

Political Islam in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia

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Abstract

Understanding the historical and sociological factors behind political Islam has tended to be relegated to the background in most of today's security-oriented analyses, which are primarily concerned with issues of terrorism and violence. This paper considers the similarities between political Islam's relationship to secular, national regimes in Indonesia, the Middle East and North Africa, as well as its role as a populist response to the tensions and contradictions of today's global capitalism. It looks at the genesis of Indonesian political Islam, and investigates how today's 'radical' Islamic groups and their leaders are connected to earlier Muslim organisations involved in the struggles against colonial rule and Soeharto's 'New Order'. It puts forward the idea that this radical stream was in fact the product of authoritarian New Order rule. The paper focuses on the city of Surakarta (Solo) as a case study and highlights the importance of Cold War politics in using and shaping political Islam in Indonesia and elsewhere.

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Glossary

<i>abangan</i>	Javanese syncretism
CSIS	The Centre for Strategic and International Studies
DI	<i>Darul Islam</i>
DDII	<i>Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia</i>
FPI	<i>Front Pembela Islam</i> (Islamic Defence Front)
FPIS	<i>Front Pemuda Islam Surakarta</i> (Surakarta Islamic Youth Front)
FKAM	<i>Forum Komunikasi Aktivis Masjid</i> (Communications Forum for Mosque Activists)
Golkar	<i>Partai Golongan Karya</i> (Party of the Functional Groups) – originated as <i>Sekber Golkar</i> (Sekretariat Bersama Golongan Karya – Joint Secretariat of Functional Groups)
HMI	<i>Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam</i> (Islamic Students Organisation)
ICG	The International Crisis Group
ICMI	<i>Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia</i> (The Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals)
JI	<i>Jemaah Islamiyah</i> (Islamic Congregation)
Lasykar Jihad	Now-disbanded Muslim militia
Masyumi	<i>Partai Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia</i> (Council of Indonesian Muslim Associations) – banned in 1960
MMI	<i>Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Mujahedeen Council)
NU	<i>Nahdlatul Ulama</i> (Awakening of the Ulama)
Pancasila	Ideological foundation of the Indonesian state, based on five principles
Parmusi	<i>Partai Muslimin Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Muslim Party)
PDIP	<i>Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan</i> (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle)
<i>pesantren</i>	Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia
PKI	<i>Partai Komunis Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Communist Party)
PKS	<i>Partai Keadilan Sejahtera</i> (Justice as Prosperity Party)
PNI	<i>Partai Nasional Indonesia</i> (Indonesian Nationalist Party)
PPP	<i>Partai Persatuan Pembangunan</i> (United Development Party)
<i>pribumi</i>	Term for the ‘indigenous’ Indonesian population
PRRI/PERMESTA	<i>Pemerintahan Revolusioner Republik Indonesia</i> (Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia) / <i>Perjuangan Rakyat Semesta</i>
Sarekat Islam	Also <i>Sarekat Dagang Islam</i> (Union of Islamic Traders) – an early twentieth century traders’ association originating in Surakarta (Solo)
Syariah	Islamic law
<i>ummah</i>	‘community’/‘nation’ – often used to mean the whole Muslim world

Political Islam in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia

By Vedi R. Hadiz

1. Introduction

Understanding political Islam, including its 'radical' versions,¹ as an historical and sociological phenomenon (see, for example, Sidel 2006) requires consideration of factors that tend to be relegated to the background in the majority of security-oriented analyses that are primarily concerned with issues of terrorism and violence (for example, Gunaratna 2002). Unfortunately, after 9/11 the study of political Islam has increasingly been dominated by the concerns of international security experts. A disquieting by-product has been the tendency to strengthen popular misconceptions of the Islamist (e.g. Abuza 2003a), who as a result, is almost inevitably now seen as a bomb-wielding terrorist. In fact, political Islam is very internally diverse and understanding its emergence anywhere – whether or not in radical or violent forms – involves complex socio-historical analysis.

In the case of Indonesia, the trajectory of political Islam must be understood in relation to a number of factors. The first of these is the legacy of the fluctuating relationship between the state and the highly varied representatives of political Islam, especially during the long rule of Soeharto's 'New Order' (1966-1998). The second is the *de facto* role played by political Islam as a major articulator of social justice issues in relation to many of the social contradictions associated with rapid capitalist development in the late twentieth century, and in lieu of a coherent Leftist, social-democratic or liberal response. The third factor, which is closely related to the second, concerns the way in which the character of political Islam has been forged: as in many parts of the world, this has been linked to the outcomes and imperatives of Cold War politics. It is argued here that, in spite of genealogies that could be traced further back in time (see, for example, Van Bruinessen 2002), what is today labelled 'Islamic radicalism' in Indonesia is essentially the product of the long phase of authoritarian capitalist development under New Order rule, which began at the height of the Cold War in Southeast Asia. In this sense the Indonesian case reflects developments more globally, where the genesis of radical versions of political Islam can be traced to Cold War-era conflicts, as they can in the Middle East and North Africa.

2. After the World Trade Center

Political Islam has undoubtedly emerged as a focus of world attention since the dramatic World Trade Center attacks of September 2001. Interest in it had already been growing, however, because just several years after the end of the Cold War, the governments of advanced industrial countries had clearly developed considerable unease with the distinctly anti-Western stance exhibited by many of political Islam's social agents around the globe. Such discomfort was reflected in the work of the academic Samuel Huntington (1993; 1996), long influential in policy-making circles, who had notoriously referred to Islamic civilisation as a major threat to Western civilisation, and to the liberal democratic values ostensibly embodied within it.

¹ There is no real consensus on what the term 'radical Islam' means. It can variously refer to those who seek the establishment of an Islamic state or caliphate, or the promulgation of the Syariah as the source of all laws, with or without outright violence. The term is also used loosely and interchangeably with 'fundamentalist' or 'militant' Islam, or sometimes simply 'Islamist'.

It is no surprise that political Islam in Indonesia – a vast archipelagic country of more than 220 million people with the largest Muslim population in the world – has been under especially intense scrutiny. Moreover, Indonesia is a country which has experienced considerable turbulence since the fall of Soeharto in 1998, after more than three decades of uninterrupted rule which began at the height of the Cold War in Southeast Asia. This turbulence has taken place in the midst of a democratisation process which has been flawed and erratic, although astounding in its scope, and has included bloody communal conflicts in places like the Moluccas, Sulawesi and Kalimantan (Aragon 2001; van Klinken 2007; Davidson 2005). These were all widely reported by the international press especially in the early post-Soeharto years. But it was undoubtedly the first ‘Bali bombing’ in October 2002, costing the lives of many foreign tourists as well as far more Indonesians, that initially stimulated newly intense levels of examination. It was this event that brought the entity known as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) into the world’s consciousness, especially given its assumed part in a global jihadi movement led by Al Qaeda.²

While valuable factual information on the social agents of radical Islam abounds,³ few analyses have actually offered a systematic explanation for the emergence of radical Islam in the social and political landscape of post-authoritarian Indonesia. In this connection, Sidel’s effort stands out for its proficient linking of the fluctuations in the fortunes of political Islam and the broad processes of social change on the one hand, and intra-regime contradictions on the other, though one can dispute the interpretation of some of the empirical material he presented.

In broad terms, the security-oriented argument that appears prominently in academic and consultancy works, as well as media commentary, goes something like this: that political Islam in Indonesia – including its more radical manifestations – is the product of the *demise* of the strong, authoritarian New Order, which left a vacuum that has been successfully exploited by exponents of such ideas as an Islamic state. The related fear expressed is that the proliferation of radical or violently militant versions of political Islam is being enabled by a politically fluid post-authoritarian environment, characterised by weak public institutions, problems of governmental legitimacy (Ramakrishna and Tan 2003), and persisting economic hardships.

It is significant that political developments in Indonesia have long been presented as potentially posing a risk to broader regional security in Southeast Asia (Gelbard 2001), though perhaps especially so during the early post-Soeharto years. There has been much emphasis on the existence of strong intra-regional links between similarly-oriented groups bent on terror across Southeast Asia. So much so that complex, long-standing and historically-rooted conflicts in the southern parts of Thailand (e.g. Gunaratna *et al.* 2005: 61-63) and the Philippines (Abuza 2003b) can be crudely lumped together with the agenda of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), which is seen to be predominantly Indonesian in its origin. In turn, JI is treated as virtually a ‘regional branch’ of Al Qaeda, with little consideration for the specific set of historical circumstances that made its emergence possible in the first place. These international linkages are seen, in accordance with Tibi’s admonitions about Islamic ‘fundamentalism’ (2002), to present a challenge to the existing international order of secular states and to Western interests.

² See also the several security-oriented essays in the volume edited by Ramakrishna and Tan (2003).

³ See, for example, several meticulously presented ICG reports, notably that of 2002 (ICG 2002).

Insofar as the security-oriented literature deals with Indonesia, a sense of discomfort with the unpredictable nature of Indonesian democracy remains a strong undercurrent.⁴ An often unstated assumption is made that 'Islamic radicalism' could really only be thwarted by Soeharto-style coercive measures. By implication, there is a yearning for a return to aspects of authoritarian rule even as the actions of 'radical' Islamic groups are depicted as being antithetical to democracy. Abuza, for example, states that the fall of Soeharto and subsequent democratisation 'sanctioned the extremists, giving them political platforms to express their pent-up grievances' (2003a: 17). He goes on to suggest that (2003a: 18-19):

Indonesian central authority broke down, especially in the outer islands, following the collapse of the new order regime in 1998. This has been compounded by abolishing the *dwi fungsi* principle of the Indonesian armed forces (TNI), which gave them a civil-administrative function in the provinces. The lack of strong central government control has always attracted Al-Qaida.

It is a minor irony that the thinking of Western security analysts on the Middle East has tended to concentrate on how the 'democratic deficit' has been taken advantage of by Islamic terrorist groups, and thus on the desirability of introducing democracy in the region (see Dalacoura 2006).

A corollary development more generally has been a growing obsession with identifying 'good' and 'bad' Muslims around the world, with the latter alleged to be the pool from which the world's fanatical and vicious terrorists are derived. This point of view is concerned with distinguishing the 'good' Muslims (Mamdani 2002: 766) – i.e. those posing little or no threat – from the 'deviants', who use religion for unsavoury and violent political purposes. This is reflected in analyses of Indonesian Islam, too – even those imbued with otherwise commendable historical and cultural sensitivity (Fealy 2004; Barton 2004).

However, it should be kept in mind that in spite of the rhetoric, those so-called 'moderate' or 'good' Muslims championed by the governments of the USA and, in the region, Singapore and Australia, have been entangled in the same broad sociological and historical processes that produced their so-called 'bad' counterparts. Although the influence of the mainstream Muslim organisations in Indonesia considered to be 'moderate' has waxed and waned, they were still a part of the politically authoritarian and economically predatory architecture of power that the New Order built (discussed at length below) – supported by the major Western governments – and which made possible corruption, oppression and murder on a systematic and wide scale.

It should come as no surprise that the Muslim community in Indonesia, as in most other places, is too complex to divide between those who are purportedly 'good' and 'bad', 'moderate' or 'radical', however these labels are to be defined. Contributing to the rich diversity of political values found among Islamic groups in Indonesia, for example, are lingering influences of Leftist-oriented Islam, which actually has a long history and is today represented mostly by small student groups attracted by the ideas of such writers as Hasan Hanafi (Badruzaman 2005). There are also groups of so-called 'Liberal Muslims' – found mainly in small sections of the Jakarta intelligentsia – whose views are well reported in the mainstream media. They are very vocal in their support of both liberal democracy and, as a particularly distinguishing trait, have less openly expressed qualms about capitalist free markets

⁴ As well democracies more generally in Southeast Asia; Ramakrishna and Tan (2003) depict some of this uneasiness in their call for greater 'state capacity' in their review of the pros and cons of a stronger 'surveillance state'.

