

## The Debate between Pancasila versus Islam in Indonesian Politics

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For most Indonesians the *garuda* is a familiar bird. It is featured on the official seal of the Republic, where the bird's claws grasp the ends of a banner proclaiming the national apophthegm, *bhinneka tunggal eka* (Unity in Diversity), indicating the predicament of a state which comprises a diverse combination of people and territory. At the centre of the seal, on a shield drawn on the *garuda*'s chest, are five objectives that symbolize the five principles of Pancasila. As officially translated the five principles are a statement of belief in:

1. The one and only God,
2. A just and civilized humanity,
3. The unity of Indonesia,
4. Democracy guided by the inner wisdom evident in the unanimity arising out of deliberation amongst representatives,
5. And social justice.

Sukarno launched these principles in his famous speech on the 'Birth of Pancasila' (*Lahirinja Pancasila*) on June 1, 1945 during a debate between such Indonesians who wanted their new state to be Islamic, and those who wanted it to be secular, or at any rate trans-religious. In this debate between the Islamist and the *kebangsaan* (national secularists) movements about the adoption of *shahriar*, the latter won, and the state adopted an ideology dedicated to the unity in diversity and religious pluralism. The Indonesian state embraced the Pancasila as the sole means of holding together a multi-ethnic, multi-religious society. The first principle—belief in God—did not give pre-eminence to Islam, or enjoin Muslims to adhere to the *shahriar* law, but as Islam was the religion of a vast majority of the Indonesian people it became a critical element in determining what was defined as Indonesian.

The history of the national movement in Indonesia reveals that the various nationalist groups struggling for freedom had never been united except for transitory and tactical reasons, when the Japanese occupation was coming to an end and independence seemed imminent. President Sukarno was aware of the ideological conflict existing within the nationalist movement. He comprehended the danger of such a conflict, which, if permitted to take its course, would inevitably result in the disintegration of the country. This could not be allowed to take place. Therefore, an attempt was made to harmonize these conflicting trends.

Accordingly to bridge the irreconcilable ideological positions Sukarno set out to establish a philosophical basis that would ensure the survival of Indonesia as a unified national state. This objective was in accordance with the explicit goals of the nationalist struggle that had promised since 1928 an independent Republic that would bring about 'one land, one people, one language, and one nation': *satu nusa, satu bangsa, satu Bahasa, dan satu tanah air*. Pancasila was therefore designed as a statement of universal values, which sought to find a political compromise to allow vastly differing conceptions of state ideology to coexist.

As the principle of 'belief in God' recognizes that the state will be based on religious belief and that every Indonesian should believe in God, it raised much controversy. But it was also an affirmation of the proclamation that the Indonesian state is not based on any particular faith and that the religious diversity of its citizens would be respected.

Some Islamic leaders had pressed Sukarno for an explicit recognition of Islam in both the Preamble and the body of the Constitution. Sukarno's most fundamental argument made against this was that if the Indonesian state were based on 'belief in God', it would be a religious state—without specifically being Islamic or secular. While this implied a monotheistic religion—a concession to Muslim concerns—it did not grant a preferential treatment to Islam. This was despite the fact that a majority of the Indonesians are adherents of Islam. But Sukarno offered the Pancasila as a compromise assuming that 'belief in God' would commit the new country to faith in God, which Muslim spokesmen had wanted. The Pancasila however, did not mention Islam, and that implied toleration of Christian and other non-Muslim beliefs.

Another reason why Sukarno embraced the principle 'belief in

God' rather than 'belief in Islam' in the Pancasila, was because he felt that if the Indonesian state was to be founded on Islam, regions where the people were not Muslims, such as in Moluccas, Bali, Flores, Timor, the Kai Islands and Sulawesi might yearn to secede. Further, the West Irian which was not yet part of Indonesia might also not join the Republic.<sup>1</sup> Sukarno made it clear that although Indonesia was a nation consisting of various sub-races, these latter could not be identified as forming separate nations but that the geographic, political and administrative unity among the sub-races in Indonesia could create a nation, above this isolation.<sup>2</sup> Therefore Pancasila was an effort to offer Indonesia's heterogeneous political tendencies a common foundation. The discourse over what kind of nation Indonesia should be, or more precisely, what kind of political systems Indonesia should have, often revolves around the different meanings and political functions Indonesians give to Pancasila.

#### *Characterizing Indonesian Islam*

Counted as one of the third world countries, Indonesia is a socially and culturally complex nation. It has a sizeable Muslim population and hence national governments have to deal with the question of the relation of the State to Islamic values. The source of Islamic power, though great, remains largely inarticulate. A significant element of the Indonesian Muslim population seems to relate strongly to alternative values in the area of political life, particularly to nationalism, geographical identification and traditional cultural identities. Consequently, many Muslims place Islam and its values in that context and they are sensitively receptive to political relations that combine Islam with those other values.<sup>3</sup>

Traders brought Islam across the Bay of Bengal to West Sumatra in the thirteenth century. Owing to the heterogeneous intensity of the spread of Islam in Indonesia there is a social cleavage between the Islamic communities—the *Santri* and the *Abangan*<sup>4</sup>. While in conformity with their political orientations, the *Santri* of 1950s and 1960s usually voted for Islamic parties and explicitly endorsed the Islamic agenda; the *Abangan* supported nationalist, socialist, and communist parties and opposed the concepts of an Islamic state. Thus, the hard core of the *Masjumi*, *Nahdatul Ulema* (NU), and other Muslim organizations came to represent the *Santri*, the more strict Islamic population, and cherished the Islamic ideas seeking to ultimately realize an Islamic state in Indonesia. They were opposed

to Pancasila—a fleeting concept—because of its syncretistic nature and its inability to secure a special place for Islam.<sup>5</sup> One historical indicator of the size of the *Santri* community was Indonesia's first general election in 1955, in which the total vote for Islamic parties was 16.6 million or 43.9 per cent of votes cast.

