

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

Muslim Societies in Indonesia and South Asia

Views from Asia Calling

Editor
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PUBLISHER'S AND ORGANISER'S FOREWORD

What comes into our minds when talking about Islam in Asia? Even those who do not know much about Islam would imagine it to be something unique and plural. The face of Islam in each country in Asia is unique and specific, and integrated with the local culture. So the face of Islam in Asia differs from country to country.

But when it comes to Islam and democracy in Asia, there is something that they have in common. Most countries with majority and minority Muslim populations in South Asia have experienced conflict and complex problems on the road to democracy. This makes Islam and democracy in South Asia an interesting topic for analysis and discussion. A forum of South Asian countries and Indonesia - the world's most populous Muslim country - is needed to share their experiences of the struggle for democracy in their countries.

Asia Calling, a regional radio program produced to create a channel of communication and understanding across borders in Asia, felt that there was a need to raise the topic of Islam and Democracy in South Asia. This theme was raised at the annual Asia Calling Forum.

In August 2008, the Indonesian Association for Media Development (PPMN), the organisers of the Asia Calling Forum, invited scholars of Islam, journalists, writers and members of parliament representing several countries of South Asia to Jakarta. Asghar Ali Engineer from India, Beena Sawar from Pakistan, Safia Siddiqi from Afghanistan, and Zafar Sobhan from Bangladesh met with two speakers from Indonesia, Ahmad Suaedy and Rizal Sukma, to

discuss the theme of Islam and Democracy in South Asia live on Green Radio 89.2 FM Jakarta.

The 2008 Asia Calling Forum also included an exhibition of photographs “Women, Islam and Democracy, Voices on the Rise: Afghan Women Making the News” held in the Utan Kayu Community Lontar Gallery. Curated by Jane McElhone and Khorshied Samad, this exhibition of dozens of photographs by international photographers told the story of Afghan women who are trying to do more than just keeping quiet behind the burkha. Life for these women journalists, managers, film makers, human rights activists and members of parliament is not easy. Not only do they have to balance their traditional role in the home with their new-found freedom; they have to deal with the prolonged conflict in their country. And they frequently face the threat of imprisonment or even death.

These women’s stories were the inspiration for the 2008 Asia Calling Forum. Their voices are now on the rise, and slowly they are beginning to reverberate outside their country. There is growing optimism in their never-ending fight, that Islam and democracy are possible, even though the fight is against the odds. That is why, although the 2008 Asia Calling Forum is long past, a book that preserves that moment forever needs to be published. Not only as a reminder of our guests’ commitment and dedication to the fight for democracy, but also as material for discussion and learning.

Finally, PPMN would like to thank Ihsan Ali Fauzi, the discussion moderator and compiler and editor of this book, and Alamsyah M. Djafar for supplementing the content of this book with is own research. Our thanks also go to the British Embassy in Jakarta and the State Department of the USA, who were partners in this activity. Without them, and others, publication of this book, “Learning from Each Other: Muslim Societies in Indonesia and South Asia”, would not have been possible.

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PART 1 **INTRODUCTION**

From Syncretism to Terrorism

MUSLIM SOCIETIES IN SOUTH AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI

I.

ORIGINATING from a radio program called “Asia Calling”, this book has been written to encourage Muslims in Asia to get to know one another better and to learn from each other. The focus is on South and South-East Asia, especially those living in Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Afghanistan, and Indonesia, where the guest presenter of this program hails from.

This is not an unreasonable or irrational idea. First, these areas of Asia are inhabited by the largest population of Muslims in the world, far more even than in the Middle East, the birthplace of Islam. Second, if not the contemporary context, history tells us that, in general, Muslims in these areas have their own special brand of Islam, marked by syncretism, and wide support for religious tolerance and pluralism. Third, the economic, political and security issues in these regions in recent years, such as radicalism and acts of violence and terrorism in the name of Islam, are problems that arise largely from the failure of modern state governments to keep independence promises -- and that is not directly related to Islam. Finally, due to all these reasons, Muslims in these two regions have many similarities that could be explored and shared.

This brief introduction will discuss these points. I also hope that this introduction will give readers some basic information about the historical and contemporary contexts of Muslim society in South and South-East Asia, par-

ticularly in the four countries mentioned above, before they go on to read the articles and discussions in the other two sections of this book.

II.

Most historical sources say that Islam was brought to and spread across the area that we know today as Asia not long after the Prophet Muhammad (570-632 AD) began his teachings in the Arabian Peninsula, in the early seventh century AD. Muslim historical sources in China, for example, state that one of Muhammad's friends brought Islam to that country, and that he died and was buried in a place that now lies in south China.

But Asia is a huge region. Islam arrived and spread to various parts of this region in a number of waves and in different ways. At certain points in South Asia (Pakistan, India, Bangladesh), and later in South-East Asia (Indonesia), the countries that are the focus of this discussion, Islam was first introduced and spread by traders and Sufi mystics.

Arab traders first began visiting west India in the seventh century. But it was not until 712 that Sind, which now lies in Pakistan, was occupied by Muhammad ibn Qasim -- who is widely cited as the bringer of Islam to this area, under the caliphate of Umar ibn al-Khattab. This happened long before Muslim conquerors from Central Asia set up their Islamic political power bases in North India -- the greatest of all being the Mughal Empire, which lasted from 1526 to 1857.

Meanwhile, in South-East Asia, Arab-Muslim traders had begun to spread Islam in around the eighth century. But wide-scale Islamisation did not occur until the 13th century. This began in the Kingdom of Aceh in North Sumatra (today, the western-most tip of Indonesia), which was the gateway to the archipelago from India and the Middle East. Around a hundred years later, Muslim communities began to spring up, mainly in coastal areas. Between the 15th and 17th centuries, dominant Hindu-Buddhist empires were replaced by Islamic kingdoms, and Islam spread rapidly to areas on what is known as the Malay peninsula. Traders, religious teachers and Sufi mystics from west India (Malabar and Gurjrat) and the Arabian Peninsula (Hadramaut) spread Islam in this area, at a time when Islamic sultanates were establishing dominance in areas that had previously been dominated by Hindu-Buddhist empires. In this context, the Majapahit Kingdom on Java (Indonesia), which was the largest of

all the old empires, fell in 1525 to the Muslim Mataram Empire.

When they introduced Islam, the first Islamic missionaries in South and South-East Asia allowed the local people to retain their old cultures and traditions. Note that it was in these areas of Asia, and *only* here, that Islam came into contact with the Hindu and Buddhist religions, which had been established there first. This never happened in Arabia, the birthplace of Islam, where Islam came into contact only with the monotheistic religions of Christianity and Judaism.

Many historians, such as Richard Eaton and M.C. Ricklefs, have pointed out that one of the main impacts of the meeting with Hinduism and Buddhism, which can still be witnessed and felt today, is that the face of Islam in this region, which is thickly mixed with local cultures and traditions, is very different indeed from the Islam that is practised in the heart of the Arab world. That is because the Hindu and Buddhist religions, which are *not* based on Abrahamic monotheistic tradition, are quite different from Islam and, indirectly, are diametrically opposed to Islam.

The fact that Muslims in South Asia are still a minority (despite their large numbers - which we will discuss more below) indicates that the majority Hindu population on the Indian sub-continent at that time were not forced to become Muslims. Their elite, the Brahman caste, refused to become Muslims, and most of the Hindus that converted were of the lower caste. However, aside from the fact that the principle of Islamic egalitarianism automatically raised their social status, there were not many advantages to changing religion, because their lifestyles after they converted were much the same as those practised by the followers of Hinduism.

In this meeting of religions, Islam accepted certain parts of Hindu and Buddhist tradition. Various influences left over from the era of Hindu-Buddhist domination were tolerated, and even incorporated into Islamic rituals.

Yet this syncretism in no way undermined the Islamic values of Muslims in South and South-East Asia. Puritans have tried to purify or “arabise” this version of Islam, but have invariably failed. Religious tolerance, and the syncretism between Islam and local cultures, has always been the main features of the Islam of these Muslims.

These are the reasons that these Muslims make up the majority of the world’s Muslim population. It is why the largest populations of Muslims

worldwide are in these three Asian countries: in Indonesia (240 million, 88 percent Muslim), in Pakistan (160 million, 97 percent Muslim), and Bangladesh (142 million, 83 percent Muslim). And in India, out of a total population of around one billion, has 140 million Muslims.

And at the same time we are also witnessing something strange but true. This has to do with the architectural heritage of these two areas. While in India, the most popular historical architectural attraction is the Taj Mahal, the product of an Islamic sultanate; in Indonesia, it is Borobudur Temple, one of the most important pieces of Hindu architecture in the world.

III.

IF THE HISTORY of Islam in South and South-East Asia is marked by a willingness to accept and mix with local traditions, and if Muslims in these regions are known as a moderate and tolerant religious group, then why have these regions been a hotbed of violent action in recent years? And have not all, to some degree or another, had to do with Islam as a religion: the conflict between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir; the political assassinations in Pakistan; the separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan; the horrors of the Taliban in Afghanistan; acts of violence, including suicide bombs, in Indonesia?

This problem is extremely complex and difficult to discuss in the space available here, especially in an introduction that is only meant to introduce readers to the articles and discussions that appear in this book. But I would like look at several key aspects that should give us an introduction this problem, which is also the main focus of the articles and discussions in this book.

These acts of violence committed in the name of Islam have to do with the contemporary situation of Muslims in these countries, which among others, is marked by the rise of Islamists, some of whom are in favour of the use of violent methods to achieve their aims. To understand this, we need to look at the history of their growth at the end of the period of Western colonialism and in the early years of independence.

Like Muslims in other regions, Muslims in South and South-East Asia lived in a situation that was remote from the world's centres of civilisa-

tion, after the fall and destruction of several Islamic kingdoms and sultanates in these regions, at various times between the 17th and 20th centuries. Following world domination by those in the western hemisphere, as a result of major, transformative events, such as the enlightenment in various key points in Europe, the French Revolution, the industrial revolution, and the growth of nation states and democracy, came the retreat of Muslims the world over, marked, among others, by the occupation of their territories by political and military means, by colonial powers from the West, notably England and France. None of the Islamic world, which stretched from Morocco to Merauke in the eastern-most tip of Indonesia, was spared from Western colonialism.

Thus, entering the modern age, Muslims everywhere, including in South and South-East Asia, were in an unfavourable position. Unlike the nation states that grew in what we now call the West (Europe and North America), where the concept of nation state was first found, practised, and developed, Muslim societies did not have the chance to develop gradually into modern nation states. In Indonesia and the Indian sub-continent, for example, the Dutch and British colonial governments dominated and occupied Muslim territories. Once their political and military authority was established, these European colonial powers ruled with an iron fist, thanks to the support of the local, Western-educated elite.

This process frustrated the acceptance of universal values, which among other things, was introduced en-masse by Western civilisations to the Islamic world. Muslims, who had been dominating the world civilisation for centuries before, were not psychologically prepared to accept the new values that were growing in Europe, which, it should be noted, held them in a grip of political, economic, and military oppression. At the very most, Western ideas were first borrowed and adopted by modernist Muslims, especially in the 19th century, in what was known as “enlightened absolutism”. Military and administrative reform within the Ottoman Empire, for example, depended largely on a reasonably enlightened Muslim despot. Modernists also sprang up in various parts of the Islamic world, mainly rulers who wanted to introduce certain Western social and economic technologies and ideas, without upsetting the basis of political power in the Islamic world. A number of sultans, for example in Persia, even followed certain enlightened European despots into introducing constitutions and laws, although these political reforms were considered too few and too slow.

Outside these enlightened despots, in general, the Muslim community regarded the challenge of the technological and military advantage of the West in one of two ways. First, some Muslims accepted Western education and adopted a Western way of life, removing almost completely religious values from their daily lives. The leaders of this group were to form the origins of the secular nationalist elite in new, post colonial countries, and included such people as Jawaharlal Nehru in India and Soekarno and Sutan Sjahrir in Indonesia. The second group was made up of Muslims who began defining politics within a framework and idiom of Islam, which emphasised that Islam offered a complete way of life that differed from that introduced by the Western colonial powers and their modern ideas. From this group would emerge those who would later be called Islamists, with leaders such as Mohammad Iqbal and Abu al-A'la al-Mawdudi in Indo-Pakistan and Mohamad Natsir and Hasyim Asy'ari in Indonesia. There were, of course, other groups that tried to forge a middle path between these two extremes, led by figures such as Abul Kalam Azad in India and Mohammad Hatta in Indonesia.

Because of these developments, the evolution of the modern era in the Islamic world was marked by the beginnings of ideological conflict among Muslims about how politics and government should be run. This was because, in the past, traditional Islamic literature had focused more on the question of how to understand and interpret the scriptures and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (*tafsir* and *hadis*), on philosophy and theology (*kalam*), and a very narrow interpretation of the observance of religious duties (*fiqh*). With few exceptions, for example in the writings of the historian Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), Muslims paid little attention to political and economic theory, for instance. Because this kind of consistent, systematic political theory did not develop in the Muslim world, certain scholars, such as Bernard Lewis, claimed that in Islam, “[i]n principle, at least, there is no state, but only a ruler; no court, but only a judge.” But this is only one scholarly explanation. Others, such as those offered by Eikelman and James Piscatori, state that the politics of Muslims have always been (and always will be) plural and ever-changing.

Aside from that, at the end of the colonial era, in the mid 20th century, there were the first signs of the beginnings of a struggle between the Islamists at one extreme, who saw the exit of the colonialists as an opportunity to “revitalise” the traditional Islamic way of life, and the modernists at the other

extreme, who emphasised that Muslims need not blindly follow the ways of 14th century Islam and reject, out of hand, the influence of Western ideas.

In Indonesia, this struggle ended with the acceptance of Pancasila as the basis of the state. It signified that the secular nationalists and Islamists agreed that, while the newly independent country was not a theocracy, it was not a country that would distance the social and political role of religion, particularly Islam. This compromise was reached to accommodate the pluralism of Indonesia, which comprises various ethnicities and religions, although Muslims make up the largest number.

Unfortunately, in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, we witnessed a very different phenomenon. The kind of agreement that the political elite reached in Indonesia was not to be found in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent. As a consequence, the sub-continent was split, into India and Pakistan, and, more recently, in 1971, Bangladesh. This happened because certain Muslim elite were worried what the fate of Muslims would be when the British colonial rulers withdrew from the Indian sub-continent, given the dominant Hindu population there. They then used Islam as the basis for a national identity and established Pakistan as an Islamic country. More recently, it was proven that this religious unity, among Muslims, was unable to hold together Bangladesh and Pakistan, which are separated geographically by the land mass of India.

All these developments point to one important fact: the political transformation that accompanied the demise of colonialism gave rise to serious problems with regard to the relationship between religion and state in the newly independent countries, which were dealt with differently, and the impacts of which are still being felt today. In India, it was agreed that secularism would be the foundation of the state, even though the majority of its population is Hindu. Here, democracy guaranteed Muslims a channel for their political aspirations, although Hindu fundamentalism has been on the rise of late. In Indonesia, the establishment of Pancasila as the state ideology guaranteed that Islam would not forcibly become the basis of the state, although Muslims do enjoy certain advantages. Meanwhile, the history of Pakistan, which was established from the outset as a theocracy with Islam as its ideological basis, continues to be marked by the obligation on the part of the political elite to define the kind of "Islam" that should be adhered to, sometimes at great cost, such as the killings of large numbers of minority Ahmadiah and the separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan.

To return to our original question: radicalism and acts of violence committed in the name of Islam have grown when there is a desire to change the initial agreements described above, or when they are reaffirmed in the face of new challenges, such as the infiltration of purification movements from the Middle East into South and South-East Asia in recent decades, a matter we shall return to later. In Indonesia and India, this infiltration is eroding the Islamic syncretism that once formed the strong foundation for religious tolerance and pluralism. Meanwhile, in Pakistan, this infiltration has intensified the social and political schism that has resulted from the never-ending struggle to define Islam.

But, just as this infiltration of puritanism fuelled the fire of this puritanical Islamic ideological militancy, so radicalism and acts of violence provided a perfect excuse for the ruling elite in these new countries to fail to keep their independence promises, such as economic growth and improved welfare, particularly if they were authoritarian rulers who neutered Islamic social and political expression. As a result of this failure, in general, at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s -- some two decades after independence -- many Islamic countries underwent what sociologist Gilles Kepel calls "re-Islamisation", because social and political spaces had previously been sterilised of Islam. It was in this context that slogans like "Islam is the solution" won broad support, because ordinary Muslims were sick of the failure of secular and authoritarian government.

The situation deteriorated further in the 1980s, at the peak of the Cold War. At that time, anti-communist Muslim leaders and policy makers in Western countries saw the advantage in forging a political alliance with the Islamicists. This political alliance reached a peak in what we know as the anti-Soviet "jihad" project in Afghanistan, which has recently been convincingly documented by Muslim scholars (such as Hamid Algar and Mahmood Mamdani) and Western scholars (such as Gilles Kepel or Olivier Roy).

The Afghanistan war was the moment when Islamist-Jihadists the world over got together, were given training in the use of firearms and bomb-making by Pakistani and US intelligence agencies, funded by Saudi Arabia, which were allies in the Cold War. Their enthusiasm for jihad grew even more when they believed that the retreat of the Soviet troops was the result of their superior opposition (which was far from the truth). They were a Frankenstein; created but then neglected, only to eat up their masters in the United States,

Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

This is the context that must be understood when we read about the acts of terrorism organised by al-Qaeda and other veterans of the Afghanistan war, some of whom spread terror in the name of Islam, in India, Pakistan and Indonesia. Now we realise that the ‘jihad project’ in Afghanistan played an extremely important role in dividing Muslim communities, transforming political Islamists into militant jihadists, and destroying the foundations of pluralism everywhere.

IV.

I HOPE that with this introduction, readers will benefit from the articles and discussions presented in the subsequent sections. Asghar Ali Engineer’s article summarises the advantages that can, and have been, enjoyed by Muslims in India, who are many in number but form a minority, as a result of the secularism and effective democracy in that country. By contrast, from Beena Sarwar’s article on Pakistan, we get a picture of how “Islam as an ideology” is not a panacea, and may itself even be the root or a part of the problem. From Bangladesh, Zafar Sobhan discusses that country’s efforts to establish democracy in the midst of the rise of Islamism.

We were unable to obtain an article from, or about, Afghanistan. Fortunately, though, Safia Siddiqi, a women’s activist from Afghanistan who was invited to Jakarta, is a well-known figure about whom much has been written and published. One of these articles, from the *New York Times*, we have reproduced here. This article talks about the difficulties and risks of being a woman in Afghanistan, particularly when the Taliban still played a key role there.

Finally, there are two articles about Indonesia, written by Ahmad Suaedy and myself. The first looks at the threat to democracy of recent growth in sharia-inspired by-laws in Indonesia. My paper, on Pancasila, although it has not been read at a seminar, is included here to show the unique position of Islam in the constitutional scheme of Indonesia. ***

PART 2 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Indian Muslim

IDENTITY, NATIONALISM AND RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER

India today has largest Muslim population, about 140 million, after Indonesia. Also, India is a secular democracy and has successfully sustained democratic processes for the last sixty years. Muslims in India have ideologically accepted secular democracy and have found no contradiction between Islam, Islamic teachings and modern day secular values within a democratic frame-work.

What is important to note is that a large number of Ulama of the Deoband school fully supported the freedom struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi who insisted on non-violent struggle based on values like truth, compassion and human dignity. Though he was not a rationalist, he accepted the role of reason in human life. Some Ulama did have reservations about non-violence as a principle but they too accepted it as a useful strategy. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a great scholar of Islam and commentator on the Qur'an which was published under the title of *Tarjuman al-Qur'an*, not only accepted Gandhi's leadership but was also an active member of the Indian National Congress, and even headed it twice.

However, the Indian freedom struggle was far from being a trouble free, smooth, non-violent affair. Indian Muslims were politically divided. The westernized educated elite as well as the feudal lords (*jagirdars*) on one hand, and the Muslim masses and sections of the Muslim middle class on the other, had different perceptions of political processes in independent India. The former (i.e. westernized elite and feudal lords) were more concerned about power

sharing in independent India and questions like land reform and constitutional structure, while the latter (i.e. the Muslim masses and sections of the middle class) had faith in the promises held out by the leadership of the Indian National Congress.

The westernized elite did not trust the Congress leadership and was insisting on a larger share in power, even larger than what the Muslim population warranted. However, this question could not be sorted out satisfactorily and M.A. Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League, party of the Muslim league and landlords, propounded a two nation theory which implied Muslims were a separate nation and could not share common nationhood with Hindus.

The two nation theory was completely rejected by the Ulama belonging to Jami'at-ul-Ulama-i-Hind, and its leader Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani argued that Islam does not believe in separate nationhood, and that both Hindus and Muslims share the same nationality. They also found the concept of secular democracy as being in conformity with Islamic teaching. These Ulama opposed the partition plan and refused to go along with Jinnah. However, Maulana Maududi, founder of the Jamat-e-Islami, did not agree with Jami'at-ul-Ulama-i-Hind and declared that secular politics is prohibited in Islam. He advised his followers not to take part in secular politics in India.

Thus it would be seen that Indian Muslims were divided into several ideological positions before partition. However, a large number of Muslims supported composite nationalism and they had no problems with co-sharing nationalism with Hindus, Christians and Parsis. Though partition was very painful -- as on this side of the divide large number of Muslims was killed and families were divided -- yet Muslims were resilient enough to adjust to new realities.

However, fresh problems emerged as democratization deepened. The nation building process in multi-religious societies poses its own challenge, especially when there are not enough resources to go around. India is not only multi-religious and multi-lingual but also a multi-ethnic nation. Western nations were mostly mono-religious, mono lingual and mono cultural and also were comparatively affluent and hence nation building was no challenge.

In multi-religious and multi-ethnic societies, religious and ethnic identities play important roles in mobilizing people to demand a greater share of power, and the Muslim elite had asserted their religious identity to do so, and the country was divided. For majority religious communities nationalism becomes coterminous with religious identity, but for religious minorities there

is the problem of religious identity being different from national identity and having to cope with dual identities, and often there is a danger of religious identity clashing with national identity.

In view of this dual identity Muslims have to prove their loyalty to the nation in times of crisis, such as the war between India and Pakistan, and this poses no mean challenge for them. Since Pakistan is a Muslim country, the right wing Hindu forces often question the loyalty of Muslims to India. Since Muslims are in minority in India (about 14%) there is no question of any demand for an Islamic state.

But at times religious identity, when under pressure, does assert itself. One instance is that of the Shah Bano Movement in the mid-1980s. The 1980s was a very challenging decade for the Muslim minority in India as frequent Hindu-Muslim riots were taking place and Muslims were feeling suffocated. They were under intense pressure and in such circumstances the Supreme Court delivered a judgment upholding a Muslim woman's right to maintenance beyond *iddah* (waiting after divorce) period under a secular law.

This angered the Ulama and they cried foul and gross interference in Islamic law which, according to the law of the land, it is their right to follow. They argued that in Islam a woman is entitled to maintenance only for the *iddah* period and pressured the Government to nullify the Supreme Court judgment by enacting a law. The Government of India yielded to the pressure from Muslims and changed the law.

Muslims enjoy equal democratic and fundamental rights under the constitution and also they enjoy rights as a religious minority in respect of their religion, culture and language. These rights have been guaranteed under Articles 25 to 30 of the Constitution. However, it also poses certain problems in society. Indian Muslims are free to follow their personal law in respect of marriage, divorce, inheritance etc.

In traditional shari'ah law men can marry up to four wives and in Hanafi law triple divorce in one sitting is permissible. Thus in a way a Muslim woman is less than equal in Muslim personal law and this clashes with constitutional provisions of Articles 14 to 21, according to which men and women enjoy absolutely equal rights. Thus some secularists as well as communal Hindus argue that there should be one law for all.

Even the Supreme Court judges differ in this respect. Some judges feel that Article 25 will prevail over Articles 14 to 21 and Muslim personal law

cannot be tampered with by the state as the Constitution guarantees Muslims the right to follow their religion. Muslims as a religious minority are extremely sensitive to their religious identity. While secular forces in the country do not insist on a common personal law or a uniform civil code, communal forces led by Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), a leading Hindu nationalist party, still demand the abolition of Muslim personal law and the enforcement of a common civil code.

Though Muslims are a huge number in India, most of them are poor and illiterate. The government has neglected their problems but now the UPA (United Progressive Parties Alliance) Government, under pressure from Muslims, has announced a series of measures recommended by the Sachar Committee which was appointed by the UPA Government to look into Muslim problems.

Yet there is always a gap between declaration and implementation. But one good thing in a democracy is that political parties, in order to get Muslim votes, have often to compete with each other to please them, and in this competitive political environment minorities and other weaker sections of society benefit, though not to the fullest extent.

There is one more problem which Muslims have to address themselves. Their leadership generally comes from backward sections of Muslims and is quite conservative. What Muslims need today is a dynamic futuristic leadership. There are a large number of madrasas in India. Through modernization these madrasas could be transformed into centres of learning both religious as well as secular. However, a section of conservative Ulama resist any attempt to modernize madrasas, and traditional madrasas churn out only narrow minded mullahs who resist any change.

Another problem which has emerged recently is that of terrorism. Terrorism is a complex international phenomenon and it is very difficult to ascertain what role some Indian Muslim youth are playing in terrorist violence. It is true that the Gujarat communal riots of 2002, in which more than 2000 Muslims were brutally killed, generated a lot of anger among Muslims but it is difficult to say whether some Muslim youth have taken to terrorism by way of terrorist attacks.

Muslims themselves suspect either certain international agencies like Israel's Mosad and the CIA are playing roles to give Islam a bad name, and Muslims or some rightwing Hindu organizations are playing their own games



Muslim boys reflect, following a morning of worship, Jama Masjid, Delhi, India, 2005 Ash_Sydney. credit: wikipedia

Women and children gather at the tomb of the 13th century Sufi saint Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya in south Delhi, India November 3, 2008. credit: fabianfoo.files.wordpress.com.



from behind. The Indian intelligence agencies blame SIMI (Students Islamic Movement of India), HuJI (Hizbul Jihad-i-Islami) of Bangladesh and Lashkar-e-Taibya of Pakistan.

However, though some Muslim youth from India may be involved, it seems unlikely that banned organization like SIMI, which is quite insignificant in terms of numbers and its entire top leadership is under arrest, can play any significant role.

By and large Islam in secular democratic India tends to be more tolerant and peaceful than in other Muslim majority countries. There are no strong fundamentalist tendencies as witnessed in countries like Pakistan in South Asia. Muslim intelligentsia in India seems to be far more accommodative than in other Muslim countries.***

Islam and State in Pakistan

THREAT OR SOLUTION?

BEENA SARWAR

When the British colonizers left India in August 1947, they granted India independence, simultaneously dividing it along religious lines as defined by the “two nation theory” which saw Hindus and Muslims as two different nations.

Pakistan was created on August 14, 1947, conceived as a nation-state for Indian Muslims, consisted of the Muslim-majority provinces or states, including two states with nearly equal Hindu and Muslim populations that were also divided up along religious lines -- Punjab, and Bengal, a thousand miles away from the other four Pakistani provinces, on India’s eastern border. Two other Muslim-majority states ended up in India’s control, Kashmir on the north-west that Pakistan also laid claim to, and Hyderabad in central India.

The two-nation theory ignored the reality of overlapping, multinational, multi-faith and multilingual communities. Attempting to develop a homogenous national identity (largely to counter rival India and justify the breakaway), successive Pakistani governments focused on Islam as the unifying factor. They also continued the authoritarian and colonist policies of the British, resulting in religious, ethnic or linguistic groups feeling excluded and discriminated against. Thirdly, for most of its existence, Pakistan has been governed by military rulers, who prioritized weapons and military training over education and social welfare. This resulted in a sense of injustice and deprivation, and divisions along religious, sectarian, class and ethnic lines. The many

interpretations of Islam also led after a point to religion being not a unifying but a divisive force. Islam cannot be an exclusive component of state nationalism because Pakistanis do differentiate themselves from the Muslims of other countries -- Indonesian, Afghan, Iranian, Bangladeshi, or even Indian Muslims.