(see, for example, <http://islamlib.com/id>). Furthermore, even ‘fundamentalist’ Islamic politics can have a variety of expressions, in Indonesia and elsewhere, and thus Muslim fundamentalists obviously need not be potential or real terrorists (Mamdani 2002: 767-768). In fact many, including in Egypt – the birthplace of the Muslim Brotherhood – may try to pursue their objectives through fairly straightforward electoral politics. In Indonesia, the PKS (Justice as Prosperity Party) models itself on Turkey’s ruling Justice and Development Party, which is famously liberal in its economic policies. Submerging an Islamist concern for the establishment of a state based on Syariah within a broader platform emphasising integrity and anti-corruption, the PKS has found significant electoral success since Indonesia began to embark on democratisation.

Historical and socio-political diversity aside, the security-oriented view of recent Indonesian history is overly simplistic at best. Because of the propensity to equate political Islam with outbreaks of violence, the danger is that such violence becomes understood as the product of irrational action born of religious zeal. This risks placing political Islam outside the domain of social analysis, and into the realm of approaches that concentrate on explaining pathologies in the psychological make-up of individuals. Where social analysis is invoked, the focus frequently creates an Islamic ‘other’ – taking religion as the defining element in the self-identities of individuals who hail from predominantly Muslim societies – a move that Al Azmeh (2003) has rightly perceived as being disturbingly ‘re-orientalising’ in its direction.

In agreement with Mamdani (2002), it is suggested here that any effort to understand political Islam, including in its radical manifestations, must begin with a realisation that it is the product of the contemporary world order – with all its inherent tensions and contradictions. Even what is termed ‘Islamic radicalism’ is not some vestige of an essentially pre-modern cultural anomaly (Al Azmeh 2003) that has somehow survived the ravages of the modern world, and now seeks vengeance upon it. The nature of political Islam – like any social phenomenon – can be more fruitfully understood through historical and sociological lenses, rather than dismissed as a manifestation of some inscrutable pre-modern ‘other’. In this regard, this paper is directly opposed to the essentialist and culturally-deterministic terms by which ‘Islam’ is understood by the proponents of Huntingtonian notions of clashing civilisations, and those favoured by the global enforcers of American hegemony.

3. Political Islam as Populist Response

It is useful to understand many expressions of political Islam in the world today as populist responses to the tensions and contradictions of global capitalism and the way that these have affected some individual societies. A number of works analysing political Islam in relation to the political economy and social histories of societies in the Middle East and North Africa are especially enlightening in this regard. Scrutinising Islamic politics in relation to issues of class transformations and the evolution of state power, these works are of considerable use in understanding the evolution and character of Islamic politics in contemporary Indonesia; yet they remain largely ignored in the growing literature on this country (e.g. Fealy and White 2008).

Alejandro Colas, for example, addresses political Islam in the Maghreb as a populist response to the social problems bequeathed by the capitalist industrialisation process, but more specifically in the phase of neo-liberal economic globalisation. In doing so, he notes how ‘class-based political movements have, with a few notable exceptions, fared less well in the region than rival organisations built around broader, and vague, conceptions of the “the people”, which are significantly cross-class in nature and defined against often equally vague opponents’ (Colas 2004: 233).

He also observes, however, that political Islam – as the leading variation of ‘people’-based movements – continues to draw upon, even as it reinvents, ‘a long-standing populist tradition of anti-imperialism in the region’ (Colas 2004: 233). Significantly, it has done so in the absence of a Left political stream that had previously been the major anti-imperialist standard-bearer. Communist parties were already being severely suppressed, if not completely outlawed, throughout North Africa by the 1960s and those Leftist forces which remain live a precarious existence. Halperin (2005) notes similar state repression of Leftist, and even merely social-democratic and liberal, elements in the political landscape of the Middle East, significantly in the context of the Cold War. Such forces were generally regarded as being threats to the nationalist or so-called ‘Arab-socialist’ projects being pursued by state elites.

At the same time, modernising authoritarian regimes in much of North Africa and the Middle East came to view Islamic forces as a useful tool in domesticating Leftists and other redistributive coalitions. In the process, state elites came to encourage ‘a whole generation of Maghrebi intellectuals, trade unionists and political activists ... to find a new political home in Islamism’ (Colas 2004: 241) and thereby to colonise some of the vehicles through which the Left had traditionally waged its struggles. It was in this way that ‘Islamist organisations’ came to establish ‘themselves as the principal alternative to traditional nationalist, socialist and liberal organisations’ (Colas 2004: 238). In one variation of this phenomenon of displacing the Left, one observer in Egypt has noticed the personal and career transformations of former Leftist intellectuals into Islamic political and social activists (Shadid 1997).

Also potentially useful is Lubeck’s observation that political Islam is but a ‘new expression of Third World nationalism’ (Lubeck 1998: 300), involving loyalty to an undifferentiated nation and community. Such a form of loyalty was of course useful for state-led modernising projects, often led by the same authoritarian or corrupt state elites who had developed an interest in curbing Leftist political and redistributive tendencies that were typically alleged to be threats to national unity. Significantly, loyalty to nation and community was often mediated by religious identity in the Muslim world, while simultaneously cast in opposition to Western neo-colonial intentions. This was of course helpful in nurturing Islamic political forces. However, contradictions came to emerge as political Islam eventually developed into a major vehicle – in the absence of a viable Left – through which broad dissatisfaction with entire social orders came to be expressed in an environment of rapid modernisation, but also new social dislocations.

In his insightful discussion, Lubeck specifically addresses the social changes occurring during the ‘Fordist’ period in the history of societies like Egypt and Algeria – that roughly lasted from the end of World War II until the oil boom of 1973 and was characterised by steady economic growth presided over by generous levels of state intervention in the economy. The oil boom that followed provided impetus for the development of ‘large-scale state controlled uncompetitive industrial projects and unrealistic macroeconomic policies’. According to Lubeck, the oil boom also provided the stimulus for the intensification of rent-seeking behaviour among state-connected elites (1998: 296-297), thereby stimulating social animosity against rapacious state elites and cronies. Scholars of Indonesia would recognise parallels here, as the oil boom of the 1970s also provided the Indonesian state with windfall profits to pursue large-scale, upstream industrial projects. Many of these were ill-considered, but created the opportunities for intensified rent-seeking activity and new alliances between state bureaucrats, their families, and leading representatives of the bourgeoisie (Robison 1986) – all of which became the subject of frequently sharp social criticism.

In Colas' more specifically Magrhebi-based case studies, societal contradictions sharpened particularly after the phase of state-led, resource-based industrialisation had been superseded by a phase characterised by compliance to the dictates of neo-liberal economic globalisation. As Lubeck also shows, hostility quickly emerged toward austerity measures undertaken by the state in line with such dictates. These typically involved acquiescence to structural adjustment and privatisation policies promoted by international development organisations that were widely perceived as being hostile to the interests of the poor. In Algeria, Colas notes that the years of the economically-liberalising Chedli Benjedid government (1979-1992) were associated with the rise of a so-called 'political-financial mafia' and 'a new capitalist *nomenklatura* made up of state officials and employees' (Colas 2004: 237). These were all prone to abuse their position to develop opportunities for private capital accumulation in the context of declining living standards and worsening unemployment conditions. On the other hand, Colas also observes that these circumstances produced 'a highly alienated generation of Algerians epitomised in the figure of the *hittiste*' – a term denoting 'young urban men who prop up walls' while 'listlessly watching life passing them by' (Colas 2004: 237-238).

Such observations are noteworthy because, as a result of post-oil boom austerity policies, the state became increasingly absent from the provision of social services; and Islamist movements gained ground in further developing what might be conceived as civil society organisations delivering the social goods required, especially by those experiencing new economic hardships. According to Lubeck, the urban poor in particular often became more reliant on the provision of basic goods by religious charities and organisations as state social agencies retreated due to reduced social expenditure stemming from neo-liberal structural adjustments (Lubeck 1998: 299). It is not hard to imagine how an environment quite naturally emerged that was conducive to the religiously-oriented social and political activism that would help forge new solidarities and self-identities, particularly among large numbers of young, mainly urban or peri-urban people facing dire futures (Berman and Rose 2006). These new solidarities and self-identities conceivably contributed to the development of political Islam as a kind of populist response to the contradictions of neo-liberal globalisation as experienced by the marginalised populations of the sprawling new cities and towns of a number of Muslim societies.

This sort of analysis is potentially significant because it provides a link between the legacy of Cold War-era authoritarian politics, the social consequences of neo-liberal globalisation, and contemporary experiences of, and responses to, social marginalisation. Indeed, the analysis of political Islam as populist response must begin with Cold War social conflicts and their outcomes. Writing on the Middle East, Halperin (2005), for example, emphasises the contemporary political ramifications of fluctuations in state policies toward Islamic and Leftist social forces during the Cold War. Like Colas and Lubeck, she traces state policies of selectively embracing the forces of political Islam in the region to the Cold War-era campaign against Left-wing social redistributional forces – and identifies their longer term consequences for further rounds of social conflict after the Cold War.

Significantly, Halperin also emphasises how such anti-Left campaigns typically expanded to suppress a range of liberal, reformist and broadly progressive elements that might have formed a social base for the democratisation process in Middle Eastern societies. As a result, Halperin asserts that the most long-lasting historical legacy of the Cold War is the lack of sufficiently organised Left, Centre or even moderate Right-wing forces in most Middle Eastern societies that could be expected to act as an engine of democratic change today. She sees few present-day channels,

other than those associated with political Islam, through which the economically marginalised can articulate their interests and voice their discontent.

But why were Islamic forces willing accomplices in the destruction of Leftist social and political currents? Antipathy toward atheistic communism would be too neat an answer – and ignores the fact that Leftist Muslims existed from Iran to Indonesia. They certainly were not the sociological oddity that they would be perceived as today – as discussed below. A more satisfying answer to this question may be presented in class terms. In discussing her Middle Eastern case studies, Halperin refers to links within the religious establishment in Arab societies, with traditional land-owners as well as the urban petty-bourgeoisie most fearing the impact of radical reforms on their own social positions. Indeed, the social base of organised Islam was similar to that in Indonesia, where petty bourgeois-based and Islamic-oriented political and social organisations became deeply involved in containing the rise of Leftist tendencies in society.

There are clearly some striking parallels with recent Indonesian history when one looks at the broad social processes contributing to the forging of political Islam in Indonesia, the Middle East and North Africa. As is well known, a pivotal development in Indonesia was the violent eradication of the Left in 1965 to make way for the rise of a stringently authoritarian and developmentalist regime. This involved the violent destruction of the Indonesian Communist Party – then the third largest in the world – and its related organisations. It is widely accepted that hundreds of thousands were killed in the process, while tens of thousands of others were incarcerated without trial for many years. Though the carnage was led and orchestrated by the army, an array of Islamic organisations and paramilitaries also took part.

