session of the People's Consultative Assem-

bly. In the 2004 elections, the party garnered 2.6 percent of votes, a slight increase from its previous performance in the 1999 elections. However, in 2009, the party won only 1.8 percent, failing to meet the 2.5 percent threshold and losing its seats in the People's Representative Council. The marginal support of the party was again evident during the 2014 elections, when it gained a mere 1.5 percent of the vote.

PPP – Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party)

The PPP emerged from a merger of four Islamic parties during Suharto's reign in 1973, and was one of the three legal parties during the New Order. From 1973-1998, the PPP was politically neutered, but remained the medium for the expression of Islamic concerns within the regime. While the PPP never posed a serious threat to the then-incumbent Golkar party, it defeated Golkar in strongly Islamic provinces such as Aceh and occasionally posed a serious challenge to Golkar's electoral dominance in West Sumatra, South Sumatra, East Java and South Kalimantan. The PPP's status as the main opposition party ended when Abdurrahman Wahid withdrew his 30 million-strong Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) from the party in 1984, resulting in the resignation of most NU leaders.

The party's share of votes has declined drastically over the years, with its popularity dropping by more than two percent (to 8.2 percent of votes) in 2004 as compared to its performance in the 1999 elections.⁸ In 2009, the party's share dropped further, to 5.3 percent of votes, earning it 37 seats in the People's Representative Council. Its popularity improved marginally in 2014, when it secured 6.5 percent of the votes due to strong patronage ties with Religious Affairs Minister Suryadharma Ali and Public Housing Minister Djan Faridz.

Worthy of note is the fact that the PPP has managed to endure the transition from a regime-sponsored party to a democratic party after 1998 because it retained some standing as a voice of Islamic interests and because of the continued involvement of a range of both modernist and traditionalist Islamic leaders who had participated in the party during the Suharto era.⁹

Like the PKS and PBB, the PPP officially states that its ideological basis is Islam. The PBB, PPP, and PKS share similar perspectives on *sharia*, but differ on the means by which to promote them. While the PKS does not focus on the formal adoption of *sharia*, the PBB and PPP advocate the incorporation of principles of Islamic jurisprudence through constitutional amendment.

Radical Salafi-Islamist Groups

FPI - Front Pembela Islam (Front of the Defenders of Islam)

The FPI was founded by Muhammad Rizieq Syihab (b. 1965), a young man of Hadrami descent born into a family of *sayyids* (reputed descendants of the Prophet Muhammad).¹⁰ Before establishing FPI, Syihab was a prominent religious preacher in addition to his daily tasks as a religious teacher in an Islamic school in Central Ja-

karta.¹¹ Laskar Pembela Islam, the paramilitary division of Front Pembela Islam, was a loosely organized entity with an open membership.¹² The majority of its members were from mosque youth associations and a number of Islamic schools (*madrassas*) in Jakarta. Other members, particularly among the rank and file, were simply unemployed youths, including those from the notorious *preman* (thug) groups, whose motivation in joining was economic reward for carrying out militant actions. Members were indoctrinated by Syihab, who taught that they should “live nobly, or better, die in holy war as a martyr.”¹³ Laskar Pembela Islam eventually succeeded in expanding its network to cities outside Jakarta. It claims to have established eighteen provincial and more than fifty district branches with tens of thousands of sympathizers throughout the country.¹⁴

Laskar Pembela Islam first made its presence felt in a mass demonstration on August 17, 1998, where it denounced Megawati Soekarnoputri’s presidential candidacy. In line with its puritanical ideological beliefs, it became “the most active group in conducting what it called *razia maksiat* (raids on vice)” to assert its political demands more visibly.¹⁵ Moreover, the group demanded that the government abrogate the policy of *asas tunggal* (“sole foundation”) which required all political and social organizations to accept the longstanding ideology of the state, *Pancasila*.¹⁶ In addition, the group rallied support for the adoption of the Jakarta Charter, which would have given Islamic law constitutional status. On one occasion, the group also reportedly ransacked the offices of the National Human Rights Commission, which it felt “had not been objective in its investigation of the Tanjung Priok massacre (where the army had shot hundreds of Muslim demonstrators).”¹⁷ In addition, the FPI also threatened Americans in Indonesia, apparently in retaliation for the United States’ attack on the Taliban in Afghanistan.¹⁸

