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*Bahtiar Effendy*

## Islamic Militant Movements in Indonesia: A Preliminary Accounts for its Socio-Religious and Political Aspects<sup>1</sup>

**Abstrak:** *Sejumlah pertanyaan yang berkaitan dengan munculnya gerakan Islam radikal di Indonesia diajukan dalam artikel ini. Misalnya, faktor apa saja yang menyebabkan munculnya gerakan-gerakan dan atau sikap militan di sebagian kalangan Muslim Indonesia? Apakah gerakan Islam radikal itu memiliki prospek berkembang menjadi bagian tak terpisahkan dari model Islam Indonesia di masa depan? Lalu, apakah sikap militan sebagian kalangan Muslim di Indonesia, yang belakangan mewarnai fenomena gerakan Islam kontemporer, tersebut memang merupakan karakter umum dari Islam Indonesia itu sendiri?*

*Untuk menjelaskan dan menjawab pertanyaan-pertanyaan di atas, artikel ini mencoba menganalisis fenomena munculnya kembali sejumlah organisasi kemasyarakatan dan partai politik pasca rezim Soeharto.*

*Jatuhnya rezim Soeharto pada 1998 memang telah menimbulkan sejumlah konsekuensi sosial-politik yang sangat dahsyat, antara lain dengan munculnya partai-partai politik yang berbasiskan agama, etnik, dan berbagai sentimen lainnya. Dari 181 partai politik yang dibentuk dalam kurun waktu kurang dari 1 tahun, yakni antara Mei 1998 sampai April 1999, misalnya, 42 partai di antaranya dapat dikategorikan sebagai partai Islam, kendati tidak semuanya menyatakan secara eksplisit Islam sebagai ideologi partainya. Dalam perkembangan berikutnya, dari 42 partai tersebut, hanya 20 partai saja yang dinyatakan sah sebagai peserta Pemilu pada 1999.*

*Hal yang penting digarisbawahi di sini adalah bahwa fenomena munculnya sejumlah partai politik Islam pasca rezim Soeharto tersebut dianggap oleh sebagian kalangan sebagai awal kebangkitan kembali sikap milit-*

an dari sebagian kalangan Muslim Indonesia. Dan ini sedikit banyak dianggap sebagai potensi yang dapat mengancam konsolidasi demokrasi di Indonesia, karena, berdasarkan pengalaman sejarah, Islam politik pernah dianggap sebagai hambatan bagi terbentuknya negara Indonesia modern dengan ideologi Pancasila. Kekhawatiran-kekhawatiran semacam ini semakin menguat lagi ketika pasca rezim Soeharto tersebut bermunculan pula sejumlah organisasi kemasyarakatan semacam Front Pembela Islam (FPI), Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah (FKAWJ), Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), Ikhwanul Muslimin, Hizbut Tahrir, dan lain-lain.

Akan tetapi, seperti ditegaskan dalam pembahasan artikel ini, anggapan-anggapan semacam itu sesungguhnya terlalu berlebihan, karena pasca lengsernya Soeharto, tidak hanya kalangan Islam yang membentuk partai dan organisasi kemasyarakatan, melainkan juga kelompok-kelompok lain yang memandang bahwa pada era reformasi, wadah partai dan organisasi memang dianggap efektif untuk menyuarakan aspirasi mereka. Selain itu, semua elemen masyarakat tampaknya menganggap bahwa iklim politik pasca Soeharto memang sangat kondusif dan strategis untuk ikut terlibat dalam proses politik dan konsolidasi demokrasi, sehingga dengan demikian mereka berlomba-lomba membentuk wadah untuk menyalurkan aspirasi dan kepentingannya.

Apalagi pengalaman sejarah menunjukkan bahwa Islam politik tidak pernah menjadi sebuah kekuatan utama meski secara riil masyarakat Muslim selalu menjadi kelompok mayoritas di Indonesia. Hal ini terjadi karena, tampaknya menjadi Muslim tidak serta merta menyebabkan seseorang memberikan dukungan terhadap partai, atau organisasi kemasyarakatan yang muncul dengan embel-embel Islam. Hasil Pemilu 1955 jelas memberikan gambaran bagaimana lebih dari separuh pemilih Muslim Indonesia memberikan suaranya kepada partai non-Islam, seperti PNI, PSI, atau bahkan PKI.

Artinya, kalau pun pasca lengsernya Soeharto banyak bermunculan partai dan organisasi kemasyarakatan Islam, itu tidak berarti pertanda akan berubahnya kecenderungan Islam Indonesia ke arah yang sangat radikal, melainkan lebih sebagai bentuk euforia politik masyarakat Muslim yang selama ini merasa kebebasannya terkekang. Dengan kata lain, munculnya gerakan Islam politik pasca Soeharto ini lebih tepat dianggap sebagai bagian dari gerakan masyarakat menuju konsolidasi demokrasi.

Demikianlah, munculnya gerakan Islam radikal, oleh karenanya juga lebih tepat dilihat sebagai fenomena sesaat yang dapat muncul di mana saja ketika kran kebebasan dibuka.

Bahtiar Effendy

## Islamic Militant Movements in Indonesia: A Preliminary Accounts for its Socio-Religious and Political Aspects<sup>1</sup>

خلاصة: تقدم هذه المقالة عددا من الأسئلة الخاصة بنشأة الحركات الإسلامية المتطرفة بإندونيسيا، ومنها ما هي العوامل التي أدت إلى نشوء الحركات أو المواقف المتشددة لدى بعض المسلمين بإندونيسيا؟ وهل كان لتلك الحركات الإسلامية المتطرفة مستقبل بحيث تتطور إلى أن تكون جزءا لا ينفصل عن طبيعة الإسلام بإندونيسيا؟ ثم هل المواقف المتشددة لدى بعض المسلمين التي تشكل بها ظاهرة الحركات الإسلامية المعاصرة تمثل الطابع العام للإسلام نفسه بإندونيسيا؟

إنه من أجل الجواب على هذه الأسئلة تحاول هذه المقالة أن تتناول بالتحليل ظاهرة نشوء عدد من المنظمات الاجتماعية والأحزاب السياسية بعد سقوط نظام سوهارتو (Soeharto).

ولقد كان لسقوط نظام سوهارتو عام ١٩٨٨م نتائجها الخطيرة اجتماعيا وسياسيا وذلك بنشوء أحزاب سياسية قائمة بالخلفيات الدينية أو العرقية أو الأمور العاطفية الأخرى، فمن عدد ١٨١ حزبا أنشئت خلال عام واحد في الفترة ما بين شهر مايو ١٩٩٨م حتى أبريل ١٩٩٩م على سبيل المثال كان هناك عدد ٤٢ حزبا اعتبر حزبا إسلاميا وإن لم يؤكد كله بشكل صريح على أن إيديولوجيته السياسية هي الإسلام، وفي تطور لاحق كان عشرون حزبا فقط من عدد الإثني والأربعين يستوفي شروط الاشتراك في الانتخابات العامة لسنة ١٩٩٩م.

ومما هم ملاحظته هنا أن ظاهرة نشوء عدد من الأحزاب السياسية الإسلامية بعد سقوط نظام سوهارتو تمثل لدى البعض انبعاث المواقف المتشددة من جديد لدى بعض المسلمين، وهذا قد يشكل خطورة على تقوية

الديموقراطية في نظرهم لأنه نظرا للتاريخ فإن الإسلام السياسي يعتبر عائقا حال دون تكوين دولة إندونيسية حديثة قائمة على إيديولوجية البانتشاسيلا (Pancasila)، ويزداد مثل هذه المخاوف قوة عندما نشأت بعد سقوط نظام سوهارتو منظمات إسلامية كجبهة الدفاع عن الإسلام (Front Fembela Islam/FPI) والمنتدى العام لأهل السنة والجماعة (Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah/FKAW) ومجلس المجاهدين الإندونيسيين (Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia/MMI) وإخوان المسلمين (Ikhwanul Muslimin) وحزب التحرير (Hizbut Tahrir) وما إلى ذلك.

بيد أن هذه المخاوف كما ذهب اليه صاحب المقالة مبالغ فيها لأنه لم يكن المسلمون وحدهم الذين أنشأوا أحزابا أو منظمات بعد سقوط نظام سوهارتو وإنما أيضا الطوائف الأخرى الذين يرون أنه في عهد الحركة الإصلاحية كان الحزب السياسي وسيلة فعالة في تحقيق آمالهم، بالإضافة إلى أن جميع العناصر في المجتمع تزعم فيما يبدو أن الظروف السياسية بعد سقوط نظام سوهارتو كانت مهيأة واستراتيجية للاشتراك في العملية السياسية وتقوية الديمقراطية فكانوا يتسابقون في إنشاء قالب يتولسون به إلى تحقيق آمالهم ومصالحهم.

