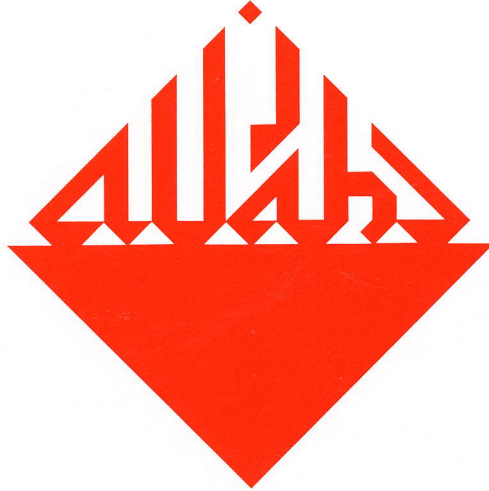


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Document

In Search of Principles of Good Governance:

Lessons Learned from a Series of Workshops on “Islamic-Western Dialogues on Governance Values”

Ismatu Ropi

GOOD GOVERNANCE is emerging as a key domestic and international political issue in the 21st century. Individual countries and the international community face new and on-going challenges in the areas of globalisation, military security, and economic stability. The negative and positive effects of trade liberalisation, the emergence of terrorism as the modern form of warfare and the interconnectedness of regional and global economies are all challenges that require international commitment to good governance.

In the Indonesia context, issues of good governance have also been an unflagging national agenda. Despite recognition of the importance of good governance, public discourse on this issue has not gained as much attention as it should within this newly democratic country. Following the downfall of the New Order government in 1998, Indonesia has faced the task of rebuilding a social and political system responsive to the changing expectations of the Indonesian people, embodied in the new animating spirit popularly known as Reformasi. This paradigm of reform refers to the wish to see democratic ideals permeate the lives of all Indonesians.

Governance reform in Indonesia is therefore more than a process of local institutional renewal. It is a long-term, multi-dimensional cooperative enterprise that depends upon fostering strategic partnerships, not only between international and national agencies, but also between qualified, professional reformers and networks of civil society stakeholders.

It is therefore common sense that good governance is important for this newly created democratic country. However, the problem of the values on which this reform should be based has unfortunately erupted in long and exhausting debates, mostly between religious leaders, politicians and academics.

Based on the reasons given above, a series of 6 workshops on "ISLAMIC-WESTERN DIALOGUES ON GOVERNANCE VALUES" was jointly conducted by Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat/Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM/CENCIS), Universitas Islam Negeri/ State Islamic University (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta Indonesia, The Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance (KCELJAG), Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia, and the Malaysian Institute for Ethical Governance.

Receiving generous financial support from the Open Society, this project was founded on the view that good governance reform should be based on a clear articulation of the values that reform intends to achieve. However, this project was neither an exercise in universalising existing 'Western' values nor a contest for the promotion of 'Islamic' values for a Western audience, as both these value systems face challenges in a globalising world. The project holds firm the argument that the answer to the universal problem of human society, towards which the issues of good governance are mainly inclined, will not come from one single culture, as it is assumed that no culture currently provides all the answers. What is needed is an international search for new and revised values. A search to which every culture can contribute and through which every culture can learn from the ideas and failures of others. The global search for answers must draw on different cultures' attempts to find answers to problems of the human condition. Each culture's process should begin by exploring its own culturally-specific values, ideals, concepts and stories as ways in which that culture has addressed their problems. These can be then be compared to the values, ideals, concepts and stories of other cultures, so that we can appreciate similarities and differences.

This series consisted of six workshops, with each workshop focusing on a core governance value and the different ways that congruent values are described and constructed in different traditions. Furthermore, each workshop also considered a current governance issue related to that core value in order to help ground the discussion of that value and to make a direct contribution to on-going debate about governance reform. The six values identified were: (1) the Rule of Law and Constitutional Change; (2) Citizenship and Nationalism; (3) Democracy and Civil Supremacy;

(4) Transparency, Accountability and Corruption; (5) Liberty and Civil Society and Civic Education; and (6) Rights and Religious Pluralism.

The inaugural workshop on "The Rule of Law and Constitutional Change" was held in Kuala Lumpur, 21-23 May 2003, and this intense three-day exchange was attended by scholars and practitioners from Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia. Well-known Indonesian scholars and public figures such as Professor Azyumardi Azra, Professor Nur Ahmad Fadhil Lubis, and Professor Adnan Buyung Nasution worked alongside other scholars and practitioners such as Professor Charles Sampford and Tunku Abdul Aziz, Director of Transparency International Malaysia.