On the other hand, the Abangans did not have much regard for Santri Puritanism, which was outside the purview of their syncretistic religion: *Agama Djawa*.<sup>6</sup> The Pancasila principle, however, appealed to the Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI) that comprised the Javanese population. They were opposed to the idea of an Islamic state in Indonesia, which would mean giving up their way of life.<sup>7</sup> For the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) the principle of 'Belief in God' was in contradiction to their ideology. Their aim was to realize a communist Indonesia. They were aware at the same time that a majority of the Indonesians were opposed to their views on religion. Therefore, as a tactical move, supporting Pancasila was the way of least resistance for them. The major improvement suggested by this group was the replacement of the clause 'Belief in God', by 'freedom of religion'.

### *Islam and State*

Indonesia is often described as a secular state but formally it is a state based on religion. The first principle of the five-part national ideology, Pancasila, enshrines 'belief in Almighty God' (*Ke Tuhanan yang maha Esa*). As discussed earlier, this was, in effect, a compromise between those wanting a secular state and those favouring an Islamic state. While there is no official state religion or formal acknowledgement of the authority of religious law in the constitution, the use of the term 'Almighty God' implies monotheism, a concession to Muslim sentiment.

The question of the formal role of Islam in the State has been one of the most divisive issues in Indonesia's political and constitutional history. In particular, bitter debate occurred over whether to recognize the *Shahriar* in the Constitution. This consideration created complex fissures within the political elite. Most non-Muslims and Abangan secular nationalists were staunchly opposed to it and Santri politicians were also divided on it. While the majority backed a constitutional recognition of *Shahriar*, some prominent Santri even favoured a religiously neutral state. Much of this debate focused on the so-called Jakarta Charter, an agreement of a compromise struck between

Muslims and nationalist leaders on June 22, 1945 as a part of the preparations for Indonesia's independence. In a draft Preamble to the Constitution, the Pancasila was retained but the ordering of the principle was altered. Belief in God was placed first and the following words were added: 'With the obligation for adherents of Islam to carry out *Shahriar*'. Islamic leaders also sought to stipulate in the Constitution that the President must be a Muslim.<sup>8</sup> The draft Preamble came to be known as the *Jakarta Charter*. The most controversial part of the Charter was a seven-word clause, which translates as: 'with the obligation for adherents of Islam to practice Islamic law.' (*degan kewajiban menjalankan syari'at Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya*). The legal implications of the clause were ambiguous. The minimalist interpretation was that an obligation to follow Islamic law lay with individual Muslims, not the State; the maximalist position held that the state must ensure adherence to the *Shahriar* and that the charter would provide the constitutional basis for extensive legislation giving effect to Islamic Law. Although often portrayed as an attempt to make Indonesia an Islamic state, the inclusion of these seven words in the constitution would not, of itself, have had this effect. After all, there was no proposal in it for Islam to become the official state religion; and the seven words were intended as an adjunct to Pancasila, not as a replacement. It remained to be seen whether Islamic parties would have the will and numbers in parliament to push through the *Shahriar*-based legislation needed for the state to enforce Islamic law.

The committee charged with finalizing the Constitution initially agreed to the *Jakarta Charter's* inclusion as the Preamble, but at a meeting on August 18, 1945, the day after independence was proclaimed, the pro-charter Muslim leaders came under strong pressure from secular Muslims and religious minorities to drop the seven words. The main argument was that if an Islam-inclined state was declared, the predominant non-Muslim region in Indonesia's east might break away from the Republic. Reluctantly, Muslim leaders agreed to exclude the charter in the interest of national unity. They also dropped the clause requiring the president to be a Muslim. The omission of the charter drew a bitter reaction from many sections of the Islamic community. They felt that the charter's opponents had been alarmist and that the Muslims had been forced into making a greater sacrifice in establishing the new state than had the non-Muslims. Islamic political leaders consoled themselves with the expectation that they would later win large majorities in parliament

and the constituent Assembly and could implement the *shahriar* through legislation and constitutional amendments.<sup>9</sup> But, after the proclamation of independence in August 1945, the Constitution did not contain the concessions to the Islamic position as were laid down in the Jakarta Charter. Consequently, much of the Muslim bitterness against the governments of Sukarno and Suharto arose from an Islamic perception of betrayal by the advocates of Pancasila.<sup>10</sup>

Much of the Islam-Pancasila debate that dominated the preparation to independence in 1945 continued to rage on through the 1955 elections which gave all Islamic-oriented political parties a combined total of 43.5% of the vote. The debate emerged subsequently in the Constituent Assembly between 1956 and 1959, where the question of the *dasar negara* became the most divisive part of the debates. Pancasila was presented from the late 1950s onwards, very much as a philosophy that denied any legitimacy to the notion of a theocratic state, particularly an Islamic one. In fact, it did not separate state and religion, in that it required every Indonesian citizen to assert a belief in God—atheism and agnosticism were both declared illegal. Yet, the State was not theocratic in the sense that it emphasized a particular doctrinally-based phenomenon, merging the notion of religious belief and national loyalty together. The idea remained a contentiously debated issue throughout the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. During the 1950s and 1960s Pancasila became an ideological weapon, wielded against militant Muslims for their religious intolerance and against Communists for refusing to believe in God at all.