وفضلا عن ذلك لقد أثبت التاريخ أن الإسلام السياسي لم يكن في يوم من الأيام يشكل قوة سياسية كبيرة وإن كانت الحقيقة تقضى أن المسلمين أغلبية في إندونيسيا، ويرجع هذا فيما يبدو إلى أن المسلم ليس عليه أن يعطي بالضرورة تأييده للحزب الإسلامي أو المنظمات الاجتماعية التي تحمل اسم الإسلام، لقد كانت نتائج الانتخابات العامة لسنة ١٩٥٥م تبني بشكل صريح كيف أن أكثر من نصف عدد المسلمين بإندونيسيا يصوتون للأحزاب غير الإسلامية مثل الحزب الوطني الإندونيسي (PNI) والحزب الاشتراكي الإندونيسي (PSI) أو حتى الحزب الشيوعي الإندونيسي (PKI).

أي أنه على الرغم من نشوء أحزاب ومنظمات إسلامية بعد سقوط نظام سوهارتو فذلك لا يعني إطلاقا تحول التركة الإسلامية بإندونيسيا إلى التطرف وإنما كان مجرد نشوة للمجتمع الإسلامي الذي عانى الكثير من نظام سوهارتو، وبعبارة أخرى كانت ظاهرة نشوء الحركات الإسلامية السياسية بعد سقوط نظام سوهارتو أحق أن تعد جزءا في اتجاه المجتمع إلى تقوية الديمقراطية.

وهكذا فإن نشوء الحركات الإسلامية المتطرفة أحق أن ينظر إليه على أنه ظاهرة مؤقتة تبرز عند أي مجتمع لم يزل على عتبة التفتح نحو الحرية.



## Introduction

Is militancy a common characteristic of Indonesian Islam? Many have suggested that Indonesian Islam represents a "different" kind of Islam compared to that of the Middle East.<sup>2</sup> This, however, does not mean Indonesian Islam is a separate religious sect or denomination. Similar to other parts of the world, Indonesian Islam has its origins in the Islamic heartland where this religion grew and developed from the early seventh century CE. Hence, both Indonesian Islam and Middle Eastern Islam share the basic teachings of Prophet Muhammad and regard the Qur'ān and Sunnah as two most important sources of Islam. They celebrate the same ritual practices embodied in the five Pillars of Islam (*Rukn al-Islām*), where Muslims are obliged to (1) declare their faith, bearing witness and testifying that there is no god but God (Allah) and Muhammad is the Messenger of God; (2) perform five daily prayers; (3) give alms; (4) fast during Ramadhan; and (5) perform the pilgrimage at least once in their life times.<sup>3</sup> Other than that, Muslims also believe in the six Pillars of Faith (*Rukn al-imān*) where they (1) believe in one God "the creator, sustainer, ruler, and judge of the universe." They also (2) believe in the messengers of God; (3) angels, (4) holy books, (5) the day of judgment, and (6) divine destiny (*qadā' and qadr*).<sup>4</sup>

In spite of this, like Islam in many other converted regions (i.e. Northern Africa, Central Asia, South Asia, etc.), Indonesian Islam was a product of the history of proselytization. In this context, the coming of Islam was very much influenced and shaped by the very nature of its "stakeholders", the bearers, the audience, and the socio-cultural, economic and political context of the area. Primarily because of this, Islam, through the interpretations of its preachers (*dā'is*) had to adjust itself to the local circumstances without giving up its basic religious tenets. This was a major factor in making Indonesian Islam (or Muslims for that matter) somewhat different in its particular orientation from Islam in other places, including its point of origin.

One of the most conspicuous features with regard to the arrival of Islam in Indonesia was the fact that it was introduced by way of trade and commercial activity. This was more of a "geographical coincident" rather than a deliberately designed course of action in the sense that the area was an important trading route and stopping point, even before the birth of Islam. As early as the fifth century the "Malay Archipelago had already become an important stop-

over for traders en route to and from China." By the seventh century, because of the ability of the Sriwijaya ruler to provide security along the Straits of Malacca, "the importance of the region in respect of international trade and shipping was enhanced further." And "by the eleventh century, there was already evidence of the existence of Muslim settlements in the archipelago."<sup>5</sup> Since then, largely because of their entrepreneurial skills and willingness to mingle with the locals, socio-culturally and religiously, Muslim merchants dominated trading as well as commercial activities. This lasted well over several centuries until the institutionalization of the Dutch colonial rule.<sup>6</sup>

Historians and students of Indonesian Islam are generally in agreement that religious proselytization via trading activities contributed to the peaceful character of the country's acceptance of Islam. Penetration pacifique, as they often described the nature of the spread of Islam in the Nusantara world, was the general assessment of anyone examining the main characteristics of the spread of Islam in this area.<sup>7</sup> Of course, this does not mean that trading or commercial activities proper would automatically led to the peaceful acceptance of Islam by the local inhabitants. Instead, the circumstances which Muslim traders had crafted, settling down in the region, mingling with and marrying the locales, and preaching religion, were the main ingredients that paved the way for Indonesia's tranquil conversion to Islam.<sup>8</sup>

Though a certain degree of schism had been in existence, which led to bitter religio-political conflicts between coastal (*santri* or devout Muslim) and hinterland (*abangan* or less devout or syncretic Muslim) Islam,<sup>9</sup> in general the basic outlook of Islam in the country has been a docile, tolerant, and friendly one.

This benign stance has been shattered by the recent events involving a number of Indonesian Muslims perceived to have links with international and/regional radical Islamic organizations. Never in the history of the archipelago has Islam been connected with acts of violence and terror. Following the Bali bomb-blast in October 2002, which killed nearly 186 innocent people and injured more than 300 others, Indonesian Islam has been suspected of having a ferocious side. In the eyes of many Westerners, this consolidates their hostile perceptions of Islam especially after the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and more importantly the attack on the World Trade Center of September 11, 2001.<sup>10</sup> Much earlier Fawaz Gerges had stated,

Most Americans' cultural perception of Arabs/Muslims is that they are dangerous, untrustworthy, undemocratic, barbaric, and primitive. Since the early 1980s, events in the Muslim world have become traumatic news in the United States. A New York Times editor noted that "thanks to current international politics, one form of ethnic bigotry retains an aura of respectability in the United States: prejudice against Arabs [Muslims]."<sup>11</sup>

Or as reiterated by Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies,

From its seventh-century breakout from the Arabian peninsula until the late 17th century, Islam advanced at sword point, spreading from the Pyrenees to the Philippines. The tide was checked only at the gates of Vienna. From the decline of the Ottoman empire until the 1970s, Islam ebbed. Today, fueled by oil wealth, surplus population, immigration and the rise of fundamentalism, Islam is resurgent. Instead of wild horsemen, its banners are carded by guerrillas, terrorists, theocrats and tyrants.<sup>12</sup>

In Indonesia itself, such events have encouraged some Muslims and non-Muslims to see post-Soeharto-era Islam in the context of the past. The rebirth of Islamic parties and the development of new Islamic socio-religious organizations are also suspected of carrying baggage of militancy.

This essay attempts to look at the nature or character of Islamic militancy as reflected in the reemergence of a number of Islamic parties as well as socio-religious organizations of Islamic origins. Circumstances following the downfall of the Soeharto government and the aftermath it has created will be used to put the issue in perspective. Based on the actual strength of both Islamic parties and the newly established socio-religious organizations, this essay also examines the sustainability of such perceived Islamic militancy.

### **Reformation and the Reemergence of Political Islam**

The resignation of President Soeharto on May 21, 1998 bore tremendous consequences. One of the most significant one was the emergence of political parties based on religious, ethnic, and other basic sentiments, including the (re)birth of political parties based on Islam. Out of 181 political parties, which were founded in a period of slightly less than one year, between May 1998 to April 1999, 42 parties can be categorized as Islamic.<sup>13</sup>

Like many other non-Islamic parties, only few of them function as real political parties. This is in the sense that they have adequate resources and infrastructure which includes a mass following as

well as networking capacity at the national, regional, and local levels. Out of that 42 parties, only 20 were deemed eligible, to contest the 1999 general election. Only 10 Islamic parties gained one seat or more in the People's Representative Council (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, DPR). They were PPP (58 seats), PKB (51 seats), PAN (34 seats), PBB (13 seats), PK (7 seats), PNU (5 seats), PP (1 seat), PSII (1 seat), PPII Masyumi (1 seat), and PKU (1 seat). Together, these Islamic parties gained 37.5 percent of the votes (172 seats out of 462 seats).<sup>14</sup>

Based on the above, it is fair to say that out of 42 Islamic parties, actually there are only a few Islamic parties can really function as political institutions to articulate the interests of the Muslims. If 2% electoral threshold is taken as a starting point to determine the adequacy of a party, then only four Islamic parties (i.e. PPP, PKB, PAN, and PBB) can be regarded as real contenders to "nationalist" political parties such as Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDIP) and Golkar. Even the relatively popular PK, due to its small gain of seats, could not form a political fraction of its own. PK had to join PAN in the Fraksi Reformasi (Reformation Fraction) in order to survive in the parliament.