Unfortunately, when alternative visions of Pakistan are formed around ethnic identities, the establishment tends to view them as threats. In 1971 East Pakistan rebelled against the western wing and emerged as independent Bangladesh. In what was left of Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto became the first elected prime minister of Pakistan (Pakistan People's Party, PPP, polled the most votes in the 1971 elections after the Awami League of Mujibur Rehman, the founding father of Bangladesh). The PPP is still the only mainstream political party of Pakistan that can be considered secular and nationalist, followed by Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

Pakistani governments have historically paid lip-service to religion-based politics. Even Bhutto tried to salvage political power by trying to appease the religious elements who had taken over the political opposition. He got Parliament to declare the Ahmedis as non-Muslims, made Friday the weekly holiday, banned alcohol and gambling, and espoused a pan-Islamic vision (he held the second Islamic Summit in Lahore in 1974 and initiated Pakistan's nuclear weapons -- "Islamic bomb" -- program). In 1977, popular discontent against Bhutto gave his military commander General Ziaul Haq a pretext to overthrow him. Zia promised to introduce Shariah, or Islamic Law to make Pakistan a truly Islamic state. Shortly afterwards, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan changed politics in the region forever.

America's involvement in the war used the strategy of religion to motivate Muslims against the Communist Soviet Union -- the Afghan "jihad", a term popularized as "holy war" although the word in Arabic literally means "to struggle". The greater, more difficult jihad pertains to the struggle with the self; the lesser jihad combats external enemies. Jihad, non-existent as an international violent phenomenon for the last four hundred years, now propped up Pakistan's military ruler who allowed the country to be used as a conduit for providing money, weapons and military training to the *Mujahideen* against the Soviets, with CIA agents recruiting Muslims from around the world.

Pakistan's tribal areas became the launching pad for the Mujahideen's incursions across the porous Afghan border. The easy availability of weapons and drugs contributed to growing lawlessness in Pakistan as the chick-

ens of the jihad came home to roost. Sectarian violence -- violence between Muslims of different sects -- escalated in Pakistan after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan as Shi'ite Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia fought proxy wars on Pakistani soil. The world forgot Afghanistan -- until September 11, 2001. Then, Pakistan again became a front-line state for America and the tribal areas developed into sanctuaries for the Mujahideen's successors, the Taliban. During the past decade or so, and particularly since 9/11, all these factors have converged -- as have the Al Qaeda, the Taliban and the Kashmir "jihadists". Pakistan has emerged as a centre of the "war on terror" due to all these reasons, which include:

1. The country's geographical location and proximity to Afghanistan on the north-west border and long-standing policy of achieving "strategic depth" through influencing developments in Afghanistan (driven largely by hostility with India on the eastern border);
2. The willingness of successive Pakistani governments to allow the country to be used for the foreign policy designs and attempts for regional supremacy of other players in exchange for arms and money;
3. The lack of a democratic process in Pakistan in general and in the tribal areas in particular, where people do not have the right to participate in the electoral process when it does take place. This has contributed to a sense of deprivation, frustration, and powerlessness;
4. The lack of development particularly in the tribal areas -- successive governments have ignored the necessity of building infrastructures like roads and institutions (schools, courts etc). Pakistani laws do not apply to these areas, so tribal councils or *jirgas* fill the judicial vacuum. These *jirgas* have become corrupted, with militants co-opting them in the name of Islam.
5. Pakistan's long-standing enmity and rivalry with India has led to its support of "jihadi" elements aiming to help the Kashmiri freedom fighters; a factor in this was the influx of money from the oil-rich Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, and the practice of preparing "mujahideen" at *madrassahs* and training camps developed during the Afghan war.

In 1893, the British who ruled India arbitrarily drew the Durand Line to divide Afghanistan from India. The Pashtuns who mainly populate this area continue to use the porous border to continue their centuries-old trade and inter-personal relationships often cemented through marriage. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, known as the “Frontier Gandhi” once said that he was a Pashtun first, a Muslim second, and a Pakistani last. Although the Taliban tend to be Pashtun, their Muslim identity dominates their ethnicity. Pakistan’s identity too has been largely projected as Islamic, a construction supported by the country’s religion-based social and political organizations. This construction now threatens the nation-state itself, as the adherents of “Islamisation” transcend national boundaries.

The Pakistani Taliban have merged traditional customs, like tribal *jirgas* or councils, with their version of an Islamic identity, based on warped notions far removed from principles of justice. The traditional notions of honor in the tribal areas have become corrupted with new concepts hitherto unheard of in Pakistan: suicide bombings, public executions, beheadings and stoning to death, mutilating bodies.

The increase in violence in general overshadows the rising violence against women -- not surprising since this is the pattern wherever “religious” extremism is on the rise. In these tribal areas, traditionally, men punished women of their own family for any perceived transgression. However, the Taliban’s “anti-vice” vigilante squads have no compunction in attacking women, unarmed civilians and security forces, alleged drug dens and prostitutes, video and music shops, internet cafes, hair dressing salons, even girls’ schools and teachers in the tribal areas. After the murder of one such teacher, Khatoon Bibi in late September last year in the tribal Mohmand Agency, hundreds of non-local teachers protested, demanding security in order to do their jobs. The lack of response from the ruling alliance of “religious” parties known as the MMA that governed the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) led to the closure of over a hundred girls’ schools. The MMA in fact encouraged the Taliban mindset. It dismissed, suspended or transferred women from public offices, and took no action against the vigilantism of “religious militants”. The militants have been strengthened by such appeasement and lack of action as well as the impetus provided by the US invasions and on-going conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.



President Musharraf is greeted by Dr Hamid Karzai at Kabul International Airport during his visit to Afghanistan on 2 April 2002. Credit: www.operations.mod.uk

The previous military-led regime of Gen Pervez Musharraf allowed US military forces to use Pakistani territory and air bases and committed the Pakistan military to combating “terrorist” elements. Their actions had no political sanction, which is why many Pakistanis see the conflict as “America’s war”. The military regime also used the “war on terror” as a pretext to crush political dissent, for example in Pakistan’s western-most province, Balochistan, bordering Iran and Afghanistan. Some 5000 persons are “missing”, presumed to be in the custody of intelligence agencies, Pakistani and American. As President Musharraf admitted in his memoirs *In the Line of Fire*, Pakistan captured 689 Al Qaeda fighters who fled into Pakistan from Afghanistan, and handed over 369 to the United States. “We have earned bounties totalling millions of dollars.” The whereabouts of just a few hundred or so of these disappeared people have been made known, most of them in the custody of Pakistan’s intelligence agencies. The lack of transparency surrounding such

detentions arouses scepticism about the claims that they are Al Qaeda fighters. Many of the disappeared are secular, nationalist political dissidents. Several have been released from American or Pakistani custody without being charged after years of deprivation and torture.

These double standards and inconsistent official approach to terrorism has worsened the situation, as the Pakistani scholar Dr Eqbal Ahmad noted in his prophetic 1998 talk “Terrorism, theirs & ours”. Overlooking the terrorism of friendly governments and allies, engaging in state terrorism involving covert operations and low-intensity warfare (leading to more terror and drugs) and paying little attention to causes and problem-solving has had disastrous consequences. “Do not seek military solutions,” cautioned Dr Eqbal. “Terrorism is a political problem. Seek political solutions. Diplomacy works.” The focus on military solutions to what is essentially a political problem, with historical, post-colonial and economic roots, has contributed to escalating violence. The militants thrive on it; the more violence they are dealt, the more adherents they gather. State force also gives rise to “private” violence, with law and order breakdowns and political vacuums only worsening the situation.

Although the Pakistan government officially gave up its previous policy of supporting the Mujahideen/Taliban after 9/11, elements within the state have continued covert support to the religious elements. Various Pakistani governments have supported and encouraged religious elements at worst and ignored or appeased them at best. They have avoided taking action against illegal activities committed in the name of religion and allowed known militants to roam free and continue instigating violence. When things get out of hand, they over-react, using unmitigated force and even chemical weapons as in the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) case. For years the administration looked the other way as the Lal Masjid clerics illegally occupied land and built a fully-functional seminary for girls next to the mosque. When the authorities belatedly decided to tear down the seminary as part of a demolition drive against illegal structures, seminary students forcibly occupied a public building in January 2007. The government again took no action until months later in July when matters finally came to a head. Then, it responded with the disproportionate use of force including chemical weapons. We are still dealing with the repercussions of that attack and the “martyrs” that the army operation created.

The army operation of 2004 in the tribal areas also involved too much force, too late. The military government launched the operation without tak-

ing Parliament or the people into confidence. The operation killed or displaced thousands -- nearly 5000 have been killed in the last two years alone, besides almost as many Pakistani soldiers since 2004.

In February, Pakistan held general elections after nearly a decade of military rule, including the last five years of military-controlled quasi-democracy. Despite terrorist threats, the people turned out in large numbers to vote -- around 45 percent, slightly above the previous elections of 2002 in which key political leaders like Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif were not allowed to participate. The election results overwhelmingly rejected the parties that favored military rule and religious politics. Since the elections the number and intensity of violent attacks in Pakistan has declined. However, the situation along the north-west frontier remains tense and there is increasing pressure on the new government to counter the Taliban militarily. The government has acknowledged terrorism as Pakistan's problem rather than "America's war", stressing that they will fight it "their way" and will deal with the issue in Pakistan's best interests. This approach is likely to win greater acceptance among the people as it encompasses dialogue and negotiation as well as firmness in dealing with the violence.

This is necessary in order for the people of Pakistan to support the government against the Taliban. However, there are fears that this delicate balance may be upset if the international pressure for military strikes continues, or if American or NATO forces may be called in for this purpose. While firmness (without appeasement) is necessary, the door to dialogue must remain open. This is not a simple problem that can be resolved overnight. Aggressive military action in isolation from the political process will only bring short term relief. There is of course an urgent need to contain "terrorism". However, the problems faced by the nation-state with relation to Islam are broader than that. Militancy makes it harder to resolve the underlying tension in a peaceful and constructive way, but the tension should at least be acknowledged as genuine. That is a longer process, and the more negotiated it is the better. Islam will always be an important component of Pakistani nationalism, but it cannot be an exclusive component, and its role cannot be left to the most extreme clerics.

Despite the hopeful results of the Feb 2008 elections, religiously-oriented political parties are making a comeback, having joined forces with the opposition that has taken up various issues that are causing unrest, like the res-



Pakistan's women anchors and editors say sexual harassment at work is their biggest worry (2008) . Credit:Beena Sarwar/IPS.

toration of judges, rising inflation and lawlessness. Some analysts fear a similar situation to that which toppled Z.A. Bhutto in 1977, when the religious parties used Bhutto's rising unpopularity to gain political momentum and create a crisis, providing an opening to the army to step in. The policies of the past continue to haunt the present, testing the democratic process. The international community needs to be patient and support Pakistan in staying the course.

We need to keep our sights on the long-term vision of continuing the democratic political process even if there are setbacks. The genie of "religious militancy" may not go back into the bottle in the near future, but it can be contained if the democratic process continues. Ultimately the violence springs not from religion but from a sense of injustice, despair, frustration and helplessness about how the system works. Empower the people, personally, politically and economically, give them something to live for, and they will not die in the path of what they have been brainwashed into believing is religion.***

The Road to Democracy

ISLAM AND BANGLADESH

ZAFAR SOBHAN

Islam and Bangladeshi Identity

Islam and democracy in Bangladesh have always had an uneasy relationship. This uneasiness stems from the circumstances of Bangladesh's original incarnation as East Pakistan based on its Muslim majority status, the failure of Pakistan as a state and the subsequent liberation war which laid to rest any notions of pan-Islamic brotherhood amongst the peoples of East and West Pakistan, and the still contested issue of how to construct Bangladeshi identity.

The 1972 constitution enshrined secularism as one of the four pillars of independent Bangladesh and in the aftermath of independence, the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), the only Islamist party of note, was discredited in the eyes of the general public due to its opposition to independence and collaboration with the Pakistani occupation army.

Bangladeshi identity in the initial post-independence years was constructed largely on Bengali linguistic and cultural grounds, minimizing its Islamic component, due in part to an acknowledgement that at independence fully 20 per cent of the country were non-Muslim and that it was the identification of East Pakistan as a Muslim space that had led to its ill-conceived inclusion in the nation of Pakistan, created as an explicitly Muslim nation.

The failure and break up of Pakistan would seem to suggest that Islam as a unifying and preeminent determinant of identity for Bangladeshi Muslims was an untenable construct. The failure of pre-1971 Pakistan and the anti-liberation stance taken by prominent Islamists during the war of independence, together with the liberal and moderate brand of Islam practiced in Bangladesh for hundreds of years, perhaps accounts for the continuing failure of political Islam to gain a strong foot-hold in Bangladeshi politics.

However, due to both internal and external pressures and constraints, the space for Islam, political Islam, and Islamism continued to exist within the body politic and the society at large. In 1975, following the assassination of the independence leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the eventual ascension to power following a series of military coups of Gen. Ziaur Rahman, the political and ideological landscape of the country shifted dramatically.

In a bid to create a new political platform to challenge that of Mujib's Awami League (AL), Zia cobbled together a coalition (that would eventually become the BNP) that included, for the first time since 1971, those politicians (for instance from the old Muslim League) who had opposed independence. In the process, the Islamist parties were politically rehabilitated. The constitution was amended to remove secularism as a founding principle, and the JI, which had been banned due to active support for Pakistan occupation forces and formation of death squads during the liberation war, was permitted to re-enter politics. Indeed, their rehabilitation was central to Zia's political and socio-cultural mission.

Gen. Zia made the Islamization of Bangladesh a corner-stone of his political philosophy and of Bangladesh's identity both internally and externally. Article 25(2) was added to the constitution, providing that: "The state shall endeavor to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity."

Thus gained ground a movement that identified Bangladesh as a Muslim country and sought to put Islam at the center, both of the nation's identity and that of the individual's construction of his or her Bangladeshi identity. The marginalization and dispossession of non-Muslim ethnic and religious minorities necessarily grew exponentially as a result and the space for the positing of a non-Muslim Bangladeshi identity shrank significantly.

In 1988, a constitutional amendment was pushed through by then military ruler Gen. Ershad, declaring Islam as the state religion. This contributed to the worsening of the persecution of minority communities, which had, in any event, been in free fall since 1975. Especially during the time of BNP/JI government, the position of Bangladesh's ethnic and religious minorities has become extremely precarious. In October 2001, after they came to power, BNP and JI cadres went on a well-documented and reported campaign of looting, land grabbing, murder, rape, arson, and assault against the Hindu community with virtual impunity. Theoretically, all religions are equal under

the law. In practice, under the BNP/JI, minorities had no rights that a well-connected Muslim needed to respect. Many Hindus have voted with their feet, and the non-Muslim population -- 20 per cent in 1971 -- today stands at 10 per cent.

Political Islam

Since the rehabilitation of the JI and the re-entrance of Islamist parties into mainstream Bangladeshi politics, the Islamists have continued to be a formidable though far from dominant force both in the nation's polity as well as in the socio-cultural sphere. Even taken together, the Islamist parties have never risen above 10 per cent of the popular vote or gained much above five per cent of the seats in parliament. Indeed, in the last elections that the JI contested without allies in 1996, it received less than 5 per cent of the vote and a paltry 2 seats in the 300-seat parliament.

The results of every election we have had in Bangladesh, stretching back to Pakistan and British times, suggest that the Islamist parties are unable to make much of an impression at the polls by themselves.

However, in coalition with other right of center parties, they can provide the margin of victory in scores of seats around the country due to the first-past-the-post electoral system. Running independently in 1996, BNP received 116 seats and the Jamaat received 2 seats, and the left of center AL came to power.

However, in 2001, when they formed an alliance, the result was very different, although the relative popular vote percentages of the main parties were similar to that in 1996. Thus, by combining their vote, the 4 party alliance (BNP, JI, IOJ, and JPNF) garnered a total of 216 seats in the 2001 elections. The reward for the JI was 17 seats in parliament and 2 seats in the cabinet, even though its share of the popular vote remained more or less constant at slightly below 5 per cent. Thus we can see that the power wielded by JI as part of the 4 party alliance is disproportionate to its popular support.

In addition to JI, there is one other mainstream Islamist party, the Islami Oikya Jote, that garnered 2 seats in the 2001 elections (as part of the 4 party alliance) as well as any number of smaller outfits who have not registered any electoral success. In the run up to the aborted 2007 elections, the AL,

thought to be the vanguard of secularism in Bangladesh, in its own effort to co-opt the Islamist vote bank and split the right of center vote, entered into a much criticized electoral alliance with one of these marginal groups, the Khelafat-e-Majlis.

There exist non-political religious organizations operating as charities and non-governmental organizations. Interestingly, although NGOs are by law barred from political activity, many of the religious NGOs do maintain an affinity with one or the other Islamist political parties.

To the best of my knowledge, the most prominent Islamic NGOs and charities, to the extent that they espouse political views, like almost all Islamist parties, do not reject democracy as a system of government. The only prominent organization I know of that openly questions democracy as un-Islamic is Hizb-ut-Tahrir, although this is the creed of almost all of the underground, militant organizations. Support for a non-democratic state based on Sharia law is more or less non-existent in Bangladesh as of today.

Current Situation

Bangladesh is currently being ruled by an army-backed interim government which has pledged to hold national elections by the end of this year and which is also conducting a high-profile anti-crime and anti-corruption drive which is aimed at removing the corrupt and the criminal from politics and to decimate the power of the two existing top political parties, the BNP and AL.

Jl (as well as the other Islamist parties) has been conspicuously absent from the anti-crime and corruption drives, and although some of its leaders have been caught up in the dragnet, it has managed to largely remain free of close scrutiny. It is clear that the party and Islamists in general are receiving preferential and protective treatment at the hands of the current authorities, who seem hesitant to move against them with the energy expended on the top two parties or other secular opposition.

In a troubling show of strength, the Jl and other Islamists have been allowed to create mayhem with impunity in the streets, even during the ongoing state of emergency, on more than one occasion. The current government appears to be either unwilling or unable to crack down on the Islamist

opposition in the same way it has against the AL and BNP.

This is nothing new. From time immemorial, non-elected regimes in the Muslim world have chosen to target secular opposition only.

Time and again, it is the Islamists who are left untouched and use the opportunity to strengthen and consolidate. Time and again it is the Islamists, who, by remaining untouched, rise to the fore-front of the democratic opposition. Time and again, it is they, promising social justice and equality and freedom from corruption, who step authoritatively into the void created by non-democratic rule.

This could be the moment that the Islamists have been waiting for these past thirty-seven years. They have never risen to 10 per cent in the polls, but with their secular rivals discredited and their leadership and party apparatus more or less unscathed, they could emerge as serious players in the next elections.

If the main political parties are decimated and the Islamists are left intact then there will be a massive power vacuum that they will sweep in to fill. This is elementary history. It has happened again and again the length and breadth of the Muslim world.

Future of Islamism

I think that it would be a worthwhile exercise to look a little more closely at the religious impulse in Bangladesh, specifically among Muslims, instead of dismissing political Islam as the ideology of fanatics and fundamentalists that has no hope of gaining popularity among the general public.

The first thing to note is that right now, with Islam perceived to be under threat around the world, many Muslims are experiencing a resurgence of faith, and feel that they must publicly identify with and rally around their besieged religion. With the neo-colonial and neo-imperialist ambitions of the West apparently running rough-shod over the world in which their voice has been silenced to a whisper, many Muslims are going to be looking for an alternative view of the world to that espoused by the neo-cons and their supporters in the White House.

In the context of Bangladesh, you don't have to be religious to believe that things have long been heading in the wrong direction, that public and private morality is at an all-time low, and that perhaps a complete cleansing of

the system and a new start is the only solution. After all, what solutions do the mainstream parties have to the wrongs and injustices that we see entrenched all around us? The Islamists, at least, for what it is worth, have a solution. They have a prescription for what needs to be done. They have a vision for the future. They claim to be able to cleanse the system of its immorality. They profess an egalitarian vision which will offer hope and opportunity to all. They speak to and for the dispossessed. They have a strategy for Bangladesh to gain respect and recognition on the world stage.

In an ironic sense, the Islamists are the new communists. There is always going to be a strong anti-western constituency in the country that is implacably opposed to the rampant forces of neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism. It used to be the communists and leftists who spoke the language of these people, but who is speaking to this constituency today except the Islamists?

Thus there remain significant opportunities for Islamists in Bangladesh to continue to gain ground. With the leading secular parties in severe trouble due to the crack down on them as well as public disenchantment due to their record of corruption and ineffective governance, with the mainstream political parties' inability to articulate anything even resembling a vision for the future of the country or policies that would address issues of poverty, marginalization, and dispossession of the country's rural and urban poor, with the society becoming more overtly religiously observant as a result of both internal and external forces, and with opportunities for partnership available with both the armed forces and the mainstream political parties, the potential for Islamists to expand their sphere of influence is considerable.

Indeed, while it seems certain that prolonged army-backed rule or even direct army rule would help to consolidate the position of Islamists in the polity, the JI, at least, remains a significant player in the democratic political sphere as well. The 4 party alliance with the BNP (and 2 smaller parties) remains intact, and any resurgence of the right-wing political forces in Bangladesh would necessarily return them to their previous position of power and influence.

Conclusion

I do not believe that the absence or presence of democracy per se will necessarily affect the rise of Islamism in Bangladesh. Islamism's rise is predi-

cated primarily on the failure of successive government, both elected and unelected, to fail to provide decent governance and opportunities for the citizens of the country. To the extent that secular or military alternatives continue to come up short, we can expect the Islamists to continue to gain strength.

It is important to note, however, that thus far, Islamism has shown no real strength at the ballot box. Its influence is disproportionate to its actual popularity. But such is the first-past-the-post system and the opportunism of Bangladeshi politics that Islamists are able to retain such disproportionate power even during times of democracy.

Islamism in Bangladesh can thus be understood to be a top-down and not a bottom-up phenomena. Without support and sponsorship from the government of the day it has never flourished.

In addition, political Islam and the Islamization of society (by which I mean the increasing identification of Islam as a central component of individual and national identity) has received strong financial and organizational support from outside the country.

It is important to note that the Wahhabized Islam that is pushed by the Islamists is at odds with the more syncretic liberal strain of indigenous Islam that is followed by the majority of Bangladeshi Muslims. There is nothing authentic or indigenous about the values and behavioral codes that are enforced by political Islam.

Finally, no discussion of the rise of political Islam in Bangladesh (or elsewhere) is complete without an analysis of the impact of the foreign policy/security imperatives of countries such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the US. As such, the continued rise of political Islam is at least as dependent on global politics as it is on events within our borders.***

On Safia Siddiqi and Other Afghan Women

WOMEN'S WORK IN AFGHANISTAN¹

ELIZABETH RUBIN

After bumping along five hours of potholes and rock-strewn mountain switchbacks on the main commercial artery from Kabul to Pakistan early last month, I was surprised as we entered the Jalalabad Valley to see an enormous campaign poster, the size of a Times Square billboard, featuring not the boyish face of Hazrat Ali -- Jalalabad's most famous ex-warlord and a parliamentary candidate -- but that of Safia Siddiqi. It's striking enough that a woman would appear so boldly in such a poster in a city where women still do not appear in public without a burka -- more striking still that she was wrapped in a shawl made from the green, black and red of the Afghan flag. These colorful, patriotic images of Siddiqi also loomed over the streets of Jalalabad itself, offering a lush kind of hope for its residents. But Jalalabad is still a place dominated by Pashtunwali, the customary law that regulates life throughout the Pashtun belt (the eastern and southern half of Afghanistan). The Pashtun code is based on the values of honor, sanctuary, solidarity, shame and revenge, and it treats women as property. In such a place, how much difference can a few female politicians really make? Many Afghans question all the fuss over elections, and the \$150 mil-

¹ This article was first published as "Women's Work," *The New York Times*, October 9, 2005.

lion expense, when, after three and a half years of American and international efforts, they still have few roads, unclean water and crumbling schools. And still every 30 minutes an Afghan woman dies in childbirth.

The image of Afghan women is easily reduced to stereotypes. At one extreme is the hidden, voiceless, blue-burkaed cloud floating through the dusty streets behind her turbaned man. At the other is the endangered young feminist firing off a tirade against warlords. Both exist, but reality is mostly between the extremes. If nothing else, perhaps women in Parliament - by law, 68 seats of 249 are reserved for women - will begin to demolish these caricatures.

In her rebelliousness, Siddiqi reflects a quality of Pashtun women that lives in the poetic memory of eastern and southern Afghanistan and was archived in a small book of women's poetry collected and edited by Sayd Bahodine Majrouh, one of Afghanistan's most revered modern poets. A dean of literature at Kabul University, a former governor of Kapisa Province, Majrouh, at age 59 in 1988, was assassinated in Peshawar, Pakistan, where the various mujahedeen factions fighting the Soviet Union were based. Shortly before his murder, Majrouh went through refugee camps in Pakistan to collect *landays*: simple two-line cries of emotion, usually recited by women to women at the river or the well or at wedding parties. They are physical and brutal, passionate and direct. One that was recited to me on a few occasions last month was almost a threat to the beloved. It shows how embedded is the tribal sense of honor for both men and women: "If you do not have a wound in the center of your chest/I shall remain indifferent, even if your back is riddled like a sieve with holes."

The women who composed and shared these poems, Majrouh wrote, "feel repressed, scorned and thought of as second-rate human beings. From the cradle on, they are received with sadness and shame. . . The father who learns of such an unwelcome arrival seems to go into mourning, whereas he gives a party and fires off a salvo of gunshots at the birth of a boy. Later, and without ever being consulted, the little girl becomes monetary exchange between families of the same clan." Majrouh, in exile among the hostile mujahedeen, seemed to identify with the anguish of Pashtun women. And he identified with their means of defiance - the *landays*. They could be cries of despair: "Cruel people, who see how an old man leads me to his bed/And you ask why I weep and tear out my hair!" They could also be bold and desirous: "Give me your hand, my love, and let us go into the fields/So we can love each other or fall together beneath the blows of knives."

Safia Siddiqi has taken the boldness of the landays into both in politics and poetry. At a reading last year in Kandahar, attended more by men than women, she read from a poem of hers called "I Am Telling the Truth." In it the poet addresses her lover, saying she wants to "smother you with kisses/To put you in the swing of my lap/And to cover you/With the wings of my hair."

Siddiqi has always enjoyed the spotlight and ached when it dimmed. She was born to a family of judges and religious scholars. Reared in the village of Nazarabad, just outside Jalalabad, she was taught at home and in Koran classes next door at the corner mosque. The Soviet invasion destroyed Nazarabad's village tranquillity, and the family was uprooted to Kabul. Siddiqi began tailoring at night near her house to supplement her father's reduced income. By 11th grade she had published a poetry collection, "Veil," in which the chador became a metaphor for protection not just from strange men but also from the Soviet invaders. Siddiqi went to law school and was energized by the artistic and intellectual life of the university.

"It was the peak time for women's liberty," she told me. It all ended abruptly. The Communists were pressuring people like her to join the party. "They were afraid of me at my college," she said. "My education. My books." Her father decided to send the family to Pakistan. "And there I was accused by the Islamists of being a Communist," she said. "They wanted to kill me. It was Hekmatyar's party" -- the Hezb-i-Islami, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar -- "with those women in Saudi black burkas. And I hate those black burkas to this day."

Yet she had to wear one herself. In Pakistan, she had no name, no degree, no poetry. She was just a poor refugee, and it made her crazy. She began to work at an entry-level job for an N.G.O., forced herself to learn English and rose in the ranks. Prominence attracted more threats, particularly from the Taliban after they captured Kabul in 1996. She wrote poetry of angry self-assertion and exploration. "Who am I?" begins one poem. "Am I a nomad? . . . No I'm not a nomad, nor a refugee/ They are much better than me." Siddiqi also wrote: "When I'm walking down the street, the people watch me/ Disrespectfully and surprisingly/Watch me,/They are talking and saying/'Who is this lout?/Who is she?/Whose daughter is she?/Whose sister is she?/Whose wife is she?' Oh! Allah, is it honor?"