The Jakarta Charter re-emerged as a polarizing issue in the late 1950s. The popularly elected Constituent Assembly, which began drafting a new constitution in 1955, came to a deadlock in early 1959 over the issue of whether or not the Charter should form the preamble. The ideological battle found its constitutional focus in the Constituent Assembly. It became the forum through which parties could get their ideal of an Islamic or Pancasila State realized in a constitutional manner.<sup>11</sup> Nationalist and non-Muslim parties, with the backing of President Sukarno and the increasingly influential Army leadership, opposed the Charter's inclusion. Muslim parties forced the matter to a series of votes in May and June 1959 but fell way short of the necessary two-thirds majority. On July 5, 1959 Sukarno dissolved the Konstituante and decreed the return of Indonesia's founding Constitution of August 18, 1945—without the Charter—making it the sole legal Constitution of Indonesia. The Konstituante, for its part, was unable to resolve the ideological

question. The Pancasila remained intact and as a nod to the Muslim concerns it acknowledged that the Jakarta Charter influenced the spirit of the Constitution. The only concession to Muslim sentiment was the insertion of an imprecise clause stating that the charter 'gave soul' (*menjiwai*) and 'connecting totality' (*rangkaian-kesatuan*) to the Constitution. This was a little more than a gesture. The word *shahriar* was not mentioned in the body of the Constitution and the vague acknowledgement of the Charter carried no legal force. The Charter was effectively buried as a serious political issue for the next forty years. Sukarno discouraged further debate on the matter and the New Order stigmatized efforts to implement *shahriar* as contrary to Pancasila and inimical to national stability.

However, despite the exclusion of the Jakarta Charter, the State nonetheless played an active role in the religious life of the nation, and Islam in particular. This has been evident in the existence and functions of the Department of Religious Affairs, in the statutory recognition of *shahriar* in specific areas of law affecting Muslims, and in the state funding allotted to a variety of overtly Islamic purposes.

Further since January 1946, Indonesia has had a Department of Religious Affairs to administer matters of religious law, ritual and education. The decision to establish the department was in part an attempt to appease Muslim groups aggrieved at the omission of the Jakarta Charter.<sup>12</sup> Though formally serving Indonesia's five officially recognized religions, the department is largely devoted to Islamic affairs. Its Islamic orientation is evident in its logo, which depicts a Quran resting on a *rehal* (a folding book stand), and its Arabic motto: *ikhlas beramal*, 'sincere commitment to service'. The department is currently responsible for over 40,000 Islamic educational institutions, administers the marriage law for Muslims, oversees the organization of pilgrimages to Mecca, and manages ritual issues such as the timing of *Id-ul-fitr* and other major celebrations in the Muslim calendar. The department presently has a staff of over 2,00,000, making it the third largest government department.<sup>13</sup> Historically, it has been the bastion of Islamic patronage and a major employer of *ulema* within the bureaucracy. For the most of the 1950s and 1960s, the NU and much of its funding and recruitment during that period, favoured the traditionalists who controlled the department. From 1971 onwards, however, the Suharto regime appointed a succession of modernist intellectuals and retired military officers with modernist inclinations to head the ministry, effectively breaking the NU's hold. Not until 1999 did NU regain the portfolio.

Several areas of the department's activities warrant special mention. A major element of its educational programme consists in administering the network of State Islamic Institutes (IAIN). First established in 1960, there are now fourteen IAIN spread across Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan and Sulawesi offering undergraduate and postgraduate studies in a range of Islamic-related sciences to over 30,000 students. There is no equivalent state-run institution for any of the other four official religions. Although the academic standards at the IAINs are generally lower than those prevalent in the state universities, the institutes have produced a good deal of innovative scholarship in recent years, particularly on liberal interpretations of Islam. The department's authority in matters of marriage and family law also had an impact on the personal lives of Muslims. Department officials register marriages and disputes over marriages, divorces, inheritance and religious bequests (*Waqf*) involving Muslims who can be brought before religious courts. Until the late 1980s, however, the power of these courts was limited: their decisions were neither binding upon the petitioners nor recognized by civil and military courts.<sup>14</sup>

The Council of Indonesian Ulema (MUI) provides a similar example of state sponsorship of Islamic Institutions, though MUI's role has often proved controversial. It was established in 1975 under the aegis of the Department of Religious Affairs, ostensibly to issue *fatwa* and advise government on Islamic issues as well as to promote good relations among Islamic groups. It has representatives from all the major Islamic organizations on its board and it claims that its decisions reflect the broad diversity of opinion within the *umma*.<sup>15</sup> In reality, MUI decisions have a limited impact on the broader Islamic community, and most Muslims would pay greater heed to *fatwa* issued by their own ulema or by the organizations to which they are affiliated, such as the Muhammadiyah, NU or al-Irsyad. Many traditionalist ulema, for example, complain that doctrinaire modernists dominate MUI. Furthermore, during the Suharto era, in many Muslim circles, MUI had gained the reputation of being a tool of the government. Successions of decisions were seen as reflecting the regimes' wishes rather than the considered jurisprudential interpretation. Also, senior MUI officials were closely associated with the regime's electoral vehicle, *Golkar*, and frequently campaigned for the party during elections.



### ISLAM UNDER THE NEW ORDER

The new order under President Suharto (1967-1998) ensured that the ideological conflicts would not betray the development of Indonesia, again as formerly. Built on the ruins of Sukarno's 'Guided Democracy', Suharto established an authoritarian 'Pancasila Democracy'. Although the Indonesian military mobilized Islam to help it secure power in 1965, President Suharto soon acted to restrict it as a political force. Military men were still generally suspicious of militant Islam, which they identified with regional rebellion. Moreover, Islam was now the only visible independent source of mass mobilization. And thus, it was an implicit threat to security. By and large, the Indonesian military has distrusted political Islam, partly because of its experience in suppressing Muslim rebellions in the 1950s and 1960s—which accustomed the armed forces to viewing radical Islam as a threat to the stability of the State—and partly because the military leadership has been largely dominated by secular nationalists.