In Indonesia, too, an authoritarian system of suppressing or pre-empting the emergence of autonomous civil society-based movements emerged. This meant that the representatives of social or liberal reformist streams suffered from the consequences of state authoritarianism – scores of intellectuals and students found themselves behind bars throughout the New Order era for their political activities. This authoritarian state – which was ideologically secular and nationalist – would become the driving force of a capitalist modernising project. Relative economic prosperity was supported by aid from Western powers, relieved that Indonesia did not fall to communism, and then by windfall oil revenue, although it was accompanied by rising social inequalities and rampant corruption. After the oil boom ended, a strategy of selective economic liberalisation, supported by international development organisations, and which heavily relied on export-led industrialisation, maintained high growth rates until the advent of the Asian Economic Crisis – after which Indonesians contended with more structural adjustment policies.

It is useful to recall that although the New Order's apparatus of violence was quite adept at shutting down sources of political opposition in good time, and that Soeharto was usually able to point to economic achievements to help legitimise his authoritarian rule, there remained strong undercurrents of hostility. Eventually much of this hostility was directed at the Soeharto family itself as well as a group of largely ethnic Chinese owners of giant state-connected business conglomerates (see Chua 2008).

As explained in greater detail in the following sections dealing more directly with the Indonesian case, the forces of political Islam were to provide a major cultural and ideological basis for social dissent, drawing on the egalitarian aspects of Islamic doctrine and the social justice-oriented and populist traditions of Indonesian political Islam. These traditions were born of the anti-colonial struggles of the early twentieth

century and were largely established by networks of petty bourgeois Muslim traders, squeezed by the system of colonial capitalism in which they were mere subordinates. Though versions of populist nationalism remained alive too – preserving the memory of Indonesia's radical-national first President, Soekarno – it was only well into the very last years of the New Order that the latter tradition was able to serve as a competing ideological rallying point against corrupt and arbitrary state power.

The Indonesian experience is not unique outside the immediate Arab world, although of course variations are to be expected in specific cases. In Iran, after sporadic periods of development following the Bolshevik Revolution in nearby Russia – although constantly checked by the presence of Western interests in the region – the Left almost collapsed after it was fiercely attacked following the overthrow of the secular nationalist Mossadegh government in 1953 (Matin-Asgari 2004; Mirsepassi 2004). This military-led coup resulted in the reinstatement of the Shah, Reza Pahlevi. It was backed by the CIA in the context of the Cold War: in part because of Mossadegh's policy of nationalising Western oil firms; in part because he was perceived to be too soft on the communist-oriented Tudeh Party. Although a variety of Leftist and social democratic movements continued to operate in Iran, it was the forces representing political Islam that became the main rallying point of dissent against an increasingly corrupt and authoritarian state, whose elite and cronies had grown rich from the country's oil wealth. While the movement that overthrew the Shah of Iran in 1979 could be described as one which united elements of the conservative clergy, the Left and a smattering of representatives of more liberal or social democratic tendencies, the Islamic Republic was to turn against its erstwhile Leftist allies with devastating effect (Halliday 2004) – as well as against secular liberals and social democrats.

The main point, however, is that with the weakening of Leftist tendencies, Islam came to represent the main source of a populist critique against the prevalent model of authoritarian capitalist modernisation in Iran. How did this happen? Skocpol (1982: 267) points to how the Iranian rentier state presided over social transformations that included land reform, massive rural to urban migration and rapid industrialisation. She also observes that discontent with the corrupt and repressive nature of the Pahlevi-dominated state was concentrated primarily in the newly sprawling cities – but especially in traditional bazaars where the urban petty bourgeoisie were being squeezed by the advance of the new layer of rentier capitalists, and where rural migrants flocked to look for jobs and access to social services in burgeoning numbers. These increasingly marginalised urban communities were tied together by Islamic religious groups and activities, in which Mullahs played a big role in providing order, settling commercial disputes and in organising informal welfare services by taxing the more well-to-do (Skocpol 1982: 271). Gabriel (2001) further suggests that the clergy were themselves part of the traditional landlord class and that the Shah's modernising land reforms – aimed at creating a modern capitalist agricultural sector and expanding capitalist wage labour markets – therefore constituted a direct attack upon its material base.

Understanding the social impact of the oil booms of the 1970s and 1980s, and also their conclusion, is obviously important in all of the above cases. Lubeck observes that the oil boom raised urban income levels in the Middle East and stimulated the construction industry, but also triggered inflation as well as rent-seeking behaviour among elites. The large sums of oil money available to the rentier state and its urban clients also adversely affected the terms of trade of rural producers, many of whom migrated to the cities as members of a new proletariat (Lubeck 1998: 297).

Again there are obvious parallels with the case of Indonesia, notably in the new

tensions and contradictions produced by modernisation. In Indonesia, it was during the authoritarian rule of Soeharto's New Order that we see the most distinct development of those classes associated with capitalist transformation (the bourgeoisie, middle class and proletariat), especially during the post-oil boom period characterised by a shift to export-led industrialisation (Hadiz 1997). The Indonesian case is important in that it shows very clearly how, even if a bourgeoisie and/or middle class do emerge out of the process of social transformation, they do not necessarily take on liberal reformist political attitudes. In the Indonesian case, the reason was obvious: their dependence on the authoritarian state for their material well-being (Robison 1993) as well as for protection. Such an observation brings to mind Bellin's notion of 'contingent democrats' – in which the material interests of a social class trumps all others – which was used to explain why the Tunisian bourgeoisie, among others, lacked the propensity to struggle for democratisation (Bellin 2002).

Taken together, the analyses above show how the emergence of 'radical Islamism' in many cases is intricately related to the eradication, in a Cold War context, of Leftist and other reformist coalitions oriented towards wealth redistribution. It is also associated with the growth of mass antipathy in North Africa, the Middle East and many other countries with a Muslim majority towards secular nationalist state projects that are often both strongly authoritarian and corrupt. Many such regimes are also seen as being externally propped-up. This sort of antipathy, it is particularly suggested by Colas and Lubeck, was exacerbated by neo-liberal structural adjustment programmes, which hit the poor particularly badly and provided a more or less natural support base for Islamic groups, whose very presence and growth revealed the sharpening of conflict over issues of social injustice.

It should, nevertheless, be borne in mind that 'radical Islamic' groups have had a vacillating and inconsistent relationship with the secular nationalist states that have frequently presided over capitalist modernising projects. Many such groups were at one time or another the beneficiaries of state assistance, as elites sought to stave off class-based redistributive challenges, and the chequered history of the relationship between the Muslim Brotherhood and the state in Egypt and Baathist Syria is well known (King 2007). Tunisian 'founding father' Habib Bourguiba initially tended to play off Islamic forces against the Left; his successor, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, who no longer faced the threat of a coherent Left, moved against Islamic forces with some strength, even if it meant partially appeasing the trade union movement that had suffered from previous repression, in order to close down some of the social space into which Islamists could insert themselves (Bellin 2002: 117-121). But as in Indonesia, all of these fluctuations must be understood in relation to the following factors: the role of the state in post-colonial modernisation; the Cold War context of many social conflicts; the ideological bases of resistance to perceived social injustices; and social marginalisation resulting from capitalist development.

4. Colonialism, the Left and the Genesis of Indonesian Political Islam

The appearance of 'radical' and/or violent expressions of political Islam in Indonesia is not simply a function of the demise of the authoritarian New Order – which, because of its ruthless but effective nature, was somehow able to suppress them. While clearly the fall of Soeharto provided the immediate setting, that 'radical' Islam emerged in newly distinct, and often anti-Western, forms cannot be understood simply as a function of the flaws of Indonesia's post-Soeharto democracy. Instead it can be more fruitfully understood in relation to similar historical and sociological processes intertwined with the ebb and flow of various kinds of Islamic-based movements in many parts of the world over the last half century or so. Much of this

took place in the context of and in relation to the exigencies of the Cold War. Thus, there is an inter-relationship between developments in the international sphere and the nature of social conflict in the domestic which must be scrutinised.

It should be kept in mind that the political nature of *Indonesian* organised Islam, even at the very early stages, could never be separated from a broader international and historical milieu. At its moment of birth it was profoundly affected by the rise of anti-colonial movements worldwide in the first decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, the term *Indonesian* is deliberately used in this instance in spite of the fact that there was no independent geo-political entity at that time actually called 'Indonesia'.

Political Islam was clearly deeply influenced politically by its appearance in the context of growing nationalist and proto-nationalist sentiment in the colonial-era Dutch East Indies, and other parts of the colonised world – one manifestation of which was the Pan Islamic movement. As is well documented, the emergence of political Islam in Indonesia can be traced back at least to the early responses of the class of traders and merchants (especially in the newly growing urban formations in the island of Java) who perceived their social and economic position to be under threat within the colonial-era Dutch East Indies at the turn of the twentieth century, or thought their social mobility to be severely constrained. It is because of such a historical legacy that social justice ideals, often strongly tinged with a combination of nationalist and anti-capitalist sentiments – in whatever permutation – remain a hallmark of political Islam in Indonesia.

The history of the birth and growth of the organisation called Sarekat Islam in the 1910s is particularly well known (e.g. McVey 1965; Shiraishi 1990) and needs no repetition here. The organisation is uniformly accepted as the first modern mass organisation in the East Indies and was crucial to the development of early Indonesian nationalism. Furthermore, a pivotal development in the organisation's history took place when it eventually gave rise to a distinct Left wing that evolved within a short time into the break-away Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in the early 1920s (McVey 1965).

It is worth pointing out that, at this juncture, the 'Muslim-as-communist' or Leftist was not the sociological oddity that he now seems in contemporary Indonesia and much of the rest of Southeast Asia. Muslim communists and assorted Leftists were historically important, especially in the Dutch East Indies, where social movements inspired by the various forms of global Pan-Islamism, socialism or communism were almost simultaneously appearing as responses to the social injustices of the colonial order. Such was the case of the legendary Indonesian communist leader, Tan Malaka, who eventually broke with the PKI: he famously supported the position that international communism should align itself with Pan-Islamism, as both were opposed to colonialism and capitalism (Tan Malaka 1922). The point to be made here is that the historical and sociological roots of political Islam in Indonesia are extremely rich and complex, and even included significant intermingling with Leftist political currents.

Within the kind of environment described above, people such as Java's Haji Misbach – who thought that it was not possible to be a real Muslim without being a communist – and West Sumatra's much lesser known Haji Datuk Batuah (Anwar 2004) were a distinct sociological possibility (and historical reality). While much is made of Muslim-communist rivalries over time in writings about Indonesian history, it is interesting that even some members of later generations of the PKI were still able to conceive of themselves as being simultaneously Muslim and communist (see, for example, Raid

2001).⁵ Even the anti-communist 'moderate', Haji Agus Salim, who is accepted as a national hero in Indonesia today, argued against 'sinful capitalism' (McVey 1965) and in so doing suggested not only some common ground with his Left-wing rivals, but also that Muslims were earlier and more advanced advocates of social justice and egalitarian principles. Nevertheless, the class basis of organised Islam in the colonial-era urban and rural petty bourgeoisie ensured that its social actors, as exemplified by individuals like Agus Salim, would have been threatened by the prospect of proletarian revolution.