Laskar Jihad (Holy War Force)

Laskar Jihad first captured the attention of the public in early 2000, when it mobilized in response to purported Christian violence against Muslims in the Moluccas, and the apparent inability of the Indonesian central government to protect local Muslims. The *Laskar Jihad* was a paramilitary group established by Ja’far Umar Thalib (b. 1961) and leading Salafi personalities such as Muhammad Umar As-Sewed, Ayip Syafruddin and Ma’ruf Bahrun.

Before its militant turn in 2000, *Laskar Jihad* had mostly been an apolitical and quietist movement, though it was influenced by puritanical Wahhabi Salafism.¹⁹ Many of its members were educated and were at some point part of campus Islamic student movements, or had been in surreptitious contact with the Darul Islam. They had come under the charismatic influence of Thalib, who had spent years studying in conservative and radical circles in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, after which he had been dispatched to Afghanistan to take part in *jihad*.²² It is widely known that from 1994 to 1999, the cadres

of Laskar contented themselves with teaching and preaching Wahhabi Islam. However, it was the conflict in the Moluccas, alluded to earlier, that propelled them into radical activism and violence. Shortly after the conflict started, the group established a training camp in West Java and was dispatching thousands of its members to the Moluccas, both as relief workers as well as fighters.²¹

Modelled after a military organization, *Laskar Jihad* consisted of “one brigade divided into battalions, companies, platoons, teams and one intelligence section.”²² As its symbol, the group adopted the image of two crossed sabres under the words of their creed: “*La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammad Rasul Allah*” (there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger).²³

In terms of its doctrinal positions, *Laskar Jihad* dismisses man-made laws in favor of its own interpretation of *sharia*. It rejects notions of democracy and popular sovereignty, maintaining that they fundamentally contradict the teachings of Islam. The group was also outspoken in its condemnation of Megawati’s presidency on the grounds that the president was from the female gender. Although the organization claims that it is not interested in politics – and specifically, in replacing the current regime with an Islamic state – during the height of its activism, *Laskar Jihad* repeatedly instigated violent street riots, often for proclaimed reasons of the implementation of *sharia*. Other acts of violence included attacks on cafes, brothels, gambling dens and other places which they considered representations of “vice.”

In the aftermath of the Bali bombings of October 2002, however, public opinion swung decidedly away from these local paramilitary groups as Indonesian Muslims expressed outrage at the targeting of co-religionists. At the same time, their patrons from the security services withdrew support and endorsement because of international attention. Both *FPI* and *Laskar Jihad* were quickly disbanded.

Radical Non-Salafi-Islamist Groups

MMI – Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (Jihad Fighter Group of Indonesia)

The MMI “places a different emphasis on *sharia* discourse than does LJ and FPI, associating it with the Jakarta Charter and the historical struggle of the Darul Islam movement” (described below).²⁴ It appears to be a front for various groups that have some relation with the Darul Islam. The group’s key organizer is Irfan S. Awwas and its chief religious authority is Abu Bakar Ba’asyir.