The new order went to great lengths to give effect to the concept of Pancasila as the practical policy of state. It implemented its conception of 'Pancasila Democracy' by restructuring the political party system. The Islam-based political parties were forced to merge to form the United Development Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*) or PPP, which was not allowed to use Islam in its title nor use a religious symbol as its logo. Under Suharto's new regime, political Islam was tamed and Pancasila was made the sole ideological basis for all social and political organizations. The only vehicle allowed for the representation of Muslim interests was the PPP, an officially recognized and controlled party with Pancasila—not Islam—as its sole ideology.<sup>16</sup> For most of the new order, the government-labelled political Islam formed the extreme right, ranking just below the communists, the extreme left, in its hierarchy of political threats. The Protestant, Catholic and nationalist parties formed the *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia* or PDI.<sup>17</sup>

From the outset, the new order undermined the Muslim party's effectiveness by manipulating rivalries between its NU and *Parmusi* components. It also restricted PPP's ability to appeal to Muslim voters by imposing a succession of electoral restrictions, including bans on the use of the Arabic language and Islamic symbols.

The decorative coalition of Muslim interests set up under the banner of United Development Party (PPP) was perceived as a wholly

unsatisfactory vehicle for Islamic interests. While the left was physically eliminated, antagonism between the regime and the Islamists endured. It was in this context that a political culture arose during the 1970s that offered an Islam-oriented alternative. It was moulded by a new generation of intellectuals calling themselves Neo-Modernists, in reference to the thinking of Fazul Rahman, a Pakistani liberal who tried and failed to shape the legislative policy of the ruler, Ayub Khan, and was forced into exile in the US. (The foremost thinker of this group, Nurcholish Madjid, wrote his dissertation at the University of Chicago under Rahman)

Strict restrictions and the increasing meaninglessness of party politics under the new order's highly-controlled politics, culminated in 1985 with a return to the 1926 Charter by the NU, hitherto the PPP's most important element. With this, the NU abjured political engagement in favour of socio-economic activity, a measure as necessary under the restrictive conditions of the new order which were similar to colonialism. Consequently, in the interest of national unity, the students' groups gravitating around these young intellectuals accepted without reservation the Pancasila ideology and its political implications, especially with regard to the non-sectarian and harmonious relations between the various faiths. What began as an elite phenomenon soon gained a wide following among the educated youth after the fall of Suharto, culminating in the electoral success in 1999.

The electoral victory of 1999 was due, in part, to the personality of its intellectuals namely, N. Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, Harun Nasution, Munwir Syazali and Ahmad Wahib. The movements' ideas also fitted the nation-state ideals unique to Indonesia among Muslim countries, its tradition of pluralism, tolerance and social harmony. Its commitment to democracy and human rights during the Suharto years served it well after his fall in 1998. This was a reverse of the situation in the 1950-65 when what mattered were party and organizational affiliations, ranking and factional manoeuvres. Abdurrahman Wahid, leader of the religious mass organization NU, became the first democratically elected president. This event was also, in a sense, a jubilation of Muslim politicians and their supporters, as a mark of a telling victory over secular nationalism and minority-dominated politics. Abdurrahman's election appeared to show Islam's power as a legitimating force in Indonesian politics and also as marking not just a resurgence in Islamic politics, but a new high point of Islamic influence in national affairs. He was the first genuine

Islamic leader to hold the presidency. Although all preceding presidents had been Muslims, none had serious credentials as an Islamic leader like Wahid. He was a religious scholar, the chairman of Indonesia's largest Islamic organization, the NU, and was the grandson of one of the country's most revered ulema (Islamic scholar), Hasyim Asy'ari. His rival, Megawati Suaknoputri, herself a Muslim, was the leader of the main secular nationalist party and was portrayed by her Muslim detractors as antipathetic to Islam. The euphoria surrounding the 1999 presidential elections tells us much about the national history of Islamic politics. Despite presence of the world's largest Muslim community, defeats for political Islam have outnumbered victories in Indonesia. Islam, though the avowed religion of a large majority of Indonesians, has rarely been the dominant element in the nation's politics and has remained largely inarticulate. In fact, from the late 1950s to the mid-1990s, Islam was politically marginalized and subject to state repression under Sukarno's Guided Democracy and later under Suharto's New Order regime.

In the eyes of the Muslim leaders, the final blow to Muslim autonomy and aspiration had come in 1984. In that year the government drafted a law requiring all socio-political organizations to accept the national ideology of Pancasila as their sole foundation and outlook. It ordered all social and political organizations to have Pancasila as their sole ideological foundation (*Asas Tunggal*).<sup>18</sup> In practice, this meant that regardless of an organization's original purpose only Pancasila could be adopted as its sole basis.<sup>19</sup> This caused dissent and a nation wide debate. The ideological concerns of the early 1980s were also buttressed by accusations that Suharto's conception of Pancasila was deeply informed by his adherence to Javanese culture and religious belief. Therefore, he represented only the Abangan point of view. At the same time, restrictions on political party activities meant that the old boundaries between reformist and traditionalist Islam were no longer reinforced by party affiliation as they had been in the democratic period of the 1950s. The leaders of Christian associations objected to the legislation as official interference in matters of religion. By introducing a legal code with penalties for those who refused to follow the principles of Pancasila many Muslim leaders felt that their organizations and their identity were the real targets of the proposal. It was anticipated that many of them would refuse to go along. But by 1985-86 all major social, political and religious organizations had formally adopted Pancasila

as their sole philosophical foundation. Those that did not were subsequently banned. While heated controversy surrounded the government initiative, the debate about the appropriateness of Pancasila as the basis of the State ended following the adoption of the *asas tunggal* legislation. By making Pancasila the official ideology of all Indonesians, Islam became one of the tolerated religious streams with no legitimate claims to exclusivity. To oppose the regime was to oppose the Pancasila, which in turn would mean opposition to the constitutional foundation of the state. State leaders confined the ulema to a narrow religious role.