Out of the above four Islamic parties, PKB and PAN are sometimes reluctant to be named Islamic parties. These two parties do not officially adopt Islam as their ideological base. Moreover, some of their members, even though very small in number, profess different religious affiliations than Islam. Partly because of this, both PKB and PAN often describe themselves as open and non-sectarian parties. If these two parties were to be excluded from the category of Islamic parties, then based on the 1999 election results, the strength of Islamic parties in parliament will decrease significantly to only 87 (17.8%) seats.<sup>15</sup> The only reason that PKB and PAN are often identified as Islamic parties is that both have strong Islamic origins with respect to their constituents. While PKB draw its membership from the Nahdlatul Ulama, PAN has been generally backboned by Muhammadiyah members and activists.

This reality, however, has never been a serious consideration for the public and many students of Indonesian political Islam. The downfall of Indonesia's New Order administration and the country's transition from authoritarian rule to democracy have always been associated with the rise of political Islam signified primarily by the birth of those 42 Islamic political parties mentioned above. Many tend to see Islamic parties from the perspective of the past

where political Islam has always been perceived as inimical to the construct of Indonesia's modern nation state based on the secular ideology of Pancasila.<sup>16</sup>

But it was not only the emergence of 42 Islamic political parties that has caused apprehension and alarmism. Post Soeharto Indonesia is also marked by the formation of a number of Islamic socio-religious organizations. This include the foundation of Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defender Front, FPI), Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah (Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah Forum, FKAWJ), Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (Indonesian Mujahidin Council, MMI), Ikhwanul Muslimin (The Muslims Brotherhood), Hizbut Tahrir (Independence Party), and many more. While not functioning as political parties, these newly established organizations often articulate Islamic interests ranging from helping their Muslim counterparts in conflict areas such as Maluku, Ambon, and Poso, campaigning against gambling, pornography, prostitution and the consumption of alcohol, to calling for the implementation of Islamic *shari'ah* (law) by the state.<sup>17</sup>

Not every Muslim agrees with the ideas and practices of this political face of Islam. In fact, a sizeable bulk of Muslims, originated particularly from Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, share a different kind of view.

The emergence of Islamic parties in post-Soeharto Indonesia is not a novel phenomenon. It is the magnitude of the number of parties that has shocked the public and encouraged them to develop some kind of public apprehension and alarmism with regard to the establishment of Islamic parties. The fact that the reformation era witnessed the birth of 181 political parties suggests that it was not only the Islamic groups that saw parties as instruments for expressing their interests. Non-Islamic political activists also agree that the resignation of Soeharto provided leeway for them to participate in the political process.

In the context of Indonesia's modern political history, Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia (Indonesian Muslim Consultative Council, or Masyumi) was the first designated Islamic political party established in November 1945 to nurture and enhance the interests of the Muslims. Initially this party was joined only by several Islamic socio-religious organizations such as Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Perserikatan Umat Islam (Association of Islamic Community), and Persatuan Umat Islam (Union of Islamic Community). But in 1948, Persatuan Islam (Union of Islam, Persis), a purist

Muslim organization, associated itself with Masyumi. And in 1950 Al-Irsyad, a leading Islamic organization of Arab descent, followed suit. In latter years, two North Sumatran Islamic organizations Al-Jam'iyatul Washliyah and Al-Ittihadiyah registered to be part of Masyumi. For several years, at least from 1949 to 1953, Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh (All Aceh Ulama Association, PUSA) was also with Masyumi to channel their political aspirations.<sup>18</sup>

There was no doubt that Masyumi was going to attract a substantial number of followers. Primarily because of this, it was understandable that Sjahrir (leader of the Partai Sosialis Indonesia [Indonesian Socialist Party, PSI] and three times premier of the revolutionary cabinet) had predicted that "if free elections were to be held [around that year], the Masyumi—at the time combining modernists and orthodox—group would obtain 80 percent of the vote."<sup>19</sup>

This was not a baseless prediction. The electoral strength of Masyumi between 1946 and 1951 was real. In regional elections held in some parts of Java (1946) and in Yogyakarta (1951), for instance, Masyumi emerged victorious. Had the government decided to hold the national election in that year, the final outcome would had been a repetition of Java's regional elections.<sup>20</sup>

It was unfortunate, however, that Masyumi's destiny to become the sole party for the Muslim groups did not last long. In 1947, a number of Sarekat Islam (Islamic Association, SI) prominent figures chose to resign from the Masyumi leadership and form a political party of their own called Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Association Party, PSII). In 1952, Nahdlatul Ulama followed the step taken by leaders of Sarekat Islam. For religious, socio-cultural and political reasons, Nahdlatul Ulama no longer felt comfortable to be part of Masyumi. Because of that, this organization decided to withdraw its political association with Masyumi and transform itself into a political party.

Compared to those of Sarekat Islam, the reasons for Nahdlatul Ulama to leave Masyumi were rather dramatic indeed. Being an all-encompassing Islamic party, Masyumi was considered to be both modernist and pure in its religious orientation. Many of its members and leaders shared the religiosity of Muhammadiyah and Persatuan Islam, two major 'puritan' religious organizations. Though different in the overall character, whereas Muhammadiyah is profoundly concerned with socio-economic and educational matters, and Persatuan Islam emphasizes religious issues, these two organizations share a comparable religious school of thought based on

the Qur'ān and Sunnah (traditional sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) as the only sources of Islamic doctrine. Mainly because of this, these two organizations often stand at odds with the socio-cultural construct of the Indonesian society at large whose traditional belief system, originating in part from Hindu, Buddhist, and pagan influences, are not necessarily in accord with Islamic tenets.<sup>21</sup>

Nahdlatul Ulama, on the other hand, differs greatly from their modernist counterparts in their religious orientation. Even though Nahdlatul Ulama accepts the Qur'ān and Sunnah as the two main sources of Islam, they nonetheless reject the notion that Muslims should not affiliate themselves with the four existing schools of thought (*madhāhib*), those of Shāfi'ī, Hanbalī, Ḥanafī and Mālikī. In their view, it is true that Muslims should base their thoughts and actions on the Qur'ān and Sunnah, but it is virtually impossible for every Muslim to be able to understand the true meaning of those two resources in Islam without the help of the existing religious scholars. For them, not every Muslim is capable of understanding the Qur'ān and Sunnah. To disassociate Muslims from the four existing schools of thought could lead many of them into an inaccurate understanding of Islam. Such a religious stand point enables Nahdlatul Ulama to accommodate local culture. Unlike their modernist co-religionists, contextualizing or indigenizing Islam in the archipelago's cultural tradition has become one of Nahdlatul Ulama's concerns in developing Indonesian Islam.<sup>22</sup>

Due to this very nature, for the most part of its history, political Indonesian Islam has been unable to unite itself for long. With the break of Sarekat Islam and Nahdlatul Ulama from Masyumi, from the early 1950s to the early years of the New Order government (1974) political Islam comprised four Islamic parties, Masyumi (banned during Soekarno's guided democracy period, and replaced by Partai Muslimin Indonesia [Indonesian Muslim Party, Parmusi or PMI], Nahdlatul Ulama, PSII, and Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah (Islamic Education Union, Perti). When the time for the first general election finally arrived in 1955, the Islamic groups were no longer represented solely by Masyumi. Instead, they were represented by those four Islamic parties. Together they gained only 43.5 percent of the vote. In fact, it was Soekarno's Partai Nasionalis Indonesia (Indonesian Nationalist Party, PNI) which gained more votes (22.3 percent) than Masyumi (20.9 percent).<sup>23</sup>

Though remaining an important factor in Indonesian political development, from the beginning political Islam had never been a

dominant force. The fact the Muslims constituted 90 percent of the Indonesian population, the general elections of 1955 provided a strong sign that not every Muslim gave their vote to Islamic parties. Therefore, it is safe to say that religious adherence (embracing Islam) does not necessarily lead to support for certain religious political organizations (Islamic parties). The result of the 1955 general election was an indication that more than half of Indonesian Muslims gave their votes to non-Islamic parties such as PNI, PSI, or even Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party, PKI). Though more precise information has yet to be unfolded, the fact that many prominent Muslim figures like Soekarno and Hatta aspired for a "nationalist" rather than a "religious" politics was a strong indication that there were many Muslims who stood behind such a political choice.