All of this may seem peculiar given the widely accepted association today of Islamic societies with a vehement rejection of the secularist and even atheistic ideas commonly found within the political Left. But there is nothing that is essentially unchanging about predominantly Muslim societies, and one should not project the conditions of today too readily into the past. In Iran, it was already noted that Leftist political forces existed, albeit problematically, well into the revolution against the Shah, and in fact co-operated closely with the pro-Khomeini forces in toppling the pro-Western monarchy. In Indonesia's neighbour, Malaysia/Malaya, colonial and early post-colonial radicals and Leftists of different stripes were an integral part of the Malay Muslim community (see Zahari 2001; Abdullah Che Dat 2005; Maidin 2005), though communism itself remained predominantly an ethnic Chinese phenomenon.⁶ Today, the struggles of such individuals are not strongly imprinted in the collective memory of Malaysians. This is due to the almost complete drawing of politics along racial lines, which began in the colonial era, and the logic of which suggests the historical improbability of Malay-Muslim Leftists opposed to foreign and domestic forms of class oppression.

As we have seen, the Middle East, the traditional heartland of world Islam, also saw the rise of a diversity of Leftist political organisations, including communist ones, in a world order dominated by Western colonialism. The Left in the Muslim world experienced its most marked decline as a viable social force after emerging as losers in key Cold War social conflicts. Indonesia was no exception. Nevertheless, as the contradictions of capitalist development became increasingly manifest – and issues of social inequality and growing perceptions of social injustice came to the fore – it was political Islam that was able to express the most trenchant critique of the existing social order. This was made possible because of the genesis of political Islam in the broader anti-colonial movement of the early twentieth century, and also because of the legacies of past intermingling with Leftist social agents and ideas.

However, the populist Islamic critique of capitalist development under Soeharto was not aimed at overthrowing the capitalist social order. Because of the social and class bases of political Islam, it was more geared toward changes that would benefit the perennially declining petty bourgeoisie that was to face new pressures with the rapid capitalist industrialisation initiated by the New Order. A new Muslim middle class and bourgeoisie also emerged as a result of the same capitalist transformations. These sections of political Islam would be more concerned with exercising control over state power in such a way as to reduce the economic influence of, notably, the giant

⁵ This is an autobiography written by a mid-ranking West Sumatran PKI member, Hasan Raid, who like many others, was imprisoned without trial after the crushing of the party in the mid-1960s, in his case for thirteen years. The autobiography, more than 550 pages in length, can be translated in English as 'The Struggle of a Communist Muslim'.

⁶ This is because of the colonial division of labour in that country. The Malays continued mainly to occupy traditional occupations in agriculture, while large numbers of imported coolies from China worked in manufacturing and the plantations, as did labourers from India.

conglomerates that were owned by ethnic Chinese businessmen and their families, and who enjoyed the protection of the New Order. In very obvious ways, therefore, they replayed the conflict between the Muslim small traders and merchants who began to associate a hundred years ago, partly in response to competition from their Chinese counterparts, who were perceived to have been favoured by the colonial state. This is the case even as capitalism also produced urban- and lumpen-proletariats in increasingly vast numbers, which – again, in the absence of the Left – became a constituency to which political Islam became more associated than it had been in the past.

5. Islam, Capitalist Development and the State

At the height of the Cold War, the representatives of political Islam in newly independent Indonesia gradually became an integral part of a conservative political coalition supported by the West, especially the USA and Great Britain. The aim of this broad coalition was to curtail the authority of the radical-nationalist President Soekarno and to stem Indonesia's perceptible political drift to the Left. For the Western powers, Soekarno was becoming a growing concern as he took up an increasingly Third-Worldist and anti-Western political stance. A major figure in the 'Third World Movement', Soekarno came to conceive of a divide between old imperialist forces and the 'newly emerging' ones of the formerly colonised nations, in which the West was increasingly demonised. More disconcertingly, Soekarno was invoking the concept of 'Nasakom' – whereby 'nationalist', 'religious' and 'communist' elements in Indonesian society would come together to confront Western imperialism, thereby providing the communists with a potential direct gateway to state power. It is in these circumstances that the political tendencies of mainstream Islamic organisations were to be further moulded.

In terms of domestic politics, it is acknowledged that Soekarno had also become increasingly close to the Indonesian Communist Party by the early and mid-1960s (Mortimer 1974). At the same time, his relationship with sections of organised Islam had become strained – he had, for example, banned the major Muslim party, the Masyumi, for collusion in anti-Jakarta regional rebellions. It should be kept in mind that there was a real fear among the leadership of organised Islam (which was made up predominantly of petty bourgeois small town merchants and rural landowners) of the threat posed to them by a communist take-over of state power, even if this were to be achieved without violent revolution but through an alliance with Soekarno.

In this period, Southeast Asia saw the gradual escalation of the Vietnam War and the prevalence of the so-called domino theory – which held that its nations would fall one by one to communism if the United States and its allies were not victorious in Vietnam. It was against this background that key sections of the Indonesian military were being seriously courted by the West, to whom the military establishment had turned for a source of external support against the PKI.

For example, along with a number of key bureaucrats who were provided with scholarships to study for postgraduate degrees in American universities, military officers were invited to attend training courses in the USA (Hadiz and Dhakidae 2005). These individuals would play important roles in the consolidation of state power and the subordination of civil society throughout the New Order. Moreover, it has been amply documented that the PRRI/PERMESTA secessionist rebellion of the late 1950s, centred in West Sumatra and North Sulawesi, and which involved sections of

the Indonesian military as well as the Masyumi,⁷ was covertly supported and bankrolled by the West in an attempt to undermine Soekarno (Kahin and Kahin 1995). It is no surprise that the eventual political demise of Indonesia's first President in March 1966 was greeted as a major victory for the West, especially as it was accompanied by the decimation of what was by then the third largest communist party in the world.

As its external alliance with the West was being forged, the Indonesian army had also courted various domestic social forces to bolster its position against the PKI – which by the early 1960s was clearly the only organisation that could match the power of the military, because of its broad membership base and organisational capacities. The military's own political standing had been bolstered by assuming a variety of non-military functions, including the control of various regional administrative bodies and those state enterprises created by the nationalisation of a number of foreign enterprises. Indeed, it is arguable that the military's managerial role in such enterprises exacerbated conflict with the PKI and its affiliated trade union organisations (Hadiz 1997). On the other hand, among the key allies of the military were a number of Muslim political parties and organisations that were also in intense competition with the PKI, not just in garnering votes during elections, but also in such arenas as youth and labour organisation. In the latter arena, Muslim political parties, with a social base that remained firmly within the ranks of the urban and rural petit bourgeoisie, set up trade unions that were based on an ideological aversion to class-based conflict (Hadiz 1997: Chapter 3).

Ultimately, when military-PKI rivalry culminated in the bloodbath of the mid-1960s, various Islamic militia and other groupings were closely involved on the side of the military, especially in parts of Java and in Bali. The Banser, a civilian militia linked with the NU (the largest Muslim association in Indonesia, today identified as a source of Islamic 'moderation') were especially complicit in some of the more notorious instances of violence against real and imagined communists and their sympathisers. The HMI, a nationally-organised student organisation that was to spawn countless New Order-era apparatchik, was at the forefront of anti-Soekarno street protests in Jakarta while also being backed up by the military.

The military leadership under General – later President – Soeharto was of course to play the lead role in the establishment of the New Order, which was ostensibly premised on the idea of a joint military and societal effort to save the nation from the clutches of the PKI. Upon assuming power, the New Order re-established Indonesia's links to the world economy, cut off so disastrously by Soekarno, and embarked on an economic strategy reliant at first on foreign investment and aid from the major industrial powers, though this was to change with the oil bonanza of the 1970s. Many Muslim leaders would have surely harboured some deep-seated reservations about supporting a new social order that depended on integration with a global capitalist economy dominated by Western interests. However, they were more immediately fearful of the threat that any communist surge would pose to the petty bourgeoisie. Still, as political Islam was born of the broader anti-colonial movement of an earlier age, Muslim politicians and leaders typically espoused some form of socialist vision for Indonesia, because their own direct experiences with global capitalism had been mainly confined to that of colonial subordination. So the anti-communist alliance, within which key sections of political Islam were a crucial component, was always uneasy and wrought with potentially serious internal contradictions.

⁷ As well as the secular right-wing socialist party, the PSI (Indonesian Socialist Party), led by former Prime Minister Sutan Sjahrir.

These contradictions were so serious that the military-Islamic-Western alliance against the Left in general was ultimately not able to absorb all the constituent elements of political Islam. This was the case even before the alliance fell apart in the early 1970s, except in the form of a distinctly statist-authoritarian project of dominating civil society. Among those only embraced with difficulty in this alliance were some groups and individuals that had been involved in armed separatist rebellions; one such was the Darul Islam, which had emerged in the 1940s in Java and South Sulawesi as a reaction by some militia groups to the perceived inability of the then leadership of the fledgling Republic to protect Indonesia's interests in independence negotiations with the Dutch. Also among these were individuals who were part of networks linked to the Masyumi party that Soekarno had banned (Van Bruinessen 2002). Though many of the actors taking part in such movements were to be at least partially rehabilitated over the years, a significant number would continue to be considerably marginalised and develop great antipathy towards the New Order. A number of recent reports by the International Crisis Group, for example, have elaborated upon genealogies that link those identified today as terrorists with that of the Darul Islam.⁸

Ironically, many of the more marginalised elements of political Islam were simultaneously amongst the most fervently anti-communist of elements within Indonesian society. Nevertheless, they would not find the New Order to be particularly receptive of their political presence once the common enemy, the PKI, had been eliminated. Operating continually on the fringes of the formal arrangement institutions of political and social life, but often with significant grassroots bases, they would at times become subject to intense state repression even in the early stages of the New Order. Eventually Islam would offer a major source of opposition to Soeharto for a significant period in the 1970s and 1980s, and thereby suffer the heaviest brunt of state repression. Throughout this time the New Order did not hesitate to display intolerance of any kind for societal dissent. Another erstwhile ally in the campaign against Soekarno – the student movement – would also suffer from clampdowns in 1974 and 1978, even though a key part of the New Order's founding mythology celebrated students as the 'conscience of society'.

In other words, the New Order was to become increasingly hostile towards organised Islam in general. This was a great disappointment to the social agents of the latter, who would have expected to wield greater influence over state power with Soekarno and the PKI both having been removed from the scene. The reason for the sharp turn of state policy toward organised Islam was fairly obvious: with the elimination of the communists in the previous decade from the social and political landscape, political Islam was the only force in Indonesia to have the potential to mobilise against the New Order. The mere presence of organised Islamic forces with a strong grassroots base simply went against a founding logic of the New Order – which was to undertake capitalist development on the basis of the political demobilisation of society at large.

As scholars of the New Order era in Indonesia have noted, Soeharto – with the help of key aides like the late General Ali Moertopo (whose skills at political intrigue were legendary) – had been gradually developing new institutions governing state and society relations throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s. These institutions were to be most prominently characterised by their function of demobilising non-state actors and social forces through a system of strict controls over associational

⁸ The most important being ICG (2005).

activities (Robison and Hadiz 2004) and of selective co-optation. Moertopo is widely regarded to have been primarily responsible for the eventual establishment of the New Order-era rigidly controlled party system and state corporatist arrangement of societal 'representation'.

That organised Islam would be the main target of this evolving system of stringent control was already evident in the pre-emption of a viable Muslim electoral vehicle – the Parmusi – as early as in late 1960s. The concern was that such a vehicle might have competed seriously with Golkar, which was the entity through which the New Order would orchestrate its electoral successes over three decades. Instead, the New Order artificially created a party called the PPP (United Development Party) in 1973, to function ostensibly as Islam's electoral vehicle, though even this artificial concoction would be subject to Moertopo's further machinations to undermine its appeal to the electorate. It is instructive that the party's name did not suggest any Islamic orientation, which was surely a move calculated to reduce appeal among Muslims.