Of the militant organizations that have become active during the post-New Order era in Indonesia, the MMI is arguably one of the oldest. According to observers, “it is a loose alliance of a dozen minor Muslim paramilitary organizations that had been scattered among cities such as Solo, Yogyakarta, Kebumen, Purwokerto, Tasikmalaya and Makassar. Notable member groups are *Laskar Santri* (Muslim Student Paramilitary Force), *Laskar Jundullah* (God’s Army Paramilitary Force), *Kompi Badar* (Badr Company), *Brigade Taliban* (Taliban Brigade), *Corps Hizbullah Divisi Sunan Bonang* (God’s Party

Corps of the Sunan Bonang Division), *Front Pembela Islam Surakarta* (Front of the Defenders of Islam of Surakarta/FPIS) and *Pasukan Komando Mujahidin* (Holy Warrior Command Force).²⁵

MMI members continue to lobby for the incorporation of *sharia* into the country's constitution, particularly at the local and regional level in former Darul Islam strongholds. One of the MMI's main objectives is to establish an Islamic *khilafah* (caliphate). MMI has also been active in making calls for *jihad*, particularly in the Moluccas and other troubled spots. In contrast to the large scale mobilization of *Laskar Jihad*, however, MMI has preferred to operate in small units that are well trained and armed.

HuT — Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation)

HuT is a political organization founded in 1952 in Lebanon by Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani.²⁶ It is unclear when HuT came to Indonesia, but some scholars trace the organization's presence as far back as the 1970s.

Before the fall of Suharto's regime, HuT remained underground, moving from one mosque to another. It avoided any documentation or public coverage that might reveal its existence and activities. Therefore, HuT's presence was largely unknown until President Suharto stepped down. During the subsequent era of *Reformasi* (political reform), however, the group made its appearance through several public rallies. But, for fear of prosecution, HuT has never revealed the identity of the leader of its Indonesian branch. Its public representative, Ismail Yusanto, claims that he is just the group's spokesperson.

HuT advocates the implementation of the *sharia* in daily life, viewing Islam as not just a religion but a political system and a way of life.²⁷ Like the MMI, its most important objective is to establish an Islamic *khilafah*.²⁸ Aligned with this dogma is the promulgation of one global government for all Muslims. It is not surprising, therefore, that this group rejects the idea of nationalism or the nation-state.

Darul Islam and Jemaah Islamiyah

The Darul Islam movement, led by S. M. Kartosoewirjo, first emerged in the mid-1940s in West Java as part of the broader armed anti-colonial movement against Dutch reoccupation after the Second World War. Kartosoewirjo declared the formation of an Indonesian Islamic State (Negara Islam Indonesia, NII) based on *sharia* in 1949. At the same time, armed elements from the Darul Islam movement launched insurgency operations against the newly formed Indonesian Republic, which Kartosoewirjo viewed as a betrayal of the anti-colonial enterprise. By 1954, the movement had spread to Central Java, Aceh, South Sulawesi, and South Kalimantan, posing a serious internal security threat. A combination of military campaigns and offers of amnesty to Darul Islam members, however, gradually eroded the influence of the movement.²⁹

The collapse of the Darul Islam Movement did not signal the end of Islamist extremism. Rather, it forced those extremist forces to evolve and take on a different, more clandestine form. In 1993, a new and more lethal extremist movement known as *al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah* – commonly referred to as *Jemaah Islamiyah*, or JI – was founded by two former Darul Islam leaders, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir. JI saw itself as the heir of Darul Islam, although it sought to achieve the goal of an Islamic state through more militant means, including the deliberate targeting of civilians. Many prominent members of JI were veterans of the *jihad* against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan during the 1980s, and had been recruited through Darul Islam channels.³⁰ The Bali bombings of October 2002, however, proved to be a watershed for JI, sparking an internal debate over the issue of the killing of Muslims and whether the organization should focus its immediate attention on proselytization rather than bombings in order to advance its goals.

Together with a crackdown by Indonesian security forces, this schism eventually forced a split in JI, with a hardline faction led by two key Malaysian leaders – Noordin Top and Azahari Husin – breaking away from the main organization and continuing a reign of terror with the Australian Embassy bombing (September 2004), the JW Marriott Hotel in Jakarta (August 2003), and the Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta (July 2009). While security operations have since led to the deaths of both men, the spring 2010 emergence of a heretofore unknown group in Aceh, called Al-Qaeda in Indonesia, underscores the fact that while on the run from increasingly effective security operations, *jihadi* groups and individuals may be active and evolving.

ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

Like most of the Muslim world, Indonesia was not immune from the global Islamic resurgence that began in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a consequence of the failure of Arab nationalism. During this period, numerous students made their way to the great Islamic learning centers of the Arab world. Many were also sent to secular schools and universities in Europe on government scholarships, where Islamic civil society movements were active among Muslim communities. Locally, an Islamic *dawah* (proselytization) movement began in Bandung around the campus-based Salman mosque and soon spread across the country to other tertiary education institutions. This movement was organized around study groups modelled after the Egypt Muslim Brotherhood. The related *tarbiyah* (education) movement began in the early 1980s at various university campuses.³¹ The legacy of this Islamicization process remains evident today in the increased social activism of the country's various Muslim communities.

A driving force for the development of the *dawah* movement was the socio-political dislocation of Islamist intellectuals. The Suharto administration had placed substan-

tial restrictions on the expression of religiously-referenced political aspirations on the part of the Muslim majority, to the extent that socially active Muslim groups like the NU and Muhammadiyah were effectively de-politicized. More conservative Muslims were also concerned for the increasing assertiveness of what was thought to be “liberal” Islamic ideas in Indonesian society. In the words of one scholar:

the general mass media, as another manifestation of the public sphere, tended to serve as the state ideological apparatus in championing modernization. The media was thus preconditioned to be sympathetic to the renewal movement. Realizing that the public sphere was hostile to their ideological aspirations, the Islamist intellectuals created a subtle and fluid social movement, which was relatively impervious to state control, as a new foundation for constructing collective solidarity and identity.³²

Salafi influences can largely be traced to the late 1950s, when a small number of modernist Muslim intellectuals were attracted to the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood.³³ However, it was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s that these ideas and organizational techniques began to win a sizeable following. The main group that was influenced by these ideas was known as the *Tarbiyah* group. Unlike in Malaysia, where Islamists leaders had direct relationships with *Ikhwan* and *Jamaat* leaders, Indonesian Islamist leaders learned these ideas mainly through Indonesian translations of books written by *Ikhwan* activists.

During this period, Indonesia was still ruled by the authoritarian New Order regime, which was extremely suspicious of Islamic parties and groups. It was Natsir and his organization, the DDII, that was chiefly responsible for encouraging Islamic student activism in Indonesian universities.³⁴ While it is difficult to establish the extent of Natsir’s relationship with *Ikhwan* and *Jamaat* leaders, it is clear that he played a major role in facilitating the travel of Indonesian students to *Ikhwan* and *Jamaat*-dominated universities in the Middle East and Pakistan. He was also responsible for introducing the *Ikhwan*’s religio-political ideas and methods of organization to Muslim students on various campuses. It was these students who established the *Lembaga Dakwah Kampus, LDK* (Campus Proselytising Network). *Ikhwan*-inspired students subsequently formed a separate organization, the *Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia, KAMMI* (Indonesian Muslim Undergraduate Action Association). With the collapse of the New Order regime, activists of KAMMI formed the *Partai Keadilan, PK* (Justice Party), since renamed as the *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, PKS* (Prosperity Justice Party). PKS maintains strong links with the broader transnational Salafi network, often attending international Islamist gatherings organized by the *Ikhwan* and *Jamaat*.