The second workshop on "Citizenship and Nationalism" took place in Bukit Tinggi, West Sumatra, Indonesia on 20-22 July 2003. It was attended by 16 experts from various fields. Professor Riaz Hassan, Professor Barry Hindess, Professor Geoff Stokes, Associate Professor John Kane, Associate Professor Janna Thompson and Professor Wayne Hudson, as well as Professor Azyumardi Azra, Professor Nur Ahmad Fadhil Lubis, Dr Bahtiar Effendi and Director of KCELJAG, Professor Charles Sampford, were amongst the participants in this workshop. In his paper "Citizenship and Nationalism: A Classical and Medieval Islamic Perspective", Professor Azra raised an interesting point about the basic political concept of citizenship in classical and medieval Islam by examining the key terms related to the issue, such as *ummah*, *ahl al-dhimmah* (protected community), *millah* (religious community), *jamā'ah* (group), *qawm* (group or folk), *sha'b* (larger tribe), *khilāfah* (caliphate), *imāmah* (leadership) and *mulk* (kingship). Some of the key issues that emerged in this workshop concerned the significance of religion in conceptualising citizenship and nationalism in contemporary political societies. These key issues include the role played by religious communities and institutions in enhancing the rights of citizens, and the practices of citizenship as prescribed by states and religious authorities.

The third workshop on "Democracy and Civil Supremacy" was held at Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia on 12-15 September 2003. More than seven working papers were presented at this workshop, including those by Professor Azyumardi Azra, Professor Nur Ahmad Fadhil Lubis, Dr Bahtiar Effendi, Dr Fuad Jabali from Indonesia, Professor Graham Maddox from the University of New England, Dr Haig Patapan, and Dr Margaret Palmer from the KCELJAG. Professor Lubis' argument in his paper on "Islamic Democracy: The Modernist Arguments," is worth mentioning. According to him, the notions of democracy and pluralism are not only in harmony with Islamic ideals, but the seeds of those concepts are embodied and embedded in Islamic thought and experience. Palmer's

paper, "Civilian Control of the Military in Australia and other Western Democracies" dealt the idea of civilian control of the military having a normative, historical and legal basis, as experienced by the Australian Government and other Western governments.

The fourth workshop was held in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia from 23-26 October 2003 and dealt with "Transparency, Accountability and Corruption." Professor Azyumardi Azra, Professor Ahmad Nur Fadhil Lubis, Dr. A. J. Brown, Assoc Professor Tim Lindsey, Professor Charles Sampford, Professor Barry Hindess, and Manuhua Barcham attended this four-day workshop.

The fifth workshop on "Liberty, Civil Society and Civic Education" was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 17-20 January 2004, and was attended by a number of scholars from Indonesian and Australian universities, such as Professor Azyumardi Azra, Professor Nur Ahmad Fadhil Lubis, Dr Bahtiar Effendi, Professor Riaz Hassan of Flinders University, Professor Barry Hindess of ANU, Professor Philip Kitley of the University of Wollongong, Professor Charles Sampford and Professor Wayne Hudson of KCELJAG Griffith University, Dr George Crowder of Flinders University, Dr Bruce Buchan from Griffith University and Dr Saiful Mujani from UIN Jakarta. Professor Hassan raised important points about Islam and Civil Society in his paper entitled "Islam and Civil Society: An Exploration." According to Professor Hassan, civil society has become a powerful slogan for political reform, democracy, rule of law and economic liberalism. The core of civil society, as institutional pluralism that prevents the central institutions from establishing a monopoly of power and truth in society, has evidently gained increasing support from cross sections of the Muslim population. In this paper, he contested on empirical and theoretical grounds the contention by Western commentators that Islam and civil society are incompatible. The evidence and material reviewed in his paper suggested that movements for civil society in Muslim countries are gaining momentum. He stressed that movement towards a functioning and robust civil society is not simply out of the question in Muslim countries, nor is it incompatible with Islamic ideology.

The final workshop in Canberra, Australia from 15-18 February 2004 focused on "Rights and Religious Pluralism." Professor Riaz Hassan, Professor Charles Sampford, Dr Patricia Martinez from the University of Malaya, Dr Joseph A Camilleri from La Trobe University, Frank Brennan SJ AO, Dr. Alastair Davidson as well as Professor Azyumardi Azra, Professor Ahmad Nur Fadhil Lubis, Professor Bambang Pranowo and Professor Komaruddin Hidayat all presented papers at this meeting. Dr Martinez, in her paper entitled "The Islamic State and the Rights of

Minorities,” for instance, explored and examined the rights of minorities in relation to the concept of Islamic state that has increasingly gained popular support from citizens in a number of nations with Muslim majorities. She gave the specific example of Malaysia, as articulated by both the Government of Malaysia as depicted in the Constitution of Malaysia, and the Islamic opposition party, PAS (Parti Islam se-Malaysia).

The overall goal of this series of workshops is to recognise the importance of values-based governance reform by seeking those values within existing cultures and religions, namely the West and Islam. It is expected that this exchange can foster a respectful and mutually beneficial relationship between countries in the region and between the two civilisations, the West and Islam, omitting the unfortunate past experiences between the two.

Ismatu Ropi is lecturer at Islamic State University Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta; project officer of Islamic-Western Dialogues on Governance Values. This document is mostly based on the project proposal submitted by KCELJAG Griffith University and PPIM UIN Jakarta; initial report written by Robyn Lui; and project’s description on The Owl’s Beak: The Newsletter of KCELJAG Griffith University.