For Muslim activists, the New Order was taking a distinctly anti-Islamic turn: this could be seen in the apparent growing influence of bureaucrats and military figures with an *abangan* (or Javanese syncretic) outlook, or who were Christians; and also in the rapid rise of ethnic Chinese business groups. Thus, helping to encourage a sense of marginalisation, and even persecution, among Muslim figures, were such developments as the rise in influence of individuals connected with CSIS in the 1970s, a think tank under the direct protection of Ali Moertopo. Within CSIS and its broader network, Moertopo had collected a coterie of aides and protégés from minority religious or ethnic backgrounds. The organisation also had strong links with Chinese business groups, which were becoming an increasingly prominent fixture in the economic landscape. That such individuals would turn to Moertopo was not surprising, as his objective of circumscribing social movements with strong grassroots bases went well with a strategy of enhancing the social and political influence of minority groups much more dependent on strong direct personal connections with the holders of state power (see Bouchier 1996).

Another key advocate of such a strategy was the rather mysterious but influential figure of the Jesuit Priest, Father Josephus Gerardus Beek, a stringent Dutch anti-communist, who presided over training courses designed to produce disciplined Catholic political cadres in Indonesia (see Bouchier 1996). Beek had long been associated with the military and was part of the inner circle of the CSIS group. Though his political role was always necessarily behind-the-scenes, Beek's status is legendary among Catholic intellectuals, while veteran Muslim political figures still recall him with considerable revulsion, even though it has been a long time since his death in 1983.

As mentioned above, a significant early sign of trouble between the New Order leadership and its Muslim allies appeared when the establishment of an Islamic party, the Parmusi, was blocked by Soeharto. This effectively terminated the already-stalled political careers of numerous Islamic-oriented leaders, who represented the long declining rural and urban petty bourgeoisie, and who had hoped for a change in fortune after Soekarno's political demise and to be rewarded for their part in the struggle against the communists. Among the most prominent of these figures was the highly revered Mohammad Natsir – a former leader of the Masyumi. Once a detractor of Soekarno's 'Old Order', he became a strident critic of the New Order as well. Not surprisingly Natsir and his associates rejected the New Order-manufactured Islamic vehicle, the PPP, as a genuinely effective option through which to articulate their aspirations and interests.

Because the Parmusi was circumvented, Natsir was to play a key role instead in the growth and development of an organisation called the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII), which was devoted to proselytising activities rather than to any overtly political role. Though not involved in formal politics, it would come to be regarded as a consistent source of opposition to the New Order, as well as a bastion of socially conservative Islamic thinking. On the one hand, revealing once again the danger of simple exercises in rigid categorisation, the DDII's hostility to notions of democracy was often quite ambiguous – no doubt because of the old Masyumi's success in the defunct system of parliamentary democracy. On the other hand, it was also reportedly a major conduit for the transfer of funds from Saudi Arabian Wahabi groups to Indonesia (see Hasan 2006), which has become one basis for arguing for the significance of the Middle Eastern factor in the rise of fundamentalist forms of Islamic politics in Indonesia today. But to take this position would be overly to simplify the nature of the DDII, which is somewhat internally contradictory.

As Van Bruinessen (2002: 123) wrote:

We find with the Dewan Dakwah group an unlikely combination of attitudes: a belief in the superiority of western-style democracy over the neo-patrimonial forms of rule adopted by both Sukarno and Suharto, an almost paranoid obsession with Christian missionary efforts as a threat to Islam, and an increasingly strong orientation towards the Middle East, notably Saudi Arabia. The DDII established close relations with the Islamic World League (Rabitat al-`Alam al-Islami, established in 1962), of which Natsir became one of the vice chairmen. It became the Saudis' preferred counterpart when these began using their oil wealth to finance the spread of conservative and puritan brands of Islamic teaching.

Indeed, it was Natsir's old party, the Masyumi, which had been most vehemently against Soekarno's initiative of breaking up Indonesia's young Western-style parliamentary democracy in the 1950s, and replacing it with something called 'Guided Democracy'. The latter effectively reduced the powers of the political parties, concentrating them on the Presidency. The initiative, it should be noted, was to the liking of the military, which gained a stronger foothold on politics proper within Guided Democracy's framework of corporatist representation. It was also to be accepted, with varying degrees of hesitancy, by most of the other major political parties – including the PKI, and the Masyumi's main competitor in mainstream Islamic politics, the more strictly Javanese, rural-based Nahdlatul Ulama (NU).

Of the many Muslim political figures who were more openly opposed to the Soeharto government, prominent were individuals whose political socialisation was in and around the old Masyumi networks, and those of the old Darul Islam rebellion (whose veterans could simultaneously claim Islamic and nationalist credentials because of their participation in the struggle against the Dutch). Given the highly authoritarian context, political opposition most frequently took the form of criticism expressed during what were otherwise religious lectures and sermons. For a short time, such sermons could even be broadcast on the radio in some areas, such as Solo, in Central Java, but this avenue had unsurprisingly been blocked by the early 1970s by the authorities, for fear of its broad public reach.⁹

Furthermore, although proselytising activity took place in many rural areas that had been bastions of PKI support – the peasantry that lived there had a good reason to

⁹ Interview: Ustad Taufik Usman 2007.

acquire stronger Muslim credentials to avoid being targeted as communists¹⁰ – such sermons were also given in mosques situated in the congested, lower-class urban neighbourhoods of Jakarta and other cities. As Raillon noted (1993: 211), ‘many mosque complexes include facilities for supporting not only religious activity, but also cultural promotion and daily politics: clinics, dormitories, canteens, shops, printing workshops, libraries, sports equipment, etc’. It was in this kind of environment that some individuals would gain a kind of underground celebrity status by the early 1980s, and many even had their sermons taped and distributed from hand to hand, especially among the targeted urban lower-class audience. The urban lower-class was of course a product of the process of rapid capitalist development during the New Order, but its members would have found much that resonated with them in sermons railing against social injustices¹¹.

This was not the only form of Islamic-oriented opposition, however, for more overtly violent reactions against the New Order were also to appear. The Komando Jihad (Jihad Command), in operation in the late 1970s and early 1980s, is depicted in New Order propaganda as an underground organisation intent on seizing state power by violent means, and in establishing an Islamic state. It received worldwide headlines in 1981 when members hijacked an Indonesian commercial aircraft; they forced it to land in Bangkok, where they were ultimately overcome by Indonesian elite military commandos (see, for example, Jenkins 2002). Komando Jihad is the best known of the shadowy, violent groups which appear in the official discourse and press reports of the period, and which tended to share the common theme of continuing the Darul Islam struggle that was supposed to have been terminated in the early 1960s.

According to the International Crisis Group, Abdullah Sungkar and Abubakar Ba’asyir – allegedly the founders of today’s Jemaah Islamiyah – had ties to the old Darul Islam movement. Through these DI networks, it is possible they also had ties to Komando Jihad. What is clear is that these individuals were part of a broader community of Muslim leaders who had become progressively disenchanted with the New Order. They founded the Al Mukmin *pesantren* in Ngruki, near Solo, Central Java, in the early 1970s and it was opened by no less a luminary than Mohammad Natsir himself.¹² The same *pesantren* was named by a well-known ICG (2002) report as a focal point of Indonesian-based terror networks. That Natsir did the honours was a clear indicator of the animosity of Sungkar and Ba’asyir toward the New Order. The late Sungkar, in particular, was noted as a fiery speaker and charismatic individual, who became widely admired in the Solo and broader Central Java region as a religious figure who did not shy away from admonishing the powers that be for their wrong-doings.¹³

However, the origins of the Komando Jihad – headed by a veteran Darul Islamist, Haji Ismail Pranoto – have always been shrouded in mystery. It has been more than credibly argued, for example, that the ‘organisation’ was all but invented by Ali Moertopo and his operatives in their quest to eliminate Muslim opposition forces. Supporting this allegation is Haji Wahyudin, an *ustad* or religious teacher who was imprisoned in the 1980s for supposed involvement in the related Teror Warman group. Now the head of Al Mukmin, which he had joined in its early years as a

¹⁰ Interview: Ustad Wahyudin 2007.

¹¹ Raillon (1991) suggests that these recordings were mainly didactic rather than political, aiming to ‘prove’ the ‘scientific’ basis of the Koran. However, while many were certainly of this nature, others heard by this author in the 1980s offered barely veiled social and political criticism of the status quo.

¹² Interview: Ustad Taufik Usman 2007.

¹³ Interviews: Sudirman Marsudi 2007; Ustad Taufik Usman 2007.

student, he too believes in hindsight that Komando Jihad was created by the Moertopo clique to flush out Islamic 'hard-liners' that the New Order identified as a threat to the political order. The shrewd scheme, according to Wahyudin, involved the 'invitation' to known Muslim activists to join 'a new coalition' against the communists, whom they were told were in the process of reorganising.¹⁴

Given the involvement of many Muslim organisations in the decimation of the PKI, individuals such as those found in Ngruki would have had reason to be concerned. Wahyudin now accepts that Muslim figures such as himself were essentially duped by Moertopo, and that no such communist resurrection was taking place.¹⁵ There is much independent anecdotal, as well as written, evidence to support this view. In 1982, for example, two sons of Kartosuwiryo, the former leader of the original Darul Islam movement, were tried for being involved in underground activities towards the establishment of an Islamic state. Their defence was that they had acted on behalf the state intelligence agency, then known as Bakin, to recruit Muslims in a new fight against resurgent communism (Raillon 1993: 215).

It is because of this sort of history that rumours persist in Indonesia to this day that terrorist attacks or anti-Chinese riots are actually the result of military plots – the idea being to deceive gullible, angry young Muslim men into acts that would in turn display the indispensability of the military to the nation's order and stability. Such conspiracy theories are heard in everyday conversation, and have more recently been reformulated to identify a different culprit – Western interests whose agents have manipulated these impressionable young men to carry out acts that stigmatise Islam in the interest of an alleged American neo-imperialist plan. This sort of paranoia was quite evidently on the rise in the general atmosphere of the 'War on Terror', which some Indonesians feel to be actually a war against Islam, in spite of American denials.

In any case, tensions between the New Order establishment and various Muslim groups had reached new heights by the mid-1980s. These tensions were underscored by a number of violent incidents, which included the bombing of the Borobudur Temple in Central Java and two branches of Bank Central Asia in Jakarta. The bank was owned by Liem Sioe Liong (*Tempo* 1986), the most successful of the groups of Chinese businessmen that benefited from their especially close association with President Soeharto. Whatever was really behind these incidents – and it remains hard to say even after more than two decades – the government response was to arrest several prominent Muslim critics of the government, adding significantly to an already-tense situation. For several weeks beforehand, an even more dramatic event had occurred in Jakarta, in the Northern working class enclave around the historic port of Tanjung Priok. Here an unknown number of Muslim street protesters were killed in a particularly bloody confrontation that took place on the evening of 12 September 1984.

The infamous massacre at Tanjung Priok was ostensibly sparked by the actions at the local mosque of a low-level security officer; protests against these actions resulted in the arrest of four members of the congregation. Tensions then built up for several days following these arrests, before government troops shot and killed a disputed number of Muslim demonstrators. Among those killed was the leader of the rioters, Amir Biki. Instructively, however, Biki was not always an opponent of the New Order. On the contrary, he previously had a notable if not particularly distinguished career as a student activist who supported the military-led toppling of Soekarno, and

¹⁴ Interview: Ustad Wahyudin 2007.