"We had such a bad life in Pakistan as educated women because they never accepted our raising our voice," she told me. She formed a small group

of activist women and eventually emigrated to Canada, where she met -- quite late by Afghan standards -- her husband, Asif Safi, an artist and journalist. He cuts an unusual figure in the Afghan landscape in his goth get-up: black wool pakool, black tunic, black baggy trousers, black shoes and long black hair. He's in charge of Siddiqi's security, and he is paranoid, with good reason. Already last year, when she and Safi were consulting for the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Siddiqi was attacked in a tough tribal region. Now that she was campaigning, she would have to go back.

At the end of 2001, just after the Taliban scattered from their Kandahari stronghold, I received a strange proposal from Mullah Abdul Salaam, known as Rocketi, a neckless barrel of a Taliban commander. He was hiding in a remote village in Zabul, a province of sand dunes, camels and abandoned mud forts, peopled by suspicious men with thick kohl painted around their eyes and a taste for burning down girls' schools. Rocketi was wanted by the Americans. He had been the Taliban corps commander of Jalalabad - not because he was in love with the Taliban but because all he really knew how to do was wage jihad and fire rockets (thus the nickname). He showed me his Stinger missiles, stashed away in a barn, and asked me to help him deliver them to the Americans in exchange for amnesty. I told him it was impossible. The next day he was forced to trust a man he didn't trust, Ismail Gailani, who is from one of the most respected religious families in Afghanistan. Rocketi tried to hide out in the mountains for a time but eventually landed in an American-run prison.

That is why I was so surprised when I found him in Kabul this summer, in a fine black tunic and a long silver-and-black turban, on his way to the Afghan television studios to record a campaign ad for himself. He was run-

A campaign worker reads a poster of Siddiqi to be displayed at a rally in Jalalabad, three days before the Sept. 18 elections in Afghanistan. By law, women are guaranteed 68 of the 249 seats in the new Parliament. Credit: Stephanie Sinclair/Corbis, for *The New York Times* (October 5, 2005).

As in any political campaign, the stump speech must match the audience. When addressing men, Khogiani steers away from challenging tradition and appeals instead to the pride of Pashtuns. Credit: Stephanie Sinclair/Corbis, for *The New York Times* (October 5, 2005)



ning for Parliament, he said, on a simple platform: "I say that I love all God's people." That's it? "If you promise a lot and do a little, that is not delicious," he told me. "But if you promise a little and do a lot, it will be very, very delicious." His smile soon turned to a frown, however, as he contemplated his chief misfortune: "No matter how much I respect humanity and how great a person I am, my name still misrepresents me."

Yet despite, or perhaps because of, his nickname, Rocketi's chances for winning a seat in Parliament were excellent. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission tried to force the adoption of an affidavit whereby candidates would have to pledge that they were never involved in any war crimes or drug dealing. "It was never included," said Ahmad Nader Nadery, one of the commission's more outspoken members, when I went to see him shortly after meeting Rocketi. "All that was left in the affidavit is that 'you are not in an armed group now.' " So any commanders under suspicion simply turned in some weapons. Ultimately just a few dozen candidates were disqualified on the basis of arms. Nadery said that although warlords are a small proportion of the candidates, they were overshadowing the process. Which makes sense. Who, after all, has been running Afghanistan for the past 25 years? Many Afghans understandably wonder whether such elections aren't intended to show "progress" in nation building - and give the United States a way out.

On the western outskirts of Kabul, in a neighborhood still scarred by the mujahedeen rockets that tore apart Kabul during the civil war 10 years ago, Shukria Barakzai stepped from a silver Mercedes to greet a few dozen women waiting for her in the garden of a neighborhood elder. Though she's one of Kabul's higher-profile women -- she started a newspaper called Women's Mirror shortly after the Taliban fell and often appears on political talk shows in bright, translucent headscarves and high-heeled, pointy pink or ivory shoes -- on this day she had the air of a schoolgirl breaking taboos. A few days earlier, at the official start of campaign season, she took an unprecedented move for Afghan women and went wading through a crowded bazaar to address men and women, shopkeepers and taxi drivers and the police. She was thrilled by it. She also must have enjoyed the fact that it irritated her husband, and that there was nothing he could do about it.

Like an Afghan version of a Tracy-Hepburn movie, both Barakzai and her husband were running for Parliament. And the tension was palpable between them - two years ago, when she was battling warlords as a delegate to

the *loya jirga*, or grand assembly, convened to agree on a constitution, she heard that he had taken a second wife. Her friends at women's organizations wanted to take to the streets to protest the laws that allow men to take up to four wives. Barakzai refused. She decided to ride out the change, instead, and in the process grow more familiar with the lives of ordinary Afghan women. During the campaign she mocked her husband's tactics. As a millionaire, she said, "he doesn't have to do anything except have big lunches for people in trade halls." (He made his fortune as an exporter.) She teased that he liked it that way because he is uncomfortable with public speaking. So, unlike Shukria - who had not hung up any posters yet, preferring radio and TV appearances and the woman-on-the-street approach - her husband had his team plaster a photograph of himself in a suit and tie, with a horse as his voting emblem, all over the trees and billboards and shop windows of Kabul.

The women waiting to hear Barakzai beneath the grapevine canopies were illiterate. The neighborhood still had no power, no roads and no buses to take anyone to work if there was any work to be had. The odor of open sewage wafted through the streets and gardens. Some women told Barakzai that their husbands wouldn't let them get their voting-registration cards. One said to me, "This is Afghanistan, and the men are rotten-natured," and a chorus of laughter ensued. Unimaginable cruelty had been meted out in this neighborhood just 10 years ago. The women remembered it vividly. One woman had lost 17 members of her family. These women were mystified that the same people who "fried us in oil and pounded nails in our heads" were in power, running for Parliament. Even worse, said one woman with a laugh, "people will vote for them."

Barakzai told them to vote for women instead. Otherwise, "the Mujahedeen leaders will suffocate us," she said. "But they won't be able to oppress you with a strong female voice in the Parliament." This was campaign-trail chatter, though; in private, she admitted that everything depended on the quality of the women elected. Many female candidates were put up by husbands whose records, even by Rocketi standards, were too tarnished. Others were put up by the Islamist parties.

Barakzai hauled herself up onto the bed of a pickup and addressed a crowd of young men. When one of them told me he was going to vote for the mullah Sayyaf because he had served his country all these years, an old woman from behind the mesh of her burka said: "Oh, you're a good one. We're wait-

ing like beggars for wheat because of the service of people like him.”

Having lived through the civil war, through Taliban rule, through the complicated compromises she observed and participated in as a delegate to the constitutional loya jirga, Barakzai was realistic about the composition of Afghan society. And she was realistic about an American policy that still supported the old commanders in the belief that inclusion was the best way to preserve stability in Afghanistan. “Of course, 75 percent of our Parliament will be commanders and drug lords,” she told me. “But, on the other hand, it’s a kind of pluralism of the last three decades. And some people say it’s better they are all coming together.”

When a news report said that U.S. soldiers were desecrating the Koran at Guantánamo, thousands of enraged men marched through Jalalabad’s streets, torched government buildings, the Pakistani consulate and foreign aid agencies, chanted “death to America” and burned an effigy of President Bush.

In the parliamentary campaign, this same spirit manifested itself in a political allergy to the rhetoric of human rights, women’s rights and all Western-sounding values. Anti-human-rights rhetoric also makes for good old-fashioned politicking, the kind that easily rouses the emotions of men, reminding them of the simpler days of jihad against the Soviets, when the mujahedeen were somehow heroes of both the Islamic and the Western worlds, and even seen as fighting for human rights - not as war criminals or the followers of war criminals.

At a sunbaked rally for the ex-commander Hazrat Ali, a white-haired, long-bearded blind mullah energized the crowd when he took to the podium and began cursing human rights. “The Koran says women cannot ask for divorce,” he cried, “whereas human rights say women should ask for divorce! In the name of human rights we are told to release fornicators and thieves from prison. We know anyone who steals should have his hand cut off. Human rights says, ‘No.’ You should vote for someone who can fight all those who want to bring human rights law in Islamic law. We need a Moses to save us, and that is Hazrat Ali.” A great rumbling and clapping ensued.

The women of Jalalabad understand the mentality they are up against. Safia Siddiqi and her leading female rival, Saima Khogiani, do not pepper their speeches with talk of women’s rights or changing traditions. They speak of the honor of the Pashtun woman, and of how the Pashtuns respect their women. They warn the men of the dangers of succumbing to the bribes of old

warlords and rich, lying candidates. They offer the service of their clean past. And they play on the pride of the Pashtun.

When I first met Saima Khogiani, a 34-year-old former schoolteacher, she was sitting cross-legged, curled over herself, on the floor of the crumbling Jalalabadi house she'd rented for her campaign offices. She peered at me from beneath the brown embroidery of a black wool scarf. She was rough and defensive, armored with a sardonic smirk. Khogiani faced the ire of her local mullahs when she first decided to run for office. Her uncles wouldn't speak to her. But she insisted and - despite the curse of one mullah, who warned that the people would be sending 12 generations of their ancestors to hell if they voted for her - the men were turning up to check her out and offer support in return for assistance. She had a small army of some 15 male cousins who stayed with her and decided where she could campaign. She was the only woman in the entire family who was allowed to meet with men. "This one," a cousin said, pointing to Khogiani's gregarious young niece, "will be banned from the men's room in two years." The young niece pouted. Then she said she didn't care because she was going to become a doctor.

But at a campaign stop up in the mountains, in a settlement of salmon-colored mud-and-straw houses, the women were uninterested in women's rights. After reciting a landay about perpetual poverty, one woman was urged by the others to tell Khogiani about their opium problem. "We know it's not good for Afghanistan, but it solved all our problems," she said. "It grows in drought, with almost no water. And it sells for a good price." The men vowed that they would plant poppies again this autumn, even under the threat of death. As Khogiani said, "The people lost their poppy, and the Americans and the government have not fulfilled their promises of an alternative-livelihoods program." The United States Agency for International Development has begun financing short-term projects - like clearing ditches - that local communities would have done anyway. It is not a true alternative, and while the farmers will lose their opium income, the governors, police chiefs and smugglers will simply traffic in opium grown elsewhere.

After returning to Afghanistan, Safia Siddiqi, like Shukria Barakzai, was a delegate to the constitutional loya jirga, where she spoke up to defend a young woman who had condemned the jihadis for their crimes against ordinary Afghans - then, for the sake of peace, urged the same young woman to apologize. Siddiqi understands politics well, as I saw when we drove out to

her home district of Surkhab, a 40-minute drive from Jalalabad. The village elders had all gathered in a leafy outdoor meeting ground and dragged along their young men, who could be heard grumbling on the sidelines about how bored they were of political campaigns. Siddiqi appealed to them as Pashtuns, pressing them not to accept money or food in exchange for their votes. She appealed to the male elders, recognizing the suffering of their community and the uselessness of succumbing to warlords. She was in the village of her uncles and cousins. They all knew her father, knew that she's the daughter of a judge. This was a village still without television, where all the children gather at night to hear an elder tell them the love story of Saiful Maluk, son of the king, and Badri Jamal, a fairy girl. The story can take three nights or longer. When Siddiqi invoked the elders, she was signaling that she understood that they will decide who gets the votes; most likely it would be her. This is how politics works in the countryside. Siddiqi wrapped up her speech with another effort at tribal bonding: "You and I are Pashtuns. We appreciate and respect women more than the others. And I will not be able to talk as freely to others as I do to you."

Still, when she did speak to others - for example, educated women in Jalalabad at the government's Department of Public Works - her tone was markedly different. "Our men are uneducated," she told them. "Our women don't have jobs. And when you go out, everyone stares at you. If you remove your chador, everyone will call you a bad woman. The girl who should go to school is getting tailoring education because she has to make money for her family. Our kids should go to school, have teachers even at home. Should we vote for someone who intimidates or stops women from going to school? They want to make us scared of everything so we stay at home and out of politics. But we want to help the culture. Who was Malalai?" Siddiqi was referring to the 19th-century Pashtun heroine who braved British guns to raise the Afghan flag. "She was a woman. A hero of our country. The reason we don't have any other Malalai is because we have people who won't allow us to go to school."

As if on cue, a teacher interrupted and said: "Prove to us that the rights of men and women are the same in Islam. Because the men are saying: 'Don't vote for women. It's not Koranic. It's only the command of Bush's wife, Laura, that women are candidates.'" "

A few days later, Siddiqi made the mistake of accepting an invitation to the most remote region of Khogiani, Saima Khogiani's tribal base. It's a place

of lurking Taliban, where roadside bombs are now commonplace and people joke that the women have to do most of the work because the men are all hiding from blood feuds. Siddiqi delivered her speech to hundreds. Then, just as they were rolling out of the village, rockets and grenades and rifle fire hit her convoy. A few of the police officers in the leading car were wounded. Siddiqi lay with her brother on the ground and then walked for hours to escape from the village.

Yet a week later, when most of the female candidates were lying low, ordered by their families to campaign only at home by receiving visitors, Siddiqi rallied for one last splashy trip through the bazaar of Jalalabad. In a coasting S.U.V. she popped out of the sunroof and addressed the crowd through a loudspeaker. Men followed her progress in mild horror. "Look at this cow out of the car," one shopkeeper said. "Isn't she ashamed to wander through the bazaar?" another said. But no, she wasn't, and as she passed though Pashtunistan Square she confronted the people of Nangarhar with her promises and her questions. "This was the second attack that happened to me here" - the first was last year. "Did I kill someone? Did I steal something? Are my hands red with blood? Why did you take the weapon to kill me? It is not in our culture to kill a woman without reason." She thanked the crowd for their support. Then her husband jumped in to dispel the rumors that he was in fact a Hollywood actor, not a real Afghan Muslim. Children read poetry. The Koran was recited. And on election day, Siddiqi donned her Afghan flag chador and voted.

It was a strange day. The turnout in Nangarhar, as elsewhere, was very low. One Afghan woman I met, who worked for an N.G.O., told me that when she tried to urge women to decide for themselves, not to be under the influence of their men, they told her, "Why shouldn't we listen to our husbands and brothers? You are a *kafir*" - an infidel - "you've been with all these foreigners so long!" A woman who was voting for Siddiqi explained, "My owner told me to." "Your owner?" I asked. "Yes. Mullah Abdul Rahim. Our husband is our owner."

Early returns showed Siddiqi, Khogiani, Barakzai and Rocketi all headed for Parliament. Although the returns were incomplete, initial counts even had Siddiqi ahead of Hazrat Ali.

A few days after the elections, I drove out of Jalalabad along the Kunar River through acres of brown sea-turtle-size stones that gave way to unexpectedly lush fields. I was looking for the father of Khalida, a young woman I'd met in a hospital. She had thrown kerosene from a lamp upon herself, lighted a match and tried to die. She was reed-thin, with burns from her face to her toes. She had little feeling left. But she was upset by what she saw in the little mirror her sister gave her. She wanted to speak and managed to get a few words out in spurts: "My father is an old man"; "We are poor"; "I have two little brothers, one is mad"; "My husband was 35, and he was good to me at first." She was 15 when they were married. Her price was small - 50,000 rupees, just under \$1,000. For whatever reason, perhaps poverty, perhaps jealousy or frustration, her in-laws began to beat her while her husband was away working as a driver in Saudi Arabia. They complained to her husband that she was doing bad work - and when he returned to their home, he began to beat her, too. After five years, with a 3-year-old daughter, she couldn't bear it any longer. "That day my father-in-law hit my head with a brick"; she crawled away and found the kerosene lamp.

When her father-in-law discovered her, he kept her for some 20 days on a bed without a mattress next to the cows. The filth and the flies infected her wounds. Her suffering and her story, told in the stifling heat of the hospital, was like so many others and would end, a week later, with her death.

In his collection of women's landays, the poet Majrouh wrote that in the face of a life of perpetual inferiority and humiliation - "even her husband does not stoop so low as to eat with her" - what is the Pashtun woman's reaction? Submission. Duties performed like clockwork. Acceptance and suffering. "Yet," he wrote, "if one takes a slightly closer look, it turns out that in her innermost self the Pashtun woman is indignant and skeptical, feeding her rebellion. From this deep-seated and hidden protest that grows more resistant with every passing day, she comes out with only two forms of evidence in the end - her suicide and her song."

He wrote that the tribal code of honor considers suicide a cowardly act, and the Pashtun male will never resort to it. In his time the two methods women used were poison or drowning. Today, Sharifa Shahab, a tireless young woman from the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, who has worked in Herat, Kabul and now Jalalabad, has found that women tend to choose poison or self-immolation. It was Majrouh's conviction that the songs

of Afghan women challenge the society in a similar way as their suicides, by glorifying three themes that taste of blood - love, honor and death. "By eliminating herself in such an accursed way," he wrote, "a woman thus tragically proclaims her hatred of the community's law."

I don't know what exactly I hoped to find by tracking down Khalida's father out in his wind-swept village. He was a short way from the cemetery where he buried his daughter and, before that, his mad son, whom Khalida never knew was dead. Certainly I did not expect the depth of the man's wretchedness. "I thought a mullah" - Khalida's father-in-law - "would be a good person to take care of my daughter," he said. "I was wrong. He had no sympathy." He wept so hard I thought his fragile frame would snap.

What I did find in this man, who had spent most of his life as a shoemaker in Pakistan and now, in his old age, would often travel the eight hours to Kabul to seek work in the bazaar as a laborer, was precisely what Majrouh had surmised lay in the innermost self of the Pashtun woman - a wild rage and hatred of the community's law.

I also found a surprising belief that telling the story of his daughter's demise and her in-laws' malevolence might somehow help prevent such things from happening again and prevent Khalida's husband from getting another wife. What the father wanted was justice. He didn't know how a jirga - the assembly of elders who settle disputes - could deliver that, given the many months that his in-laws, who were also his cousins, had been able to get away with torturing his daughter. "By the human rights commission," he said, "we will find them and bring them to court."

SHARIFA SHAHAB has less faith than Khalida's grieving father that the government will be the place to resolve the issues of abuse of women. As she said to me one night: "How can we trust the government to do anything when all the warlords are in government? Dostum" -- an indestructible warlord from Mazar-i-Sharif -- "burned my house down during the civil war because my father was against the Communists. Ismail Khan" -- formerly governor of Herat, still power broker there and minister of water and power -- "had his men assault my son because I tried to set up a women's council without his permission. Khalili" -- Abdul Karim Khalili, currently a vice president - "captured all

my father's lands. And in Jalalabad, I had an official letter that we are sure is from the old governor saying I better leave Jalalabad because I was trying to change the religion of the people by working on women's issues."

And then Shahab told me the story of two wives who were recently killed. Two men exchanged their sisters so they could avoid the high price of a proper bride. One of the men killed his wife the first night, accusing her of having had sexual relations before marriage. When the news arrived in the other village, the other man brought his wife -- the other man's sister -- and made her walk around the grave; he cut her hands and feet off and killed her on the grave of the other girl. "Why? I asked him, and he said, 'He killed my sister; I had to,'" Shahab told me. "The government forgave the murderers because the jirga forgave them, and the jirga is higher than the law." So she will not wait for the government or any electoral miracle to intervene. Instead, she's creating women's jirgas, using Afghan traditions to bring about change. "Otherwise, I am totally alone here," she said.

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A Useful and Necessary Synthesis

THE ISLAMICITY OF INDONESIAN PANCASILA

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI

Introduction

Indonesia achieved her independence on Friday, 17 August 1945. Prior to that, the archipelago was colonised by the Dutch, from the late 16th century to the early 1940s, when the Japanese occupation began. Today, independent Indonesia is the largest archipelago in the world, with about 14,000 islands, large and small, inhabited and uninhabited, stretching between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. It shares borders with East Timor to the south (228 km), Malaysia to the north (1,782 km), and Papua New Guinea to the west (820 km). As of July 2007, Indonesia's population was an estimated 241,973,879, making it the fourth most populous country in the world. Its people comprise around 300 ethnic groups, the majority being Javanese (45%), followed by Sundanese (14%), Madurese (7.5%), and coastal Malays (7.5%). Although Indonesian is its national language, there are about 583 languages and dialects spoken in the country. Given these facts, it is little wonder that today's Indonesians are proud of their country's motto: Unity in Diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*).

In terms of religion, Indonesia is also one of the most plural societies in the world. While majority Muslim (88%), there are also Protestants (5%), Roman Catholics (3%), Hindus (2%), and Buddhists (1%), as well as followers of other beliefs (1%). Since the partition of India and Pakistan in 1948, Indonesia has been the largest Muslim country in the world. But religiously and ideologically, it is not an Islamic state like Iran, Saudi Arabia or

Sudan. It is a state based on a national ideology called Pancasila or the Five Principles. These five principles are belief in one supreme god; a just and civilised humanity; the unity of Indonesia; democracy; and social justice.

Indonesians, therefore, generally describe their country not as a theocratic state or secular state, but as a Pancasila state. For those who are not familiar with the nation's ideology, to say that a state is neither secular nor theocratic may sound absurd. But that is precisely how most, if not all, Indonesians describe their country in terms of its ideology – and they are proud of it. Given Indonesia's religious pluralism, they believe that Pancasila is a useful and necessary synthesis for maintaining the country's unity. They believe that no one religion should be the ideological or constitutional basis of the state, but rather that religion should be its ethical, moral and spiritual basis. In other words, in Indonesia, we believe that religion is important, even essential; but that theocracy is not an option.

This belief is shared by most, if not all, Indonesia Muslims, who represent the dominant religious group in the country. Both Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta, the country's founding fathers, and its first President and Vice-President, were Muslims. Despite intense pressure from several Muslim leaders, activists, and politicians before independence to make Islam the basis of the future state ideology, Sukarno and Hatta stood firm and confident in their decision that the country should not be based on any particular religious ideology, including Islam, because of its divisive potential. And perhaps more importantly, the two founding fathers were able to convince other Muslim actors to accept and support this wisdom; in fact, it was Sukarno himself who was the creator of Pancasila. It is for this reason that Alamsjah Ratuprawiranegara, a former Indonesian Minister for Religious Affairs, once quite correctly claimed that Pancasila was a Muslim's gift to the entire nation. So, we thank Sukarno and Hatta for their leadership – and we certainly thank God that their legacy remains intact today.

But how and why was this so-called Pancasila state possible in the first place? What are the benefits of having Pancasila as the state ideology? Do Indonesian Muslims accept Pancasila as the state ideology? What are the Islamic arguments made by Indonesian Muslim leaders and scholars to support its acceptance? This essay will discuss these issues.

The first section sketches the historical debate among Muslim leaders, activists, and politicians on the relationship between Islam and nationalism,

including the place of Pancasila as the state ideology in this relationship, before and shortly after the country's independence. This is followed by discussion of the fate of Pancasila during the Sukarno and Suharto presidencies, crucial periods during which there were challenges and threats to this state ideology. The paper concludes with further elaboration of the Islamic arguments made more recently by contemporary Muslim leaders and intellectuals in support of the acceptance of Pancasila as our state ideology.

Religious, but not Theocratic: The Islamisation of Pancasila

The relationship between Islam and politics in Indonesia has a long tradition. In short, Islam was an integral part of the formation of the Indonesian state and, later, its nation-building. Indonesian Muslim support of nationalism during the colonial period has been well-documented, by both Indonesian and foreign historians. One of its strongest expressions of support was the emergence of Islamic Unity (*Sarekat Islam* or SI) in 1911, which later became the first nationalist political organisation in the Dutch Indies. Notably, under the charismatic leadership of Haji Oemar Said Tjokroaminoto, SI pioneered the development of political programs demanding Indonesia's independence from the Dutch. In Ruth McVey's words, SI formed "the centre of the Indonesian national awakening".¹

Another instance of Muslim support for Indonesian nationalism was that provided by the leaders of the traditionalist Muslim organisation called the Ulama Awakening (*Nahdhatul Ulama* or NU). Following the Dutch attempt to re-colonise the country shortly after the proclamation of independence in 1945, the NU ulama declared the so-called 'Jihad Resolution', which was backed by a religious edict issued by K.H. Wahid Hasyim, the highest ranking NU official at that time. This edict stated that to fight against the Dutch was a personal religious obligation (*fardh 'ayn*) for all Muslims in the country. It was this Jihad Resolution that fuelled Muslim anti-colonial feeling in the heroic Battle of Surabaya on 10 November 1945, which is now commemorated as Heroes' Day in Indonesia.

¹ Ruth McVey, "Faith as the Outsider: Islam in Indonesian Politics", in James Piscatory (ed.), *Islam in the Political Process* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 200.

Almost at the same time, however, intellectual debate on the relationship between Islam and nationalism began to emerge among Indonesian Muslim leaders, activists, and politicians. And with the day of independence fast approaching, the debate heated, and its ramifications expanded into the debate on the state ideology. In this debate, which had started back in the early thirties, Muslim leaders, activists, and politicians were broadly divided into two camps: the nationalists and the Islamists. While the former argued that nationalism was in keeping with the spirit of Islamic teachings, and proposed that the future Indonesia be a secular state; the latter saw the danger in a chauvinistic form of nationalism, and demanded that the nation be an Islamic state². It is important to note here that the founding fathers, Sukarno and Hatta, were two of the major players in the nationalist camp: they believed that while religion should play important role in the country, Indonesia could not be a theocratic state.

Initially, the debate centred almost entirely on the nature of nationalism. In an effort to unite all groups in the country to achieve independence, Sukarno broadly defined nationalism as “the feeling of love for a country, the readiness to sacrifice oneself for a country, and the willingness to put aside narrow group-interests”. Elsewhere, he wrote that “nationalism is a belief and realisation of people that they are united in a single group, a nation”. In short, he saw nothing incompatible between Islam and nationalism. For Islamic leaders and activists such as SI leader Agus Salim, Sukarno’s conception of nationalism seemed to place it on an equal footing with religion, and was therefore unacceptable. If the concept was to be adopted, he maintained, it would “enslave people and make them country idolaters”. For that reason, Salim strongly recommended that nationalism be framed in terms of “our service to God”. And following this logic, Salim argued, Islam must take priority over nationalism.³

The debate developed in more detail during the sessions of the Committee for the Preparation of Indonesian Independence (*Panitia Persiapan Ke-*

² A rich presentation of the debates during this period is given in Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900-1942* (Singapore and Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973) and B.J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971).

³ The quotes are taken from Bahtiar Effendy, *Islam dan Negara: Transformasi Pemikiran dan Praktik Politik Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta, Paramadina, 1998), pp. 70-71.

merdekaan Indonesia or PPKI). As Anthony Reid notes in his study of the Indonesian revolution, the representatives of the Islamists on the PPKI had “always argued the need for a Muslim state in which religious law would be enforceable”.⁴

These issues were also debated during the meetings of the Advisory Council, the body responsible for providing answers to the Japanese administration’s questions on issues related to Islamic affairs. Here, the debate expanded into issues as detailed as whether the future Indonesian president should be a Muslim, whether or not Islam ought to be the state religion, the necessity of establishing the state apparatus and agencies relevant for the implementation of Islamic law or Sharia, and the possibility of Friday being the day off instead of Sunday.

During the sessions of PPKI, which convened from late May to mid August 1945, fully-fledged debate of these issues ensued. In his telling memoir, Hatta recalled that when the sessions began, the majority of the members were reluctant to answer directly the question raised in the chairman’s opening address: “What will be the foundation of the state that we are about to shape?”⁵ In other words: If Islam was not to be the basis, what was the alternative? The entire debate was a too complex to be summed up just in a few words, but it is fair to say that Sukarno’s and Salim’s opinions, as outlined above, broadly represented those of the nationalists and Islamists.

Here, Pancasila emerged as a *modus vivendi* that bridged the gap between the two groups; a useful and necessary synthesis by which both groups felt that their positions were satisfactorily represented, at least in the interim. It all began with Sukarno’s elaboration of his position on nationalism. In an attempt to answer his critics, Sukarno stated that the nationalism he proposed “was not jingoistic or chauvinistic nationalism, nor was it a replication or imitation of the Western form of nationalism”. He added that the nationalism he envisaged was a tolerant, Eastern-style nationalism; not the aggressive European kind. He further claimed that it was this form of nationalism that made the Indonesian people “God’s tools”; what gave them “spirit”.⁶

But the real breakthrough in the debate came only after Sukarno gave his famous “Pancasila Speech” of 1 June 1945, in which he proposed that

⁴ Anthony Reid, *Indonesian National Revolution: 1945-1950* (Melbourne: Longman, 1974), p. 20.