Simultaneously, however, the new order also needed religious endorsement. Especially from the mid-1980s onwards, one can see a change in government policy which was moving to co-opt Islam rather than simply to restrict its political expression. The authorities involved themselves in a great expansion and upgrading of the system of religious tertiary education. They took a positive role in the growing *dakwah* internal missionary movement, setting up training centres for propagating the faith, thus competing with militant fundamentalists for patronage of religious fervour. In contrast to its repression of Islam as an independent political force, the regime became a generous patron of religious Islamic activities and infrastructure. Thus, by the mid-1980s Suharto began to take steps to accommodate the desires and sensitivities of Indonesian Muslims while deepening his own identification with Islam. This he did by negating any shift towards a politicized Islam through symbolic overtures and by co-opting leading Muslim figures. A series of legislative and institutional concessions to Islamic sentiment provided tangible evidence of this. Suharto himself established the Pancasila Muslim Service Foundation (YAMP) in 1982,<sup>20</sup> for the stated purpose of developing socio-religious resources for the *umat*. By 1991, the YAMP had raised over US \$ 80 million and built more than 400 mosques. Undoubtedly, these activities had a political objective; through such beneficence the regime could parry accusations that it was anti-Islamic. Another political vehicle in this endeavour was the ICMI (Association Of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals). The establishment of the *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Se-Indonesia* (ICMI), chaired by the Minister for Research and Technology and later by President B.J. Habibie, with strong support from Suharto, was a milestone in the Islamization process. ICMI was the key in establishing new Islamic institutions, such as, the Indonesian Islamic Bank, the *Republika* daily newspaper and the Centre for Information

and Development Studies (CIDES). It also mobilized Muslim intellectuals and laid the ideological and political foundation of the post-Suharto upsurge of political Islam.<sup>21</sup>

Suharto's endorsement of the ICMI reflected the President's ability to get a grip on the increasing Muslim intellectual ferment among the middle class. Many of the members of the ICMI were long standing critics of the new order's policies towards Islam and even the new order regime itself. One difference, however, was that unlike in the 1950s when *Masjumi* leaders found themselves debating whether the State should be explicitly Islamic in character, many of them now thought that it should be. They also debated whether the State should cling to the principles of Pancasila, as Sukarno and his secular-nationalist and Christian supporters had wished? In the 1990s, the Islamic groups centered in ICMI were willing to set aside the talk of an Islamic state and work instead for an Islamic society within the framework of Pancasila. Suharto now, in contrast to the preceding two decades, appeared set on pursuing a proportionality policy whereby the number of Muslims in cabinet and senior military and bureaucratic positions would roughly reflect the percentage of Muslims in society. In his own personal behaviour, Suharto appeared also to embrace a more *santri* form of Islam. He took the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1991 and began appearing regularly thereafter at events to mark major Islamic celebrations. Through one of his charitable foundations, Suharto also supported the construction and maintenance of thousands of mosques and *madrassa*. The government passed legislation establishing the equality of Islamic courts with other types, and returning to them jurisdiction over inheritance disputes.<sup>22</sup> Suharto courted the neo-modernist Muslims represented by the *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* (DDII-Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council), an organization with a strict *salafi* orientation that had previously been a strong critic of the regime. The close relations between the younger DDII leaders facilitated this reconciliation and some of Suharto's green (Islamic) generals rose to leading positions in the military in the mid-1990s.<sup>23</sup> Suharto's son-in-law, Major General (later Lieutenant General) Prabowo Subianto was instrumental in building a support base among Muslim clerics, called the Committee of Solidarity with the Muslim world (KISDI).<sup>24</sup> KISDI and the DDII were later to play an important role in supporting Laskar Jihad and other militant groups.

Suharto's change of heart remained a matter of dispute. While some believed that it was a genuine awakening of interest in Islam

for the ageing president, political analysts believed that Suharto's relations with the armed forces were under growing strain and that he was cultivating Islamic support in order to counterbalance the declining loyalty of the military.<sup>25</sup> In a sense, the seeds of today's Islamic upsurge in Indonesia were sown in the later years of the new order when Suharto, having lost support within the military, sought to cultivate Muslims as a countervailing force.

Under the final years of Suharto, the regime witnessed the outbreaks of public unrest which all involved religion in some sense, in quite different ways. Islam has sometimes appeared as ethnic identification, sometimes as a symbol of economic protest and at other times as an attack on bureaucratic rule. One reason for this is the historical fact of Islam's gradual and still incomplete conversion of the *Nusantara*. The other is the political fact that Islam is essential to the legitimacy of Indonesia's new order regime and at the same time is the source of popular opposition to it. Although the Indonesian military mobilized Islam to secure power in 1965, President Suharto soon acted to restrict it as a political force. The New Order leadership was nominally Muslim and it had a significant Christian component. Military men were still generally suspicious of militant Islam, which they saw as being identified with regional rebellion. Moreover, Islam was now the only visible independent source of mass mobilization, and thus it was an implicit threat to security. Therefore, the government gradually tightened the screws on Islamic political expression.

*Islam and post New Order politics: Is Pancasila still relevant?*

Suharto's downfall led to the dismantling of most of the repressive structures imposed by the new order. Restrictions on political parties, the media and associations were lifted; freedom of speech conceded and democratic elections were scheduled for June 1999. For the first time in almost four decades, Muslims had substantial freedom in expressing their political aspirations. Their subsequent behaviour has provided a revealing indicator of changing attitudes and priorities. Two developments in particular deserve close attention: the fragmentation of Islamic politics and the rise of pluralist Islam. Never before had political Islam been so divided.<sup>26</sup> Pluralist Islamic parties were those that took Pancasila as their ideological basis but which nonetheless relied heavily on an Islamic identity or leadership to attract votes. On the basis of this, it would seem that Muslim support

for a multi-religious rather than an Islam-based state has never been stronger. Arguably, cultural Islam has contributed to this commitment to pluralism but it may also be true that the new order's unrelenting stigmatizing of the Islamic State issue has played a role as well.