¹⁵ Interview: Ustad Wahyudin 2007.

subsequently became an entrepreneur who did business with the state oil company, Pertamina (see Raillon 1993). By the late 1970s, however, he had become frustrated with what he viewed as the New Order's favourable treatment of Chinese businessmen. In this sense he exemplified members of the Muslim petty bourgeoisie, who had expected their fortunes to change through an alliance with the military, but whose hopes were soon dashed.

The Tanjung Priok incident has been blamed on the late General Benny Moerdani, a Catholic who was earlier regarded as a follower of Ali Moertopo (and Father Beek), and who to this day remains a symbol of New Order repressive policies. Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces (1983-1988) and Minister of Defence (1988-1993), the widely feared Moerdani was another key Soeharto aide.¹⁶ Also implicated in the incident was General Try Sutrisno – later Vice President of Indonesia (1993-1998) – who was then military commander of Jakarta. Moerdani and Sutrisno were far from being the only New Order military luminaries whose reputations were tainted by violent acts against Islamic groups. For example, the name of General Hendropriyono, subsequently also military commander of Jakarta, chief of the national intelligence body, as well as a post-Soeharto cabinet Minister, is forever associated with a bloody incident in 1989 in a small village in the in the province of Lampung, on the southern part of the island of Sumatra. Here security forces under his command (then as a colonel) attacked and killed an unknown number of the members of a *pesantren* led by one Anwar Warsidi, believed have been clandestinely attempting to resuscitate the Darul Islam movement (Van Bruinessen 1996).

Apart from these violent episodes, the tensions between sections of political Islam and the state were also reflected in the rejection by a number of Muslim organisations of the establishment of Pancasila as state ideology in the mid-1980s. In fact, Muslim groups were among the most vocal opponents of the enshrinement of Pancasila as the so-called *azas tunggal* (sole principle) – a policy which was then being pursued by the Soeharto government to enforce even more ideological conformity and stringent controls over societal groups than already existed. Under the proposed legislation, organisations had to acknowledge Pancasila – a mere secular creed in the eyes of Muslim activists – as the basis of their existence or risk being dissolved by the state. The subordination of Islam to such a creed was widely resented (see Bouchier and Hadiz 2003: Chapter 6);¹⁷ this was partly because of the memory of previous failed attempts by Muslim organisations to advance the so-called 'Jakarta Charter' version of the preamble to the Constitution,¹⁸ which carried an injunction for Muslims to carry out their religious duties.

In spite of the debates, many mainstream Islamic organisations – like the HMI (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam; Islamic Students Association) – eventually relented and formally accepted Pancasila as *azas tunggal*. Besides the obvious threat to individual well-being that continued opposition would have entailed, there was also the risk of political marginalisation, which would have meant being completely excluded from the networks of patronage that characterised the New Order. However, a continuing atmosphere of mutual mistrust would be a feature of the relationship between the state and organised, political Islam for several years to come.

¹⁶ This was before he was cast aside, however, due to a clash with the President on matters regarding the autonomy of the military as an institution within the New Order *vis a vis* the Soeharto family and its cronies (see the discussion in Robison and Hadiz 2004).

¹⁷ Especially excerpts by Syarifuddin Prawiranegara, then a senior statesman of the Muslim community, and the Islamic Students' Association (HMI).

¹⁸ Interview: Sobarin Syakur 2007.

These tensions were only significantly defused with the establishment of ICMI (the Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals) in 1990. Led by another of Soeharto's key lieutenants, the engineer and technocrat B. J. Habibie, this vehicle essentially provided a route to bureaucratic power for members of the new Muslim middle class that had emerged during the process of modernisation. ICMI notably became an organisation that was filled not only with state bureaucrats, but also with Muslim political activists formerly critical of the state (Hefner 2000).

Although allegedly the grassroots initiative of a number of Muslim activists, ICMI was soon taken over by bureaucrats staunchly loyal to the New Order under Habibie's leadership, and provided Soeharto with a new instrument with which to redress his previously strained relations with organised Islam. At the same time, ICMI was a vehicle to develop support for Soeharto among the new urban Muslim middle class. A product of sustained economic development, with burgeoning aspirations and ambitions, they welcomed the new avenue that the organisation presented to bureaucratic power (Ramage 1995: 7; also see Hefner 1993). Before long, ICMI grew in influence and became a major institutional channel within the regime through which individuals could seek to advance their political and bureaucratic careers.

The establishment of ICMI won over a number of individuals who were previously amongst Soeharto's harshest critics, including Amien Rais, who would later break ranks again and appear at the forefront of the movement to remove Soeharto. Others who joined the fold included the NGO leaders and intellectuals Dawam Rahardjo and Adi Sasono, as well as the late activist Imaduddin Abdulrahim. No less importantly, *pribumi* businessmen such as Fahmi Idris and Fadel Muhammad came to play a key role in both ICMI and Golkar. Using their ICMI credentials, they promulgated the need for a more equal distribution of economic wealth – a very veiled reference to the economic power of the Chinese-owned business conglomerates.

In spite of its diverse internal composition, ICMI was a great playground for state bureaucrats. In 1993, a number of ICMI-related bureaucrats, including allies of Habibie such as Wardiman Djojonegoro and Haryanto Dhanuirta, were appointed to the cabinet and to the Golkar Executive Board (MacDougall 1993: 5). Attracted to its increasing influence, sections of the military also came to be associated with the ICMI – including Soeharto's fast rising son-in-law, Prabowo Subianto. This military connection was to provide yet another avenue for middle class co-optation through the establishment of think-tanks like the CPDS (Centre for Policy and Development Studies), under the aegis of Prabowo, which recruited a number of Muslim intellectuals and academics. Among these were Amir Santoso (University of Indonesia), Din Sjamsuddin (a director general of the Department of Manpower), Yusril Mahendra (a University of Indonesia legal scholar), Lukman Harun (Muhammadiyah), and Fadli Zon – an ambitious young Muslim activist closely linked to Soeharto's ambitious son-in-law. The changed nature of Soeharto's relationship with political Islam at the time was perhaps best reflected in the participation of A. M. Fatwa – a former political prisoner who suffered directly from the New Order repression of the 1980s – as a prominent ICMI figure (see Watson 2006).

As Robison and Hadiz observed (2004: 117):

To many, the establishment of ICMI signalled a new era in which Islam finally had 'arrived' as a social and political force. In the euphoria, some may have even seen it as a possible tool to strike back at those deemed responsible in the past for Muslim suppression, including within military circles.

Among such 'enemies' were Generals like Moertopo and Moerdani, as well as the Catholic and Chinese intellectuals and business figures converged around the CSIS-

based networks. Imaduddin, for example, reverted to the view that the Moertopo group actively attacked Islam, but that due to ICMI, and the Will of God, he now had friends in high places (see Naipaul 1998). The presence of New Order generals within the ICMI network offered the setting for a new phase in the history of the often shadowy intersections between military interests and those of political Islam.

As in the Middle East, North Africa and Iran, the developments described above must be placed in the context of the broader processes of social and economic change that had been taking place in Indonesia since the 1970s. It was during the New Order period that the most significant development of capitalism occurred, with all the ensuing socio-structural changes associated with it. This can be seen not only in the advance of industrialisation, but also in the concomitant changing class structure. The latter was characterised by the appearance of an increasingly powerful domestic capital-owning class (Robison 1986). It also saw the slow but gradual enlargement of a new industrial working class, based mainly in urban, low-wage manufacturing centres (Hadiz 1997); and a more highly-visible urban middle class of salary-earners and professionals (Robison 1993), complete with a consumer-oriented life-style.

In fact, one of the most striking developments to take place during the three decades of Soeharto's rule was the emergence and consolidation of a new capital-owning class. From the 1970s on, giant business conglomerates noticeably began to take shape, with state backing in the form of various economic protection policies. Some of these conglomerates, the Salim Group, Lippo, Sinar Mas and several others, grew to become regional, even international, economic players (see Chua 2008).

All of these ethnic Chinese businesses enjoyed close state connections. As a result there was soon a discernable rise in public concern about the growing influence of the Chinese-owned conglomerates and with issues of socio-economic inequality. The reaction to the rapid growth of these increasingly powerful business entities essentially merged concerns that were simultaneously class-oriented and ethno-religious in nature, because of the role occupied by ethnic Chinese businesses as middlemen in the colonial economy. The issue of race relations has thus always been an acutely sensitive, and the development of the conglomerates came to be commonly associated in the public mind with the continuation of the colonial-era pattern of the concentration of wealth in the hands of the ethnic Chinese minority – and away from the majority Muslim population. This is in spite of the fact that some of the major conglomerates were in fact non-Chinese, including those owned by members of the Soeharto and Bakrie families: the Bakries remain influential in today's democratic Indonesia, thanks to the presence of their current scion, Aburizal, in several post-Soeharto cabinets, and later as chairman of Golkar.

After the Asian Crisis of the late 1990s, Indonesia's economy went through a tough period during which much of the material progress achieved under the New Order was reversed as the economy contracted dramatically. Not surprisingly, this produced vast armies of unemployed, angry young people; and because of the New Order's relatively successful pursuit of depoliticisation at grassroots level, these angry youngsters lacked a much needed political lens through which to make sense of their own situation amidst the general economic and political turmoil. It is worth recalling that, more than in any other country in the region, the Asian Crisis would manifest itself in Indonesia both in economic and political terms, thus precipitating the unravelling of Soeharto's once seemingly impregnable New Order. Although middle class students, who suddenly faced an uncertain future, were largely at the forefront of growing social protest against the New Order in 1997 and 1998, industrial workers also participated, albeit belatedly: Jakarta slum dwellers rose up to protect students from the violent militia groups sponsored by the military during the tension-filled days

around Soeharto's resignation on 21 May 1998. These thugs were organised under the aegis of a civil defence militia known as the Pam Swakarsa, most probably under the direct initiative of the then military commander-in-chief, and loyal Soeharto aide, General Wiranto (*Tempo* 1998).

In many ways the Pam Swakarsa was a precursor to the various militia groups, including those that have adopted a Muslim identity, which are now prevalent throughout many parts of Indonesia. Some of these, most notably the now disbanded Lasykar Jihad, provided personnel to aid local Muslims during the communal strife in Maluku. Others have been present in such hot-spots as Poso, in Sulawesi. Lasykar Jihad's leader, Jafar Umar Thalib, fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan, and was known to have close personal relationships with top military figures (Hasan 2006), even as the organisation he led maintained cordial relations with the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia earlier rejected by the military-dominated early New Order.

Like their counterparts in the Middle East and North Africa, for large sections of the Indonesian rural and urban underclass there was a dearth of coherent ideological and cultural resources available through which to make sense of a rapidly changing social environment brought about by economic modernisation. What was on offer was Islam, with Soekarno's secular nationalism – as preserved in its much milder forms by successor organisations to the old Soekarnoist PNI – as a possible alternative. It was only in the mid-1990s that these milder forms coalesced into enthusiastic lower-class support for his daughter Megawati (President of Indonesia, 2001-2004). In the most populous island of Java, in particular, Soekarnoist secular nationalism absorbed the cultural sensibilities of the so-called *abangan* or syncretic traditions of Islam, producing a romanticised version of the noble struggles of a patriotic though downtrodden *wong cilik* (literally, the 'little people') against the depredations of powerful domestic and international forces. But it did not fill the yawning gap that was left by the destruction of the PKI, one which became even bigger as Indonesian society and its class structure was transformed under Soeharto.