⁵ Mohammad Hatta, *Memoir* (Jakarta: Tintamas Indonesia, 1979), p. 435.

⁶ See Effendy, *Islam dan Negara*, p. 74.

the state be based on “five basic principles,” which would later be known as Pancasila. The five principles, as stated at the time, were: nationalism (*kebangsaan*), humanitarianism (*internasionalisme* or *perikemanusiaan*), democracy (*mufakat* or *demokrasi*), social welfare (*kesejahteraan sosial*), and belief in God (*ketuhanan*). Sukarno hoped that this formula would be acceptable to the Muslims. He also openly warned them that if they wanted more, they were free to fight for that, through democratic channels. Because Pancasila had a broader appeal, Sukarno’s warning was well-heeded. In contrast to the Muslim leaders and politicians who insisted on an Islamic identity for the new state, Sukarno insisted on a culturally neutral identity, compatible with democratic or Marxist ideologies, and overarching the vast cultural differences of the heterogeneous population. Like the national language, Indonesian, which Sukarno also promoted, Pancasila did not originate from any particular ethnic or religious group, and was intended to define the basic values of an “Indonesian” political culture.

Hatta was not present at the fourth and final session when Sukarno delivered his speech on Pancasila. However, many years later, in 1975, when reviewing the committee’s deliberations, Hatta acknowledged that he had always approved of Pancasila. He pointed out that as long as belief in God was written into the basic principles of the state, the Islamic tenet that God must be at the centre of every Muslim’s activities was ensured. For Hatta, a devout Muslim and a son of an Islamic leader, “Belief in God is not just a way of respecting each other person’s creed, as was first suggested by Bung Karno [Sukarno], but it is a basic principle which leads towards truth, justice, goodness, honesty, and brotherhood”.⁷

It might be suggested here that, for Hatta, the broad concept of belief in God also provided an escape route from any obligation to support the appeal for an Islamic state. In one of the sessions of the Advisory Council, he clearly made this point when discussing the role of the Qur’an in contemporary society:

The Qur’an is, in essence, the basis of religion, not a book of law.
No regulation can be found in the Qur’an for contemporary legal

⁷ Mohammad Hatta, *Menuju Negara Hukum* (Jakarta: Yayasan Idayu, 1975), pp. 9-10. See also Mohammad Hatta, *Pengertian Pancasila* (Jakarta: Idayu Press, 1977), p. 28.

needs. ...Of course, the Qur'an establishes a basis for justice and welfare, which must be followed by Muslims. But this basis... is only a guiding goal. ...The people of the state themselves must establish law and order through mutual deliberation. Of course, every person will express his opinions based on his religious convictions. But the resulting law will be state law, not religious law. It may be that state law will much influenced by religious spirit. ... We will not establish a state with a separation of religion and state, but a separation of religious affairs and state affairs. If religious affairs are also handled by the state, then the religion will become a tool of the state... its eternal character will disappear. State affairs belong to all of us. The affairs of Islam are exclusively the affairs of the Islamic *ummah* and the Islamic community.⁸

This quote implies that Hatta positioned himself on the side of the nationalists: he rejected the idea of an Islamic state and proposed the creation of a national unitary state, in which affairs of state would be separate from affairs of religion. However, in spite of his strong preference for a national unitary state, he maintained that such a state would not be an irreligious one. In the later years of his life, reflecting on the opening session of the PPKI, Hatta recalled: "At that time, I said that if we established a free state, don't let us just have the same basis as European states; there is no need to repeat the history of Western countries and their conflict between religion and state".⁹

However, despite Hatta's support for Sukarno's Pancasila, the Muslim leaders in the committee were offended by the fact that Sukarno, in his speech, treated Islam as merely one religion among many.¹⁰ To bridge the gap between the Islamic and nationalist groups, a sub-committee was set up, whose members consisted of Sukarno, Hatta, Achmad Subardjo, Muhammad Yamin, Abikusno Tjokrosujoso, A. Kahar Muzakkir, Agus Salim, A. Wahid Hasyim,

⁸ This quote is taken from Daniel S. Lev, *Islamic Courts in Indonesia: A Study in the Political Bases of Legal Institutions* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1972), p. 40.

⁹ Mohammad Hatta, *Bung Hatta Menjawab*, 2nd edition (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1979), p. 89.

¹⁰ Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia*, pp. 21-22.

and A. A. Maramis.¹¹ This sub-committee drafted a gentlemen's agreement, which, in one centrally important passage, provided that Indonesia would be a republic founded not only on the basis of unity, a righteous and civilised humanity, democracy, and social justice, but also on the belief in God, "with the obligation for adherents of Islam to practice Sharia".

It was soon apparent that this formula was much easier to formulate than to sell. When the draft was again debated by the PPKI, the Islamists argued that it did not go far enough. For this reason, Wahid Hasyim of NU suggested that Islam be adopted as the state religion. He also suggested that only Muslims could be elected to the office of president or vice-president of the Republic. Pushing further in the direction of establishing Islam as the basis of the state, Ki Bagus Hadikusumo of Masjumi demanded that the theological principle be stated as "Belief in God with the obligation practice Sharia", without the condition that this was applicable only to Muslims. The nationalist group, particularly those of non-Islamic origins, strongly objected to this compromise. Driven by their concern of possible discrimination against other religions and the growth of religious fanaticism in the newly-born country, they demanded that the state must be unconditionally removed from association with any religion, including Islam.¹²

It was only after Sukarno's appeal to both sides to make great sacrifices that the debate cooled down. The PPKI agreed that the future independent state would be based on the principle of "Belief in God with the obligation for adherents of Islam to practice Sharia". They also accepted "Islam as the state religion and that the President of the Republic must be a Muslim".¹³ This decision was incorporated into a special document called the Jakarta Charter (*Piagam Jakarta*), which was to serve as a Preamble to the Draft of the Constitution.

A day after the declaration of independence, however, when the constitution was about to be promulgated, the PPKI decided to drop the clause in the Jakarta Charter and retain only "belief in God", to ensure the support of

¹¹Given the centrality of the agreement (see more below), it is crucial to consider the religious background of these gentlemen. The first eight members were Muslims with differing political outlooks (the first four were nationalists, and the latter four, Islamists), and Maramis was a Christian who shared the ideological leanings of the nationalists.

¹²Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia*, pp. 30-33.

¹³Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia*, p. 33.

non-Muslims for the newly-proclaimed Republic of Indonesia. These words were also deleted from article 29 of the Constitution, where they had also appeared before. “Although well short of Muslim hopes,” Reid notes, “this was to prove the highest point in their pursuit of an Islamic state”.¹⁴

From this brief description of the acceptance of Pancasila as Indonesia’s state ideology, three conclusions can be drawn. First, Sukarno proposed the five principles as a synthesis of the secular nationalism advocated by the nationalists and the idea of an Islamic state promoted by the Islamist politicians. But second, and more importantly, as a national ideology, Pancasila was accepted by all concerned only after long and tedious deliberations. And third, reading the history of the debate from the perspective of Indonesian Muslims today, the acceptance of Pancasila seemed possible only after some of its principles were ‘Islamised’, in one way or another:

1. Monotheism replaced Sukarno’s original concept of a more generalised “belief in God”, which may include polytheism. And while Sukarno proposed it be the fourth principle, the Muslim representatives demanded that it come first. This made monotheism the predominant principle, which coloured the four other principles following it.
2. Sukarno’s initial concept of the third principle was “nationalism”. This was replaced by the more neutral but dynamic term, “The Unity of Indonesia”, in response to the objections raised by Muslim politicians to the term “nationalism”, which for them went against the Islamic ideals of universalism and cosmopolitanism, and brought to their minds the chauvinist nationalism of Germany and Japan.
3. “Democracy”, the fourth principle, is a short form of the longer “Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of the deliberations among representatives”. This notion of “wisdom arising out of deliberations” is reminiscent of an adage or *hikmah* ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad, who once said, “*Ra’s al-ḥikmah al-musyâwarah*” (“The trunk of wisdom is deliberation”).

¹⁴Reid, *Indonesian National Revolution*, p. 20.

It is widely believed that Mohammad Hatta (the first vice-president of the Republic), Haji Agus Salim (a prominent Muslim intellectual of revolutionary Indonesia), Ki Bagus Hadikusumo (head of Muhammadiyah, an Islamic modernist movement), and Abdul Wahid Hasyim (head of NU, an Islamic traditionalist movement), are to be credited most for the 'Islamisation' of Pancasila that eventually made it acceptable to most Indonesian Muslims. This makes sense of Ratuprawiranegara's assertion, mentioned at the beginning of this essay, that Pancasila was a gift of Indonesian Muslims to Indonesia as a nation.

Challenges and Threats to Pancasila

Ever since the acceptance of the gentlemen's agreement discussed above, Pancasila has been Indonesia's national ideology. But this does not mean that, in the country's history, it has always been accepted across the board without challenge or even threat. The first challenge came from a repeated effort by some Muslim leaders and politicians to impose Islam as state ideology. Pancasila was again threatened when Indonesian Communist leaders and activists attempted at a national coup d'état in October 1965, which ended Sukarno's presidency and opened a new period of Indonesia's history under the presidency of another Muslim named Suharto. But, as explained below, the integrity and purity of Pancasila were also challenged from sources rarely identified: presidents Sukarno and Suharto themselves, as dictators, attempted to monopolise the interpretation and practice of Pancasila, thus discredited its value.

The first major threat to Pancasila came in 1955, when the country was only about ten years old. At the time, as part of the Indonesian experiment with parliamentary democracy and general elections, the door was opened to all political parties to again discuss the philosophical basis of the Republic of Indonesia. In the Constituent Assembly (*Majelis Konstituante*), which was formed following the 1955 general election, the politicians fell into one of three main ideological camps: nationalism (*Partai Nasionalis Indonesia* or PNI), communism or socialism (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* or PKI), and Islamism (*Partai Masyumi* and *Partai NU*). While the nationalists wanted to keep Pancasila as the philosophical basis of the state, the communists aspired to a Marxist state modelled on the Soviet Republic (USSR), and the Islamists once again argued for an Islamic state.

The deliberations in the Constituent Assembly came to a deadlock, and President Sukarno, backed by the Indonesian military, finally decreed the return of the Republic of Indonesia to the 1945 Constitution with Pancasila as the permanent philosophical basis for the nation. And in a gesture to accommodate the Muslims' desire for a state imbued with Islamic values, Sukarno declared that the 1945 Constitution and Pancasila should be seen as the historical continuation of the Jakarta Charter, calling the charter a "historic document".

But Muslim leaders and politicians were in no mood to accept this move by the president. This situation, coupled with dissatisfaction about how politics and economy were regulated and managed at the national level, led some Muslim leaders and politicians from Jakarta to proclaim an alternative government, the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (*Pemerintahan Revolusioner Republik Indonesia* or PRRI), in February 1958. Here, prominent politicians from Masyumi, including former Prime Minister Mohammad Natsir, joined forces with regional military commanders and civilian leaders who had been rebelling for months on the island of Sumatra. The PRRI rebellion was short-lived, however, defeated in June of the same year. And Masyumi, which had been the most vocal in supporting the idea of an Islamic state and had been supportive of the PRRI rebellion, was banned in 1960.

This incident came with another cost: on 5 July 1959, Sukarno issued a presidential decree that dissolved the Constituent Assembly and that eventually led to his personal rule, presiding arbitrarily over what he called "Guided Democracy" (*Demokrasi Terpimpin*). Under his dictatorship, Sukarno firmly placed Pancasila as Indonesia's national ideology, but he also monopolised its interpretation and practice. Here, it was not really Pancasila as the state ideology as a whole that was saved, but Sukarno's authoritarian conception of it. In so doing, he identified Pancasila with himself – and thus discredited it in the eyes of the Indonesian public. And a figure no less than Hatta, Sukarno's soul-mate during the colonial period, vehemently opposed Sukarno's move: in protest against Sukarno's growing authoritarianism and dictatorship, he resigned as vice-president.¹⁵

¹⁵On this period of Indonesian politics, the best source is still Herbert Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962).

With the emergence of Sukarno's personal rule, another unfavourable development took place when the PKI, with the direct or indirect support of Sukarno, began to dominate the political arena shortly after the presidential decree of 1959. This domination was demonstrated particularly after 1963, when the PKI openly attacked religious establishments, including many in Indonesia's countryside. This situation led to the political debacle of the 1965, when the Communists tried to seize power by force and their opponents fiercely fought back. Again, Pancasila as the state ideology survived, but at great cost: it is believed that about 500 thousand people, mostly PKI leaders and supporters, were killed during this incident, the bloodiest event in post-war Southeast Asia until the Khmer Rouge established its regime in Cambodia a decade later.¹⁶

Suharto, at the time a rising-star major general in the Indonesian army, put an end to the crisis. And on 12 March 1967, he was installed as acting president; although he would ultimately maintain his presidency until 1998, more than three decades later. Like Sukarno's Guided Democracy, the so-called New Order under Suharto was an authoritarian regime. Although opposition movements and popular unrest were not entirely eliminated under his presidency, Suharto's regime was extraordinarily stable compared with that of Sukarno's. His success in governing the country is mainly attributable to two factors: the military's absolute or near-absolute loyalty to the regime, and the military's extensive political and administrative powers.

But the stability of the regime was also made possible by the establishment of a large number of corporatist-style organisations to link social groups in a subordinate relationship with the regime. These included organisations of a social, class, religious, and professional nature. Here, again, Pancasila played a significant role. Rather than imposing cultural and ideological homogeneity, Suharto revived the Sukarno-era concept of Pancasila. Striking the balance of "stick and carrot" mechanisms, Suharto's approach to political conflict did not reject the use of coercion but supplemented it with a rhetoric of "consultation and consensus", which, like Pancasila, had its roots in the Sukarno era.

For this reason, starting in 1978, a national indoctrination program was undertaken to inculcate Pancasila values in all citizens, especially school

¹⁶The most balanced analysis of this incident is given in Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978).

children, students, and civil servants. From being an abstract statement of national goals, Pancasila was now used as an instrument of social and political control: to oppose the government was to oppose Pancasila; and to oppose Pancasila was to oppose the foundation of the state. In addition, in 1985, the stage-managed legislature passed government-backed bills requiring all political parties and social organisations to declare their support for Pancasila as their ideological foundation. Through this campaign, called 'the making of Pancasila as the sole foundation' (*pengasastunggalan Pancasila*), even Islamic social organisations had to change their charters, deleting Islam from it and – in its place – acknowledging only Pancasila as the ideological basis of their organisations.

This campaign caused great resentment, especially among Muslims. Declaring such support was an extremely delicate issue for many Muslim groups, since it attacked the basis of their religious identity. Some Muslim leaders were even convinced that the real and long-term goal of this policy was the final destruction of their organisations: the policy seemed to them to hark back to the earlier Dutch colonial policy of tolerating Islamic religion but ruthlessly repressing all forms of political Islam. So, the policy aroused strong opposition among politically active Muslims: riots broke out in the Tanjung Priok port area of Jakarta on 12 September 1984; and a wave of bombings and arson took place in 1985, with targets including the Borobudur Buddhist temple and the palace of the Sunan of Surakarta in East Java, commercial districts in Jakarta, and the headquarters of the Indonesian state radio, also in Jakarta.¹⁷

This was in spite of the fact that the state under Suharto, particularly by the 1980s and early 1990s, and within the legal and politically acceptable boundaries of Muslim involvement, had become a major promoter of Islamic institutions in the country. Thousands of new modern mosques and *mushalla* (smaller places of prayer) were built everywhere, mostly on the initiative of , and with financial aid from, the government. The government also subsidised numerous Muslim community activities, such as the annual Qur'anic recitation competition (*Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an* or MTQ), and the celebration

¹⁷See R. William Liddle, "Suharto's Indonesia: Personal Rule and Political Institution," in his collection of essays *Leadership and Culture in Indonesian Politics* (New South Wales, Australia: Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1996), pp. 15-36.

of special religious days, including *maulid* (the Prophet's birthday) and *hijrah*, in the presidential palace or national mosque. Generally speaking, within the overall value structure of Pancasila, Islamic moral teaching and personal codes of conduct balanced the materialism inherent in secular economic development, the mantra of the New Order government. For example, on many university campuses across the country, especially in big cities, the fasting month of Ramadan was marked by major religious activities, so-called "Ramadan on Campus", just as if they had been converted to Islamic centres. And last but not least, Suharto himself went to great lengths to demonstrate that he was a good Muslim. On 6 December 1990, he authorised the formation of the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* or ICMI), Indonesia's most powerful and controversial Muslim social organisation; in August 1991, he pledged three billion rupiahs to a new Islamic bank (*Bank Muamalat Indonesia* or BMI) and declared that he would encourage other wealthy Muslims to contribute; and in May 1991, he made the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, making him Haji Mohamad Suharto.¹⁸

By wooing Islamic intellectuals, leaders and teachers, Suharto's government won broad support for its developmental policies. Some observers began asking whether this was "the bureaucratisation of Islam" or "the Islamisation of bureaucracy". Whatever the case, there was no question that Islam was the state-favoured religion in Indonesia, although it was not the state religion.

But still this was not an ideal situation for Indonesian Muslims, for at least two reasons. First, the formula was made possible only by Suharto's authoritarianism, and it was managed on his personal terms. In other words, there was no guarantee that it would prevail over the longer term. Second, Suharto's favouritism of certain Muslim factions in the country betrayed his supposed neutrality in the matters of religious affairs – not only to non-Muslims, but also to the Muslims who did not support his politics.

Islamic Justification for Pancasila

When the New Order period of Indonesian history finally ended, the question then remained: How could democratic opposition, Islamic or other-

¹⁸A rich presentation of this aspect of Suharto's Islamic politics is given in Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000).

wise, be legally and peacefully expressed within the framework of Pancasila as the state ideology? This was an important question, because the Pancasila on which Suharto had based his power and rule was his own, dictatorial interpretation and practice of this state ideology. Although Suharto's Islamic policy had benefited at least some groups of Indonesian Muslims, it was founded on a personal, and therefore fragile, foundation. To put it another way, living harmoniously in religiously pluralistic Indonesia would be possible if, and only if, two conditions were met: (1) Pancasila as the state ideology was whole-heartedly accepted and supported by Indonesian Muslims, the largest religious group in the country; and (2) Indonesia as a country was governed democratically.

Thanks to the Reform Movement (*Gerakan Reformasi*) that brought the end of Suharto's dictatorship in May 1998, progress has been made towards meeting these two conditions in post-Suharto Indonesia. There is no stronger indication of this than the rejection by the majority of Muslim politicians in the newly- and democratically-elected People's Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat* or MPR) of the so-called 'Sharia amendment' in 2002. Note that this proposed amendment, which stated that the state should be responsible for the implementation of Islamic law or Sharia for all Muslims,¹⁹ represented the latest effort to revive the Jakarta Charter. Although the amendment was supported by some politicians from Islam-based political parties such as the Unity and Development Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* or PPP), Crescent Moon and Star Party (*Partai Bulan Bintang* or PBB), and Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan* or PK), in all they constituted only about 15% of the total members of the People's Consultative Assembly. A significantly larger number of Muslim politicians in the Assembly, from, for example, the NU-based National Awakening Party (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* or PKB), Muhammadiyah-based National Mandate Party (*Partai Amanat Nasional* or PAN), and nationalist parties such as the Functional Group Party (*Partai Golongan Karya* or Golkar) and Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan* or PDI-P), firmly rejected the proposed Sharia amendment.

The importance of this decision cannot be overstated, because, as of this time in Indonesian history, this was the first and most democratic decision

¹⁹The original text of the proposed amendment (Article 29) was: "The state is based on the belief in God, with the obligation for all adherents of Islam to practice Sharia."

by the Indonesian people to accept Pancasila as the state ideology and reject the Jakarta Charter.²⁰ Remember, during the Constituent Assembly sessions that took place after the general election of 1955 – which was the only democratic election that Indonesia had ever had before the one held after the fall of New Order in 1998 – the debate over state ideology came to a deadlock, prompting Sukarno to issue the presidential decree to return to Pancasila and begin his dictatorship.

In this contemporary context, it is interesting and important to ask: why did this happen? Why have Muslim politicians in the modern-day People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) finally and willingly accepted Pancasila? In short, this would have been unimaginable without the changes that have been taking place in the last three decades of Muslim intellectualism and activism in Indonesia, which have provided further Islamic justification for the acceptance of Pancasila. To conclude this essay, let us look at the contribution made to this end by the late Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid, undoubtedly the two most influential Muslim thinkers and reformers in contemporary Indonesian history.

Madjid (1939-2005) was chairman of the Muslim Student Association (*Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam* or HMI), the largest student organisation in Indonesia, for two terms of office (1966-1974). A son of a Javanese ulama, he was formally trained in Islamic studies (after finishing his early education at the Dar al-Salam Islamic Boarding School in Gontor, Ponorogo, East Java, he went to the State Institute for Islamic Studies in Jakarta, and then completed his PhD in Islamic Studies at the University of Chicago, US) and was widely-known as an authority in Islamic teachings and history. He was the first Indonesian Muslim scholar to publicly introduce the idea that political secularisation – the separation of state and religion – was not only legitimate in Islam, but also necessary. In a controversial speech delivered in early 1970s, and in the spirit of defending the Islamic teaching of *tawhid* [belief in the oneness of God] that is corroborated by the development of modern political thought, he argued that as long as Muslims were unable to distinguish the sacred from the profane, Islam from worldly social and political affairs, the essence of Islam

²⁰A more detailed discussion of this is given in Saiful Mujani, *Muslim Demokrat: Islam, Budaya Demokrasi, dan Partisipasi Politik* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2007), pp. 74-77.

(the sacred) and the establishment of a modern form of politics (the profane) would be beyond their grasp. Madjid said:

‘Secularisation’ does not mean the implementation of secularism, because ‘secularism’ is the name of an ideology, a new closed world view that functions very much like a new religion. What is meant here is all forms of ‘liberating development’. This liberating process is particularly needed because the *umma* [the Muslim community], as a result of its own historical growth, is no longer capable of distinguishing – among the values which they consider Islamic – those that are transcendental from those that are temporal. In fact the hierarchy of values is often reversed: the transcendental becomes temporal and vice versa, or everything, without exception, becomes transcendental and valued as *ukhrawi* [pertaining to the hereafter].²¹

For Madjid, because the only thing sacred in Islamic teachings is God, the secularisation or de-sacralisation of the profane (mundane politics) is a religious necessity. Thus, he was known for his pro-secularisation motto, “Islam, Yes; Islamic party, No”, which basically meant that Muslims did not have to support political parties that used Islamic names or symbols.

Unsurprisingly, given his mastery in Islamic teachings and history, Madjid developed his support for the modern ideas of equality, tolerance, pluralism, consensus, opposition, and popular sovereignty from Islamic doctrines and traditions. He argued that any ideas developed by Muslims that contradicted these modern social and political ideas should be subjected to historical criticism. By taking this approach and stating it publicly, and thanks to his effectiveness as a writer and speaker, he became an important agent of Islamic cultural change among his contemporaries. In the last three decades, he has been a major force in developing modern Islamic discourse and political practice in Indonesia.

²¹Nurcholish Madjid, “The Necessity of Renewing Islamic Thought and Reinvigorating Religious Understanding,” in Charles Kurzman (ed.), *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 286.

Considering Indonesia's diversity and pluralism, Madjid used the same approach to support Pancasila as the state ideology and to reject the idea of Islamic state. He argued that for many Muslims, Pancasila is, from the Qur'anic perspective, the common denominator or common ground (*kalimah sawâ*) between people of different religions that God commands us to seek and find. He quoted a verse in the Holy Book (3: 64), addressed to the Prophet Muhammad, which states: "O followers of the scripture, let us come to a logical agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but God; that we set up no idols but Him, nor set up any human beings as lords beside God."

Thus the principle of monotheism, for Madjid, was the common denominator of all divinely-inspired religions. But he quickly added that the adherents of different religions could also agree to a set of common values that included more than that of monotheism: "And the more values that the adherents of different religions can agree upon as common terms, the better", he wrote.²² To support this argument, he quoted a dictum in the Islamic principles of jurisprudence (*Ushul al-Fiqh*), which say, in Arabic, *mâ kâna aktsar fi' lan kâna aktsar fadhlan* ("The more the [good] deeds, the greater the virtue"). Thus, it is better for different religions or factions to have five values in common (such as Pancasila for the Indonesian people) than to have just one. In this way, Pancasila provides a firm basis for the development of religious tolerance and pluralism in Indonesia.

Directly or otherwise, Madjid's ideas won crucial support from his close colleague Abdurrahman Wahid, another major agent of the modernisation of Muslim political culture in Indonesia. In fact, given his background and social status, Wahid's agency is perhaps even more decisive than that of Madjid. A grandson of the founder of NU and a son of long-time NU Chair Wahid Hasyim, Abdurrahman Wahid is not only a part of the NU subculture, but also an important member of the core elite of this social organisation, the country's largest. He is, as we describe him in Indonesia, of 'blue-blood lineage'. After completing his early traditional religious training in NU-based Islamic boarding schools, Wahid was sent to Egypt and Iraq to continue his Islamic studies. But in addition to his mastery of Islamic teachings and tradition, he has also been known for his close attention to Western intellectual,

²²For further elaboration of this point, see Madjid's long introduction to his book, *Islam Agama dan Peradaban* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1993).

civilisational and artistic tradition (he can speak about Aristotle's philosophy, Tolstoy's novels, or Spielberg's movies as fluently as he talks about Islamic history or discusses Ibn Taymiyah and al-Kindi). Although he is less inclined than Madjid to anchor his ideas in Islamic teachings and tradition, his voice is strong and widely accepted in NU circles, most possibly because of his social status. And even before he became the Chairman of NU in the early 1980s, he started writing extensively in popular publications such as *Tempo*, the country's most-widely circulated weekly, on Islam and modern political thought, and social issues.

Since returning from his studies in the Middle East in the early 1970s, Wahid's major concern has been with pluralism and tolerance in the context of the modern Indonesian nation-state. He argues that in order for Indonesia to be a modern nation-state, and for the sake of the public interest (*mashâlih al-mursalah*), itself the core value of Islamic teachings, every citizen should be treated equally, regardless of his or her religious affiliation. Since Indonesia is a religiously plural nation, in which Islam is only one among many religions, then treating someone as a second-class citizen simply because he or she is non-Muslim is utterly intolerable. For this reason, Wahid argues, seeing Islam and other religions as complementary, not contrary, is necessary for the sake of the public interest.

Moreover, he sees nothing contradictory between Islam and nationalism. He also believes that Islam could thrive spiritually in a nationalist state that is not formally based on Islam. He writes:

NU adheres to a conception of nationalism that is in accordance with Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. NU has become the pioneer in ideological affairs. This is the case even though throughout the entire Islamic world there is still a problem between nationalism and Islam. All the Saudi writers consider nationalism a form of secularism. They do not yet understand that nationalism such as in Indonesia is not secular, but rather it respects the role of religion.²³

²³Quoted from Douglas Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 53.



Mr. Sjahrir, President Sukarno, and Mohamed Hatta sharing a lounge at Sukarno's estate (1946). Credit: John Florea/Life

During the New Order period, Wahid's idea of an inclusive Islam led him to support Pancasila as the sole foundation of Indonesian politics. And under his leadership, NU was the first major Islamic organisation to accept Pancasila as the absolute state ideology. Moreover, NU declared that Pancasila is its organisational foundation, a decision that had a powerful effect on NU's role in national politics. Among others, under his leadership, NU withdrew from partisan politics and declined to support PPP, an Islam-based political party. And in 1984, NU returned to the 1926 *khittah* (the so-called "1926 guideline", after the year the organisation was established), meaning that it once again became a purely social and religious, but not political, organisation. Thus, as if echoing Madjid's "Islam, Yes; Islamic party, No", the members of NU were free to participate and vote for any political party, regardless of its religious affiliation. Since then, NU members are to be found in many political parties, both Islamic and secular, including the NU-based PKB political party that rejected the proposed "Sharia amendment" in 2002.***

Sharia-Inspired by-Laws and the Future of Indonesian Democracy

SOME REFLECTIONS

AHMAD SUAEDY

The rapid growth of Sharia-inspired by-laws since the start of the democratisation and decentralization of Indonesia following the demise of the New Order government has caught the attention of many. A large majority worry that this phenomenon will be a setback for democratisation. That is, they see it as the emergence of seeds of discrimination and disregard for the equality of all citizens under the law in Indonesia which is, after all, a country of law. Moreover, they see it as an intention to turn Indonesia into a country based on Islam.