This had substantial impact on the ability of Muslim political activists to realize their socio-economic and political objectives. The inability of Muslim politicians to make Islam as the basis of state during the Constituent Assembly debates in 1956-1959 was basically due to, the inadequate support the Islamic groups had.<sup>24</sup> This marked the first defeat of political Islam in a democratic Indonesia.

In a non-democratic Indonesia, the realization of Muslim interests were further hampered. During Soekarno's authoritarian government, disguised as the 'Guided Democracy' regime, Muslim political interests were generally curtailed. On Soekarno's order, Masyumi was disbanded due to its strong opposition to his regime.

There had been no clear proof of the political advantage enjoyed by Islamic groups during Soekarno's Guided Democracy other the fact that Nahdlatul Ulama was in the cabinet, controlled the Department of Religion, and involved in putting some of its cadres in the bureaucracy.<sup>26</sup> But, as already suggested, Nahdlatul Ulama had to pay a high price for such political involvement. Other than being ridiculed as opportunist, to engage in such political activities had forced many of its *kyais* to abandon their *pesantrains* (Islamic boarding schools) which in the end affected the quality of religious education in those institutions.

Given the circumstances described above, it is no exaggeration to say that in either democratic or authoritarian Indonesia political Islam was still unable to marshal the necessary support for their socio-economic and political objectives. In fact, for the first two decades of independent Indonesia, political Islam had been severely contained. Further, political Islam had frequently been a target of



distrust, suspected of being opposed to the state ideology Pancasila. And this politics of containment or domestication did not stop during Soeharto's New Order period.

It is important to note, however, that such political curtailment was not directed only to political Islam. Rather, it was applied to virtually all political forces with different degrees and intensity depending on the perceived threat of the government of each of the existing political forces, considered inimical to the New Order's policy of establishing order and stability to guarantee economic growth.<sup>29</sup>

Beginning with the rejection of the Muslims' demand to revive Masyumi (disbanded by Soekarno in the late 1950s), the New Order government always kept political Islam in check. In 1968, the New Order administration finally allowed the modernist Muslims to form a new political party, Partai Muslimin Indonesia (Indonesian Muslims Party, Parmusi). But, they prohibited former prominent Masyumi leaders from leading the party. The leadership of the new party was given instead to Muhammadiyah activists.<sup>31</sup> Such a leadership configuration did not last long.

The result of the 1971 general election was a disappointing one for political Islam. Four Islamic parties, Nahdlatul Ulama, Parmusi, PSII, and Perti, contested this election. Intimidation, coercion, and undemocratic electoral laws had put the government's Golkar party in the top position gaining 62.80 percent of the vote. Put together, under these non-competitive measures, four Islamic parties received only 27.11 percent of the vote. The next five non-competitive elections did not bring about significant changes for political Islam.

In 1977, after the political restructuring orchestrated by the government in January 1973, where four Islamic parties were forced to merge into Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (Development Unity Party, PPP), political Islam did slightly better. It gained 29.29 percent of the vote, though it was still well below the Golkar's "success" (62.11 percent). In 1982 general election, PPP maintained its voting "slot" in the high 20s (27.78 percent), while Golkar gained 64.34 percent of the vote. When the policy of *asas tunggal* (sole basis) for any existing political organizations was adopted in 1983 the Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (People's Consultative Assembly, MPR) general assembly required all political forces to abandon any ideological basis but Pancasila. PPP had to dismantle its Islamic ideology and replaced the party symbol of Ka'bah with the star.

This put PPP in a very difficult position, and cost this party dearly in the 1987 election where it received only 15.97 percent, while Golkar obtained 73.16 percent of the vote. This substantial loss was also due to Nahdlatul Ulama's withdrawal from PPP in 1984 to retain its original function as a socio-religious organization.

In the New Order's last two general elections, the strength of the Islamic party did not significantly change, with 17 percent in 1992 and 22.43 percent in the 1997 general election.

More important than these electoral defeats was that political Islam was also subjugated in many other areas as well. Donald K. Emmerson, a notable Indonesianist of American origins, suggested that in addition to electoral losses, political Islam was also constitutionally, physically, bureaucratically, and symbolically debilitated.<sup>34</sup> Even though some observers were inclined to believe the New Order government would never dare to interfere with the religious or doctrinal aspects of Islam, the reality showed that there had been several attempts to formulate a number of policies perceived to be contradictory to Islamic teaching that had raised oppositions from many Muslims. These ranged from the introduction of the marriage bill in 1973 which did not in accord with Islamic tenets, the effort of certain groups to have the indigenous belief system (*aliran kepercayaan*) recognized as a religion, and the prohibition of female Muslims from wearing head covering (*jilbāb*).

It suffices to say that the political relationship between Islam and the government had never been cordial. For more than four decades, there has been mutual suspicion on both sides.<sup>36</sup> This discongenial relationship put political Islam on the outer, a majority but with a minority mentality.<sup>37</sup> Thus, when opportunity presented itself, especially with the resignation of President Soeharto from the office he had occupied for more than three decades, politically alert Muslims wanted to seize that particular moment to revive their political aspirations.

This, however, should not give the impression that all Muslim political activists were totally dormant during the New Order period. Many Muslim political activists were incorporated in the government, within the bureaucracy and the cabinet, the legislative institution and the ruling party of Golkar. But such political participation was only possible under the New Order's terms. This means that Muslim political activists had to adjust their political world view and allowed themselves to be dictated to by the state including the substance of their political objectives.<sup>38</sup>

Accordingly, when political relaxation and liberalization dominated since 1998, as with many other political groups that suffered intimidation and coercion during the New Order administration, Muslim groups tried to develop their own political objectives within the boundaries of Indonesia's transition to democracy. Under these circumstances, there is nothing peculiar with regard to the (re)emergence of political Islam. As political Islam had been severely hampered in the last fifty years of independent Indonesia, it was only natural that its activists decide to take their chances in Indonesia's new democratic environment. However, the tendency has been to perceive the Islamic political movement in the light of the past where political Islam was generally associated with the creation of a theocratic state or at least a *sharī'ah*-administered government. This political objective puts a great challenge on the construct of Indonesia's nation state and the heterogenous nature of the country's socio-religious and cultural landscape.

Though it is a mistake to see the rebirth of political Islam in the light of the past, nonetheless there is no other Muslim country in the world that has the number of Islamic political parties that exist in Indonesia. Being the largest Muslim country in the world, with 87 percent of 210 million citizens being Muslims, the presence of 42 Islamic parties in Indonesia represents something of great importance politically as well as religiously.

One final factor that also contributes to the growing perception that political Islam is on the march is historical. That is the history of Muslim political activists in the attempt to make Islam as the basis of state in 1945, in the Sanyo Kaigi (Advisers Council) and especially in the Dokuritsu Zyunbi Tyoosakai (known as Badan Penyelidik Usaha-Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (Investigatory Committee for the Efforts for the Preparation of Indonesian Independence, BPUPKI). It was in this agency that Muslim political activists such as Ki Bagus Hadikusumo (Muhammadiyah) and A. Wachid Hasjim (Nahdlatul Ulama) appealed to their fellow founding fathers that Islam be adopted as the basis of the state. A compromise was finally reached in the form of the Jakarta Charter. This charter endorsed Pancasila as the basis of the state, only that the clause of "with the obligation to carry out Islamic *sharī'ah* for its adherents" was added to the principle of "belief in one God."<sup>39</sup> The compromise was nullified on August 18, 1945, one day after the proclamation of the Indonesian independence on August 17, 1945, on the grounds that it would crack the unitary nature of the state.

The Muslim effort to make Islam the basis of state was then revived in the Constituent Assembly debates (1956-1959). Muslim politicians failed to realize that objective as they were unable to marshal the necessary support for the materialization of that particular goal. Others chose to employ non-parliamentarian means by declaring the existence of Darul Islam (DI) movement along with its Tentara Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Army (TII) led by Kartosuwirjo of West Java and joined by Daud Beureueh in Aceh, and Kahar Muzakkar in Makassar.<sup>40</sup>

Both parliamentarian and non-parliamentarian means failed. Not only had these efforts brought about a great deal of apprehension for Indonesians in general, but they also left the issue unsettled concerning, whether or not political Islam had actually been able to come to terms with an Indonesian nation state based on Pancasila. The transformation of Islamic political ideas and practices that occurred during the New Order period, where many Muslims endorsed the substantive objectives of political Islam and rejected the legalistic, formalistic, or symbolic nature of Islamic struggle, was put in doubt given the fact that shortly after the departure of Soeharto many Muslims once again reintroduced the notion of Islamic formalism and symbolism in Indonesian politics.

The fact that the rebirth of Islamic symbolism in politics has sparked public apprehension, alarmism, or fear requires all Muslim political activists to provide genuine explanations that this politics of symbolism differs from that of the 1940s and 1950s. Until then, any kinds of political Islam will be regarded, perhaps even in an imaginary form, as equivalent to the reemergence of the idea of Islam as the basis of state.