While conservative forces aligned themselves behind the Salafi movement and the various social and, eventually, political organizations, alternative patterns of thinking were also emerging elsewhere within the Indonesian Muslim community during the

late 1970s and early 1980s—particularly among younger intellectuals who sought to recalibrate Islam’s role in Indonesian society. This phenomenon, initially called the “reform movement” (*gerakan pembaruan*) and more recently “cultural Islam” (*Islam kultural*), consciously rejected the political agenda and aspirations of Islamist parties since independence and sought to redefine Islam’s relations with—and role in—the state from a purely apolitical, cultural perspective. Among the chief proponents of this movement were former president Abdurrahman Wahid and the well-known intellectual, the late Nurcholish Madjid.³⁵

Cultural Islam was particularly critical of political Islam (or Islamist activism) on several counts. Islamist parties had experienced very limited success in achieving their goals. Moreover, they had not been able to unite Muslims politically, nor managed to garner a majority of votes at general elections, nor succeeded in getting Islamic laws implemented in local and national government. What was required instead, proponents of cultural Islam believed, were alternative ways of achieving the aspirations of Indonesian Muslims to live pious lives—aspirations that had in fact been hampered by the preoccupation of Islamist leaders with politics.

The movement’s position on the formal role of the *sharia* in the state was highly controversial. Many younger intellectuals repudiated the concept of an Islamic state, arguing that the Koran contains no prescription for the structure of the state. Instead, they supported the religiously neutral *Pancasila* as the basis of the Indonesian state, asserting that the pluralism and religious equality inherent in the concept were consistent with Islamic principles. In addition, the group disputed the notion that Muslims should only support Islamic parties. Pluralist, “deconfessionalized” parties were not less virtuous for Muslims to belong to than exclusively Islamic ones, they argued.³⁶

The democratization of Indonesia was a critical factor in expanding the space for Islamic discourse and activism. Along with the proliferation of faith-based political parties, Indonesia also witnessed the emergence of many Islamic civil society groups, including the radical organizations introduced above. This included Muslim groups whose interpretation of Islamic scripture were deemed by the mainstream as unorthodox. One such movement was the Liberal Islam Network or Jaringan Islam Liberal, a movement that shunned received wisdom and encouraged critical thinking among Muslims. Formed in early 2001, this liberal Islamic movement has come under heavy criticism from fundamentalist quarters in the Indonesian Muslim intellectual community, including the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia. At the same time, the movement has also had an uneasy relationship with more moderate organizations such as the Nahdlatul Ulama.³⁷

An increasing concern in this climate of openness has been the instances of hostility and even violence perpetrated by more extremist Muslim groups against fringe organizations, indicative of a degree of intolerance in certain segments of Indonesia’s

Muslim society. Such is the case against the Ahmadiyah, an Islamic sect of South Asian origin deemed deviant by the two largest Muslim organizations in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. While fatwas against the Ahmadiyah have not resulted in violence against them among NU and Muhammadiyah members, the Ahmadiyah have nevertheless been victimized by the FPI. On January 28, 2011, members of FPI attacked an Ahmadiyah mosque in Makassar and forced the congregation to evacuate the premises before destroying their property.³⁸ Since then, attacks on Ahmadiyah places of worship and members by Muslim vigilante groups such as FPI have become all too frequent. The Indonesian government of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono appears either unable or unwilling to stem this vigilantism.

ISLAMISM AND THE STATE

While Indonesia is often considered a secular state, it is officially a state based on religion as premised in the first principle of the *Pancasila*, which enshrines “belief in Almighty God” (*KeTuhanan yang Maha Esa*). This was, in effect, a compromise between those wanting a secular state and those favoring an Islamic state. While there is no official state religion or formal acknowledgment of the authority of religious law in the constitution, the use of the term “Almighty God” implies monotheism, a concession to Muslim sentiment.

Indonesia’s political and constitutional history reveals that among the most divisive debates surrounds the formal role of Islam in the state and the question of the position of *sharia* in the constitution. Much of this debate focused on the Jakarta Charter, an agreement struck between Muslim and nationalist leaders on June 22, 1945 as part of the preparations for Indonesia’s independence. The most controversial part of the charter was a seven-word clause: “with the obligation for adherents of Islam to practice Islamic law” (*dengan kewajiban menjalankan syari’at Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya*). Although often portrayed as an attempt to make Indonesia an Islamic state, the inclusion of these seven words in the constitution would not, by itself, have had this effect. Rather, it was left to Islamic parties to demonstrate whether they could garner sufficient support in parliament to advance *sharia*-based legislation.³⁹ Islamic leaders did, however, succeed in having a stipulation inserted into the draft constitution that mandated the president be a Muslim.