This fear is well founded if we consider that the establishment of the state of Indonesia, based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution (with all its amendments), was consciously intended as the basis for a democratic nation-state that holds in high regard the equality of all its citizens under the law. In several areas, Sharia-inspired by-laws and other rulings have already had quite an obvious discriminative effect on public services (Subair Umam et. al, 2007).

However, for its supporters, this process is part of their as yet unfinished struggle for the establishment of Indonesia itself. Failure at the national level to make Indonesia an Islamic state has obliged them to alter their strategy to one of 'the village besieging the city'. That is, to adopt a strategy that supports and promotes the creation of Sharia-inspired regulations at the local level with

the aim of changing the foundation of the Indonesian state to one based on Islam (Haedar Nasir, 2007).

Yet, historically speaking, incorporation of a variety of elements of religious (particularly Islamic) law into the national legal system has occurred since the state of Indonesia itself was established. Ratno Lukito's study (2003) showed that, although in essence customary law and Islamic law have had the same opportunities to influence the development of national law, in reality Islamic law has been the more frequent winner of the two. In other words, in the history of the development of Indonesian law, Islamic law has been more influential than customary law in the development of national law, including laws on marriage and inheritance, and even economic laws such as those passed in the 1990s on Bank Muamalat and *zakat* (charitable giving) (Robert Hefner, 2003).

As a public issue, adoption of Sharia appears to be increasingly unpopular. This trend is reflected in the results of several direct local elections such as in Cianjur, West Java and Bulukumba in South Sulawesi, and even the South Sulawesi gubernatorial election, where the candidates that advocated the adoption of Sharia failed to win a significant share of the vote. But the reality is that Sharia is in fact being adopted through a process of 'creeping mainstreaming'. For example, the Ministry of Religion and the Ministry of Law and Human Rights are currently preparing at least three laws concerning the so-called "application of Sharia" with regard to marriage, inheritance, and religious donations, all three of which are problematic with respect to relations between citizens of different religions. Various elements of Sharia have been incorporated into local and national laws and regulations, without ever having been the subject of public debate.

Proponents of the implementation of Sharia have shifted the fight for their cause from the public arena to the strategic, practical arena and, as a result, what is now happening is that exponents of Sharia are now vying among themselves for strategic positions. Political parties based on the ideology of Islam, such as Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS), Partai Bulan Bintang (PBB) and Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP), tend to conceal their support for the adoption of Sharia. Indeed, PKS has been seeking to expand its voter base by promoting pluralism and diversity.

But in practice, the supporters of these parties, both in society and in the bureaucracy, are systematically working to incorporate elements of Sharia into laws and government regulations, both stand-alone and general.



[1] Spanduk bernada kritik terhadap usaha politisasi syariat terpampang di pinggir jalan kota Tasikmalaya 2003, yang dipasang kelompok seniman pimpinan Acep Zamzam Noor. Credit: Doc. Wahid Institute 2003.



[2] Petugas Syariah (Wilayahul Hisbah) Kota Banda Aceh, melaksanakan hukuman cambuk kepada salah seorang pelaku khalwat (perbuatan mesum) yang berlangsung di halaman Masjid Kampung Mulia, Banda Aceh (12/1 2007). Credit: Fauzul/rakyaataceh.com

These three political parties, along with Partai Demokrat (PD) established by incumbent president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, are the *inner ruling parties*. Their position gives them significant opportunity to plan and carry out their mainstreaming agenda without having to bring the issues to the public realm for debate. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's tendency to turn a blind eye, coupled with his party's lack of knowledge of Islam, empowers these parties and enables them to utilize their proximity to power. Some predict that these parties, in particular PKS, will increase their share of the vote, and that this will, in and of itself, consolidate the creeping mainstreaming of Sharia.

Taking a quantitative approach, Robin Bush (2007) calculated the extent of Sharia-inspired by-laws. She estimates that there are about 78 such regulations in 52 regencies and cities, not including decrees/official letters from district heads, mayors and governors, and draft regulations still before local parliament. So, if this trend continues, like it or not, it is indeed possible that it will influence the direction the development of national law takes. Concerns about this trend have mounted as a result of the decision by the Supreme Court to decline a judicial review of a by-law adopted in Tangerang (Nurun Nisa et. al., 2007). The Supreme Court reasoned that this anti-prostitution regulation, which discriminated against women, fell outside its jurisdiction.

Factors in the Emergence of Sharia-Inspired Local Regulations

Fairly careful observation would arrive at the conclusion that, in reality, there is no *single factor* involved this phenomenon. Rather, it must be seen from several perspectives, and in doing so, a number of contributing factors can be distinguished. Bush, for example, suggests that there are several factors contributing to the rapid growth of Sharia-inspired local regulations. These factors are:

1. History and local culture. According to Bush, the development of this phenomenon is associated with areas that have historical links to DI/TII (Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia).
2. Corruption. The phenomenon is more likely to occur in areas that have a high potential for corruption. It is therefore likely that these local regulations/policies constitute part of the effort to conceal the corruption of politicians, both at executive and legislative levels.

3. Local political influence. One way for politicians running for office as local head can draw voters is by offering them Sharia-inspired local regulations.
4. The legal drafting skills of politicians. The questionable legal drafting skills of politicians, notably their apparent inability to apply the principles of good governance, coupled with their lack of vision and inability to identify strategic issues to improve public welfare, and set against the extensive political opportunities and powers they have to make regulations, leverages the growth of Sharia-inspired by-laws.

Arksal Salim as quoted in Bush identifies at least three categories of Sharia-inspired local ordinances:

1. By-laws concerning issues of public order or the regulation of societal morals, such as local regulations against gambling, prostitution and drinking alcohol. The adoption of these regulations makes these issues of concern not only to Muslims, but to almost everyone.
2. Regulations connected with religious observance and ritual obligations. Specifically targeting Muslims, these include by-laws requiring citizens to read the Quran, pay *zakat*, and so on.
3. By-laws related to symbols of religion, such as regulations requiring women to wear hijab and men to don Islamic-style dress on Fridays. In practice, these by-laws are the cause discrimination in public services and in the community, against both non-Muslims and Muslims.

Several Considerations in Response

These facts suggest that there is no single, all-encompassing strategy that can be adopted in response to this rapid growth in Sharia-inspired by-laws. They must be examined on a case by case basis, taking into account the background and political context of each. A response that is overly general and fails to distinguish the complexities and differences associated with each by-law would be inappropriate and run the risk of neglecting important issues. The solution should also generate debate, and perhaps even involve proportional advocacy.

First, the paradigmatic and substantive standards for by-laws need to be clarified and rationalized. For example, the state foundation of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution and all its amendments are the primary standards, which are supported by the principles of human rights. It is very difficult to respond to regulations that are concerned with 'public order' or that address issues of public concern, such as gambling, prostitution and drinking alcohol, at the substantive and paradigmatic level by very nature of the fact that these are public concerns.

Rather, the aims of these by-laws and the steps involved their application need to be monitored. These include regulations concerning redundancy, which without a solution would cause mass unemployment and suffering. Monitoring is also needed of the methods of enforcement, which may, for example, include violence and uncalled-for and discriminatory criminalization. This being the case, advocacy would better fulfil the objective. Without clear, concrete standards and norms and a measured response such as this, the fear is we will have a debate without basis.

One core standard regarding procedure for drafting of regulations is Law 10/2004. This law covers, among others, the procedure for drafting local ordinances. It underlines the importance of testing the consistency of the preamble, which serves as the basis for a by-law, against existing Indonesian laws. It also establishes the need for public participation, which is particularly important in view of the fact that some by-laws presumed valid in a particular region are mere carbon copies of by-laws from other regions. This effectively minimizes the public participation stipulated by Law 10/24, and undermines well-intended efforts to resolve social problems within that region.

Then there are the various regulations, including decrees/official letters issued by district and municipal heads that are based, for example, on fatwa issued by the Indonesian Council of Ulema or on group opinion, and which ignore existing laws. In this case, advocacy should focus on the errors of and departures from law these regulations contain, without having to take it as high as, for example, the constitutional level.

Where it is proven that by-laws are mere political commodities used by politicians for political gain, advocacy should focus on commoditization. In South Sulawesi and Cianjur, for example, it has been proven that "selling" Sharia does not significantly increase the chances of elected governor or district head. These regions, known for their "fanatical" support of Sharia,

despite electing district heads who do not value such issues, elected governors and deputy governors who promote pluralism and tolerance,

Occasionally, political issues do become major problems and this demands courage and vision from those in the central government. Theoretically, decrees/official letters issued by district/municipal heads and governors that have no legal basis, such as those based on Indonesian Council of Ulema fatwa and those that contravene national law, should be revoked by the Minister of Home Affairs. In practice, however, this rarely happens. For political reasons, the government prefers to turn a blind eye, for fear that political reaction may undermine public confidence in the government.

What is needed is major political pressure on the government to take such action. Yet the outcome of research undertaken by the Wahid Institute (2008) on this phenomenon indicates that civil society lacks strength to pressure politicians and the government to pay more attention to public issues such as poverty, justice and corruption, rather than focusing on pseudo-issues and satisfying the interests of the few.

Thus, besides the need for reform of Islamic law (An-Na'im, 2007), civil society movements need to promote substantial issues based, to borrow Na'im's term, on *public reason*, in order to realize the substance of Islamic values. For some time now, movements like this have been busy working in many sectors, and extend to almost all kinds of social groups, including those that have always upheld Islamic values in support of democracy and those that have more recently taken up this cause in response to social challenges. These movements, however tend to be limited in their ability to directly mobilize the masses, and by the concentration of power in the hands of the government and parliament (Suaedy, 2007).***

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**PART 3: LIVE RADIO
TALKSHOW ON ISLAM
AND DEMOCRACY**

The Road to Democracy

AFGHANISTAN, BANGLADESH AND INDONESIA

Editor's note: *This is an edited version of the transcript of the discussion on the first day, Wednesday, 13 August 2008, among the guest speakers and with members of the audience and listeners. The discussion begins with questions put by moderator Ihsan Ali-Fauzi.*

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Our theme today is “The Road to Democracy in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia”. We have speakers from each of those countries. We will start with the normative and historical antecedents of the relationship between Islam and democracy. Then we will be going into more detail, into country studies, about what is going on in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia.

Let me start with Mrs. Siddiqi. Do you think Islam is compatible with democracy? Is there any antecedent in Islamic histories that we can use as sources to promote democratisation in Muslim countries?

SAFIA SIDDIQI: It is a great moment for me to be in Indonesia. Together not only with the Indonesians, but also other colleagues from outside of Indonesia.

The question is: Is Islam compatible with democracy? Yes, certainly. We learn from the Qur'an that, for example, education is both for girls and boys. There is no gender discrimination here. Now, some Muslims say that education is only for boys and not for girls, as I see it pronounced by the

Taleban in Afghanistan. That's Muslims' problem and not Islam's. And that's why we have the responsibility to introduce Islam that's compatible with democracy. This is the promotion of democracy in Islam or the promotion of Islam in democracy.

I believe we cannot live without democracy today. I also believe that as Muslims we cannot live our lives without our religion as well. For that reason, we have to be very realistic about Islam and democracy. For example, I could not get here, from Afghanistan to Indonesia, without the freedom of movement guaranteed by democracy. It has been a long, long road to get here.

Some conservative and radical Muslims say that women are not allowed to leave their countries or their homes without *muhrim*.¹ But nowadays we need to be in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Canada, Pakistan, or Saudi Arabia to see how other people live their lives and learn from them; to see how Muslims all over the world cooperate with each other.

Sometimes we see that there is a gap between what Islam wants Muslims to do and what the Muslims are really doing. That is why as scholars and teachers we need to educate people. That's my real concern about Islamic radicalism; that wants to limit the freedom of movement of Muslim women.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Mr. Sobhan, do you agree with that? If that is the case, how should we explain the lack of democracy in almost all Muslim majority countries in the world today? Can you say more about this, please?

ZAFAR SOBHAN: Yes. I agree one hundred percent with everything that Mrs. Siddiqi said. And if you look at our situation in Bangladesh, we have tried very hard to establish democracy, because most Bangladeshis take Islam very seriously and also take democracy very seriously.

I think, if you look at Muslim majority countries, with regard to Islam and democracy, a lot of it [has to do with] cultural issues. If you look at the Arab world right now, they are struggling with democracy: the issue is that they are culturally part of the Arab world. But it has nothing to do with being Muslim.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: So, this is not about religion but about culture, Arab culture?

¹ Muhrim, Arabic word, refers to close relative(s) of the opposite sex.

ZAFAR SOBHAN: That is right. If you look at Africa, where there is a fairly even split between Christian and Muslim countries, it is not the case that the Islamic countries are less democratic and the Christian countries are more democratic. But if you look Arab countries, like Lebanon, where there is a very large Christian population, you will see there is a great problem with democracy.

I would say that this is cultural issue and not religious one. I think maybe the Muslims in South Asia and Southeast Asia can lead the way, and can demonstrate the compatibility between democracy and Islam.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: I think, being a journalist, you will be familiar with the thesis that Prof. Huntington made about ten years ago, the clash of civilisation thesis, which among other things suggested that there was an incompatibility between Islam and democracy. Can you say more about that, because it is question often discussed here [in Indonesia]?

ZAFAR SOBHAN: Absolutely. I disagree with Huntington's thesis and I think the thesis doesn't really have strong support. There is a book that I would like to recommend to all of the listeners here, by Tareq Ali, called *The Clash of Fundamentalisms*. What we have in this world is not a clash of civilisations, but a clash between fundamentalists or extremists in one civilisation against fundamentalists or extremists in another civilisation.

And what's more important than the clash of civilisations is, I think, that we in fact have a war going on right now within Islam: a war for the soul of Islam, between the moderate Muslims and the extremists. Within Christian civilisation, they are also having a similar war and struggle. And I think that this struggle is much more important, and much more real, than any kind of clash between civilisations.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Let's now turn to Mr. Suaedy. Mr. Suaedy, I know that you have a rich experience in strengthening democracy in Indonesia. Can you describe the role that Muslim organisations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) play in strengthening Indonesia's democracy?

AHMAD SUAEDY: The main value of democracy is that the system guarantees individual rights. So this system is compatible with Islam because Islam also guarantees the creativity and rights of individuals. The question is how to

implement democratic rights, and whose responsibility it is to guarantee the expression of those rights.

In Indonesia we have many ethnic and religious groups. They have the rights to express their opinions and work together in diversity and the spirit of pluralism, as it is expressed in Pancasila. We have Islamic organisations like NU and Muhammadiyah that support this state ideology. We also have many traditional Islamic education institutions, like *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), that contribute to strengthening the compatibility of Islam and Pancasila. Almost all Muslim groups in Indonesia support the pillars of democracy, such as elections. Only one or two small groups reject the concept of elections.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: I know that you're a close colleague of Mr. Abdurahman Wahid, or Gus Dur, our former president. Can you tell more about the role that ulama such as Gus Dur have played in strengthening and deepening democracy in Indonesia?

AHMAD SUAEDY: Yes. In my opinion, the greatest contribution that the ulama in Indonesia, like Gus Dur or the late Nurcholish Madjid, have played in strengthening Indonesia's democracy is by providing the Islamic justification of our acceptance of Pancasila.² This goes against other interpretations of Islam by Muslim fundamentalist and extremists, who suggest that Pancasila is un-Islamic and that Pancasila must be replaced with Islamic sharia.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Let me come back to Mrs. Siddiqi. When you heard the news that Indonesia, the biggest Muslim country in the world, was going through a process of democratisation, what was your reaction? Did you believe it? Are you happy about it? Are there any lessons that you can take from here for the democratisation of Afghanistan, for example?

SAFIA SIDDIQI: Well, yes. Mostly I am really jealous of the majority Muslim countries that are democratic at the same time.

But here, first of all I would like to thank Asia Calling for broadcasting such a good program in Afghanistan. I am one of the listeners in

² On Pancasila, see Ihsan Ali-Fauzi's contribution in this volume.

Afghanistan, although initially I did not know where the program was broadcast from. Fortunately, today I am here in this studio with the audience and listeners of Asia Calling. We need broadcasts like this in Islamic countries, especially in Afghanistan, to learn about Islam in the other countries, to learn about democracy in Islamic countries. Because you know, introducing American democracy in Afghanistan is not applicable. Whereas introducing an Indonesian-style democracy would be applicable; introducing a Pakistani-style democracy would be applicable; introducing a Tunisian-style democracy in Afghanistan would be applicable, and acceptable to our scholars. Because we know that in this country what is democracy is left alone and what is Islam is left alone; nobody meddles with Islam as a religion, and nobody meddles with democracy as a way of life for everybody in the society. For that reason, we need your Islamic scholars to come to Afghanistan to talk to the people, to talk to the Islamists, the people who are making trouble for the Islamic country of Afghanistan and for the Islamic government of Afghanistan. The government of Afghanistan is Islamic and the people in Afghanistan are Muslims. They have the right to live in the country in peace and security, practicing their religious ways in the Islamic society that we have right now. And we believe that we need others who are close to us; even people from as far away as Indonesia and the other Islamic countries. They should help us as human beings, as Muslim brothers and sisters. We need their help. We need their views; we need them to come to Afghanistan, to see the way of life of Afghans, and to see how our scholars are introducing Islam.

I would like to go back to one thing that Mr. Sobhan said: I think politics and Islam are two different things, but unfortunately the people who are interfering in Afghanistan are mixing them together. For that reason, we need people to tell to those who are forcing power over and fighting in Afghanistan, that they should separate Islam and politics.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Let's hear the Bangladeshi view point. Do you agree that South East Asian countries themselves are better ambassadors of democracy in South East Asia than George Bush is?

ZAFAR SOBHAN: I do agree – although not with the point that George Bush is bad at democracy – but beyond that I agree with the point that South East Asian countries have to learn a lot from one another. Because we have

cultural similarities and historical similarities. And I think we spend too much time looking to Europe, looking to North America, when actually there are many things that we can learn from our neighbours. That is one of the reasons that I am happy to be here in Indonesia, learning from the Indonesian experiences, and I am happy to be part of the show Asia Calling, which I think puts into action the idea that we should be talking the one another. And I think the lessons we can learn [from one another] are definitely more applicable; I would agree with that statement.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: You tend to look to American and European history, is that what you meant here?

ZAFAR SOBHAN: That is right. We tend to look too much to North America and Europe. In fact in Bangladesh, a recent government had an official policy look east. We really need to do this, because in Bangladesh we see ourselves as South East Asian. So, of course we think about India and Pakistan, but we don't think about the countries on our other side – Myanmar, and just beyond that Thailand, and then Malaysia and Indonesia. These countries are very close, and there may be many things that we can learn from them; and there may be a few things that they can learn from us as well.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Mr. Suaedy, I think it would be a good idea if you and other people from NU would come and have another, broader, discussion about Islam and democracy, with ulama and other people from Afghanistan and Pakistan. What do you think about that?

AHMAD SUAEDY: Although our cultures are different, we can share issues and experiences. We may have more than one hundred ethnicities and more than ten religions, but we can share and debate not only about the state, but also about justice, economic distribution, and so on. And we can also share about Indonesia, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Let's hear what some people from Bangladesh and Afghanistan say about the theme that we are discussing today. Some of our correspondents asked people in these two countries the same question that we are looking at today: Is Islam compatible with democracy?

RESPONDENT 1: I don't think it is compatible because in Islam we have what we call *hudud*,³ we have to cut our robbers' hands off and we have the death sentence for murder, and in a democracy, these things are not allowed.

RESPONDENT 2: Are Islam and democracy compatible? Well we have to separate them. Islam is democracy in its own shape. Islam guides us in every little thing. For example, Islam says that we must not kill an insect. In Islam and democracy, even an insect has rights.

RESPONDENT 3: Religion is one matter, and using the religion for politics is another matter altogether; using religion for political purposes, for party politics. What we have done is made people afraid of religion because they are unable to read and understand the texts because they do not write and read Arabic.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: You are listening to a special Asia Calling talk live. Our theme is Islam and democracy in South and South-East Asia. If you are listening out there in offices, homes or cars, and want to give us your views and opinions about the theme that we are discussing today, please send us a text message to 08121188181, or, to the free of charge number 08001403131. Don't forget to tell us your name and don't hesitate to say what you think about the theme that we are discussing. So, now let's go back to the speakers. Do you have comments?

SAFIA SIDDIQI: Yes, I think the first person is an Afghan, and what he said is that in Islam the punishment for robbery is having your hand cut off, and in a democracy that would not be called for. Yes, Islam calls for that; but on the other hand, it is impossible to commit a robbery in front of four witnesses. And for that reason, I think this is the way of democracy, because on the one hand, people are forbidden from doing something, and on the other, the punishment for doing it is spelled out, but there has to be four people who testify that it was done in front of them. That's just not possible. For

³ *Hudud*, Arabic word, literally means "limit" or "restriction". In Islamic law or Sharia, *hudud* usually refers to the class of punishments that are fixed for certain crimes that are considered to be "claims of God" such as theft or consumption of alcohol.

that reason, we believe that this is the Islamic way of dealing with people, of keeping peace and security in society. But it is also democratic, because the demand that a robber's hands be cut off stops people from committing theft; because if they did, they would have no hands and everyone would know that he or she is a thief. It's a deterrent. But for centuries nobody has seen that the reason people do not commit robbery is because they are afraid. Even if that is no longer applicable because of human rights, they still do not do it. But sometimes people are afraid of doing it, because of the people, because of the social shame. I have always believed that Islam and democracy are compatible.

AHMAD SUAEDY: I think people have individual experiences and collective experiences. Democracy is not static; it is a dynamic process. And people have dreams, plans, agendas and challenges, too. Indonesia, for example, in terms of procedure is completely democratic, but in terms of justice and religious freedom, there are serious problems. We still have to deal with making democracy more just and free.

ZAFAR SOBHAN: On that subject, I think a lot has to do with how Islam is interpreted. When people think of Islam, they have a very traditional, orthodox, conservative interpretation of Islam. But that is not necessarily the case. You can say well, you know Islam says that women must get a larger share of inheritances than men. But there are actually many *ulama* in Bangladesh who now say that there is a limit, which is established by law in Bangladesh, the inheritance law. This has been a topic of debate for a long time. If the inheritance law says that men and women inherit equally, there is no problem with this, there is no bar within Islam on equal inheritance rights. This is the type of issue which we need to discuss in public, because this is a big issue: that there is more than one interpretation of Islam, and some can be very liberal, and democratic, interpretations.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Let's look at each country in more detail, here. Mrs. Siddiqi, you are a major player in Afghanistan, what is the situation for women and women's issues in Afghanistan?

SAFIA SIDDIQI: It is a very a difficult question. We all know about the Taliban

rule in Afghanistan; and that was six very hard years for the women and girls who had previously worked outside their homes. But fortunately, after 9/11, the attention of the world was drawn to Afghanistan. One of the good things has been [its effect] on the women's freedom in Afghanistan. I think that one of the reasons we as politicians, and Mr. Sobhan as a journalist, are here in Indonesia. It is one of the good things to come out of our struggle during the time of Taliban rule.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Excuse me, are you from a political party?

SAFIA SIDDIQI: No. I am not from a political party. I am an independent, writer, journalist, and politician of women, for all matters concerning women, especially during the time of the Taliban regime, and the struggle. I have called for the freedom of women in Afghanistan. I have been involved in activities to raise the voice of Afghan women as human beings, in Afghanistan and outside of Afghanistan as well. Today, there are women working as doctors, as teachers. We have almost six million children going to school, and of this number, thirty-five percent are girls. The majority of our government employees are women, and most teachers are women, and we have women doctors and politicians. We have women busy everywhere with all kind activities. I really admire the women who work for the media. Especially because, when I ran for parliament, the woman journalist got a big picture of a young woman. Women are busy everywhere, but they are afraid of tomorrow. Especially in terms of the Taliban movement, in terms of the people, or our neighbouring countries who are now interfering our country, the people who do not want stability in Afghanistan. I think this is one of the things that is really frightening for women. For example, in my constituency, every week I go to meet constituents, but the Taliban show up on the way and attack people, and they may go to my constituency. Because of that, for me as a woman in parliament, travelling from one province to another with other women is a problem. And one which we believe will get worse in the future.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: So that is true, the news that we have been hearing in the last two months that the Taliban is regaining a foothold?

SAFIA SIDDIQI: That is true. This is the problem. I have no problem because I have the bodyguard and I can go with my family members, but what will happen to a young girl if she wants to go to school? What will be happen to a woman teacher who is going to teach the children in the school. You know this is one of the things, one of the signs of insecurity for women in the future.

I think the other thing that I can say is that the women are competing equally in the social and political arenas in Afghanistan. This is one of the good things about democracy in Afghanistan, that women have a role both in Islam and in democracy. Unfortunately, the situation might not improve.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Do you expect the international community do something?

SAFIA SIDDIQI: As I mentioned before, the international community can help us by sharing information, experiences, expertise, about how we can live in Islamic society that is also a democratic society. We believe that in this day and age, people cannot live behind curtains, cloths, windows, and closed doors. Because the people, they should be interacting with people from other parts of the world. And for that reason, the Islamic scholars can help us, and we can ask our government, to invite Islamic scholars to come to Afghanistan and to negotiate with the people who are fighting in the name of Islam and Afghanistan. Because you know today we have and Islamic government, we have Muslims ruling the government of Afghanistan.

We believe that for the last thirty years or so, for three decades, people have been trying to force us out – Russia, America, this and that – and this is not fair, because we are human beings. They should help us. And other Islamic scholars should intervene to show us how we can live as Muslims in that part of the world. Why is that all the time the international community, from Pakistan, Iran, the Arab Emirates, everybody comes to Afghanistan and fights in Afghanistan and kills the Afghan people? Why do they have to go there? We are an Islamic country too. We are asking other Islamic countries, we are pleading with them, to come to Afghanistan. People from neighbouring countries are fighting in Afghanistan. Four days ago, eleven Alqaida members were killed in Afghanistan; and of the eleven, four were foreigners. The people who are fighting in Afghanistan are not Afghan, they are people from other countries. They do it for their own interests in

Afghanistan. This is not for Islam, not for the benefit of Islam and the people of Afghanistan. We ask the international community and Islamic scholars to come to Afghanistan and have a conference to talk about the Islamic world and the changes in the lives of Muslims, and about how we can live together in a world-wide Islamic society. This is my suggestion to the Islamic countries.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: OK, let's go back to Mr. Sobhan. We will talk more about that later. In Bangladesh the elections will be held this December. Are you optimistic about the elections? Are they going to be OK? Are they going to be fair?

ZAFAR SOBHAN: I think so. Right now in Bangladesh, for the last two years, we have had the military back up the government, and they instituted many reforms, which we hope will strengthen democracy, and take democracy forward. There is some apprehension among certain people, who fear that perhaps the army supporting the government has its own agenda. But last week, when we had city council elections, by all accounts, the election was very fair; the old political party did very well, the turnout was good, so no complaints. The turnout was about 70 to 75 percent, which is very good for Bangladesh. *Inshaallah* we should have a good election in December.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: What about the role of Islamic political parties in Bangladesh? Do you think that they are strong?