For Sidel, therefore, rapid industrialisation under the New Order created an 'urban and suburban underclass' available for mobilisation – not as a class-conscious proletariat – but as members of an Islamic *ummah* (2006: 52). Such mobilisation was facilitated by the rapid expansion of social welfare and educational activities undertaken by a variety of Islamic organisations through their vast networks of mosques and boarding schools – even as political Islam's place in the New Order's system of power was ambivalent at best. Furthermore, Sidel observes the consequence of a legacy of colonial policies that privileged minority Christians and Chinese in terms of educational attainment and material conditions. To many, the relatively good fortune enjoyed by members of such minorities seemed to contrast with the poverty of the swelling 'masses'.

If the swelling 'masses' continued to be understood as being synonymous with 'Muslim', the economic growth generated under Soeharto's New Order had in fact produced a more distinctly urban Muslim middle class and bourgeoisie (Sidel 2006: 53-54), whose members also sought conduits into the New Order's vast system of patronage. But seemingly this only served to accentuate social cleavages based on class and ethnicity, as the aspirations of the newly privileged Muslims grew rapidly along with their traditional antipathy for Chinese dominance over the private sector of the Indonesian economy.

An idea prevalent in the public discourse was that, if privatisation of national companies were to take place, then control should fall to non-Chinese businesses for reasons of social justice. Soeharto also intervened in the debates through two well

publicised acts. First, he ordered the Indonesian Association of Economists (ISEI) to prove that Indonesia's economy was not based on 'free fight' liberalism but in accordance with the egalitarian ideals of the Pancasila. Second, he asked a group of top ethnic Chinese businessmen to transfer a quarter of their riches to cooperatives, so that they could be redistributed to the poor. Of course the first intervention was mainly a matter of propaganda, and the second was never meant to produce anything practical (see Chalmers and Hadiz 1997: Chapter 10). Amidst social inequalities and a rising sense of marginalisation within economically disadvantaged sections of society, neither of these moves significantly altered the widely-held perception that state elites remained in connivance with big, mainly ethnic Chinese-owned, conglomerates to deprive the common people of more of a share of the country's wealth.

The point, however, is that even through the state ideology of Pancasila, which held that classes did not exist in Indonesia, the New Order was never able ideologically to address the growing social discontent which largely stemmed from the social dislocations and marginalisations of capitalist industrialisation. Even the attempt to assuage the articulation of social grievances through Islam by the establishment of ICMI only met with partial success. Although ICMI helped to neutralise some Islamic-based opposition to the New Order, which had been brewing for years, it was not able to absorb all of political Islam into its formidable network of patronage. Those who were not absorbed would remain hostile to the New Order's brand of state authoritarianism, and in the margins of state and society. After the fall of the New Order, many of them would be among the key social agents advocating the idea of an Islamic state, largely in opposition to Western democracy and the Western capitalism that had helped to prop up Soeharto.

6. Islam and *Reformasi*: the Case of Solo

Sidel (2006) strongly suggests that the appearance of B. J. Habibie as President, following Soeharto's resignation, temporarily signalled to many of the social agents of political Islam that control over state power had now been attained. It is conceivable that many ICMI stalwarts, particularly those who had leapt onto the Habibie bandwagon in the 1990s, felt that their time had finally arrived. Nevertheless, Sidel also notes that almost as soon as apparently 'attaining' such power, the many elements within the broad category that is political Islam – even if they had temporarily aligned within the ICMI – fragmented into opposing alliances and political parties. The fragmentation was such that it is impossible to entertain the idea of a single coherent Islamic force having attained state power.

This section of the paper analyses the role played by the forces of political Islam in 'democratisation'. These forces have, by and large, remained on the fringes of state and society and many are associated today with 'radical Islam' – in the sense of a rigid adherence to the idea of an Islamic state based on Syariah and antipathy towards the democratic process that is viewed as Western or alien. The analysis focuses on the particularly interesting case of the city of Solo – also known as Surakarta – which has been a major focal point of activity of organisations widely considered to be 'radical' in the post-Soeharto period (Wildan 2007).

As mentioned above, conversions to Islam took place in Solo and its environs following the events of 1965, as people sought to escape being branded communist. In fact, the establishment of the Al Mukmin *pesantren* in Ngruki was intricately connected to a perceived need for proselytising and moral education in the area, which one leading Islamic figure describes as having been 'hedonistic' in earlier

times.¹⁹ The DDII also established itself in the area, keen morally to cleanse its formerly heathen population, many of whom were now converting to Islam.²⁰ While organised Islam has a strong presence in the city, that lasts to this day, it has still not been possible to shake off syncretic Javanese *abangan* traditions.

It is therefore more accurate to see Solo as a distinctive melting pot of different social and political traditions. Steeped in Javanese culture and history – it is the site of two revered Javanese *kraton* (palaces) – the city is also the heir to the social networks and organisations set up by the pious Muslim traders of the colonial period. The latter had a major role in the rise of the Sarekat Islam,²¹ which helped to facilitate intensive proselytising. Added to the rich cultural mix, Solo also has a not insignificant Christian minority population.

Historically Solo was a major centre of traditional, petty bourgeois economic activity, centred on the textile industry and particularly *batik* production. Its Pasar Gede and Pasar Klewer markets remain hubs of small trading activity. However, the predominantly Muslim petty bourgeoisie of Solo was already facing competition from Chinese merchants for control of local trade during the colonial period. It is commonly accepted that Sarekat Islam was founded in Solo in 1912 (see, for example, Mulyadi and Soedarmono 1999), although the legendary Javanese aristocrat, journalist, businessman and activist, Raden Mas Tirtoadisoeryo, surely played a major role in establishing a precursor in Bogor.²² At the same time, Solo was a major centre of communist activity against Dutch rule in the 1920s, thanks to the export-oriented sugar plantations around the city, and the abovementioned Muslim communist Haji Misbach not surprisingly hailed from this milieu (Mulyadi and Soedarmono 1999: 25-27).

During the period of rapid industrialisation under the New Order, Solo and its surroundings became a significant site of light manufacturing production, triggering the growth of a new, urban working class. The rise of this industry was to be dominated by Chinese business interests (Mulyadi and Soedarmono 1999: 258-259), as well as those connected with New Order state officials. In May 1998, when anti-Chinese riots rocked Jakarta, they also hit Solo, revealing local racial tensions that were relatively easy to mobilise in the uncertainty that characterised the end of Soeharto's rule. The frenzy in Solo spilled over into the destruction of property known to belong to Harmoko, the widely-derided, long-time Soeharto-era Minister of Information and later Speaker of Parliament, who owned a major share in PT Sritex, a prominent textile manufacturer in the city.

It is worth noting that many actors within the old Darul Islam networks were not closely associated with ICMI and state collaboration in the late Soeharto period. Such actors included those ensconced at the Al Mukmin *pesantren* at Ngruki, on the outskirts of Solo. This is in spite of the oft-related story of how Adi Sasono, then a close lieutenant of B. J. Habibie, had failed to assuage Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, as late as 1998/1999 – apparently as part of the mobilisation of support from the broader Islamic community for the continually besieged Habibie Presidency.²³

¹⁹ Interview: Ustad Taufik Usman 2007.

²⁰ Interview: Sudirman Marsudi 2007.

²¹ Interview: Soedarmono 2007.

²² The novels of the late, great, Pramoedya Ananta Toer (especially his famous 'Buru Quartet' of works, written whilst imprisoned for about a dozen years without trial by the New Order for his Leftist sympathies) provide a fascinating, if fictionalised, account of the life, times and struggles of Tirtoadisoeryo.

²³ See, for example, interview: Hari Mulyadi 2007.

Also less associated with the path of state collaboration are the groups that would later drive the establishment of such organisations as the FKAM (Forum Komunikasi Aktivis Masjid; Communications Forum for Mosque Activists) in Solo in the early post-Soeharto period. Like many similar organisations, FKAM would initiate a militia group, in this case the Lasykar Jundullah.²⁴ Thus the FPIS (Front Pemuda Islam Surakarta; Surakarta Islamic Youth Front), would give rise to the FPIS Brigade.²⁵ Yet another organisation is the Korps Hisbullah – named after an Islamic-oriented and anti-communist military unit involved in the national independence struggle in the 1940s. All of these groups emerged during the short-lived Habibie Presidency and its immediate aftermath, when there was a general atmosphere of mobilising to safeguard the *ummah*.

They have subsequently attained prominence, in part through their vocal activities in promoting public morality. Techniques include ‘sweeping’: actions designed to force the closure of entertainment venues like pubs, cafes, massage parlours and the like.²⁶ An illustration of the way in which such organisations became increasingly anti-American during the ‘War on Terror’ is the involvement of the FKAM and Korps Hisbullah in a ‘sweeping’ exercise directed at Americans staying at local hotels, meant as a protest against American foreign policy.²⁷

It is useful at this point to consider the social backgrounds of the leading figures of these organisations that have by and large remained on the outer fringes of state and society. First of all, what stands out is that few are able to claim much of a role in politics prior to the fall of Soeharto. They were neither prominent in the opposition nor key actors in ICMI, the main vehicle through which Soeharto attempted to mend fences with organised Islam in the latter period of his rule.

The leader of the FPIS, for example, was not an activist of any kind prior to 1998, but was instead a school teacher with civil servant status. The leader of the FKAM, also a former school teacher, had moved into a range of small businesses involving textiles, contracting and printing, but had not been involved in any serious political or organisational activities by the time the New Order ended.²⁸ The leader of the Korps Hisbullah – who essentially heads a break-away unit from the similarly-named militia force of the Islamic-oriented party, Bulan Bintang – is a one-time head of the PPP’s security force in the Surakarta region, and activist of the HMI in the 1980s. However, he had had little involvement in politics between his student days and 1997, when he had a role in the brief ‘Mega-Bintang’ movement in Solo.²⁹ This was an attempted alliance, forged by local PPP leader Moedrick Sangidoe, between the followers of his party and that of Megawati Soekarnoputri, who lacked an electoral vehicle to contest the last of the rigidly controlled parliamentary elections of the Soeharto era.³⁰ It is also of interest that none of these actors has received formal religious training in *pesantren*, although they came from devoutly Muslim, and anti-communist, families.

²⁴ Interview: Kalono 2007.

²⁵ Interview: Warsito Adnan 2007.

²⁶ Although this strategy was later eschewed by the FPIS, perhaps because of the bad publicity it generated; interview: Warsito Adnan 2007.

²⁷ Interview: Yanni Rusmanto 2007.

²⁸ Interviews: Warsito Adnan 2007; Kalono 2007. Warsito Adnan remains employed as the headmaster of a secondary school.

²⁹ Interview: Yanni Rusmanto 2007.

³⁰ Interview: Moedrick Sangidoe 2007.