On August 18, 1945, the day after the proclamation of independence, pro-charter Muslim leaders came under strong pressure from ‘secular’ Muslims, nationalists, and religious minorities to drop the seven words regarding the practice of Islamic law, despite the initial agreement of the committee responsible for finalising the constitution. Those opposing the clause were concerned that the embryonic Indonesian nation would collapse as pressure from Islamists caused the non-Muslim dominated outer islands to secede. Eventually, Muslim leaders were persuaded, in the interest of national unity, to exclude the charter. In addition to that, the clause requiring the president of the country to be Muslim was also dropped.

It was not until the 1970s that Islam experienced a resurgence in Indonesia. That period witnessed a surge in mosque attendance, enrollment in religious classes, adoption of Islamic dress (including the veil, worn by women), and expansion of Muslim education and social organizations. Although there were a small number of extremists at its fringe, the Islamic resurgence was never politically radical. Its primary social impulse was pietistic and ethical, aimed at heightening the role of Islam in social life.⁴⁰

The resurgence put greater pressure on the government to make concessions in favor of Indonesia's Muslims. In response, Suharto began to extend greater aid to the country's Muslim community in the late 1980s, increasing state subsidies for mosque building, Islamic education, Muslim television programming, the celebration of religious holidays, and preferential treatment for Muslim entrepreneurs in state contracts. He lifted an earlier ban on the veil in state schools, and imposed tighter restrictions on the activities of Christian missionaries. The president even went as far as to sponsor an Islamic faction in the armed forces, previously a bastion of conservative secular nationalism, with the assistance of his son-in-law, Prabowo Subianto.⁴¹

The slew of legislative and institutional concessions to the Muslim community was a strong indicator of the New Order's new stance towards Islam beginning from the late 1980s. Prominent among them were "the expansion of the authority of religious courts in 1989, the establishment of the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals association (ICMI) in 1990, lifting of the ban on female state school students wearing head-dresses (*jilbab*) in 1991, the upgrading of government involvement in alms collection and distribution, the founding of an Islamic bank (BMI) in 1992, and the abolition of the state lottery (SDSB) in 1993."⁴²

While major Muslim organizations agreed to cooperate with the New Order regime in facilitating and implementing its social and educational initiatives, they also subtly pressed for democratic reforms. This challenge from moderate Muslims led Suharto to change his political strategy in the mid-1990s, and to reach out to hard-line groups like Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII - Indonesian Council for Islamic Predication) and Komite Indonesia Untuk Solidaritas dengan Dunia Islam (KISDI - the Indonesian Committee for Solidarity of the Islamic World), which had developed reputations for being strongly anti-Western and anti-Christian. Suharto's efforts had a backlash effect, however. "With the onset of the Asian economic crisis in late 1997, support for the Suharto regime waned, and the President was forced from power in May 1998."⁴³

Nevertheless, the end of Suharto's rule did not spell the end of efforts to exploit religious tensions for political advantage in Indonesian politics. After May 1998, and in the wake of the upheaval of post-Suharto democratisation in Indonesia, more than a few politicians and leaders appealed to ethno-religious sentiments in order to enhance their credentials. The tactic had an especially bloody consequence in Ma-

luku, Central Kalimantan, and Sulawesi, upsetting a delicate demographic balance between Christians and Muslims with the rise of sectarian paramilitaries and bloody campaigns of ethnic cleansing.