### **Ideas and Practices of Political Islam**

This paper has dealt with the questions of the reemergence of political Islam in post Soeharto Indonesia, giving some theoretical as well as empirical basis that the revival of political Islam could not be viewed simply in the light of the past. The politics of liberalization and relaxation that began to take place following the resignation of President Soeharto in May 1998 should also be taken into account as it was this particular event that generated public political euphoria. Thus, the emergence of political Islam was only part of the country's democratic movement.

Also important in this argument is that public apprehension and alarmism is sometime exaggerated. The results of 1999 general election prove that not every Islamic party has comparable strength and potential. In fact, only Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (Unity Development Party, PPP), Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (National Awakening Party, PKB), Partai Amanat Nasional (National Mandate Party, PAN), and Partai Bulan Bintang (Crescent Star Party, PBB) have meaningful forces in the parliament. Even the popular Partai Keadilan (Justice Party, PK), which always draws public sympathy in their campaigns, could not marshal adequate support to pass 2 % electoral threshold.

It is important to note, however, that in some cases the amalgamation of Islamic forces can bring about decisive results. The success in bringing Abdurrahman Wahid to the presidency during the 1999 Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (People Consultative Assembly, MPR) assembly was a case in point. At that time Amien Rais of PAN built a political coalition among Islamic forces which was called *Poros Tengah* (Middle Axis). With the support of Partai Golkar, which has a substantial number of Muslim politicians, Islamic forces were able to stop Megawati Soekarnoputri of PDIP from taking the presidency.

The regime of Abdurrahman Wahid indicated that such an alliance among Muslim politicians could not last long. In fact, it was Amien Rais himself who pioneered the removal of Abdurrahman Wahid from the palace after being the fourth president of the Republic for only twenty one months.

It is not easy to fully describe the place or role of Islam in the socio-economic and political lives of its adherents. Basically, Muslims see Islam as a divine instrument for understanding the world where Muslims base their socio-economic and political lives on Islamic teachings. In theory, no single Muslim would deviate or challenge the tenets laid out in the Qur'an and Sunnah (traditions of Prophet Muhammad). Being a Muslim, it is his or her duty to always follow the straight path as put forward in those two primary resources in Islam. This means that the teachings of Islam should be the primary guidance of each Muslim; its presence should always give "the right moral attitude for human action."<sup>41</sup>

In reality, however, this simple principle is not easy to be put into practice. This is not because Muslims deliberately avoid the divine teachings of Islam, nor that Islamic tenets are difficult to practice. One major reason that makes the implementation of Islamic

teachings difficult lies in the fact they are polyinterpretable. Indeed, there is only one Islam, but its expressions are many. Unfortunately, many Muslims have the tendency to see his or her understanding of Islam as the truest, and those of others as wrong, though such attitude has no basis in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Muslims do not have any problem with regard to the fact the teachings of Islam are holistic in nature. In fact, Muslims are encouraged to embrace Islam in its totality (*kāffah*). But, as suggested, there is no one single interpretation of Islam. Muslims differ greatly in this case, especially in their understanding of certain doctrines which relate to non-ritual issues. So, while recognizing the Islamic *sharī'ah* as a total way of life is one thing, understanding it properly is quite the other. Here lies the complexity of the problem of implementing Islamic teachings especially those with direct socio-economic, cultural and political bearings.

Though generalization does not always describe fully the reality of the Muslim community, basically there are two schools of thought in this regard. First, those who interpret the teachings of Islam quite literally, and those who seek to understand the sources of Islam in order to discover the general principle of the doctrines. The former are more concerned with an endeavor to recover the true meaning of the doctrine as literally expressed in the text, while the latter are more concerned with the effort to uncover the substance of doctrines beyond their textual appearances. This is why sometimes the first are called textualists or scripturalists, while the second are described as substantialists.

Muslims do not have any problems with regard to accepting or implementing the *sharī'ah* (Islamic law or jurisprudence), but they do have differences in understanding or interpreting it. Accordingly, Muslims do not embrace a single, unified interpretation or implementation of Islam. Differences in socio-economic, cultural and political origins have become a primary source of the emergence of various schools of thought in Islam.

Given the nature of Islamic teachings, which is omnipresence, the ideas and practices of political Islam cannot escape the iron law of polyinterpretability. Muslims generally admit the important role of Islamic principles in politics, but they differ greatly on how the connection between Islam and politics should be constructed. Because of that, the ideas and practices of political Islam are rich and diverse. In general, this diversity can be categorized into two main intellectual currents. First, those who argue that Islam covers all

aspects of politics, and therefore that Islam should be the basis of any political activity. Included in this opinion is that an Islamic state should be adopted, that *shārī'ah* be treated as the law of the land (constitution), and that all state infrastructures (executive, legislative, and judicative branches, should Muslims follow the modern division of power) be administered in accordance with Islamic principles.

Second are those who are of the opinion that Islam does not "lay down any clear cut and dried pattern of state theory to be followed by the umma [Muslim community]." <sup>42</sup> Rather, the Qur'ān and Sunnah preach "ethical values and injunctions ... on human socio-political activities." These include the principles of "justice, equality, brotherhood, and freedom." <sup>43</sup> For them, as long as Muslims adhere to these principles in governing the state than there is no religious reason to question such an endeavor. In this line of argument, the development of a formal state based on Islamic teachings is not terribly important. What matters is that the state is substantially governed in accordance with Islamic values and injunctions.

Throughout the Muslim world the followers of Islam have been struggling to come to terms with the problem of how Islam and politics can be connected. These two bipolar schools of thoughts have tremendous impact on each and every Muslim as they attempt to adapt themselves toin this modern, globalized world. The inability to do so has sometimes brought about responses which do not necessarily conform to global norms. Militancy, extremism, or fundamentalism are often used to express such a discordance.

As the world's largest Muslim community, Indonesia does not escape the above bipolar views of Islam in its global relations. As suggested earlier, it began in 1945 when the nation's founding fathers deliberated what kind of constitution would be suitable to the citizen in general. Though categorization is often misleading, in that period there were two groups with different world views regarding the construct of the state as well as the substance of the constitution. The nationalist group was adamant about a non-theocratic state based on a national platform or ideology. Pancasila was considered the proper national ideology for the Indonesian state.

On the other hand, Muslim groups were determined to have the state based on Islam on the basis that, as majority of the Indonesians were Muslims, there was no other acceptable worldview than Islam. Compared to Pancasila some of whose principles derived from non-Indonesian influences, Islam had been socially, cultural-

ly and politically absorbed by most Indonesians since the thirteen century when Islamization took place. Not only religious groups demanded that Islam be adopted as the basis of state, but they also proposed that the President must be a Muslim and Friday, instead of Sunday, be recognized as public holiday.<sup>44</sup>

Realizing that his fellow Muslims were greatly disappointed, Soekarno made a promise that the state ideology Pancasila was only a temporary arrangement. The establishment of the Constituent Assembly, as the result of the 1955 election, was meant to accommodate this objective. Once again, both religious and nationalist groups debated the issue but failed to reach a compromise. In 1959 Soekarno issued a decree that Pancasila was to be the state ideology and the 1945 constitution to be recognized as the source of the law of the land.

It was rather unfortunate, however, that Muslims' endeavors to make Islam as the basis of state were not carried out through peaceful means. The proclamation of Darul Islam (DI) and Tentara Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Army, TII) in West Java by Kartosuwirjo supported by Daud Beureueh in Aceh and Kahar Muzakkar in South Sulawesi, provoked arm conflicts with the military.

Since then political Islam has been perceived as a threat to the unitary nature of the Indonesia's nation state. More distressingly, political Islam has always been associated with armed movements. Comparable to the Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party, PKI), following its failed coup in 1965, which was categorized as the left threat by the New Order government, political Islam often has been labeled as the 'right' threat to the state.

All of these ideas were basically influenced and shaped by a certain tenet of the Qur'ān. Though there are many Qur'ānic verses which can be used to legitimize the foundation of a theocratic state based on Islam, Muslims often refer the Qur'ān V : 44 "*wa man lam yahkum bi mā anzala Allāh fa ulā'ika hum al-kāfirūn*" (whose judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed: such are disbelievers). This verse is mentioned several times in the Qur'ān with different judgments. Other than being named as disbelievers, for those who take law other than what has been revealed by Allah (in this case the Qur'ān and Sunnah for Muslims, Torah for Jews, and Bible for Christians), they are also labeled as "wrong-doers" (Qur'ān V : 45); or "evil-livers" (Qur'ān V : 47).