ZAFAR SOBHAN: In Bangladesh, not really. We do have Islamic political parties, but they have never won more than between 5 and 10 percent of the national vote. I do not anticipate that changing in December; that they will do any better than they have done in the past. The truth is that there are two mainstream political parties, BNP (Bangladesh National Party) and Wamili, and it is not like, if you are a Muslim you must vote for an Islamic party. I mean there are Muslims in the other parties as well. You can separate your religious beliefs from your political beliefs. So I don't think in this election they will have much more impact [than they have in the past]. But I will say that if the political parties ignore the increase in the number poor, ignore the increase in the number of marginalised people, and the religious parties speak to those constituents, then maybe in the future they will do better and

they will become stronger. And I think it is true that political parties speak to the people. So far so good – in Bangladesh, since we got our independence in 1971, we have reduced poverty to 80 percent, and then down to below 50 percent. But in the last four years the poverty rate has been rising again. The latest reports put the poverty rate at 55 percent. The price of rice is very high. This is a very big thing for the average Bangladeshi, which can cause a great deal of trouble for some. So, there are working class, rural, and agricultural families who are really suffering right now. If the government does not address this issue, if the mainstream political parties do not address this issue, then someone will step into that void. Likewise with corruption; there are a lot of anti-corruption movements against the mainstream political parties. If they don't sort themselves out and if they don't show to the voting public that they have cleaned up their activities, then maybe voters will look for a different alternative in the future.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: In Indonesia, we have been dealing with the issue of Ahmadiyah over the last five years. I believe this is also an issue in Bangladesh. Is that right?

ZAFAR SOBHAN: That is right. We had this issue with the last government. They had a lot of extremists. They had a coalition with one of the extremist parties, Jamaah Islam, and IOJ (Islami Oikya Jote) is also anti-Ahmadiyah. There is a movement to have Ahmadiyah declared non-Muslims. Unfortunately, this has not happened and there have been attacks on Ahmadiyah mosques and on Ahmadiyah communities, and in 2004, even the government banned Ahmadiyah publications. However, you know I think there is no popular support for these actions. It is a certain segment of the population and certain political parties that are trying to advance their own political interests by making this an issue. I think that for the last two years we have not seen any anti-Ahmadiyah activities, and I hope that after the elections we will continue not to see any. I hope that very much.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Thank you. We can share the experience of Indonesia later. What is the situation of Ahmadiyah in Indonesia today? What should we do?

AHMAD SUAEDY: This is part of the challenge of democratisation, and I think

that the people and groups who are anti-democracy also can join in this democracy. For example, I think that groups that perpetrate violent attacks on other people or groups, like conservative and fundamentalist groups that attack Ahmadiyah, are a part of the democratic situation. The problem is how the government handles the situation. It has to handle this situation, and this conflict, carefully. For example, there is a political party that has an anti-democracy agenda, that is anti religious freedom and anti non-discrimination. So the people and political parties that promote democracy have to meet the challenge of the situation, not only through argumentation for the compatibility of Islam and democracy, but also in terms of the practicalities of running a democracy and promoting its values so that people will vote for the political parties that are pro democracy.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Are you suggesting that PKS [*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* – Prosperous Justice Party] poses a threat to Indonesian democracy? Is that what you mean?

AHMAD SUAEDY: Yes. I think that PKS is one of the political parties in SBY's [Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's] ruling government with a very strong pro Islam agenda. Publicly, they have promoted diversity and pluralism. But in practice, implementation of their agenda has been anti-religious freedom and so on. They have also been behind the implementation of sharia Islam in local regulations.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Let's talk about that more, the emergence of local sharia-inspired by-laws, as one of the impacts of democratisation in Indonesia. How widespread is this?

AHMAD SUAEDY: It is a combination commitment to religious values and anti-America and anti-west sentiment. There are many sharia-inspired local district regulations, and they can be divided into several categories. Some address common morality issues, like drugs, gambling and so on, but based on religious argumentation. Some tend to be discriminatory against Muslims, like requiring women have to cover their heads. Care is in order in response to this issue. Sometimes they go against democracy, but in other cases they address common concerns.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Let me ask Mr. Subhan – from your experience as a journalist, do you believe having Islamic parties is a threat or a challenge to democratisation? Is it better to have Islamic parties that are doing things constitutionally, peacefully than having, let's say, terrorist groups, for example. What do you think about that?

ZAFAR SOBHAN: That is the argument that people made in Bangladesh. I have to say, I personally do not agree with that. I think it is actually more dangerous. Because I saw what happened during the last government when Jamaah Islam was a coalition partner. Because they were in the government, they were able to give sponsorship and support to radicals, extremists and militants, and that is why we see more militancy when they are in the government. When they are not in the government, and they are not able to sponsor the radicals, we see fewer radical activities. That is our experience in Bangladesh.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: There are some text messages coming in now in response to the talkshow. (1) From Buya in Jakarta: May I have some information about how well Muslims in Afghanistan and Bangladesh get along with the minority groups? (2) From Buya also in Jakarta: What is the understanding of the democracy among Muslims in Afghanistan and in Bangladesh? Are there any groups that are opposed to the models of democracy applied there? (3) from Laila also in Jakarta: The Afghanistan and Bangladesh constitutions state that every citizen has the right to freely conduct activities according to their religion, Laila, Jakarta.

Let's begin with Mrs. Siddiqi first. Your response?

SAFIA SIDDIQI: I have got only one question: are there some people who are against democracy in Afghanistan? Yes. And that is why there is still fight going on in Afghanistan, because they say, the reason they are doing it is because they are against democracy, opposed to democracy in Afghanistan. That is why, they say things like they don't like women working in offices. They don't like women going to school. They don't like women being a part of society. That is why there is still fighting in Afghanistan. They are against democracy in Afghanistan.

People are arguing that Afghanistan is Islamic country. That it should be

purely Islam, Islamic law not any other law, even though our constitution very clearly states that the men and women have equal rights, equal participation in the law. But unfortunately some people are making different rules for some countries, like in Afghanistan. These are the people who are against democracy in Afghanistan.

ZAFAR SOBHAN: I'll take the second one first. Fortunately, in Bangladesh, there is very strong support for democracy. The number of people or groups that are anti-democracy is very small. So, that is one thing which is good in Bangladesh.

I would like to address the other two text questions. The first is the minority situation; how Muslims respond to them. I would say that the majority of Muslims have very good relations with our minority communities – we have Hindus, we have Christians and Buddhists, and we also have tribal communities with their own religions. However, there is a small group in the country that is anti the minority communities. And so much depends on the government. If the government defends the minority communities, then everything is okay. If the government steps back and does not take up its role to defend the minority communities, then there may be many incidents. I think we saw this from the government [that was in power] from 2001 to 2006. They did not defend the minority communities, and so things go very difficult for the minorities. Theoretically, everyone has equal rights in Bangladesh. It doesn't matter what your religion is, it doesn't matter what your community is; but for enforcement of those rights, you depend upon the government.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Any comments from the audience?

ASKER 1 (YUSUFLIH): It is too bad that there is no interpreter. In Afghanistan, why is that if a Muslim converts to another religion, the sentence is death? There is no freedom in that country. Actually, [freedom of] belief is a basic human right. The Qur'an says *lakum dinukum waliyadin*. Thank you.

SAFIA SIDDIQI: I think this is very difficult to answer. Actually, I don't want to answer this question. The only thing that I would like to say is that this is true not only in Afghanistan, but everywhere in Islam. The Qur'an states this very clearly. But I am so sorry I don't want to answer this.

ASKER 2: My name is Yeni Rosada Damayanti. I am a women's activist. I would like to say something to Mrs. Siddiqi. Actually, in Indonesia there is a worrying trend in Islam. When I was a student at university during the 80s, no women in my faculty wore a headscarf, and at a gathering like this, you might find one or two women wearing headscarves. Twenty years later, in my faculty, for example, about sixty women students wear headscarves. This is a very fast growing tendency. I don't know whether to call this Islamisation; but in Indonesia, something like that is quiet worrying. Following that trend, there is also demand to change our constitution from a secular one to an Islamic based one. And they are using that to campaign or to promote their ideas. They use the very same arguments that you do: that we should not be afraid to make Islam the basis of our constitution or our ideology or our state foundation, because Islam is compatible with democracy. That is what the promoters of an Islamic state say. Here in Indonesia, we have a secular country because the constitution is secular. But there is a growing demand that Indonesia should change from a secular country to a theocracy. And the reason [they give] is that Islam is compatible with democracy, that the kind of democracy that we have in Indonesia is democracy from the western perspective, which is actually is not suitable for us in Indonesia. Therefore, [they say] we should adopt Islam as our state ideology and we should not be afraid because it is compatible with democracy. What do you think about this? From the three of you.

ZAFAR SOBHAN: It is a difficult question to answer. I think in the context of Bangladesh, I would say that while they are compatible, they should be separated. So you can be a Muslim and you can be a democrat. But I still think that does not mean you should base the entire country on Islamic law, Islamic understanding, because in Bangladesh we also have non-Muslims, and they are equal as members of society. If it were an Islamic state, I don't see how they could be considered equal. But it is an issue that we are discussing and debating in Bangladesh very much as well.

AHMAD SUAEDY: We have very small anti-democratic groups and they struggle to implement their ideas and agendas in the society and state. But we also have big people and big political parties that support

democratisation. So, it is like fair competition between the pro- and anti-democracy people and political parties. I think that Muslim scholars have to re-interpret Islam, so that Islam is compatible with democracy. Also, the government has to guarantee the people freedom of expression, freedom of religion, and so on.

SAFIA SIDDIQI: About ten years or eleven years ago, I went to Bosnia for a conference. There were women for Friday prayers, me and my colleagues. When we went there, there were some young girls, also going to Friday prayers. When I came out from the mosque, a man asked me who was in the mosque. I said there were men and women. Are they young or old? I said they were young. Here, in this country [Afghanistan], people fight against Muslims going to the mosque to pray. It's as if we are not proud to be Muslims. But we cannot just close our eyes to religion. We believe in our religion, and we believe in democracy as well. We live in the 21st century; we don't want, as I said before, just to stay indoors, behind curtains. We will end up like Iran. You see women working, and you see women wearing burqah, or whatever it's called. But we should have the right to education, we should have the right to work, and we should have the right to be free. Like my colleague Najiba, she does not wear a scarf like I do; and I am proud of this, I really believe in this. Everybody should have that right, not have it forced upon them. But I don't think women are forced to wear the scarf in Indonesia. In Afghanistan, we don't mind wearing the scarf as long as we have the right to education, as long as we have the right to work. If we don't have the right to anything, then it is time to fight for our rights. I think in Afghanistan right now, women wearing the scarf is just part of the bargain. That's all I can say.

ASKER 3: My name is Ferdi. I would like to ask to Mrs. Siddiqi from Afghanistan why the statue of Buddha in Banyam has been destroyed? The Silk Road is very famous; it symbolises the melting of cultures. In the past, merchants from the Middle East or Arabia going to China and Chinese merchants going to Arabia, used the Silk Road without any problems. Why is it that these so-called fundamentalists, these so-called radicals, have only appeared in the 20th and 21st centuries?

I would like to add something about Turkey. Turkey is very moderate;

they have bars, karaoke, and nightlife. The people are Muslims. Do you think Turkey is a good example of a Muslim country. Because they are very moderate; not fundamental, and not radical. Fundamentalists will not live in Turkey. So, what do you think about that?

Mr. Suaedy, I'd like to add something about there being no democracy for women in Saudi Arabia. If they are not *muhrim*, they aren't even allowed to get into a taxi. They are not allowed to travel overseas alone. Why is it still like that? And why do Arabs want it to be like that? It's not democratic.

Mr. Sobhan, in your opinion, what is the reason that Islamists have become so radical? What is the main factor in the recent emergence of radicalism and fundamentalism in the late 20th century and 21st century? Do you think it has something to do with Islamic scholars in the western countries, because universities in America have departments of Islamic studies?

SAFIA SIDDIQI: As I said earlier, there is a great difference between Islamic democracy and American democracy. In Afghanistan, right now, there is a fight against American democracy. In my opinion, there is not a lot of difference: democracy is democracy everywhere, whether in Islamic society or non-Islamic democracy. It is about respect for the rules and regulations, for better lives and more freedom.

About the Buddha statue in Bamiyan, I think the people of Afghanistan are really sorry and sad about what happened, about what was done by the enemies of Afghanistan. It was not the Afghans, it was not the politicians of Afghanistan, it was not the people who think about Afghanistan as Afghans do. It was not the work of Afghans. It was the work of the enemies of Afghanistan, the enemies of Afghani society, of Afghani culture, of Afghani people, and of the Afghani government. We are very sorry and we are very sad about what happened. It will not be repeated again in Afghanistan.

About Turkey, if you go to Ankara or Istanbul, you will see radicals, and you will see Islamist groups in that country, too. But the government treats everyone equally, regardless of their way of life. Some Muslims are very open and free, and some are very closed and live their own way of life. But my hope is that the people of Afghanistan can make their own choice about the rights we have. Whatever the people want, that should be the way of life in Afghanistan. Because at the moment we are not really free to

choose the way of life that we want. And I think not only Turkey, but in some other countries as well, they really have democracy, like in Pakistan and India. India, our neighbour has a very good way of life, like its neighbour, Bangladesh, and like Iran and central Asia. We are very close. We have similarities. We share the same cultures. We share the same religion. We have the same languages as our neighbouring countries. We don't have any problems. But it is Afghanistan's strategic location that means it is always the centre of problems and trouble. And unfortunately, we really suffer because of that.

AHMAD SUAEDY: I can't say anything about women in Saudi Arabia, but from the Indonesian Islamic perspective, this is anti-democracy. But the situation in Saudi Arabia has its own history, and we cannot interfere. Some Americans and democracy activists say they have introduced democracy, including women's rights, into a few groups in Saudi Arabia, but only time will tell what will happen in Saudi Arabia. Thank you.

ZAFAR SOBHAN: Just want to answer the question very quickly. I think that in the 20th and 21st centuries, in the southern world, the eastern world, whatever you want to call it, there has always been a strong anti-western, anti-colonial, anti-imperialist constituency. This is a position that used to be voiced by the left, but with the demise of political left in this part the world, there is a vacuum, and the only language to fill that vacuum is political Islam. So that is why we see have seen the rise of political Islam in the late 20th century and the 21st century.

ASKER 4: My name is Umara from the Afghanistan embassy. I am a diplomat. Actually I am not asking question and I am not answering the questions. I just want to clarify something our brother asked about killing people when they change their beliefs and thoughts. In Afghanistan, Muslims make up the majority, more than 99 percent; but we have minority religions like Hindus, sects, and we have Jews, they live in Afghanistan very peacefully. The practice of other religions is free in the constitution, but changing your religion and proselytising your religion is not constitutional. But, nobody has yet been killed for changing his religion; there has only been one case of a person [being condemned to death], and he is now in Italy.

The thing I hope our Indonesia brothers ask about, and sympathise with, is the hundreds of people, civilian women and children, who in just three months were killed. I am waiting for them to ask about that, and to show their sympathy; to ask why civilians and Muslims are killed in the name of Islam, by both sides. The other point I would like to make is that the statue of Buddha was not destroyed by Muslims or by Afghani people. There is a political reason for what happened, that has nothing to do with religion or any other issue in Afghanistan. As for Turkey, we cannot make democracy in Turkey the model for democracy in our country. We should have our own models, and make our own choices.

SAFIA SIDDIQI: Actually, I have not raised the issue of conversion. I don't want to answer that question. This is not my job to do that. The other thing, as I said, for model ways of life, I think Afghanistan, should look at other Islamic countries, at their cultures and ways of life, such as in Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. Afghanistan has to have the right to make its own choice, the one that is best suited to the way of life of the people there. This is one thing that I really hope for: that the Afghan people can determine their own future.***

Islam and the Nation State:

LESSONS FROM PAKISTAN, INDIA, INDONESIA

Editor's note: *This is an edited transcript of the discussion on the second day, Thursday, 14 August 2008, among the guest speakers and with members of the audience and listeners. As on the first day, the discussion begins with questions put by moderator Ihsan Ali-Fauzi.*

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: We will be talking about Islam and Democracy in South Asia, focusing on Islam and the state today. By learning from the experiences of Indonesia, Pakistan and India, we will be focusing on whether Islam, with its respect for human rights and so on, is a resource for state building or a constraint to state building.

Let me start with Professor Asghar. Let's talk about something very normative. Do you think that there is compatibility between Islam and nation state? Is Islam a resource for the nation state, or a constraint?

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER: When did Islamic theology emerge? It emerged when there was no concept of nation state at all. That is why when the caliph Umayyah became head of state after the death of the holy Prophet, peace be upon Him. At that time, there could be no more than one caliph at a time. But then Abbasiyyah challenged and defeated Ummayyah, and took over as caliph. Meanwhile, Umayyah founded a state in Spain, so then there were two caliphs: Abbasiyyah and Umayyah. Then Islam spread to many countries, and many new rules came into existence at that time. So multiple

caliphs were accepted, modifying theology once again. Thus, we can see that theology is not set in stone.

But what about the modern state, Islam and nation state? Nation states did not come into existence in Asia until the 20th century, because most of our countries had been under colonial rule. All deliberated about creating nation states.

Let's take India as an example. When the question of nation state was debated by ulama in India, the great philosopher and poet Ulama Akbar argued that India could not be a nation state, because all Muslims must unite in one *millah* or religion. This was the position taken by Akbar. But Maulana Husain Madani, a very eminent theologian from India and syekh of Darul Uloom Deoband, one of Asia's most prominent Islamic seminaries, countered that there was no conflict between Islam and nation state, citing the example of the holy Prophet when He migrated from Mecca to Medina. He pointed out that Medina was a pluralist community, made up of Jews, Muslims, and idol worshippers. He drew up a covenant known as *Mithaq-e Madina*, the terms of which recognise the state. Jews were free to worship; Muslims were free to worship; idol worshippers were free to worship. But if Medina was attacked, they had to stand together in its defence. Medina was a pluralist state. As well as Muslims, there were several Jewish tribes and idol worshippers who had not converted to Islam. We cannot say that this was a nation; but it was state, where everyone was free to worship according to his religion, and was bound by a covenant. What is a nation state? We are bound by one constitution, which is our covenant. The constitution guarantees everyone the right to worship according to his religion; we enjoy equal rights. This is exactly what the holy Prophet did in Medina: He founded the concept of the nation state in *Mithaq-e Madina*, the Covenant of Medina.

So there is no contradiction between Islam and nation state. Because so many countries came into existence when Islam spread outside Saudi Arabia, and so many ethnic groups, with unique cultures, languages, customs and traditions, embraced Islam. Out of this, a new theology had to emerge because the theology that developed when the only Muslims were Arabs had no relevance in these new situations.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Which means that it is actually 100% okay to accept the ideas and the reality of secularism, of a state based on secularist principles?

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER: Yes. Even in Medina when the Prophet was alive, there was no state as we know it. There was no bureaucracy, no police, no military; all of these functions were purely voluntary. When the holy Prophet had to fight, he asked “Who wants to fight with me?”. There was no paid army, paid bureaucracy, that we could call a state. It was a society where voluntary groups coexisted and enjoyed equal rights.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Mrs. Sarwar. Do you believe that, do you agree with that, do you buy Professor Asghar’s argument?

BEENA SARWAR: I think Professor Asghar, being an engineer, is a very learned man. I have learnt a lot from him about history and what he said makes complete sense to me. So, I think, unfortunately, the people on this panel will agree with each other on this point. But let’s apply what he said to the context

Talkshow “The Road to Democracy: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia”, di Jakarta Rabu 13 Agustus 2008. Dari kiri ke kanan: Safia Siddiqi (Afghanistan), Ahmad Suaedy (Indonesia), Zafar Sobhan



Talkshow “Islam and the Nation State: Lessons from Pakistan, India, Indonesia”, 14 Agustus 2008 Jakarta Indonesia. Dari kiri ke kanan Asghar Ali Engineer (India), Beena Sarwar (Pakistan), Rizal Sukma (Indonesia), Ihsan Ali Fauzi (Moderator, Indonesia). Dok. PPMN



of Pakistan, for example. Pakistan is also a very pluralistic society. We have many ethnicities, tribes, languages, religions; and within the religions, there are the sects, within the languages, there are dialects. It is very diverse society. But it seems to be the compulsion of the modern nation state to construct an identity. So what is the Pakistani identity? And the only thing that people in Pakistan can come up with [as an identity] is Islam. Then again, Islam as a religion is followed by many different kinds of people, each with their own culture, language, way of living, dress, whatever. So in the process of trying to impress this Islamic identity in Pakistan, I think that a lot of damage has been done; damage that needs to be undone as soon as possible.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: I believe Pakistan was one of the first religious states ever build in the 20th century...

BEENA SARWAR: It was founded on the name of religion, as, I believe, was Israel. But I don't think that a country can have a religion, because religion is something that living beings, human beings, people with souls, have. You can say a country has Muslim majority population, but how can you say a country is Muslim or non-Muslim?

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Are you suggesting that even if you establish a religious country, there will still be diversity within that country?

BEENA SARWAR: That's right. I think that you can't declare that a country has a religion. The reality is that Pakistan is a Muslim majority country. But to say that it is an Islamic country is a very strange concept to my mind. I think it is a political strategy. It is a way that politicians at that time used to divide and rule; to promote their politics. It was unnecessary. When something is done in the name of religion, it is very difficult to undo. Rallying people to do something in the name of religion, can, as we have seen, end in violence.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: You said that in the history of Pakistan, damage has been done because of that. Can you tell us more about that?

BEENA SARWAR: The start of all the bloodshed, was, as you know, the partition of India in 1947, which led to the establishment of an independent

Pakistan. Between one to two million people were killed, and thousands of women were raped, abducted. There was so much bloodshed in the name of religion at the time of partition to start with; and then along came the religious figures who had opposed the creation of Pakistan on the grounds described by Professor Asghar, and said we can have a nation state for Muslims. They all said that it was an opportunity, and they came to Pakistan and started trying to co-opt the state – which they succeeded in doing to some extent – to put pressure on the constituent assembly to adopt the objective resolution. The objective resolution stated that Islam would be the state religion. But, as I mentioned earlier, this was just a political means of consolidating a new identity, which laid the groundwork for a lot more damage in the early fifties, when the religious organizations realized that nobody was paying them any attention. So they started attacking the Ahmadiyah and there was a lot of bloodshed in Lahore, where many people were killed.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Let's go back to Indonesia. What can we learn from the Indonesian experience in the context of Islam and nation state?

RIZAL SUKMA: The tension between Islam and nation state was there even before the creation of the Republic of Indonesia. The early forties were a time of great debate in Indonesia, too. Fortunately, the debate to a certain extent was about the state identity, the basis of the state and how we would define the state identity. It was decided that the new state was going to be called the Republic of Indonesia, and the founding fathers of Indonesia agreed on the five principles of Pancasila. And I think that even today, the majority of Indonesians are quite happy and content with the fact that we have this dual identity. That Indonesia can be classified as a Muslim country, in the sense that we have a Muslim majority population, but not an Islamic state; that the state identity, the basis of the state, has never been defined in terms of religion. So, of course, in that kind of population you have all different kinds of interpretations, points of view, but the way we tried to resolve that tension was to define the Indonesian state not as a secular state or theocratic state, but as something different.

Basically, we define it in terms of a grand philosophy that aims to unite this diverse nation and its differences in religion, ethnicity, and background,

into a solid concept of nation state. In reality, we have remained steadfast in the face of many challenges. The compatibility of Islam and nation state was not an issue during the early years of independence, although the debate was re-opened at that time. The question of whether we should define the state in terms of religion, whether it should be a theocracy or we should continue with our neither secular nor theocratic state, continued during the early fifties. But, I believe that at that time, the Indonesian political system that was introduced after independence was referred to as liberal democracy, parliamentary democracy. In fact, there was no question whatsoever that democracy was the political arrangement that all political forces accepted. And in fact, if you recall, even when the Islamic parties actually became the government of the day, leaders such as Natsir of the Masyumi Party basically accepted democracy as the political arrangement by which the country would be governed. Of that, there was no question whatsoever; there was no debate at that time as to whether democracy and Islam were compatible.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: What is the latest on the debate in Indonesia? Has it been resolved?

RIZAL SUKMA: When the process of democratization began in 1998, of course some groups tried to re-open the debate. But events during the People's Consultative Assembly sessions in 1998, and again in 2004, clearly suggested that the majority would like to see Pancasila continue; would not like to see the state defined in terms of religion, but to continue with, and to see, the dual identity preserved. Because that is the basis, and also the guarantee, for the survival of a pluralistic country like Indonesia, without which Indonesia would break down. We have also had to deal with challenges from ethnic nationalism, but as far as the role of Islam in that context is concerned, I think the majority would prefer that the country not be defined in terms of religion.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Let me come back to Professor Asghar. Do you think this, the example of Indonesia, is a good model that other Muslim countries could adopt?

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER: Each country is unique. We should not say that a

country should adopt this model or that model. Each country has each own historical situation, political situation and social situation. India is called a secular state, a secular democracy; but secularism does not mean atheism as it did in the in western context when the West had to fight against Church domination. That is why their secularism became atheistic. But we Indians did not have to fight any church. I mean, our situation was different, because our population has followers of different religions. Even after partition, there are a huge number of Muslims in India. We are second only to Indonesia, with a hundred forty million Muslims. We have a large number of Muslims, but also Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsees. So we decided to have a secular country, a secular nation. And secularism would mean equal respect for all religions. That the state has no religion is the most important part of our secular concept. The state has no religion, but people are free to follow any religion they want, or no religion at all. I mean, even atheism is not a sin in India. You can proclaim yourself an atheist and you still can enjoy all the rights guaranteed by the constitution; and similarly I can be a Muslim and enjoy all the rights, or a Hindu, or a Christian, or whatever. It is a very different context in India, which has a unique model of secularism by law.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Do you think that the emergence of the BGP [Hindu fundamentalist party] in India poses a threat to Indian secularism?

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER: Yes, you see, unfortunately in every country parties emerge that are racist, quite radical, that hate minorities. And in India, we have what we call the Hindu dual family. But they don't represent real Hinduism. Real Hinduism is not about violence or hating others. In fact, Hindu tradition says that all religions should be respected. And India welcomes the Paris, the Jews, the Christians, the Muslims, whatever their origin. So, the form of Hinduism represented by the BGP is a very dangerous form, which creates hatred between the followers of one religion and those of another religion. They represent majoritarianism; they believe that followers of the majority religion should dominate. That is their way of looking at things. So, the secular process in my country is always fighting against communal processes in India represented by this so-called "severance family".

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: What can Indonesia and Pakistan learn from each other?

What can you learn from the Indonesian experience? What do you think Indonesia has to learn from Pakistan?

BEENA SARWAR: I think what Indonesia should learn from Pakistan is not to mix religion and politics, because you can see how it has really torn our country apart and how Muslims are fighting other Muslims within Pakistan. And once you start on that road, there is no end. I think what Pakistan can learn from Indonesia is that it is possible to reconstruct the national identity without having to force religion, or one religion, down everybody's throat.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Our correspondent has recorded some people's opinions about the topic we are discussing.

COMMENT 1: I think first of all we need to question the concept of democracy itself. Because Afghanistan has always said that it is true to democracy, that this is a war for democracy and a war against terrorism. And why is it always a question of being against Islam? We all know that it is because we need to conjure up an enemy to survive; and Islam today was also created by this so-called process of democracy. I don't think that anything is compatible with this kind of democracy.

COMMENT 2: Islam is a complete core of life and a complete religion. We can find a solution for everything in Islam. Allah distributed human beings in tribes and nations, so they could know each other. No nation or tribe is superior. Islam is a threat to all those which do not follow Islam, even if in a democracy or nation state. There is no room for other laws in Islam. The other laws are made by men, and Islamic laws are made by caliphs.

COMMENT 3: No religion is compatible with democracy, whether it is Christianity or Islam. Second, I strongly feel that the state should be separated from religion. Religion should not enter into the public domain.

Comment 4: The holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon Him, was a democrat who believed in consultation, who believed in promoting egalitarian values, and who believed in the equality of opportunity. Islam is not a threat. Islam is part of the process that promotes and protects the



1. Peserta talkshow dari berbagai kalangan (mahasiswa, aktivis NGO, jurnalis) memadati Mawar Room Hotel Santika Jakarta..

Beberapa peserta Talkshow Asia Calling melihat-lihat sejumlah foto bertema Perempuan Afghanistan yang dipamerkan selama kegiatan berlangsung di Hotel Santika Jakarta, 13-14 Agustus 2008.



nation. Islam protects the identity of Muslims. So they are loyal to the nation state and they are loyal to the faith; the two are compatible and they coexist.