Despite the lack of official support for the implementation of *sharia*, the issue appears to be gaining some traction at the regional level. One such case would be the north Sumatran province of Aceh, where *sharia* was promulgated under special autonomy laws in early 2002, though there is intense debate within the local Islamic community over the scope of the laws and the details of their implementation. The *sharia* issue has also attracted strong support from Muslim groups in South Sulawesi, West Sumatra and Banten, but is still well short of receiving majority support. In a number of districts in West Java, *sharia* has been implemented in a de facto fashion by local Muslim groups, often in concert with district government officials and *ulama*.⁴⁴

The prevalence of cases of *sharia*-inspired laws and by-laws being adopted in Aceh and several other local districts, especially conservative variants associated with *hudud* law, is rooted in the agreement between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement, where the introduction of *sharia* law was one of the concessions made to end the decades-old separatist insurgency (even though it was not clear that this was demanded by the Free Aceh Movement).⁴⁵ After implementation, there has been very little evidence that the Indonesian government harbors any intention to slow down, let alone overturn, this gradual process of *shariaization*, despite the fact that, as critics have pointed out, it runs contrary to of Indonesia's secularist constitution.

ENDNOTES

[1] Greg Fealy, "Divided Majority: Limits of Indonesian Political Islam," in Shahram Akbarzadeh and Abdullah Saeed, eds., *Islam and Political Legitimacy* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 151.

[2] Anies Rasyid Baswedan, "Political Islam in Indonesia: Present and Future Trajectory," *Asian Survey* 44, no. 5 (October 2004), 675.

[3] Bambang Sulistiyo and Alfian, "Voices of Democracy from Within the Tarbiyah," in Asrori S. Karni, ed., *A Celebration of Democracy* (Jakarta: PT. Era Media Informasi, 2006), 200.

[4] R. William Liddle and Saiful Mujani, "Indonesia in 2004: The Rise of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono," *Asian Survey* 45, no. 1 (January 2005), 123.

[5] Baswedan, "Political Islam in Indonesia," 677.

[6] Liddle and Mujani, "Indonesia in 2004," 121.

[7] The NU was a non-political Islamic organization that was founded in 1926, became a political party in 1952, and participated in the 1955 and 1971 elections. In 1973, the NU was merged into the PPP. In 1984, the NU declared itself *kembali ke khittab* (return to origin) as a non-political religious movement, and officially retreated from partisan politics. The NU remained neutral until it made a return to partisan politics by establishing the PKB (National Awakening Party) in July 1998.

[8] Stephen Sherlock, *The 2004 Indonesian Elections: How the System Works and What the Parties Stand For* (Canberra: Centre for Democratic Institutions, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 2004), 17.

[9] *Ibid.*, 32.

[10] See Noorhaidi, "Islam, Militancy and the Quest for Identity in Post New Order Indonesia," *Letters Proefschriften*, 2005, <http://igitur-archive.library.uu.nl/dissertations/2006-0705-200332/c1.pdf>, 3.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] Sherlock, *The 2004 Indonesian Elections*, 17.

[13] See, Noorhaidi, "Islam, Militancy and the Quest for Identity in Post New Order Indonesia," 6.

[14] For more details, see Edward Aspinall, "Indonesia," in Bogdan Szajkowski, ed., *Revolutionary and Dissident Movements of the World* (London: John Harper Publishing, 2004).

[15] Noorhaidi, "Islam, Militancy and the Quest for Identity in Post New Order Indonesia," 4.

[16] M. Rizieq Syihab, *Kyai Kampung: Ujung Tombak Perjuangan Umat Islam* (Ciputat: Sekretariat FPI, 1999).

[17] Police Question Rights Body Over FPI Attack," *Jakarta Post*, May 26, 2010.

[18] "Indonesia's Muslim militants," BBC (London), August 8, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/2333085.stm>.

[19] Salafis are those who attempt to reform Islam by taking it away from its traditional association with syncretism and re-orienting it towards scripturalism.