Other than these judgmental viewpoints, especially for those who do not follow the revealed law, the Qur'ān also mentions many more



instances regarding the obligation to judge according to the what has been revealed by Allah. So, even though it is only a simple order, that Muslims have to follow the law established by Allah, it has become the most influencing theological factor that drives Muslims to embrace the idea of a theocratic state; at the least that Islamic law be adopted as part of the recognized legal system of any country where Muslims constitute a sizeable proportion of the population. In many countries where Muslims are a considerable minority (i.e. Singapore, the Philippines) Islamic legal institutions such as Islamic courts (*Mahkamah Syariah*) are also in existence.

In Indonesia, the crux of the matter lies in the need to have some kind of mechanism where Islamic law can be recognized as the law of the land. If this is impossible, than at least there should be a way where the state has some kind of authority to impose Islamic law upon its adherents (Muslims). If one cares to examine in great detail the discourse of political Islam from the 40s until 60s, he or she will find that the main thrust had been the quest for the implementation of Islamic *sharia* for Muslims where the state plays a pivotal role.

Realizing that the articulation of the ideas and practices of political Islam during the first two decades of independent Indonesia did not generate a positive response, Muslim thinkers and activists changed their strategy throughout the New Order regime. One of the most important things was that they no longer aspire for the creation of an Islamic state or Islam as the basis of state. Throughout the New Order administration Muslims worked hard to convince the state as well as the public at large that what really matters is the creation of a Muslim society where the adherents of Islam, with the help of the state or otherwise, implement Islamic principles. In this view, as long as the state adheres to such principles there is no theological reason for Muslims to question the legitimacy of the state.

Such a discourse, developed by a number of Muslim independent thinkers was very instrumental in transforming the new ideas and practices of political Islam. Not only that they promoted a viewpoint that there is no basis in the Qur'ān and the practice of Prophet Muhammad regarding the formation of an Islamic state (even the Qur'ān never mentioned the term state), they also rejected the notion that Islam should only be channeled through Islamic instruments. Furthermore, they also argued that it was more important that Muslims live up to the demands of modernity to ensure their

material as well spiritual well being. For Muslims are only to surrender their loyalty to Islam and not to any institutions or individuals, even though they are Muslims.<sup>46</sup>

Accordingly, during the New Order period there was a great deal of change with regard to the ideas and practices of political Islam. One important point was that Islamic ideas were no longer be opposed to the idea of a modern Indonesian state. They did not present political Islam as a threat to the country's nation state.

Largely because of these changes, the state began to accommodate the interests of Muslims. These include the incorporation of Muslim activists in the bureaucracy, parliament and other state agencies; the passing of religious court law; the foundation of Iktan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia (Association of the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals, ICMI), the compilation of Islamic law; the issuance of a joint-ministerial decision concerning the *zakat* (religious-alm) collection and distribution agency, Bazis; the reversal of policy on head covering (*jilbab*); the holding of Islamic festivals; and the annulment of the national lottery.

So, further Islamization did actually take place during the New Order period. Initially, Muslims were equally suspicious of Soeharto's regime. But during his last ten years in power, Muslims enjoyed substantial leverage to power as the New Order administration began to accommodate their interests.

In spite of the fact that many Muslims endorsed such a politic of accommodation, there were still some Muslims that the state deliberately pushed aside. Members of the Nahdlatul Ulama were generally in this category. Abdurrahman Wahid was the most rigorous symbol of opposition of such accommodation which according to him only brought about further sectarianism and exclusivism. More important than Abdurrahman Wahid's perception was the fact that this transformation of political Islam took place in a non-democratic atmosphere. Because of this, one cannot be really sure whether or not such a transformation was genuine or otherwise.

When the resignation of President Soeharto, the answer became more certain. In the name of democracy, many Muslims still endorsed a formal and symbolical political Islam. Those who endeavoured to realize such an objective through the parliament did not formulate the interests of political Islam in the light of the past. First, virtually all Islamic political parties, with the exception of PKB and PAN, adhered to a notion that having an Islamic symbol in politics was part of their democratic rights. Because of this, one way or the

other, they put Islam as the party basis. Second, when all political forces as well as the public at large felt that amending the constitution was necessary, there were many Muslims activists who endorse the idea of reviving the Jakarta Charter. Comparable to the primary task of the Constituent Assembly of the 1956-1959, where one of its duties was to formulate the constitution as well as the basis of the state, amending the constitution was also perceived as reformulating the constitution. For this, PPP, PBB, and an amalgam of minor Islamic parties in the parliament calling themselves Fraksi Persarikatan Daulatul Ummat (FPDU), worked hard to insert the clause "with the obligation to carry out Islamic *shari'ah* for its adherents." The majority of Muslim parliamentarians rejected the idea.

Interestingly, the Justice Party (Partai Keadilan, PK), whose political objectives resembled those of PPP, PBB, and FPDU did not officially support inserting the above clause in the constitution. Instead, its national leadership, argued that as far as implementing the *shari'ah* was concerned, the Justice Party was inclined to endorse the idea of the Madinah Charter, a political platform formulated by Prophet Mohammad nearly fourteenth centuries ago as a governing mechanism of his state.

More interesting than the attitude taken by the Justice Party on this issue was perhaps the general attitude of the rest of the Muslim politicians in the parliament. Not only Muslim politicians who affiliated themselves with Golkar and PDIP, those who joined PKB (Nahdlatul Ulama) and PAN (Muhammadiyah), also did not support the idea of the Jakarta Charter. In fact, the leadership of Muhammadiyah (represented by Ahmad Syafii Maarif) and Nahdlatul Ulama (represented by Hasyim Muzadi) issued statements regarding this issue basically voicing their rejection of the idea of the Jakarta Charter.

If two biggest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, did not support the idea of the Jakarta Charter, it is only safe to say that such an interest of political Islam is highly problematic, religiously as well as politically. Religiously, many Muslims are of the opinion that the formal attachment of Islam and the state is not necessary. In fact, for some Muslims, it might discourage individuals from being Muslims in the eyes of the state apparatus. Had the Jakarta Charter been endorsed in the constitution, it would have provided the state apparatus with significant authority to punish (or reward if they wish) Muslims from trespassing religious obligations. Included in this is the fact that Mus-

lims have to follow any religious decrees issued by the Department of Religion, such as determining the day when the fasting month of Ramadan begins and ends (religiously Muslims often have different opinion on this issue with Muhammadiyah usually one day ahead of the Nahdlatul Ulama). More astonishingly, had Indonesia been administered according to Islamic law, there are Muslims who may abandon their Islamic nature in the eyes of the state, but not in the eyes of Allah. Meaning that they could endorse other religions to be mentioned on their identification cards (Kartu Tanda Penduduk, KTP), but performing Islamic teachings individually and privately at homes.

Because of that, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama are inclined to promote a middle way for political Islam. This is somewhat comparable to the idea that Indonesia is neither a theocratic nor a secular state. The implementation of Islamic law must become the sole concern of every Muslim to implement. Should the state feel it necessary to endorse some Islamic doctrines (such as in the case of Islamic courts), this should be viewed in voluntary manner. This means that any Islamic law accommodated by the state must be treated as a voluntary constitutional or legal instrument, and not as a positive law of the land.

But some newly founded Islamic organizations such as Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah (FKAWJ), Front Pembela Islam (FPI), Ikhwanul Muslimin (IM), and Hizbut Tahrir (HT) are of a different opinion. They appeared to be the main supporters of PPP, PBB, and FDU in the quest for the insertion of the Jakarta Charter. Being non political organizations they take non-parliamentarian politics as their strategy to influence and shape the nature as well as the substance of the country's politics according to their interests. In doing so, they can be considered radical in defending their religio-political view point, the main factor which makes compromises difficult to achieve.