COMMENT 5: I feel very strongly that the government should follow the Qur'an when it comes to handling matters of religion. The Qur'an states very clearly "*laa ikraha fiddiin*", which translates into English as "there is no compulsion in religion". You are not meant to enforce religion. Shariah is not meant to be enforced. *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) is not meant to be enforced. Quranic law is not meant to be enforced. The *hadith* and *sunnah* just give the details of what it is in the Qur'an.¹

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Professor Asghar, I believe that the imam of the Taliban said that there was no separation between religion and state, *din wa dawlah*. What does that mean?

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER: The concept of religion and politics going together in Islam came into being because of the unique situation of Islam at that time. Because before Islam there was no state in Mecca, there was no government in Mecca; no kind of government, neither in Mecca nor in Medina. It was just a tribal society. But then Islam emerged and the Prophet, peace be upon Him, headed our organization, which became a state. And then the successor of the Prophet was both a head of religion and a head of state. That is how our doctrine that come into existence. You won't find it in the Qur'an, you won't find it in *hadith*. I mean it is purely a product of a historical situation. So we should not call it Islamic doctrine. I am not in favour of that.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Mr. Rizal Sukma, do you think that radical Islamic organisations are a threat to Indonesian democracy?

RIZAL SUKMA: I am not saying that the consolidation of democracy in Indonesia is guaranteed. We started this process just over ten years ago,

¹ Hadith, Arabic word, refers to oral traditions relating to the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad. Sunnah, Arabic word, refers to the sayings and living habits of the Prophet Muhammad.

and of course there are still a lot of challenges. I need not stress that these challenges, or threats, if you like, come not only from so-called Islamist groups. Threats also come from within the democratic movement itself, which in many cases have nothing at all to do with religion, but are to do with things like democratic behaviour; the behaviour of civil servants; communal violence; the inability of the government to deliver the promise of economic prosperity; and the absence of justice, especially legal justice. So, while there are threats from so-called radical Islamic groups, we need to understand these threats within the broader context of the political challenges and threats and economic threats I mentioned. The inability of the current state to deliver economic prosperity, and to guarantee legal justice and social justice, has actually provided a space for these radical groups to mount a challenge against the current political arrangement, against democracy.

But in my view, despite these challenges, and even when these groups use violence and justify the use of violence in the name of Islam, they are still more of a nuisance than a serious threat, because the state is reluctant to rise to these kinds of challenges to democracy in Indonesia. In fact, even when violence is used, not only by radical Muslim groups, but by other groups in Indonesia, the state invariably fails in its function as law enforcer. The state needs to perform this function effectively in order to stop this kind of violence.

The real challenge is how to demonstrate the effectiveness of the current political arrangement, the current political system, to the wider public in Indonesia, so that people do not need to go looking for alternatives, such as those promised by some radical Islamic groups. But, so far, I think the ability of Indonesian society to withstand the challenges that come from groups that use or abuse or misuse Islam for their own ends, is actually quite good.

First, as I mentioned earlier, there has been no real debate as to whether democracy is compatible with Islam. We have just practiced democracy from the time we established this new nation in 1945. Even the Muslim parties at that time practiced democracy, and in fact called it liberal democracy. And it was when the Muslim parties were in power that progress, real progress in democracy, was made in the first decade of independence.

Second, since 1998, many key Muslim leaders have been at the forefront, advocating and pushing for the democratization of Indonesia. These leaders

are from two largest Muslim organisations in Indonesia, as well as other Muslim organizations. I think we also need to understand that the rise of the Islamic parties in Indonesia actually owes much to the space created by the process of democratization. Everyone, including Islamic radical groups, are stakeholders in democracy, so it is in their interest to preserve democracy, otherwise they would not be able to participate in the democratic process.

In reality, in the 1999 and 2004 general elections in Indonesia, the Islamic parties – by Islamic parties I mean those that declare that their parties are based on Islam – won no more than 18 percent of the vote. And if you include political parties that target Muslim constituents but are based on Pancasila, like PAN or PKB, the total vote was less than 32 percent. So, in that context, when it comes to the political preference of Indonesians, I think the majority will continue to vote for parties that do not have a particular religious identity.

BEENA SARWAR: If you look at the democratic process in Pakistan, up until the 2002 elections, the Islamic parties never won more than 3 to 4 percent of the total vote. People say, yes we are Muslim, but they vote for parties that are not based on religion. In the 2002 election, they managed to secure 10 percent of the vote. But that was only because several Islamic parties joined together to form one party, and also because of the sympathy factor, due directly to the US intervention in Afghanistan that led to scores of refugees flooding into Pakistan and scores of people being killed. There was sympathy for parties that voiced anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism rhetoric. As Mr. Sobhan pointed out yesterday, the anti-capitalism agenda that was once the platform of the political left has now been taken up by the Islamic right. But even so, in the February 2008 election, people demonstrated that even if they declared themselves Muslims, they would not necessarily vote for a religious based party.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: What is the current state of play between radical groups and Muslim groups in Pakistan?

Beena Sarwar: It is difficult say because many Muslims are members of groups, but these groups are not overtly based on religion. But the radical groups have now been infiltrated by so many foreigners, people from all over

the world; and that is true of the radical groups in the north-west belt that are supporting attacks into Afghanistan and Pakistan. I think that this is a major threat to Pakistan, and I think that we in Pakistan have suffered the most from the presence of these radical, militant Islamic groups.

An important point that I want to add here is that the main issue is law enforcement. The government tends to be very lenient towards these groups, towards their followers, when they break the law; for example, when they do 'fundamentalist' things like blacking out the faces of women on public billboards, burning CD shops, burning down cinemas. These kinds of crime are dealt with very leniently – people are never punished for them – so things just get worse.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: We hear that madrasa are being used to train terrorist Muslims. Is that true?

BEENA SARWAR: I think Professor Asghar will be able to tell us more about that. But traditionally, madrasa are places of learning, they are schools. After the 1979 Russian invasion of Afghanistan, and the US involvement in Pakistan and support for Zia al-Haq, the then Pakistan military dictator, madrasa were used to train fighting forces for the war in Afghanistan. That is when militancy in the madrasa started; it was something that the governments of Pakistan, America, Saudi Arabia, and countries like that founded themselves, to train the Afghan jihad.

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER: Madrasa are by no means training grounds for terrorists. That is a very unfair accusation. Madrasa were great centres of learning throughout Middle Ages, and are in modern times too. And what Mrs. Sarwar said is absolutely true. It is CIA (?) who used madrasa to train students from Pakistan and then turned against them. They started saying that madrasa were training grounds for terrorism. In India, this allegation is frequently made. Even the home minister has declared that madrasa are training grounds for terrorists. These are political statements used by politicians for their own agendas. As far as India is concerned, I assure you that there are no madrasa that are training grounds for terrorists. And you will note that terrorists are not usually mullah, they are not the students of madrasa. They are highly educated people; technology and software

engineers, doctors. These kinds of people are training to be terrorists because they are angry young people, and they are more concerned because they are educated. Madrasa are not concerned with raising political consciousness. These are modern, educated people. They are more educated, they are more aware, they understand the technology of bomb-making and whatnot. But let me make one thing absolutely clear here: there is no justification for violence as far as Islam is concerned. I mean you are not allowed to kill innocent people under any circumstances, even in the event of war. Detailed rules are laid down in sharia which state that non-combatants must not be killed; women, children, old people and those who are not participating in war must not be killed. It is very clear. And terrorists kill only innocent people who are doing shopping, who are going to schools. These are the people who are killed.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Let me go back to Rizal. Can you tell us about the international connection between terrorists groups in Indonesia and terrorist groups outside Indonesia? For example, it was reported in the news that the Bali bombers had connections with the Afghan jihad. What should be the response to this?

RIZAL SUKMA: Actually, I don't know much about this. But news reports at the weekend did say that some of the terrorists were so-called veterans of the Afghan war. But the extent to which this terrorist group in Indonesia maintains organisational links with terrorist groups in other countries is still open to debate. There are, of course, what we call inspirational or ideological links; but as to whether they are pursuing a wholly homespun agenda or being influenced by global forces – the extent to which they are a proxy for the global terrorist agenda – is still open to debate. Inspirational or ideological links can always be established, especially during, or within the context of, the resurgence of terrorist ideology, which basically justifies the use of violence to achieve certain political aims, and exploits the pride of Muslims all over the world, especially in Palestine, but also in other parts of the world.

Again, I tend to think that the Indonesian approach, which relies not only on the use of law enforcement and law enforcement agencies, but also on the greater participation and involvement of Muslim based civil society, is the best response to this problem. I think so far, Indonesia could

be described as an achiever in terms of our counter-terrorism operations. Nevertheless, we must also acknowledge that we have to produce even better results in order to contain and combat the threat of terrorism.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Mrs. Sarwar, can you tell us about the current position of women in Pakistan? And also about Musharraf's position in Pakistan today?

BEENA SARWAR: Both are very important, multi-dimensional issues, and there is no one-line answer for either. But very briefly, women in Pakistan have made many advances over the last few years, and are now active in all professions – women are working in journalism and the media, and as commercial airline pilots, nurses and surgeons, even as motorbike-riding traffic police in Lahore. But at the same time, Pakistan is still a deeply traditional country, and the socio-economic and political changes that have taken place over the last few years threaten the way life, the status quo. And because of that, there is also a lot of violence against women, particularly in more traditional, rural settings when women assert themselves, give voice to their aspirations. That is just a very quick look at two sides of the problem.

As for Musharraf, I think that if he were wise, he would have stepped down by now. He said that when the people no longer supported the parties that supported him, he would leave. But he didn't. In the 2000 election, the parties that supported him had no standing, no credibility. Yet there he is, sitting there talking about the impeachment motion. His being in power is the source of great instability in Pakistan. I also think that joining America in its 'war on terror', instead of dealing with our own war, has brought more damage to Pakistan than to any other country. We have suffered the consequences of suicide bombings all over the country, but rather than dealing with our war, he chose to join America in its war. And because he has no political credibility, no political backing; he is a military dictator; in power thanks to the backing of the army, not by the vote of the people.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Is the army backing Musharraf?

BEENA SARWAR: Right now, the army is staying neutral. But the fact that Washington has been backing Musharraf is one of the reasons that he is still in power. And Washington is only now starting to acknowledge that

Musharraf is not the only Pakistani who is opposed to terrorism. We all are against terrorism, and a politically elected government would be able to rally the people in that fight, so that it is seen not as an American war, but as Pakistani war.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: There are some text messages coming in now in response to the talkshow. (1) From Nuri in Jakarta: Is it true that Islamic nations are not successful? (2) From Akbar, also in Jakarta: Many people equate Islam with violence and terrorism especially after 9/11. How to counter such understanding? (3) From Melda, also in Jakarta: How can democracy and pluralism be implemented in an Islamic government system?

Mr. Rizal Sukma, would you please answer the question about Islam and terrorism, extremism and violence?

RIZAL SUKMA: In terms of counter terrorism, everybody understand that the threat has two dimensions. First, of course, there are the law enforcement and counter terrorism procedures or operations undertaken by the police force. The second dimension is acknowledging that this terrorism is linked to the use, the abuse and misuse of Islam. This needs to be addressed, and I think the best way to address is that the Muslim community itself should show that it is angry that the teachings of Islam are being misused and abused. By the Muslim community, I mean Muslim organizations, Muslim civil society, and all other elements of society, particularly Muslim thinkers, leaders, and so on. Another part of this second dimension is that the state, especially in a country like Indonesia where Muslims are the majority, should be very sensitive and understand the context in which counter terrorism measures need to be taken. The idea that city leaders, mayors, are political instruments to be used to corner and to marginalize Islamic forces really needs to be avoided. The state used this technique in the past, particularly during the New Order period. But because its real purpose was to sideline Islam as legitimate political force, suspicion of this method still runs high within certain groups in Indonesia. On the other hand, measures by the book, taken by the police force, have met with some success. So far, counter terrorism measures carried out by the police force has not been perceived as deliberate political attempts to marginalize political aspirations within the process of democratization.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Professor Asghar, I think the first text message is suggesting that pluralism cannot be expected to flourish in an Islamic state. Do you agree?

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER: There are different interpretations of Islam. That might be one. In fact, pluralism has been accepted by many scholars of Islam. Again, using India as an example, the ulama there accept pluralism, they accept secular democracy. Jamiat Ulama Hindu has always been with the Indian national congress and they were in the frontline of the opposition against partition. As I said, Maulana Husein Ahmad Madani challenged the position of the ulama on Islam and nation state. There are different views, but I for one strongly believe that Islam is not at all incompatible with pluralism. Islam accepts pluralism because there is a verse in the Qur'an which says if Allah had wanted to, He would have created only one community, one religious community, one *ummah*; but He chose to create many. Why? He gave us the challenge of living in peace with all others, saying: Do not challenge each other's religions. Do not challenge each other's beliefs. But extol each other in good faith. If we do that, we will live in paradise. But instead, we use religion deliberately to promote our own politics, our own political agenda, and that is our downfall.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Sarwar, why are Islamic countries not successful?

BEENA SARWAR: Well, as I said before, a country does not have a religion; a country cannot be Islamic. But if we look at Muslim majority countries, many are located in areas that have strong tribal traditions or in areas that have despots as rulers. And if we look at global politics, we can see how western powers have supported those despots and those kings, those military rulers, and not allowed any kind of progressive political movement to take place. We have seen this in Iran and Pakistan, and in other countries. Also note that there are many non-Muslim majority countries that are not democratic. So, this is a red herring thrown in to confuse the real issue of socio-economic-political power and democratic processes.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Any comments from the audience?

ASKER 1: My name is Andy Budiman. My question is for Sarwar. Ahmadiyah

has become a big issue here in Indonesia. Some conservative groups are putting pressure on the government to ban Ahmadiyah. I want you to share your experience, your country's experience. What happened when the government officially banned Ahmadiyah?

BEENA SARWAR: I'll just answer that quickly. Look at what happens when a government legislates in the name of religion, whether it is to outlaw a community or to introduce laws like the blasphemy law in Pakistan, or other laws legislated in the name of religion, regulating, for example, rape and adultery. All of these laws introduced in Pakistan have led to great injustice, bloodshed, violence and loss of life. And I think that Indonesia should learn from these lessons. Because when something is not laid down in black and white, when there is no law that says how a particular crime should be viewed, that allows society to deal with it in a more flexible way. But if the law says when you do this, the punishment is this, it leaves no room for a grey area, and it leaves the door open for corruption and abuse of the law. Take the blasphemy law for example. If a non-Muslim is getting married and they send out invitations with the words *bismillah al-rahman al-rahim*² at the top, they can be arrested. They can be tried for blasphemy. If they are convicted, they face years in jail. And their fellow prisoners might attack them, or something like that. Sometimes the real motive behind such accusations is economic rivalry. I have been part of several fact-finding missions in Pakistan with the Pakistan Human Rights Commission, and wherever people have been accused of blasphemy, of apostasy or turning their backs on the Qur'an and the Prophet, peace be upon Him, or something like that, in many cases the motive is economic rivalry. Shopkeepers accusing neighbouring shopkeepers of blasphemy. And in many cases, the accused are Christian or non-Muslim; but lately, increasingly also Muslim. And this has opened the flood gates. Look at Pakistan for a good example of why you should not legislate in the name of religion; of why you should not mix religion and politics.

² *Bismillah al-rahman al-rahim*, Arabic phrase, means "In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful." The phrase constitutes the first of every "sura" (chapter) of the Qur'an (except for the ninth sura). The phrase is used in a number of contexts by Muslims, such as when they start doing something.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Another question. Some Muslims in Indonesia say that they [the Ahmadiyah] are insulting Islam. How should we respond to this argument?

BEENA SARWAR: I think you should tell them their faith is weak. That they are the ones misrepresenting Islam. You should say, if your faith is so weak, you really need to clean up your act. Do not blame other people. They are a proselytizing community. They go around, inviting people to find Islam. But I think the answer is to educate people. So that people themselves are strong. Let people preach what they want to preach. Your faith should not be so weak that is a threat to you. I think that basically it is about insecurity. And also it is used as a political tool. Every time a government starts getting weak, there is always somebody who comes along and claims that so and so has offended Islam, and that so and so has insulted the Qur'an and things like that. This is just a ploy to distract people's attention from other problems. Economic problems, social injustice, political problems get sidelined, are marginalised.

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI: Mr. Rizal, do you think that the Indonesian government is firm enough in guaranteeing the Ahmadiyah's right to the freedom of religious expression?

RIZAL SUKMA: Yes I think, like many other groups in this country, the state is also unsure about how to deal with this problem. You pointed out exactly the core dilemma of this issue. On the one hand, people accuse the Ahmadiyah of so-called blasphemy, of deviating from the mainstream core teachings of Islam. But on the other hand, there is the debate about the role of the state to guarantee space for differences. But then again, you also have to look at the context of the kind of space for differences that can be allowed. In particular, you need to consider the context in which that struggle for the space for differences in Indonesia takes place. So, in that context I really understand the difficulty that the government is facing. Whether they should actually ban groups accused of deviating from the so-called mainstream, or continue to guarantee their existence. The bottom line, with regard to Muhammadiyah's position on this issue, is that violence should not be used to resolve this issue. I think that Muhammadiyah's position on this issue is

quite clear on that point. In fact, if I am not mistaken, Muhammadiyah has not officially voted in favour of a ban on Ahmadiyah. There are some within the Muhammadiyah organisation that want the Ahmadiyah to be banned, but then again, it would be against the nature of an organisation with thirty-five million followers to enforce one particular point of view.

BEENA SARWAR: I think it would be a big mistake if an organisation like Muhammadiyah were to take that line.

ASKER 2: Yesterday during a discussion with a Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI)³ activist, he argued that the Qur'an says that Islam and democracy are incompatible. This verse he quoted is from Surat al-Ma'idah that says, "Don't accept Jews as our leaders". Do you think that this verse is doctrine supporting the incompatibility of democracy and Islam? Husni, Paramadina.

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER: What the Qur'an says is in a historical context. There was some conflict between Jews and Muslims, Christians and Muslims. And in that context, the Qur'an says do not follow them. But it is not doctrine. On the contrary, as far as doctrine is concerned, the Qur'an says that they [Jews and Christians] are *ahlul kitab*, people of the book. Respect them. Respect the book. Respect the Bible. Respect the Torah. That is what the Qur'an says. Clearly, you should not quote Quranic verses out of context just to prove a point. This would not be honest to the Qur'an. It is very wrong. We should understand the Qur'an in totality, not in pieces.

ASKER 3: I am a student majoring in international relations. In the past two decades, the effects of globalisation have accelerated and been accentuated in Indonesia. My question is, how should Muslims respond to globalization and modernization, based on the Pakistan, India and Indonesian perspectives?

RIZAL SUKMA: The challenges of globalisation are not specific to Muslims,

³ Arabic phrase refers to the Indonesian chapter of the party of liberation. Hizbut Tahrir is an international pas-Islamist, Sunni political party whose goal is to combine all Muslim countries in a unitary Islamic state or caliphate, ruled by Islamic law and with a caliph head of state elected by Muslims.

and they do not really require an Islamic response. I think all groups, the world over, are faced with exactly the same kind of challenges. The process of globalisation challenges their identities, and the problem facing all groups is how they will fit into the new world structure, but at the same time retain their identity. Globalisation is like a double-edged sword; it brings with it both opportunities and problems, which of course have to be dealt with. It really a process that gives rise to many contradictions. On the one hand, globalisation is an integrating force, bringing groups, nations and forces closer together; but at the same time, there needs to be space for disintegrated forces. The rise of nationalism, the rise of political sovereign identity, where people and groups challenge the identities of other groups. So in that context, in general terms, I think it is important for groups, societies, and nations to cooperate, that there needs to be cooperation among different groups, to identify how globalization can bring economic prosperity, better access to technology, and so on. But at the same time, you also need to identify the negative impacts of globalisation that need to be addressed.

ASKER 4: I am a women's activist from PBHI Jakarta. My name is Yeni Rosa Damayanti. I am a Muslim. I am not being paranoid, but I think you are playing down the threat of Islamic political power, especially in Indonesia, because I don't really know anything about the situation in India and Pakistan. It is not the radical groups I am afraid of; it is the formal political parties that say democracy is compatible with Islam, but that we need not adopt western democracy; that we should adopt so-called Islamic democracy and turn Indonesia into an Islamic state, because we should not be afraid of Islam. The reason that I think Rizal Sukma plays down the power of the political parties is because PKS, the most popular Islamic political party in Indonesia, campaigns using the language of democracy, but is actually using the democratic mechanism to win their struggle. I for one take no notice of what they say, because the PKS charter clearly says that they want an Islamic state. Take the regional elections for example: PKS won seats in provinces and districts all over Indonesia, including North Sumatra, West Java and Jakarta. Twenty major parties, including giants PDIP and Golkar, against one small PKS. And those twenty parties almost lost. So I am afraid that in 2014, PKS will gain more than 50 percent of the seats in parliament, and then they will have the right to change our constitution and impose Islamic

law in Indonesia. I think you are playing down the threat.

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER: She also raises again the question of whether Islam and democracy are compatible. The question is why should we adopt 'western democracy'? Why not 'Islamic democracy'? But the phrase 'western democracy' does not refer to any religion. It is not Christian democracy. So asking why western democracy, why not Islamic democracy, to my mind is a non question. In my opinion, there is no such thing as 'Islamic democracy' because democracy cannot be Christian, Islamic, Jewish, or any other religion. Democracy is democracy. Democracy is a system of election. It is simply a system of election by the people. How can it be Islamic or Christian or Jewish? If the state had a religion, who would define it? Whose interpretation would be followed? You can call it an Islamic democracy, but there are so many sects in Islam. Who will control that? And then there will be power struggles between the different sects of Islam, and to win power they will become more and more radical, more and more violent. So that is why democracy must not be hijacked by religion. Democracy has to be neutral to all religions. I will be a much better Muslim if I follow Islam voluntarily than if the state compels me to follow my religion or the state recognized religion. I would not be a genuine follower of religion. I would be doing it not out of consciousness, but out of fear, and I would have to suppress my real feelings. So never mix religion and politics. Religion is genuine only when you follow it out of consciousness, not out of fear.

BEENA SARWAR: I think Yeni again raised an important point that Professor Asghar has pretty much covered. But in the Pakistan experience, I can say that although the Islamic parties are gaining ground, when you allow them to participate in the democratic process, when they participate in the democratic process, the people themselves will vote them out. That is what has happened in Pakistan.***

PART 4 **CONCLUSION**

Learning from Each Other in Asia

SOME CONCLUSIONS

IHSAN ALI-FAUZI

THIS BOOK came out of an episode of Asia Calling on Radio 68H, aired live in Jakarta with four guests from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, along with two host speakers from Indonesia. Over two days, as well as having discussions on papers from each of the countries and presentations from the speakers, this live radio show also featured recorded and live commentary from others. All this made up the main content of this book.

So, what can Muslims in South and South East Asia learn from each other? Lots of things. But here I will focus on four main, inter-related themes: (1) Islam and the state, (2) democracy and political participation, (3) Islamic radicalism and terrorism, and (4) violence against women.

Before looking at these four topics, it is important to remember that each Muslim community in Asia has its own historical context and contemporary society, as discussed in the introduction. This should make us realise that just copying the experiences of other countries is not a good idea. But emphasising the differences and trivialising the similarities is not a wise idea, either. How often we are told that we should learn from industrialised countries (the West), as if there were nothing we could learn from each other as Muslims in Asia! So, we must be dynamic and learn from each other, while taking into account our similarities and differences.

Islam and State: Protecting Pluralism

Today, Muslim communities in Southeast and South Asia are spread across borders. That is one of their similarities, and one of their differences. They

are part of the same faith, the Muslim faith; but they are citizens of different countries (India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and so on).

As well as being part of a faith and a country, they are actually also part of a smaller group: an ethnic group. In Indonesia, for example, as well as having a religious identity (Muslim) and a nationality (Indonesian), an Indonesian Muslim may also be of Javanese, Sundanese, Acehnese, Makasarese or other ethnic origin. In addition, from the religious viewpoint, even smaller groups exist: some may be from a particular sect within Islam, following a particular theology, law (*fiqh*), denomination, and so on. In Pakistan, as well as being Muslim and Pakistani, a person may also be of Pushtun ethnic origin or a Syi'ah or Ahmadiyah Muslim, for example.

This means that every Muslim-- indeed, every human being--has multiple identities. They are not just a part of a particular religion or a citizen of a particular country, but also of a particular ethnicity or religious denomination. All of this opens up the possibility of violent conflict, if these differences are not dealt with peacefully and fairly. On the contrary, if managed properly, towards building a sense of human justice and solidarity, these multiple identities can strengthen and enrich each other.

In the 20th century, the nation state is the strongest institution that is generally accepted as the instrument to manage these differences. And that has been the case in South and Southeast Asia since the end of colonialism in the mid-20th century. Although some Muslim scholars and political activists, such as Abu al-A`la al-Mawdudi on the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, opposed nationalism, arguing that it was not compatible with Islam, the nation state as a polity was ultimately, and inevitably, accepted as the instrument for uniting peoples.

The question is: to what extent can the ideology underlying this polity, the nation state, uphold the plurality that exists within the polity? Here, Indonesia and India differ significantly from Pakistan; and it is from here that important lessons can be learned.

In his paper, Mr. Asghar Ali Engineer emphasises that India is a nation that was formed on the basis of the acceptance of the religious plurality of its society. Although the majority of the Indian population is Hindu, when it was established in 1947, following the partition from Pakistan towards the end of British colonialism (see below), it was not established as a Hindu nation, but as nation that fully embraced the principles of secularism. Here, secular-

ism does not refer to a state administration that *hates* religion, but one that is *neutral* to religious issues.

It is important to note that the construction of this secular state had the full support of Muslim leaders who rejected the two nation theory that forms the basis of the Pakistani Islamic state. “The two nation theory was completely rejected by the Ulama belonging to Jami’at-ul-Ulama-i-Hind, and its leader Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani argued that Islam does not believe in separate nationhood, and that both Hindus and Muslims share the same nationality. They also found the concept of secular democracy as being in conformity with Islamic teaching,” writes Mr. Engineer.

Was this decision wrong and one to regret? Mr. Engineer believes that internationally respected Indian Muslim theology has a very clear answer: No. The experience of Muslims in India shows that benefits of secularism have been many. Although many in number (140 million, the second largest Muslim population in the world, after Indonesia), Muslims are in a minority in India; yet the constitution guarantees them the legal right to pursue their own interests, which includes adhering to certain Islamic laws that apply to their sect.

This sweet experience, although not without serious trials and obstacles, which we will discuss later, was quite the opposite of that of Pakistan, a state based on Islam as its ideology. The history of Pakistan ever since its establishment has been marked, among others, by unending political violence and discrimination of minorities. As Ms. Beena Sarwar, journalist and film maker from Pakistan, points out: The two-nation theory ignored the reality of overlapping, multinational, multi-faith and multilingual communities. Attempting to develop a homogenous national identity ... successive Pakistani governments focused on Islam as the unifying factor. They also continued the authoritarian and colonist policies of the British, resulting in religious, ethnic or linguistic groups feeling excluded and discriminated against.” Ms. Sarwar also emphasises that the many interpretations of Islam, as noted above, make it impossible for a state to be founded on Islam: “The many interpretations of Islam also led after a point to religion being not a unifying but a divisive force. Islam cannot be an exclusive component of state nationalism because Pakistanis do differentiate themselves from the Muslims of other countries – Indonesian, Afghan, Iranian, Bangladeshi, or even Indian Muslims.”

The experience of Pakistan demonstrates that rather than being the panacea promised by the likes of the Muslim elite that supported the separa-

tion of Pakistan from India (now being echoed the world over, in slogans like “Islam is the solution”), establishment of an Islamic state is in fact the root of many social and political diseases. Ms. Sawar bitterly points out how frequently politicians use Islam for their own political ends. Even by socialist leaders known for their secular leanings, such as Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. “Even Bhutto tried to salvage political power by trying to appease the religious elements who had taken over the political opposition. He got Parliament to declare the Ahmedis as non-Muslims, made Friday the weekly holiday, banned alcohol and gambling, and espoused a pan-Islamic vision (he held the second Islamic Summit in Lahore in 1974 and initiated Pakistan’s nuclear weapons – “Islamic bomb” – program).”