Despite their electoral setbacks, the parties, more Islamic in character, remain committed to the Jakarta Charter. At the 2000, 2001 and 2002 annual sessions, the MPR, the PPP and Crescent Star party (PBB) proposed the re-inclusion of the seven words in the constitution but the motions attracted support from only a small minority and were emphatically rejected by mainstream Muslim organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah.<sup>27</sup> At the regional level, however, the campaign for the implementation of *shahriar* has had some success. The north Sumatran province of Aceh has provided the most concrete example of this. *Shahriar* was promulgated under special autonomy laws in early 2002, though there is an intense debate within the local Islamic community over the scope of the laws and details of implementation. The *shahriar* issue has also attracted strong support from Muslim groups in South Sulawesi, West Sumatra and Banten, but is still well short of the majority support.

Suharto's downfall in 1998 unleashed political forces that the new order had suppressed or controlled. The new political environment enabled Muslim extremists to launch what Michael Davis calls the *jihad* project, an attempt to undermine the country's pluralist political institutions and establish an Islamic State.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, however, the mainstream Indonesian Islam remained firmly anchored in the framework of Pancasila. Both the traditionalist NU and the modernist Muhammadiyah resisted (and continue to resist) efforts to redefine the State in Islamic terms.<sup>29</sup>

Following the fall of the Suharto regime, the Habibie government that succeeded it, found it untenable to maintain Pancasila in its previously totalitarian form. As the Suharto regime had become increasingly corrupt, the Pancasila legitimacy suffered. And both democratic and political groups, particularly an expanding new Muslim middle class that had begun to emerge in the 1980s, began to see the Pancasila laws as representative of the corrupt regime itself. Therefore, the Habibie government dismantled the legal sanctions that it had from the 'asas tunggal' legislation of 1985, as well as the huge apparatus that had been built up for Pancasila propagation, Pancasila education, etc. Pancasila applied in Indonesia was seen in its initial years, as an ideal example of the positive use of political power in the cause of religious toleration. Rather than

separate religion and state, it gave the state a role in preserving tolerance through its own form of religious ideology. During the Suharto era, another side of the coin was exposed with the use of Pancasila as an instrument of state coercion. Rekindling the accumulated grievances of significant sections of the community, the Muslim population now clamoured for the establishment of an Islamic State once again thus raising the spectre of Islamic fundamentalism. Student protesters, who agitating for reforms in the riots of May 1998 had brought on the fall of Suharto, were seen to regularly wave posters of Ayatollah Khomeini and laud the Afghani Taliban generals. However, they were viewed in the broader Indonesian community simply as students craving reform rather than as marshals for radical Islam.

President Habibie oversaw the general elections of June 1999 and the presidential elections in October where more than ten Islamic parties competed—a phenomenon that would have been impossible under Suharto's version of Pancasila. The pre-existing *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (PPP) was 'Islamised', its flag altered to include the *Ka'bah* which Muslims face during prayer, while its party principle was changed from Pancasila to Islam.

Islam has become increasingly important in Indonesia, and since the fall of Suharto, the Muslim parties have moved into mainstream politics. These parties have deep roots in the Indonesian Muslim culture and each brings to national politics its own distinctive Muslim conceptualization of Indonesian society<sup>30</sup> which has not always been particularly democratic or pluralist. The tension between Indonesian Islam's democratic and authoritarian tendencies became evident when President Wahid was threatened with impeachment in 2001. Despite having espoused the virtues of pluralism and democracy, he toyed with the use of mob rule and tried to use the army to thwart constitutional processes when his own power was threatened. But more worrying and pertinent to this study is Wahid's use of the more extremist language of Islam to justify his actions. The ulemas and Wahid himself have used the term *jihād* in their calls for mass action, and have accused his opponents of engaging in *bughat*. This was not the first time that Wahid had allowed the teaching of Islam to be interpreted for his personal benefit. One of the arguments used to edge Megawati Suakrnoputri out of the running for the presidency in 1999 was an assertion that Islam prohibits women from taking a leadership position over men. Many Islamic groups also opposed her presidential nomination on the grounds that Islamic law forbade



a female from becoming the head of state.<sup>31</sup> The cynicism of this argument was laid bare in 2001 when the supposedly Islamic objection to a female president evaporated, as the Muslim parties wanted Megawati to replace Wahid. It is doubly ironic that the person making the original objection, Hamzah Haz, became Megawati's vice-president. The cumulative lessons in these cases are the ease with which Islam is used as a cover for short-term political agendas in contemporary Indonesia.

It is important to note that the war in Afghanistan had hardened the fundamentalist wing of Muslim opinion in Indonesia. Although the appeal of extremism to the broader communities of Southeast Asia remains very limited, it has still been sufficiently strong to make Megawati acutely sensitive and defensive about their alignments with the US against Afghanistan.

### *Conclusion*

The relevant question here is regarding the degree to which Islamic criteria have molded the Indonesian political system? The discourse of Indonesian Muslims on politics and the state, as we have seen above, is not monolithic. There have been a wide range of views about what role Islam should play in national life. At one end of this spectrum, Muslims have used Islamic principles to justify armed rebellion and the establishment of a breakaway Islamic State as in Aceh. At the other end, they have drawn on the precepts of their faith to sanction pluralist or even secular positions regarding the role of Islam in the state. This diversity of aspiration and expression is important for an understanding of not only the cultural richness of Indonesian Islam but also its frequent lack of unity and coherence as a political force. Second, Islam, while seldom a determining factor in national affairs, has nevertheless been a consistently significant legitimating force. Therefore, all Indonesian governments, including those that have tightly controlled Islamic parties, have been wary of alienating the Islamic community and have carefully cultivated Muslim support. Consequently, both Sukarno and Suharto devoted considerable effort and expense to co-opt Muslim leaders to their cause or, at the very least gain Muslim approval for government policies.