With the exception of FPI and FKAWJ, they do not resort to violence in advocating their ideas. Through discussions and speeches they work hard to influence the public, and this is not without significant result. With Aceh being given an autonomous status in 2000, with the right to formulate and implement their own law based on Islamic teachings (Islamic *sharī'ah*), form legal institutions such as *Mahkamah Syariah* (*sharī'ah* court) or any other Islamic courts, oblige its citizen to wear Islamic costume (*jilbāb* or head covering), and so forth, there were many districts (*kabupaten*) which unilaterally de-

clared the implementation of Islamic *sharī'ah*. What have been the main characteristics of this venture were that many districts such as Pamekasan (East Java), Maros, Sinjai and Gowa (South Sulawesi), Cianjur, Garut, and Indramayu (West Java) began to implement certain aspects of Islamic *sharī'ah*. They ranged from the wearing of Islamic dress, regulating the collection and distribution of *zakat* (religious alms), performing prayers and reciting the Qur'ān in public offices, and allocating more times for religious subjects to be taught as schools.<sup>47</sup>

Though certainly the endeavors of the above newly-established Islamic organizations have certain influence on the implementation of Islamic *sharī'ah* in some areas of the Republic of Indonesia, it is important to mention that district politics have also become a major factor. In this case, venturing to gain broader political support from their local constituents, they use Islam as a principal political resource. According to Aswar Hassan, secretary general of the Committee for the Implementation of Islamic *Sharī'ah* (Komite Pelaksana Syariat Islam, KPSI), the majority of political forces in Makassar, including PDI-P and Golkar, are willing to recommend to the central government as well as parliament that Islamic *sharī'ah* be implemented in this region. They do so with the hope that they can win the hearts and minds of the Makassarese. Strange enough, KPSI is still unable to formulate what constitute Islamic *sharī'ah*. This difficulty is understandable, because once they dwell on the more elaborate issues of Islamic *sharī'ah* they will not be able to maintain the unity of the Muslim community as they have different opinions regarding the so called Islamic *sharī'ah*.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to calling for the implementation of Islamic *sharī'ah*, FPI and FKAWJ were also involved in several practical actions. FPI members several times resorted to violence in their campaigns against gambling, pornography, prostitution and the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages. This not only made FPI be regarded as a radical organization, but the propagation of fear invited condemnation from many Muslims themselves. In their view being a socio-religious organization, FPI does not have the right to take such matters into their own hands. It is the right and duty of law enforcement agencies to implement the law regarding gambling, pornography, and any other socio-ethical issues. Unfortunately, since the fall of the New Order regime, the government has lagged in the area of law enforcement as well as in many other socio-economic and political realms.

In spite of its ardent call for the implementation of Islamic *sharī'ah*, FPI does not aspire to the creation of a theocratic state. Its leaders, especially Habib Rizieq, never discuss the issue of Islam as the basis of state. What is more important is that the Islamic law is being respected and all Muslims implement those *sharī'ah*.

FKAWJ's concentration, along with its militia wing (Lasykar Jihad, Holy War Brigade) has been to assist their fellow Muslims in many conflict areas, such as Ambon, Maluku, Poso and so forth. In fact, as many have argued, its formation was basically inspired by the plight of their fellow Muslims in Ambon in particular, which in their view were unable to defend themselves from being badly attacked by their fellow countrymen of other religious beliefs. Time and again, the bloody nature of the transition, from authoritarian rules to democratization, made the state unable to provide sufficient protection for its citizens. It was in these areas that FKAWJ also called for the implementation of *sharī'ah*. In this regard, one of its shocking actions was the sentence of stoning-to-death for one of its members who confessed to committing adultery.<sup>49</sup>

All in all, suffice it to say that there are many factors which determine the formulation of Islamic political ideas and practices in Indonesia. Religious doctrines are certainly one factor that needs to be taken into consideration in understanding the ideas and practices of political Islam. In this regard, special attention needs to be given to the diversity of Islamic understanding. Because of this, one cannot simply make an assertion that Islamic doctrines are automatically behind the agenda of Islamic militancy. There are devout Muslims that preach moderation and tolerance. And in the Indonesian case, Muhammadiyah and Nahdhatul Ulama, being two mainstream religious organizations in the country, have by themselves hampered the development of religious militancy, though it is important to note that Muslim radicals might share certain religious viewpoints of both the Nahdlatul Ulama as well as Muhammadiyah.

But, given the recent development, it is safe to say that radical ideas and practices of political Islam has still been unable to dig deeper ground and accumulate wider support. After the crackdown on those identified and charged as a responsible for the Bali bombing on 12 October 2002 and the incarceration of Abu Bakar Baasyir, leader of Pesantren Ngruki, the politics of militancy has somewhat subsided. Shortly after the crackdown, the FKAWJ dispersed its Lasykar Jihad (Holy War Brigade) and FPI suspended all of its ac-

tivities. Reasons for dispersion and suspension are yet to be revealed, but there has been some speculation that state determination to enforce the law, especially with regard to campaigns against terrorism, has some impact on these organizations.

Meanwhile, other than continuously calling for the implementation of Islamic *shari'ah*, no substantial agendas being put forward by other religious organizations.

### Islamic Militancy:

#### A Temporary or Permanent Phenomenon?

From what has been presented, it is not too difficult to see that political Islam was on the rise following the resignation of President Soeharto on 21 May 1998. This is signified not only by the birth of 42 Islamic parties, but also the call for the implementation of Islamic *shari'ah* both at the constitutional as well as at the practical levels, and the formation of a number of new religious organizations which operate beyond parliamentary boundaries. Apprehension and alarmism echoed all over the country as if the nation were to be converted into an Islamic state. This kind of feeling, though exaggerated, is legitimate in the sense that Islamic politics not only emerged as an indigenous phenomenon, but there was also ample evidence of international factors at work. The willingness of some Muslim activists, motivated by pure religious considerations and/or political interests, to resort to violence or the use of arms and explosives to achieve their objectives only confirmed the legitimacy of public fear.

At the same time, however, we are witnessing a different type of political Islam. While Muslim political activists in the PPP, PBB, and FPDU are campaigning for a more formalistic and symbolic political Islam, with the insertion of the Jakarta Charter as one of their primary interests, their Muslim colleagues in Golkar, PAN, PKB, and PDIP for that matter, are developing a different kind of political Islam which is more congenial and sociable to the interests of the Indonesians at large. Once again, we are being exposed to two different kind of Islam, between scripturalism and substantialism.

Primarily because of this, generalization has to be avoided. This means that not all political Islam creates or brings about militancy. Moreover, even if one party employs the politics of symbolism, one cannot jump to a conclusion that such a party will automatically resort to radical acts. Symbol is a matter of human necessity. In the

context of the Indonesian politics, it was only during Soeharto's era that the politics of symbolism was prohibited. In Soekarno's time, Islamic parties were allowed to use their religious symbols. It was only the use of Islam as the basis of state which was rejected vehemently by Soekarno and his political allies.

Thus, as long as Islam is being used only as a party symbol, then its impact on the structure of the country's politics is insignificant. Perhaps, it may not have any bearings at all, socially, culturally, as well as politically. To call for the insertion of the Jakarta Charter, however, would have tremendous impact as this would allow the state to impose Islamic law upon its adherents. Even if the state were able to perform its duties justly, there would always be societal complaint concerning Indonesian citizens being subject to two different set of laws and regulations. For example, if the *hudūd* law were to be applied, a convicted thief who happens to be a Muslim would lose his hands and secondly, unless pardoned would likely lose his life.

But the issue here is not to develop some kind of public apprehension or alarmism with regard to the resurgence of Islamic militancy. The main problem here is to identify what kind of militancy has emerged and how we deal with such an issue as a nation.

As suggested earlier, militancy does not appear in a vacuum. Instead, it is heavily imbued with the existing socio-economic, cultural, and political circumstances. In the context of Indonesia, militancy, not only of religious origins, emerged along with the process of democratic transition which was not only highly uncertain, but also accompanied by the withering away of the state. During the period of transition, the state was substantially weak. Whereas formerly, it was the state which dictated public affairs, it is now the public who shape and influence the state. Thus Muslim political activists feel that they have the right to voice and formulate their interests which have been denied for so long by the state. Including in this matter is the implementation of Islamic *sharī'ah*.

It is one thing to call for the implementation of *sharī'ah*. How to realize this is a different matter. In any given democratic system, all interest groups may articulate and aggregate their objectives. Both the mechanism and instruments being used to realize those objectives are determined by certain rules and regulations. In other words, all parties have to play by the same rules. It is the task of the state apparatus to enforce this rule. The inability of the state to function properly encourages transgressions.



It was this kind of circumstance which, for instance, inspired the birth of Lasykar Jihad which by all means tried to assist Muslims in Maluku. The inability of the state to function as a buffer zone as well as an instrument to control and mediate the conflicting parties in the conflict areas encouraged both Muslims and Christians to take sides according to their own religious affiliations.

The militancy of FPI in its campaign against gambling, prostitution, pornography, and the sale as well as the consumption of alcoholic beverages can also be explained by the same line of argument. Even though Indonesia is not an Islamic state, there are positive laws which prohibit gambling, prostitution, pornography, and the consumption of alcoholic beverages. In a time of multi-dimensional crises, the failure of the state to act accordingly gave ample opportunity to FPI members to take matters on their own hands, which is equally prohibited under the law. The fact that FPI was able to repeat its campaigns against gambling, prostitution, and the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages a number of times suggests that the state did not actually perform its duty adequately. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the absence of law enforcement has somehow encouraged militancy.

A period of transition is always full of uncertainty. This not only concerns material well being but also relates to the psychological, particularly in conflict areas. The limited capacity of the state to act accordingly only strengthens the perception that a state of normalcy is still far from being realized. This state is not exclusive to conflict areas. In both cities and rural areas, people question the integrity of the national elite in its endeavour to craft a better quality social, economic, and political climate. The transfer of authority from President BJ Habibie to KH Abdurrahman Wahid, and from President Abdurrahman Wahid to Megawati has not changed the situation substantially other than the fact that politics is liberalized and becoming more relaxed than it was during the Soeharto period.