In addition to the political violence and discrimination against minorities in Pakistan, the failure of Islam as a unifying umbrella was also indicated by the separation and establishment of former East Pakistan as the independent state of Bangladesh, in 1971. Here, Islam failed to be a unifying factor, even though the majority of the Bangladeshi population is Muslim. Unfortunately, as Bangladeshi journalist Zafar Sobhan points out in his paper, recent political developments in Bangladesh have shown a strong tendency towards calls for the formation of an Islamic state. It is as if the people of Bangladesh, including their political elite, have forgotten the most valuable lesson they should have learned from their separation from Pakistan: that Islam as the basis for a state is not a panacea, because it goes against the basic, plural nature of human beings!

That is also why Mr. Sobhan, on his return from Jakarta, called on his Bangladeshi colleagues to embark on serious discussions about national identity and Islamic identity in Bangladesh. In his column on his impressions of his visit to and discussions in Jakarta in the *Daily Star*, a weekly co-managed by Mr. Sobhan, he wrote: “The country [Bangladesh] deserves an honest, thoughtful, and sophisticated discussion on Islamic identity and what it means and how it is constructed. As with all other matters of importance, it is a discussion we have never had in this country beyond simplistic, unserious, and cynical calumnies, accusations, and counter-accusations. Let us talk seriously about Islam and identity...”

In terms of managing this multiple identity, the experience of Muslims in Indonesia comes closer to that of their fellow Muslims in India. The difference is: while the majority in India is Hindu, in Indonesia, Muslims make

up the majority, making them more accepting of the religious (and ethnic) pluralism in Indonesia. As Ihsan Ali-Fauzi points out in his paper, and as Rizal Sukma confirmed during the discussions, at a crucial stage in the formation of the Indonesian state at the end of Dutch colonialism, the founding fathers of the Republic of Indonesia managed to convince certain Muslim leaders to withdraw their demands for a state based on Islam. Another contributing factor, besides the magnanimity of these Muslim leaders, was the claims that some areas in the eastern part of Indonesia would withdraw if the fledgling republic donned the clothes of an Islamic state, which would disregard the plurality of the new nation. The way out was Pancasila, which even today is the 'glue' of Indonesian unity, with its motto "Unity in Diversity". That is also the reason why some historians call Pancasila the Muslims' gift to Indonesia.

Learning from these experiences, both positive and negative, we hope that the current political crisis in Afghanistan can be resolved with the formation of a new government that has complete respect for pluralism. One of the biggest threats comes from the Taliban (see below), which, when in power, destroyed the ancient statues of Buddha in Bamiyan, and whose version of Islam would pose a serious threat to the advancement of Afghan society, particularly of Afghan women.

Democracy and Political Participation

The discussion above shows that establishment of an Islamic state is not a panacea, a cure for all diseases. This can be seen from the experiences of India and Indonesia, secular nations that provide their citizens opportunities to develop to the best of their potential, regardless of their ethnicity or religion.

However, as well as being states based on the principle of secularism that is neutral to religion, it should also be noted that India and Indonesia are both democratic states. Although the "health" of democracy (stability, durability and quality) in these two countries differs, it is clear that democracy allows the political aspirations of their citizens, including Muslims, to be channelled peacefully in both countries.

Looking at the history of the two countries, democracy in India is much "healthier" than democracy in Indonesia. Except for the relatively short period of 18 months, between 1975 and 1977, under the leadership of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, democratic institutions have survived in India, with

little damage, since independence in 1947. Over the past six decades there have been no fewer than 13 national general elections, and many more at the state level. At the federal states level, there have been no fewer than seven peaceful exchanges of power between contesting political parties. Since 1967, the party in power in New Delhi governed fewer than half the federal states of India, which reflects a significant level of state decentralisation. Moreover, since 1977, incumbent governments have been ousted numerous times in general elections.

Meanwhile, civil supremacy has continued to reign, and the armed forces in India have never taken power by coup d'état: the military has demonstrated its commitment to democratisation and plays only a minimal role in politics, as in, for example, the United States. The mass media continues to perform a critical function; it is free to express opinions and is not in fear of government clampdowns or censorship. Also, the judiciary, despite pressure from the executive in federal government, has managed to maintain its independence.

The healthy state of Indian democracy -- perhaps the healthiest of all developing countries--allow for the political participation of minorities, including Muslims. Under this system of democracy, writes Mr. Engineer, "Muslims enjoy equal democratic and fundamental rights under the constitution and also they enjoy rights as a religious minority in respect of their religion, culture and language. These rights have been guaranteed under Articles 25 to 30 of the Constitution." He goes on to say that, "...one good thing in a democracy is that political parties, in order to get Muslim votes, have often to compete with each other to please them, and in this competitive political environment minorities and other weaker sections of society benefit, though not to the fullest extent."

What about Indonesia? In almost complete contrast to the experience of India, in Indonesia, the lifespan of democratic governance has been short -- just over a decade in total -- from 1950 to 1957, and then again from 1999 to date. In 1957 and 1959, with backing from the Indonesian Armed Forces, President Soekarno dissolved parliament, declared a general state of emergency, and killed off parliamentary democracy, which, under the 1950 Constitution, appointed him as head of a state that had no effective power. After that, Indonesia was under a regime of authoritarian 'Guided Democracy', which ended in 1965 following a bloody exchange of power, and the subsequent

killing of around 500,000 members and sympathisers of the Indonesia Communist Party, which was accused of plotting a coup d'état. In 1967, Soeharto was officially appointed the second President of the Republic of Indonesia, and so began another period of authoritarian rule, under the flag of the 'New Order'. Until the fall of Soeharto in 1998, the government was a military regime, which for most of its history failed to give citizens space to express their political rights and civil freedoms.

The two regimes led by Soekarno and Soeharto had an enormous impact on the "health" of democracy in Indonesia. In an overview of this impact, Indonesian political observer R. William Liddle, once wrote: "[F]orty years of authoritarianism and governmental centralization, from 1959 to 1999 (1957-1959 was a transitional period) have left an organizational and institutional legacy of a weak interest group and party system, non-functioning legislatures, a corrupted bureaucracy and judiciary, an armed forces not yet brought under civilian control, and a frustratingly obscure if not undemocratic constitution."¹

Fortunately, democracy in Indonesia is beginning to grow once more, since Soeharto stepped down as President in 1998. Over the past ten years, there have been three democratic general elections, in which Muslims were completely free to express their political aspirations, and even set up Islamic-based political parties. They can also freely express their political aspirations and participation through the mass media and through peaceful protest action and lobby.

Unfortunately, a similarly democratic political system is almost completely missing in other Muslim countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh. In these two countries, the military has been almost continually in power, often selling "political Islam" to boost the political participation of citizens. This is core of the narrative in the paper by Mr. Sobhan on Bangladesh and in Ms. Sarwar's paper on Pakistan. With bitterness, Ms. Sawar, for example, writes, "... for most of its existence, Pakistan has been governed by military rulers, who prioritized weapons and military training over education and social welfare." One of the consequences of this, continues Ms. Sarwar, is growth of "...a sense

¹ R. William Liddle, "Indonesia," in W. Phillips Shively (ed.), *Comparative Governance* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University, Department of Political Science and McGraw-Hill Primis, 2005), p. 250.

of injustice and deprivation, and divisions along religious, sectarian, class and ethnic lines.”

Again, in this case, the positive experiences of India and Indonesia are worth noting: democracy opens the way for peaceful citizen participation. But this does not mean that everything has gone smoothly for democracy in India and Indonesia. Democracy itself is an ongoing process, because at the core of democracy lies the continuous and never-ending process of democratisation -- who would have thought that a democratic nation as old as the United States would find itself embroiled in a scandal over the abuse of detainees by the CIA?

In the contexts of India and Indonesia, as pointed out by Mr. Engineer and Mr. Ahmad Suaedy in their papers, one of the challenges, threats even, to democracy in these two countries is the growth and growing strength of political wings that want to put an end to pluralism in these two countries. These include the BJP in India and sharia-inspired by-laws in Indonesia. Fortunately, in the past few general elections support for right-wing parties with agendas like these has dwindled in these two countries.

Another problem gnawing away at democracy in India and Indonesia, and that is clearly a long-term threat, is social-economic imbalance. The seriousness of this threat has been frequently underlined by those who focus on the substantive aspect of democracy, not simply on its procedural aspect. For them, for democracy to function properly, social equality, and, even more importantly, economic equality, among citizens is a must, without which any changes to the representatives and institutions elected by the “people” will have little effect.

In studies on democracy and authoritarianism in South Asia (particularly India and Pakistan), this view is held by, for example, Ayesha Jalal, who says that democracy in India is nothing more than a “democratic authoritarianism”. He argues that in this regard there is no fundamental difference between India and Pakistan, except in terms of political superstructure. He writes, *“Kecuali jika mereka mampu memperlebar hak-hak mereka untuk memilih melampaui batas-batas arena elektoral yang terlembagakan, memperluasnya menjadi sebuah perjuangan yang efektif untuk menghapus eksploitasi sosial dan ekonomi, maka warganegara yang legal akan cenderung lebih menjadi korban para manipulator politik yang kuat daripada agen-agen otonom yang mengu-*

*payakan capaian-capaian konkret dari proses-proses demokratis.*²² (*naskah asli Inggris menyusul*)

It would be impossible to discuss this complex issue in such a limited space, but it must be said that people do tend to focus on contestation and participation as the two main criteria of democracy. Indeed, democratic theoreticians like Robert Dahl assume that if citizens who do not enjoy social and economic equality are given equal political opportunities, and if the worst off make up the majority of voters, their political choices will, sooner or later, be reflected in who comes to power and what public policies are adopted. The key assumption here is that: if everyone is given an equal right to vote, regardless of any imbalance in the resources they have, giving voting rights to all will create mechanisms that will allow for, sooner or later, the eradication of vertical advantages that the elite better off have over the worst off. For example, in Europe, the labour parties that have the interests of workers at heart, appeared on the political stage at a time when the right to vote in general elections was extended to ordinary working people. This is the best way to break the vicious circle of food (poverty and economic growth) and democracy.

The challenge now is to solve this dilemma in India and Indonesia, by reducing the poverty rate and improving the social services provided by a democratically elected government. Otherwise, this will provide fertile ground for the growth of disillusionment in democracy. And more even more frightening, if this disillusionment in democracy is coupled with, or fed by, radical ideology that promotes the use of violence in the name of religion, sometimes in the form of terrorist actions.

Islamism and Terrorism: Avoiding the Trap of Generalisation

Unfortunately, this phenomenon of violent action in the name of religion is common in the countries of South and South East Asia, and beyond, such as in the Middle East. Almost every day, we hear news of violence, including suicide bombings, in these countries.

²² Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 48.

Although this is a complex issue, at the Asia Calling meeting in Jakarta, we looked at three aspects of this phenomenon: (1) Islamism that promotes violent action; (2) the national and international contexts that provide fertile ground for this kind of action; and (3) the support or otherwise of Muslim communities of this action. Because this is such a sensitive issue, we must take extra care when analysing it. First of all, we must avoid the over-generalisations that come out of suspicion of all forms of Islamism.

The word “Islamism” refers to the phenomenon in which Islam is seen not only as a religion, but as an ideology, reflecting social and political Islamic expression. The word also refers to the adoption of Islamic principles in economics, science and so on. And, because its pioneers focused on the practical side, or *‘amaliyah*, its public presence is very much felt. Its adherents are called Islamists.

However, it is very important to note that Islamists are not a monolithic group. Genealogy shows that plurality within the Islamists started to emerge when the Islamic world was forced to respond to the growing domination of the West, which was symbolised physically by the entry of Napoleon to Egypt at the end of the 18th century, which is discussed briefly below.

The first dominant response was Wahhabism, an interpretation and movement of Islam initiated by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in the 18th century. This was to become the official interpretation of Islam of Saudi Arabia, which, thanks to oil money, was spread to the world over. Its adherents emphasise the importance of the doctrine of *tauhid* or oneness of God (they call themselves *al-muwahhidun*), one of the excesses of which is the purification of Islam from what they call *syirik* (polytheism). Due to the fanaticism of its followers, at certain points in history Wahhabism has dubbed other Muslims non-believers.

The Wahhabi also call themselves Salafi, because, they say, they call for a return to Islam as exemplified by Rasulullah and the first generation Muslims (*al-salaf al-shalih*). Islamic traditions that emerged at a later date was rejected, along with any influences from outside Islam. This is the reason for their anti-intellectualism: philosophy is forbidden because it was Greek in origin, mysticism because it came from Persia, and so on.

But 19th century *mujaddid* (reformists) like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh also claimed to be Salafi. But unlike the Wahhabi, they did not reject out of hand Islamic traditions or influences from outside

Islam; they asked only that we take a critical view of them all.

In the early 20th century, the crisis in the Islamic world was exacerbated by the intensification of colonialism and the dissolution of the Utsmani caliphate in 1924. All this influenced Islamist views and movement. In the wars against colonialism, the jargon of *jihad*, for example, was used more and more frequently, although with the nationalist aim of freeing themselves from the grip of colonialism.

In short, it was in this context that Hasan al-Banna formed Ikhwan al-Muslimin (IM) in Egypt in 1929. IM emphasised individual piety and the importance of brotherhood. As Gilles Kepel³ points out, the critical period for the IM was in the mid 20th century, when repression by the government of Egypt -- now independent from the British -- forced a split in the IM. Its radical wing, led by Sayyid Quthb, argued in favour of war against the Egyptian secular regime, regarding it as a *jahiliyah* regime that must be replaced by an Islamic regime. The non-radical wing of IM, on the other hand, called for more gradual change, from the bottom, without violent contestation of power. Today, the IM -- its radical and non-radical wings -- is still most often used as the prototype Islamic organisation.

Two important points should be noted here, regarding the recent growing violence by radical "Islamists". *First*, when repressed by the Egyptian government or other governments in the Middle East, hard-line IM activists fled to Saudi Arabia. More skilled and better educated than the Muslims in Saudi Arabia, these activists became the brains behind the establishment of many higher education institutes in Saudi Arabia; the places where people like Osama bin Ladin studied. It is in these spaces that the alignment of IM radical views and Wahhabism occurred. This was the origin of the "Salafist-Jihadist" movement, an extreme, contemporary Salafist movement that allows the use of violence, even against other Muslims who are believed not to be fighting against, or fraternising with, the enemy.

Second, a mutually beneficial relationship grew between these activists and the Saudi Arabian government. Although *gerah* with the hedonism of the royal family, these activists benefited from their protection and from the

³ Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh* (California & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

funds they gave them to spread their views around the world. At the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s, this relationship gained new momentum with the Iran Revolution (1979) and the invasion of the former Soviet Union of Afghanistan (1981). “Jihad energy” was also channelled into this scenario: first with the increased assistance of Saudi to prevent the revolution in Iran spreading to the rest of the Islamic world; and second, with the dispatch of the mujahidin to Afghanistan.

These two points were crucial, as Ms. Sawar’s paper on Pakistan explains. The Afghanistan war was the moment when Salafist-Jihadists the world over got together, were given training in the use of firearms and bomb-making by Pakistani and US intelligence agencies, funded by Saudi Arabia, which were allies in the Cold War. Their enthusiasm for jihad grew even more when they believed that the retreat of the Soviet troops was the result of their superior opposition. “Now that we’ve beaten the Soviets, who’s next?” they seemed to ask. They were a Frankenstein; created but then neglected, only to eat up their masters in the United States, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. This is the context we must understand when we read about the actions of Al-Qadea or former Afghanistan fighters who have been spreading terror across the world in the name of Islam.

In short: Islamists are not monolithic; not all of them agree with, never mind promote, violent action. Even those that do are not in agreement as to the extent or targets of this action. A wide variety of Islamists are to be found in Indonesia, India, Pakistan, and other Muslim countries. They add local colour to the prototype global Islamism. To emphasise the importance of distancing ourselves from the potentially fatal over-generalisation that all Islamists are in favour of, or perpetrate, violent action, I would like to describe in more detail their plurality in Indonesia, the country that I know best.

In Indonesia, Wahhabism had a profound influence on the Padri movement in Padang in the 19th century. More recently, taking on the name of the Salafi movement, we have witnessed the expression of Salafism-Wahhabism in certain groups that feel they should grow beards, wear Arabic-style, calf-length trousers, and the like.

The *tajdid* movement has had a very obvious influence on Muhammadiyah, the second largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia (with around 30 million followers), although their puritanism puts us more in mind of Wahhabism. Afghani and Abduh Salafism are evident in the ideology and

movement of reformist Nurcholish Madjid, one of the most influential Islamic reformists, who places Islamic tradition in a very important position and is appreciative of the achievements of Western civilisation. Disregarding Salafism in Indonesia would be a great mistake, because in doing so, we would only be bowing to the wishes of the Wahhabi, who claim that they are the only representatives of Salafism in contemporary Islam.

In Indonesia, the non-radical wing of MI has clearly influenced the *tarbiyah* movement, which in the 1990s grew into the Indonesian Muslim student action group *Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia* (KAMMI), and in the era of reform, formed the backbone of the Justice Party (*Parti Keadilan* or PK), which recently changed its name to the Prosperous Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* or PKS). The very decision to form a political party shows that this movement's activists want to influence political policy in peaceful and democratic ways, putting us in mind of the moderate IM wing in Egypt.

Finally, there are the Salafist-Jihadists. Some, mainly among the ranks of the leaders, are veterans of the Afghan War. They have differed in their views as to whether Muslims are legitimate targets of their terrorist attacks.

This latter group is much smaller than other Islamist groups. Unfortunately, it does not take large numbers of people to wreak the havoc that their actions have, twice in Bali, several times in Jakarta and in other places in Indonesia. Almost all the 'brains' behind these actions are veterans of the war in Afghanistan. They used to be linked to al-Qaida, at least in terms of funding, but now able to make their own bombs, they can act outside their ideological affiliation with al-Qaida, as in the case of the bombing of two hotels in Jakarta on 17 July 2009.

So, what about developments outside Indonesia? What can we learn from this experience with regard to violent action, or terrorism, in the name of Islam? What policy choices are available to deal with this problem?

From Mr. Engineer's paper, we learn that this latter group, the Salafist-Jihadist, is also small in numbers in India. Like Nahdhatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia's largest Islamic organisations, most Islamic organisations in India are also opposed to the violent tactics they use. And, contrary to the suspicions of many policy makers in the West, in general Islamic schools (*madrasah* and *pesantren*) are not hotbeds for the promotion and proliferation of Salafist-Jihadist ideology.

But, as in Indonesia, broad support is not needed for the actions of this handful of people to be dangerous and deadly. Thus, the first lesson that must be learned from this development is that Muslims should be critical of and oppose this kind of violent action, and the ideology that promotes it. According to Mr. Engineer, we cannot count on conservative Muslims in India, who have even been known to point the finger at others (the CIA, Mossad and others) as the brains behind terrorist attacks -- something that has also happened in other countries, like Indonesia and Bangladesh. In this context, a consistent, deradicalisation programme is a must.

Another lesson that must be learned is that policy makers, both at national and international levels, must never (again) be allowed to play with fire with any radical Islamic groups, especially the Salafist-Jihadists, to fight their enemies, as they did in response to the former Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan in the early 1980s. As in the many bombings in India and Indonesia, and in London and Madrid, there has been a failure to admit that almost all the frequent acts of terrorism in the name of Islam in Pakistan and Afghanistan were masterminded by veterans of the Afghanistan War, the monster trained and created in the "devil's game" -- to borrow a XXX term -- the result of collaboration between the US and its allies, particularly in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

This is one of the main messages of Ms. Sawar's paper on the growth of militancy, radicalism and terrorism in the name of Islam in Pakistan and Afghanistan. She writes, "America's involvement in the war used the strategy of religion to motivate Muslims against the Communist Soviet Union -- the Afghan 'jihad', a term popularized as 'holy war' although the word in Arabic literally means 'to struggle'. ...Jihad, non-existent as an international violent phenomenon for the last four hundred years, now propped up Pakistan's military ruler, who allowed the country to be used as a conduit for providing money, weapons and military training to the *Mujahideen* against the Soviets, with CIA agents recruiting Muslims from around the world."

On top of all this, as mentioned above, is the strengthening of democracy, which gives everyone the opportunity for full political participation. This must, of course, go hand in hand with strengthening of the security and legal apparatus, to ensure that all differences of opinion and interest are channelled peacefully. And just as importantly, this democracy must demonstrate that it has a positive effect not only in procedural terms, such as conduits for political

participation through free, fair and transparent elections, but also substantively, in increased social and economic equality.

Violence against Women

We have looked at the various fatal consequences of the actions of veterans of the Afghanistan War across the world -- from Mumbai to Madrid, from Jakarta and Bali to London and New York. But the effects have been, and continue to be, felt most in Pakistan and Afghanistan, on almost a daily basis. And in these two countries, the people that suffer most are women.

As Ms. Sawar emphasises, in these two countries, and I think everywhere, "...the increase in violence in general overshadows the rising violence against women." For her, this comes as no surprise, because, "...this is the pattern wherever 'religious' extremism is on the rise" -- an observation that I think is true, and perhaps applies to other places, too.

In remote areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan, it is still common for men to blame women for calamities that befall their families. The conservative Islamic view that the voices of women are unimportant is still strongly held, and family law is still strongly in favour of the interests of men.

But the Taliban domination of recent years, the remnants of which linger even today in some parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan, has multiplied the oppression and setbacks that women in particular have suffered. They not only closed down beauty salons and forced women to don the burkha, they also prohibited girls from going out to learn and attacked women teachers who had the courage to carry on teaching. If practices such as these are allowed to continue, imagine what the future would hold for Afghanistan, where women make up almost half the population!

Unfortunately, practices and policies like these continue even today in some areas of Pakistan, particularly on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, the area where the Salafist-Jihadists were trained in the war against the former Soviet Union. Even more alarmingly, criticism and opposition of these practices has provided conservative Muslims the ammunition to covertly and overtly gain political power. As Ms. Sawar recalls:

After the murder of one such teacher, Khatoon Bibi in late September last year [2007] in the tribal Mohmand Agency,

hundreds of non-local teachers protested, demanding security in order to do their jobs. The lack of response from the ruling alliance of “religious” parties known as the MMA that governed the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) led to the closure of over a hundred girls’ schools. The MMA in fact encouraged the Taliban mindset. It dismissed, suspended or transferred women from public offices, and took no action against the vigilantism of “religious militants”. The militants have been strengthened by such appeasement and lack of action as well as the impetus provided by the US invasions and on-going conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In discussing these matters, it is not my intention to negate or belittle the advances that have been achieved by women in Pakistan, for instance. As Ms. Sarwar mentioned in our discussions in Jakarta, women in Pakistan have long held down professions in Pakistan, working in prominent positions as lawyers, pilots, journalists like Ms. Sarwar herself, police officers and so on. However, these professionals make up a very small proportion of the total population of women in their country.

That is why, as Mrs. Sarwar pointed out in her presentation in Jakarta, traditional communities make up the majority in Pakistan. Development in this country has been uneven in rural and urban areas, including in matters of education. So, it is not surprising that discover that although Pakistan has produced one or two internationally-known novelists or scientists, the illiteracy rate in this country is still very high.

At varying levels, this phenomenon is also found in Muslim societies in India and Indonesia. And, of course, in Afghanistan, a country that for almost four decades has been marked by acute political instability and insecurity.

That is why the presence and contribution of people like Safia Siddiqi is so important to the future of the people of Afghanistan, especially its women. It is impossible to summarise the story of her determination and courage against all odds, in a society that is totally opposed to the advancement of women: you must read for yourself the *New York Times* article about her and listen to what she has to say in this book. She is a living example of the dream of Muslim society in Asia: a democratic, peaceful Islamic society that respects plurality and promotes the advancement of all, including women.***

Biodata of the Contributors



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ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER is a Muslim scholar and engineer born in 1939 in Rajasthan, India. Internationally he is known for his work on liberation theology in Islam, the leader of the Progressive Dawoodi Bohra movement, and his work on (and action against) communalism and communal and ethnic violence in India and South East Asia. He is the founding chairman of the Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN), director of the Institute of Islamic Studies, and head of the Center for Study of Society and Secularism in Mumbai. He has authored more than 40 books and many

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several awards for his work, including the Communal Harmony Award in 1997 and the Right Livelihood Award in 2004 for his 'strong commitment to promote values of co-existence and tolerance'.

BEENA SARWAR is a journalist and documentary film maker from Pakistan who



focuses on human rights, gender, media, and peace, and has extensive experience with the print media and television in Pakistan and abroad. She was the founding editor of weekly *The News on Sunday*, Pakistan, in 1994, has been the OpEd Editor of daily *The News*, and is Contributing Editor in Pakistan for the monthly *Himal Southasian*, Kathmandu. Since completing her Masters in Television Documentary at the University of London in 2001, she has made several documentaries and worked as a producer with Geo Television news, Pakistan's first 24-hour news channel. She was a council member on the Human Rights

Commission of Pakistan for twelve years until 2005, and a founding member of the Women's Action Forum, established in Karachi in 1981. Ms. Sarwar was also a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University, where she returned as a Fellow at Harvard University's Carr Center for Human Rights Policy to work on a book about democratic struggles in Pakistan.

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lecturing at Paramadina Mulya University, Ihsan Ali Fauzi is also the editor of *Madina*, a Muslim magazine popular with urban middle class readers, and a doctoral candidate in political science from Ohio State University in the USA. A graduate of the Ushuluddin faculty of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah (previously IAIN), Jakarta, he was a journalist for the daily *Republika* newspaper. He is the author, translator and editor of a number of books on Islam and Indonesia, with a particular interest in social movements.

NAJIBA AYUBI is a writer, journalist, media manager and press freedom activist. Ms. Ayubi is the Managing Director of The Killid Group (TKG) in Afghanistan, which has five radio stations in Kabul, Herat, Jalalabad, Mazar-e-Sharif and Kandahar provinces that are well known for their public service programming. TKG also produces two magazines, Killid weekly, with a circulation of 25,000 and Mursal weekly, which has a print run of 15,000. Ms. Ayubi is on the steering committee of the National Association of Journalists and is a member of the Media Law Working Group. She has also published a collection of stories about Afghan women.



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SAFIA SIDDIQI. Member of Parliament from the South Eastern province of Nangahar and a former deputy chair of the constitutional Loya Jirga that ratified



the Afghan constitution. Ms. Siddiqi holds degrees in literature, law and business administration and is also one of only a half-dozen published Pashto poetesses in Afghanistan. She fled to Pakistan in 1988 during the Soviet occupation after the Communist leadership objected to a collection of her poems. In 1999 she migrated to Canada before returning to Afghanistan shortly after the fall of the Taliban. Ms. Siddiqi has since held high-ranking positions in the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs and as a gender advisor at the Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

ZAFAR SOBHAN is the Editor of Forum, a monthly political magazine, and opinions



editor of The Daily Star, Bangladesh's biggest English language daily. He also writes a weekly column for the Daily Star and has published numerous articles, interviews, and essays. With a Masters in English literature and a J.D. in law, Mr. Sobhan previously worked as a public school teacher and a corporate attorney in the USA. In addition to his work in media, Mr. Sobhan is also involved with a number of organizations aimed at engaging young people on political, social, and civic issues, and helping them find a voice. Mr. Sobhan was selected as a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum in 2005 and is currently a member of the Forum of Young Global Leaders.

Organizations hosting the events

Asia Calling radio program. Developed to reflect the lives and reality of citizens across the region, Asia Calling is a weekly radio programme from Indonesia's radio news agency KBR68H. Since its launch in October 2003, Asia Calling has been covering significant events in South, South-East and East Asia, with a network of correspondents keeping listeners informed of developments taking place in their region. This includes coverage of breaking news stories, as well as background features exploring issues in more depth, allowing listeners to develop an understanding of the context in which events are taking place. Today, Asia Calling can be heard on 169 radio stations throughout Indonesia, and in local languages in 8 other countries on 89 radio stations across Asia.

PPMN (Perhimpunan Pengembangan Media Nusantara, Indonesian Association for Media Development) is a non-profit organization established in 2006 to develop the professionalism of all forms of media and to extend access to information in Indonesia and other countries in Asia. It does so through capacity building programmes, establishing new media in remote locations, emergency assistance for media in disaster areas, and media content production.