In other words, none of these individuals was important enough to be co-opted by the state before 1998, nor had they taken a leading role in society-based opposition movements. Until recently, few would have had the credentials to represent themselves as leaders of political Islam. Even in the case of Al Mukmin, rightly or wrongly regarded as a bastion of consistently staunch criticism of the New Order, its top officials insist that since the departure of Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir to Malaysia to escape imprisonment during the period of New Order repression in the 1980s (Sungkar died in 'exile'), it has been an educational institution³¹ without a political role.³²

So far away from the action were today's 'radical Islamists' at the end of the Soeharto era that they were essentially bystanders in this important moment in recent Indonesian history. This is the case even though Solo, alongside Jakarta, was a focal point for anti-Soeharto protests in 1998. It is no surprise that one Solo-based academic and NGO figure describes those now involved in radical Islamic organisations as having 'laid low' during the entirety of the anti-Soeharto struggles.³³ Moedrick Sangidoe, who was politically ostracised after his 'Mega-Bintang' efforts near the end of the New Order, asks with some disdain where the lasykar were 'when we fought the Javanese Pharaoh' – a sarcastic reference to Soeharto.³⁴

There are exceptions to this rule, however. Also prominent in radical of Islam are the individuals who would form the Majelis Mujahidin (MMI) – which spawned yet another militia group, the Lasykar Mujahidin. Based mainly in nearby Yogyakarta, not Solo, the Majelis Mujahidin is also closely linked to Abubakar Ba'asyir and was formed out of a congress held in Yogyakarta in August 2000, which was attended by about 1500 individuals.³⁵ According to Van Bruinessen, the organisation 'appears to be a front of various groups that all have some relation with the Darul Islam underground'; he also points out that 'its chief organizer', one Irfan S. Awwas, used to publish 'a series of semi-clandestine bulletins in Yogyakarta...' in the early 1980s (Van Bruinessen 2002: 146).

In contrast to other organisations, the MMI is notable for its partial embrace of a number of Soeharto-era dissidents. For example, its secretary general Sobarin Syakur served seven and a half years in prison for alleged subversive activities in the 1980s relating to the establishment of an Islamic state.³⁶ But prior to 1998, there appears to have been a long period when the initiators of the MMI were not paid much attention to by authorities, whether in terms of being the subject of repressive policy or beneficiaries of substantial patronage. Sobarin Syakur, for example, who speaks well of ICMI and considers the short Habibie period to have been helpful to Muslim aspirations, was only marginally involved in the organisation.³⁷

That those associated with 'radical' Islam today remained 'out in the cold' even towards the end of the New Order does not mean that they remained so because they were necessarily the most overtly 'radical' representatives of Islamic politics.

³¹ Interviews: Ustad Wahyudin 2007; Ustad Taufik Usman 2007.

³² Outsiders suggest that the most radical followers of the charismatic Sungkar, in particular, had broken with the present Al Mukmin administration in the mid-1990s and had formed their own educational institutions, from which it may be possible to detect a stronger JI trail. See, for example, interview: Sudirman Marsudi 2007.

³³ Interview: Hari Mulyadi 2007.

³⁴ Interview: Moedrick Sangidoe 2007.

³⁵ Interview: Sobarin Syakur 2007.

³⁶ Interview: Sobarin Syakur 2007.

³⁷ Interview: Sobarin Syakur 2007.

The leaders of an organisation called KISDI (Indonesian Committee for Islamic World Solidarity), for example, supported Soeharto until the very end and were later in the forefront of the mobilisation efforts to 'save' the Habibie Presidency from the advocates of 'total reform', who saw the former loyal Soeharto aide as merely an extension of the New Order. KISDI was established with close links to members of the Soeharto family, although a number of its key members had been former New Order critics prior to the establishment of ICMI. In fact, the distinction between KISDI and the groups that remained on the fringes was not primarily ideological, but lay in their different proximity and access to centres of resources and power.

It was at this time of mobilisation that a host of Islamic-oriented militia groups began to appear on the political landscape. During 'the tense days of November 1998', when 'the MPR, Indonesia's super-parliament, convened in an extraordinary session' Van Bruinessen (2002: 141) notes that the military 'recruited over 100,000 civilians, many of them affiliated with radical Muslim groups, as auxiliary security guards', to protect the Habibie Presidency that had organised the session. The outcome of the session was to quash the demands for *reformasi total* and to provide legitimacy for a course of legalistic gradual reforms which Habibie forces hoped they could, but ultimately failed to, control.³⁸

It is also significant that 'many of the rank-and-file of these new militia-type groups', according to Van Bruinessen, had not 'been active in Muslim organisations before' but tended to belong to the large reservoir of irregularly employed 'street toughs' (Van Bruinessen 2002: 140) who are prominent in many major Indonesian towns and cities. Brown and Wilson (2007), with some justification, characterise such paramilitaries as vehicles where 'criminals meet fanatics'. A Solo-based social scientist conjectures that many members of such groupings are involved in extorting money from the cafe and nightclub owners they threaten with closure.³⁹ Among the more notorious organisations that have actively opposed 'dens of immorality', such as massage parlours and places that sell alcohol, has been the Front Pembela Islam (FPI; Islamic Defence Front). This high-profile organisation was established in Jakarta with the support of top military officers, reportedly including General Wiranto himself.⁴⁰ In 2008, the FPI was embroiled in controversy when it attacked a peaceful demonstration being held in Jakarta by opponents of a proposed 'anti-pornography law', which included clauses potentially restricting women in such matters as dress and appearance.

In Solo today, Islamic militia groups compete for control over the city with rivals that prominently include the PDIP *satgas* (task force or militia). Although it would be an

³⁸ Complicated political maneuverings – involving dissent from within his own Golkar political base – resulted in his ousting from the Presidency in late 1999.

³⁹ Interview: Soedarmono 2007.

⁴⁰ Echoing widely held opinion, Van Bruinessen (2002: 148) described the FPI as:

more like a racket of mobs for hire than a genuine Islamic movement...The rank-and-file appear to be mostly poor and of low education, from the circles where *habaib* [from Jakarta's (sayyid) community] are held in great respect, and one of the functions of the FPI's activities appears to be to give these *habaib* some leverage with the political elite. The FPI carried out raids on bars and brothels but also held political demonstrations, one of them calling for reinstatement of the Jakarta Charter. They also ransacked the offices of the National Human Rights Commission, which they felt had not been objective in its investigation of the Tanjung Priok massacre (where the army had shot hundreds of Muslim demonstrators). The FPI also threatened actions against Americans in Indonesia in retaliation for the assault on Afghanistan.

exaggeration to suggest that the competition is especially bloody, violent clashes have taken place in recent years. Perhaps the most dramatic one occurred in 1999 when the PDIP fought with the Hisbullah after Megawati Soekarnoputri failed to win the Presidency that year: this was widely seen to be the result of the efforts of an Islamic-oriented anti-Megawati bloc in the national parliament.⁴¹ In another infamous case in 2001, violence broke out between Lasykar Jihad and Hisbullah members on the one hand, and various toughs employed by the politically well-connected owner of Café 2000 – then a popular night spot – as well as some local security forces, on the other.⁴² The Islamic paramilitary organisations had demanded the closure of the cafe because it was allegedly a den of vice.

The dynamics of these developments in Solo may be applied more generally. It is evident that the politicisation of Islam took place in the context of broad processes of socio-economic change, beginning in the colonial period but accelerated during the period of rapid economic development under the New Order. Moreover, the presence of strong, local Islamic social organisations has resulted from the eradication of Leftist elements from civil society following the tumult of 1965-1966. This is so even if Islamic paramilitary groups today still have to vie for supremacy with a host of rival *satgas*, some of whom are associated with more 'secular-nationalist' political tendencies – especially the PDIP's militia forces. It is also useful to note that the strategies employed by New Order elites around Soeharto's fall in 1998 undoubtedly helped to re-activate a host of vehicles that have come to represent 'radicalism', including those based on networks that had been marginalised by the New Order policy of suppressing Islamic forces.

7. Concluding Observations

It is instructive, first of all, that when New Order elites were faced with their most serious crisis ever in 1998, they partly staved off society-based demands for wide-ranging political reforms by utilising an Islamic bulwark. This was a similar strategy to those historically employed by elites in the Middle East and North Africa, in deflecting attacks directed against the way that wealth and power was fundamentally distributed. This was the case in spite of the longstanding absence of a coherent Left in Indonesia. In other words, Cold War era strategies remained useful in insulating the status quo from potentially serious societal challenges up to only a decade ago.

Second, the kinds of Islamic groups and organisations that can be broadly classified as being 'radical' remain, for the most part, on the fringes of post-authoritarian Indonesian state and society and are relative political outsiders. This is the case even today, notwithstanding the close connections which they have forged with some factions of the political and military elites, often for reasons of exigency. In this sense, Sidel (2006) is correct when he concludes that violent radicalism coming from within sections of political Islam shows weakness and desperation, rather than strength and confidence. This marginalisation is indicated in the disgust often expressed by the social agents of radical Islam with the obvious failure of ostensibly Islamic political parties to articulate what they consider to be the common interest of the Muslim community. The predilection of these parties for mutual competition is usually seen by radicals to have resulted in the fragmentation and weakening of the *ummah*.⁴³ While this may be true, the expression of such sentiments displays quite clearly how

⁴¹ Interview: Yanni Rusmanto 2007. In this clash, he claims that one PDIP militia member was decapitated.

⁴² Interview: Yanni Rusmanto 2007. He claims that the proprietors of Café 2000 were connected to the incumbent then mayor and to the Kopassus, the Indonesian special forces.

⁴³ Such exasperation was most strongly expressed by Sobarin Syakur: interview 2007.

the social agents of 'radical' political Islam remain quite isolated from the political mainstream, even in the more specifically delimited space of Islamic politics.

Third, contemporary political Islam has clearly inherited significant elements of the political ideology of the early twentieth-century Muslim petty bourgeoisie, which was anxious about the survival of their material base in the face of the competition they faced in colonial society. However, the enlargement of the Indonesian proletariat and lumpen-proletariat in the course of economic development and urbanisation – as well as serious crises – has provided a new pool of potential support. This is especially so in the absence of competing ideologies appropriate for mass mobilisation – with the significant exception of relatively mild versions of Soekarnoist radical nationalism. Nevertheless, this one competitor is actually quite a formidable presence, and partly explains why political opposition in Indonesia during the New Order was not fully Islamic in nature, as had been the case in of the Middle East and North Africa at the same time.

A fourth and related observation is that political Islam in Indonesia, including in its radical forms, is not best described as being anti-capitalist in nature, although it almost always represents a kind of populist response to economic domination by foreign and/or ethnic Chinese interests. Not only have the social agents of political Islam been traditionally involved in small business activities, but given the ideological legacy inherited from Muslim organisations since the Sarekat Islam, it would not really be possible for staunch anti-capitalism to be one of their defining political markers. This is also the case for another group normally considered to be hard line, as well as particularly anti-imperialist – the Pan Islamic-oriented Hizbut Tahrir – which seems to favour a state-commanded economy within which private enterprise would be the domain of the pious.⁴⁴ This is not surprising, given that the interests of the petty bourgeoisie are frequently expressed in rhetoric about morality and the virtuous way of conducting business and state activity – and contrasted with the immorality of global capitalism or of capitalism as dominated by Chinese big business. In other words, the awaited Islamic state based on Syariah would favour the social and economic interests of the faithful, thus mirroring the expectation of Muslim activists who supported the army's anti-communist campaign in the 1960s, and who expected to be rewarded with privileges in the future social order then envisaged.

The discussion above shows the complex interweaving of a range of social and historical processes in shaping political Islam in Indonesia over time. The longstanding authoritarian, capitalist rule of the New Order – born of the Cold War – was particularly significant in providing the setting for political Islam as it exists today in its many variations, including radical ones. In this sense, Indonesia is not unique, as Cold war-based struggles, authoritarian rule and the contradictions associated with capitalist development have all been important in terms of the forging of political Islam in societies throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

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