[20] Syihab, *Kyai Kampung: Ujung Tombak Perjuangan Umat Islam*.

[21] See Kirsten E. Schulze, "Laskar Jihad and the Conflict in Ambon," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 9, iss.1 (Spring 2002).

[22] <http://igitur-archive.library.uu.nl/dissertations/2006-0705-200332/c1.pdf>, 6.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] See Martin van Bruinessen, "Genealogies of Islamic Radicalism in Post-Suharto Indonesia," in Joseph Chinyong Liow and Nadirsyah Hosen (eds.), *Islam in Southeast Asia* vol. IV (London: Routledge, 2009), 52-53. In the 1950s, the Darul Islam (DI, the Islamic State) movement, spread to South Sulawesi and Aceh under the leadership of Kahar Muzakkar and Daud Beureu'eh respectively. At its core, DI is a political movement which was dissatisfied with the policies of the central government under President Sukarno. However, they used Islam to legitimize their existence and at the same time to denounce the nation-state of Indonesia.

[25] Noorhaidi, "Islam, Militancy and the Quest for Identity in Post New Order Indonesia," 7.

[26] Saiful Umam, "Radical Muslims in Indonesia: The Case of Ja'Far Umar Thalib and The Laskar Jihad," *Explorations in Southeast Asian Studies* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2006), 11.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibidem.

[29] Greg Fealy, Virginia Hooker and Sally White, "Indonesia," in Greg Fealy and Virginia Hooker, eds., *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia: A Contemporary Sourcebook* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), 49.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Andreas Ufen, "Mobilising Political Islam: Indonesia and Malaysia Compared," *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 47, no. 3 (2009), 316. For further reading on the *dakwah* movements and *tarbiyah* movements, see Yudi Latif, "The Rupture of Young Muslim Intelligentsia in the Modernization of Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 12, no. 3 (2005), 373-420, and Salman, "The Tarbiyah Movement: Why People Join This Indonesian Contemporary Islamic Movement," *Studia Islamika* 13, no. 2 (2006), 171-240.

[32] Latif, "The Rupture of Young Muslim Intelligentsia in the Modernization of Indonesia," 391. Some scholars refer to the renewal movement (*gerakan pembaharuan*) as reform movement (*gerakan pembaruan*).

[33] Muhammad Natsir was the former Prime Minister and Information Minister of Indonesia. He was leader of the Masyumi party, which was banned under the New Order regime in 1965. For more on Natsir, see Luth Thohir, *M. Natsir: Dakwah dan Pemikirannya*, (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 1999).

[34] Any Muhammad Furkon, *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera: Ideologi dan Praksis Kaum Muda Muslim Indonesia Kontemporer* (Jakarta: Penerbit Terajau, 2004), 124.

[35] Greg Fealy, "Divided Majority: Limits of Indonesian Political Islam," in Shahram Akbarzadeh and Abdullah Saeed, eds., *Islam and Political Legitimacy* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 161.

[36] Ibid., 162.

[37] Anita Rachman, "Fundamental differences to the fore at NU meeting," *Jakarta Globe*, March 25, 2010.

- [38] Hadianto Wirajuda, "Ahmadiyah attack a threat to Indonesia's democracy," *Jakarta Post*, February 10, 2011.
- [39] Fealy, "Divided Majority: Limits of Indonesian Political Islam," 155.
- [40] Robert W. Hefner, "State, Society, and Secularity in Contemporary Indonesia," in Theodore Friend, ed., *Religion and Religiosity in the Philippines and Indonesia* (Washington: Southeast Asia Studies Program, 2006), 42.
- [41] Ibid.
- [42] Fealy, "Divided Majority: Limits of Indonesian Political Islam," 163.
- [43] Ibid.
- [44] Ibidem, 164-165.
- [45] Dewi Kurniati, "Shariah in Aceh: Eroding Indonesia's secular freedoms," *Jakarta Globe*, August 18, 2010.