The developments within Islamic politics since 1999 suggest that its long history of internal rivalry and disunity continues, despite ephemeral periods of solidarity such as that which resulted in

Abdurrahman Wahid's election as President. Abdurrahman proved an inept and erratic leader and was eventually dismissed by the MPR on July 23, 2001 and was replaced by Megawati, his Vice President. Many of his erstwhile Muslim allies led the charge against him and shifted support to Megawati, conveniently putting aside their earlier objections to her secular nationalism and gender. Megawati, for her part, was careful to curry Muslim favour prior to her election by appearing regularly at Islamic celebrations, by taking the pilgrimage to Mecca and by casting herself as a product and patron of the Islamic education system. Despite her deeply held Abangan views, Megawati, like Sukarno and Suharto before her, understood the legitimating power of Islam.

As such Islam has been a contributory factor in moulding the state but hardly a decisive one. It is important to note that most Islamic groups in Indonesia never sought to establish a full Islamic State, as was the case in Pakistan or Saudi Arabia. The great majority of Muslims leaders accepted that Indonesia would be a religiously neutral state based on Pancasila, though historically, Islamic opinion has also favoured a constitutional recognition of the obligation for Muslim citizens to uphold the shahriar. The failure of Islamic parties in the 1940s and 1950s to achieve an acknowledgement of shahriar was a major blow to those seeking the formalization of Islam's role in the State. Similarly, the inability of Islamic parties to win more than 44% of the vote at any general election has deprived them of the parliamentary majorities needed to drive through a legislation reflecting Islamic values and interests; only a handful of statutes mention shahriar.

Political Islam has, nonetheless, won important concessions regarding Islam's role in the State. There is a large religious bureaucracy running the Department of Religious Affairs, which is predominantly given to serving the Islamic community. Successive governments have also channelled extensive resources to Islamic groups. There is also *de facto* recognition across the political elite of the need to respect Islamic sentiment. For example, although there is no constitutional requirement for a president to be a Muslim, in practice, it would be almost impossible for a non-Muslim to become the head of state.

Indonesia's founding president, Sukarno recognized that his new nation scattered over thousands of islands needed some kind of cultural cement. Religion was powerful yet potentially volatile. In order to harness its potential and yet restrain its excesses, a new ideology, Pancasila was developed.

The official ideology—based upon unity, belief in one God, and decision-making through consensus—established during the independence, always took precedence. This ideology has been credited with holding Indonesia's hundreds of ethnic groups together in one pluralistic nation. Yet, the ideological crisis has remained persistent. It emerged in 1945 during the drafting of Indonesia's new constitution, even before independence was announced, when Muslim leaders strongly sought to create a special place for Islam in the new document. Muslim leaders were committed to firmly establishing Islam within the new Republic's constitutional framework, which would oblige Muslims to practice the shahriar, Muslim law. Eventually, a charter was produced that reflected a more secular and pluralist view of the role of religion in the State. A national ideology of Pancasila emerged wherein belief in God was not described within a Muslim context, much to the displeasure of pious Muslims.

An outright proclamation of Indonesia as an Islamic State was too controversial to be realistic—while the Christian minorities would have objected to it, those in eastern Indonesia also might have been tempted to secede. Muslim leaders therefore, fell back on what they considered a more feasible proposition; i.e., let the Constitution merely affirm that Indonesia's Muslims were obliged to comply with Islamic law. After an emotional debate in the committee that was charged with drafting the new charter, this seemingly reasonable request was rejected. For, even the cryptic phrase, merely in seven words, implied that the full power of the State could be used to enforce orthodoxy for all Muslims, including numerous people in Java, whose beliefs and practices could be perceived as incompatible to, if not in violation of the Quranic law. Demographically, Muslims were in a huge majority in Indonesia. But politically, Islamists were in a minority both within that majority and among the State's founders. Nor did the idea of officially implementing Islam reassure non-Muslims who saw it as an invitation to use the State to transform the archipelago's statistically Muslim majority into a formidable and, from their standpoint, a dangerous political force. The defeat of the Islamist project and the consequently non-Islamic character of the country, in turn, profoundly disappointed the more self-conscious Muslim segment of Indonesian society. In the eyes of the Muslim leaders, the final blow to their aspiration came when the Suharto government drafted a law requiring all socio-political organizations to accept the national ideology of Pancasila as their sole foundation and outlook.

Promoted assiduously for over 40 years, Pancasila was arguably the most important stabilizing element in the nation's development. In the present day Indonesia however, Pancasila has not been able to contain the fissiparous tendencies. Indonesia's domestic instability—it's potential inability to control a mass outbreak of unrest—is fraught with the possibility of inter-communal violence in the provinces of Aceh, Ambon, Kalimantan, Irian Java. The outbreaks of public unrest that Indonesia has experienced in the recent past have all involved religion in some sense or another, but in quite different ways. Islam has sometimes appeared as a source of ethnic identification, sometimes as a symbol of economic protest and at other times as an attack on bureaucratic rule. One reason for this is the historical fact of Islam's gradual and still incomplete conversion of the Indonesian archipelago. The nature of Indonesian Islam has been questioned—in that not all Muslim groups seem convinced of the importance of a Pancasila society. A number of moderate Muslims are increasingly taking recourse to Islam as a means to prevent the collapse of moral values. Those who are pushing for a bigger role for Islamic law, include the political parties which seek to reinforce their religious credentials, and also marginal militants who aspire to create an Islamic State. The economic crisis too has unleashed a host of latent challenges confronting the weak political leadership. It remains to be seen how Indonesia, with the largest Muslim population, will deal with the issue of democracy and how political and religious diversity would resonate in Asia and the broader Islamic world. A more extreme Islamic stance in Indonesia would be deeply disturbing if it generates aggressive foreign policies.