Where this situation leads remains uncertain, especially in the eyes of young people. For many of them, the current situation does not give them any hope that their future will be better than that of their elders, socially as well as economically. Because of this, they look for the opportunity and means to alleviate the level of uncertainty. Their involvement with the new existing parties and organizations gave them some certainty. In these organizations, they found a channel for upward mobility. For the younger cohort, even to wear organizational uniforms provides them with some kind of pride as

human beings. As such, it is not surprising that FPI, MMI, Hizbut Tahrir, Ikhwanul Muslimin are largely supported by younger Muslims. The fact that these organizations embrace militancy, at least in their discourse, is not something to be worried about. More importantly, because of their religious sentiments, the call for the implementation of *sharī'ah* can be viewed with certainty as a *jihād fi sabīl al-Allāh* (struggle in the way of Allah). For a religious person, there is nothing more certain than to be able to participate in such a *jihād* (struggle) in which its utmost reward is *jannah* (heaven).

Second, it is also important to see Islamic militancy in the light of Islamic doctrine. As described before, Islamic teachings can be interpreted differently. While there are many verses which preach Muslims moderation, even in religious realms, there are some verses which if taken in their literal sense can provoke militancy. In other words, a non-conducive situation will likely to enhance militancy. Unless this situation is changed than Islamic militancy will always be a recurrent issue.

The transformation of Islamic political ideas and practices during the New Order regime was a case in point. To some extent, the New Order's political environment, especially during its final years, was relatively conducive for Muslims to channel their interests through the existing political system. The fact that there are still some Muslims who aspire for the insertion of the Jakarta Charter has to be seen in the light of the relative success of the Islamic transformation which occurred during the New Order period.

The final point that needs to be made before a conclusion can be drawn about whether or not Islamic militancy is a permanent or temporary phenomenon, is the issue of Islamic solidarity. At least theologically, Muslims are bound with a strong religious/Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwwah islāmiyyah*). There are many Qur'ānic verses as well as the sayings (*hadīth*) of the Prophet Mohammad which endorse the idea of Islamic solidarity.

From this perspective, as described in section 3 of this study, the Islamic world has for long been a target of injustice. The initial resentment of the Muslim world toward the west originates from the period of colonialism. Despite the fact that the independence of many Muslim countries was finally achieved in the mid forties and fifties, there are still many injustices exposed to the Muslim world.

There is no better example of this, other than the plight of the Palestinians. For many decades the international community has witnessed injustices placed upon the Palestinian with respect to their

relationship with Israel. In the view of many Muslims, Palestinians are always forced to comply with the United Nations resolutions however they fall short in ordering Israeli compliance. Since the United States of America has continuously served as the major back bone of Israel, many Muslims voice their hostility toward this country. Likewise, the strong determination of the US and its allies to attack Iraq, on the ground that this country did not comply with the UN resolutions, only encourages the development of a radical agenda.

In Indonesia, however, domestic issues outweigh the importance of, religious doctrine and international injustice. If Indonesia's national elite fail to lead the nation to a more better future, or if the period of transition goes for too long, than the likelihood is that militancy will flourish, and will be carried out by Muslim groups. From the perspective of Indonesian history, other the Communist party, Islam has served as the rallying point for national militancy. Even the traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama, as once stated by Mitsuo Nakamura, can some time endorse Islamic radicalism (militancy).<sup>50</sup>

Yet, there are many ways to alleviate militancy. First, Indonesia needs to speed up the process of transition, especially in the realms of economics, politics, and law enforcement. This country cannot afford to go back to the old situation where order and stability dictate public participation. At the same time, however, the nation cannot accept a disorderly and highly unstable political situation. In this regard, Indonesia needs to be a strong, capable, and stable state with a visionary leadership that can guide its citizens to socio-economic and political betterment by way of democratic participation and respect of human rights.

Only under such circumstances can Indonesia realize its development agenda. Education which is often identified as the most promising instrument for human resource development will play a crucial role in shaping public tolerance and moderation. The development of alternative ideas vis-a-vis Islamic militancy (i.e. tolerant Islam, liberal Islam) needs not to be juxtaposed in a contradictory manner. Instead, both parties should be encouraged to conduct a series of dialogues to enable them to come to terms with regard to their endeavors to put Islam in Indonesia's socio-cultural and political context. With such socio-economic and political crafting, it is hoped that militancy will lose its significance, if not totally be eradicated.

In spite of this, it is also important to note that even when the impact of transition has not been fully settled, Islamic militancy did not gain substantial support in the parliament as well as in the society at large. The failure of PPP, PBB, and FPDU to include the Jakarta Charter in the constitution is a case in point. Similarly, the strong arguments made by Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, the two largest and most influential Islamic organizations in the country, regarding the need to develop a tolerant Islam, indicated their resentment of any militancy. More interestingly, the dispersal of the Lasykar Jihad (Struggle Brigade) and the suspension of FPI's activities by the leadership of these two organizations only suggest that Islamic militancy is losing its momentum.

Based on this line of argument, it can be concluded that Islamic militancy is only a temporary phenomenon. It could become a recurrent issue if the windows of opportunity for its emergence stay open.

## Endnotes

1. The draft of this article was presented to International Conference on "Islamic Militant Movements in Southeast Asia," organized by Pusat Bahasa dan Budaya, UIN Jakarta and Indonesian Netherlands Cooperation in Islamic Studies (INIS), Jakarta, 22-24 July 2003.
2. See Eliraz 2004: 89-93.  
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11. Fawaz A. Gerges, *America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?* Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1999, pp. 6-7.
12. Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies, *Why Do People Hate America?*, Cambridge, UK: Icon Book, 2002.
13. They were Partai Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaah (PAS), Partai Aliansi Kebangkitan Muslim Sunni Indonesia (AKAMSI), Partai Abul Yatama (PAY), Partai Amanah Masyarakat Madani (PAMM), Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN), Partai Bhakti Muslim (PBM), Partai Bulan Bintang (PBB), Partai Cinta Damai (PCD), Partai Demokrasi Islam Republik Indonesia (PADRI), Partai Dinami-

- ka Umat (PDU), Partai Dua Syahadat (PDS), Partai Era Reformasi Tarbiyah Islamiyah (PERTI), Partai Indonesia Baru (PIB), Partai Islam Demokrat (PID), Partai Islam Indonesia (PII), Partai Islam Persatuan Indonesia (PIPI), Partai Gerakan Insan Muttaqin Indonesia (GIMI), Partai Ka'bah, Partai Keadilan (PK), Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB), Partai Kebangkitan Kaum Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah (PAKKAM), Partai Kebangkitan Muslim Indonesia (KAMI), Partai Kebangkitan Umat (PKU), Partai Kesatuan Umat Indonesia (PKUI), Partai Kesatuan Wahdatul Ummah (PKWU), Partai Politik Islam Masyumi (PPMI), Partai Majawangi, Partai Masyumi Baru (PMB), Partai Nahdatul Ummah (PNU), Partai Persatuan (PP), Partai Persatuan Islam Indonesia (PPII), Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP), Partai Persatuan Sabilillah (PPS), Partai Pengamal Thareqat Indonesia (PPTI), Partai Persatuan Tharikat Islam (PPTI), Partai Politik Thareqat Islam (PPTI), Partai Republik Islam (PRI), Partai Solidaritas Uni Indonesia (Partai SUNI) Partai Syarikat Islam Indonesia (PSII 1905), Partai Syarikat Islam Indonesia (PSII), Partai Umat Islam (PUI), and Partai Umat Muslimin Indonesia (PUMI). See, Arsekal Salim, *Partai Islam dan Relasi Agama-Negara*, Jakarta: Pusat Penelitian IAIN Jakarta, 1999.
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  15. The total number of DPR for the period of 1999-2004 is 500 members. This number includes 38 appointed members of parliament from the military and police forces. This will be the last period for the military and police forces to be represented in the DPR.
  16. Bahtiar Effendy, "Islam and the State: The Transformation of Islamic Political Ideas and Practices in Indonesia," Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1994.
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  20. Herbert Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962, pp. 274-175.
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  22. For Nahdlatul Ulama's religious standpoint, see Amak Fadhali, *NU dan Aqidahnya*, Semarang: Thoha Putera, 1969; Ali Maksun, *Kebenaran Argumen Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah*, Pekalongan: Udin Putera, 1983.

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50. Mitsuo Nakamura, "The Radical Traditionalism of the Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia: A Personal Account of the 26th National Congress, June 1979, Semarang," *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 12, September 1981.

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مجلة إندونيسية للدراسات الإسلامية

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