At the moment, however, the rising popularity of Muslim movements seems unlikely to translate into a hard-line Islamic insurrection against the central government. At least until the Bali bombing, Indonesia was the weak link in the war on terrorism in southeast Asia. A diminished capacity of the State, its political and economic vulnerability and the unresolved issue of the role of Islam in politics have made Indonesia an attractive target for Islamic extremists: tactically, as a base for recruitment or as a launching pad for attacks, and strategically, as a potential component of their vision of an Islamic state in southeast Asia. In the first years of Indonesia's new Democracy, militant Islamic factions were able to exert a greater influence than their numbers would seem to warrant. One reason for this was the lack of a countervailing mobilization by Muslim moderates, which allowed radicals to exploit Islam for their own

political purposes. Another was the complacency within the government. The Bali bombing changed the political environment, prompting a crackdown on extremism and a greater willingness by secular politicians and moderate Muslims to challenge the radicals. The qualified support of the major Muslim organizations for a stronger anti-terrorist stance, and the Vice-President's distancing of himself from Bashir, suggest that the Megawati government enjoys more latitude in responding to religious extremists. However, whether this new-found resolve will be sustained, and whether the shift in the wider public mood will fundamentally alter the pattern of political competition in Indonesia, remains an open question.

The future direction in Indonesia will be decided by the ability of President Megawati Suaknoputri to govern a new democracy, which is characterized as being highly unstable and volatile. The problem is exacerbated by resentment at centralization. What Indonesia essentially needs is political stability and economic recovery to overcome its present predicament. Many of the outer, less populated, islands have large Christian communities whose willingness to remain a part of an Indonesia ruled by an overtly Islamic government is not assured. There has been a serious loss of legitimacy from the way in which the Pancasila had been implemented in later regimes which in turn, has weakened the Pancasila's capacity to overcome religious tensions and conflicts that we have witnessed in the recent years. This same issue had bedevilled Indonesia's founding fathers in the mid-1940s. It had been resolved by a decision not to make Islam the basis of the State. Whether a democratic process a half-century later will produce the same result remains unclear.

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Notes

1. See Sukarno, (1952), p.37
2. *Ibid.*
3. Mc Vey, (1983), pp. 199-225.
4. Wertheim, (1956), p.10. For a treatise on the dichotomy of Santri-Abangan see Geertz, (1960).
5. Ghoshal, (1982), p.49.
6. For criticism on Geertz, *Santri-Abangan-Priyayi* division, see Koentjaraningrat's (1963), review of Geertz's *Religion of Java* in *Madjalar Ilmu - ilmusastva Indonesia*, No. 1, pp. 118-91.
7. Feith, (1954), p. 246.
8. Nasution, (1992), pp. 10,11, 63-64, 103-104, and Muhammad H. Yamin, (1959), vol.1, pp.153-154, 264.
9. The best account of the Jakarta Charter debate is in B.J. Boland, (1982). See also Anshari, (1981).
10. See H. Endang Saifuddin Anshari, (1986)
11. For details see *Tentang Dasar Nagara Republic Indonesia Dalam Konstituante*, (Speeches regarding the basis of the Indonesian State, delivered in the Constituent Assembly), (No Publisher mentioned).
12. The Government initially considered calling the department the Ministry for Islamic Affairs, but eventually opted for a multi-religious function. For a historical account of the department see Noer, (1978); and Boland, (1982), pp. 105-12.
13. Dhofier, Zamakhsyari (1998), pp.66-7.

14. Lev, Daniel S. (1972); and Effendi, Bachtiar (1998), pp. 283-90.
15. 10 *Tahun Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (Jakarta: department Penerangan RI, 1985) and *majelis Ulama Indonesia* web page <<http://www.mui.or.id/index-i.htm>>, 15 August 2002.
16. Following the downfall of Suharto and the lifting of controls on political activity, the PPP has returned to an Islam-based ideology.
17. See Lee, Oye Hong, pp. 59-74.
18. For a good account of this period, see Schwarz (1999), Chapter 6.
19. See Liddle, R. William (1984), "Why Suharto Tries to Bring Islam to Heel", *Asian Wall Street Journal Weekly*, 12 March.
20. Effendi Bachtiar (1998), p.305.
21. For an overview of Suharto's tactical turn towards Islam in the 1990s, see Vatikiotis, Michael (1993) pp.132-38.
22. Hisyam, Muhammad (2002) "The Interaction of religion and State in Indonesia", in Meuleman, ed., (2002), pp.308-12.
23. Azra (2002), "Globalization of Indonesian Muslim Discourse", in Meuleman, John, ed., pp. 36-37.
24. KISDI sponsored activities in support of the Bosnian Muslims. Funds were raised through the National Committee for Solidarity with the Bosnian Muslims, chaired by Suharto's stepbrother; see "Indonesia Alert!", January 2001, < [www.indonesiaalert.org/index.html](http://www.indonesiaalert.org/index.html).>
25. Liddle, R. William (1996), pp. 613-34.
26. For a discussion on the election results see, Fealy, Greg (2001), pp.119-36. Interestingly, the process of fragmentation has continued since the elections, with each of the five largest Islamic parties experiencing internal fraction and splitting away of dissent factions.
27. No vote was taken on the issue at the annual MPR session but in the deliberations on the Jakarta Charter, seemingly less than 20% of members were in favor of its reinsertion.
28. Davis, Michael (2002), p. 28.
29. In a press interview in which he proclaimed the "death of ideology", Muhammadiyah Chairman Ahmad Syafii Maarif scorned the idea of an Islamic state; "Ideology is Dead", in *Politics*.
30. See Fajrul, Falaakh Mohammad (2002), pp. 33-42; and Amin Abdullah, M. (2001), pp. 43-54.
31. For an account of the controversy regarding Islamic law and a female president, see Platzdasch, Bernhard (1999), pp.226-49.