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Indonesian Political Islam: Capitalist Development and the Legacies of the Cold War

Vedi R. Hadiz

Abstract: This article explores the genesis of Indonesian political Islam and its interactions with the nationalist secular state in the immediate post-colonial era while examining some of the origins of the 'radical' stream that has garnered much attention in the current post-authoritarian period. It puts forward the idea that, rather than an outcome of Indonesian democratisation, this stream was in fact the product of authoritarian New Order rule. The article also considers some parallels in the trajectories of political Islam more generally in Indonesia, the Middle East and North Africa, especially as a kind of populist response to the tensions and contradictions of global capitalism. It addresses the city of Surakarta (Solo) as a case study and highlights the importance of Cold War politics in moulding political Islam in Indonesia and elsewhere. The approach emphasises historical and sociological factors shaping political Islam that have tended to be relegated to the background in prevalent security-oriented analyses concerned with issues of terrorism and violence.

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Keywords: Indonesia, political Islam, Cold War politics, New Order rule

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Introduction

Political Islam is understood here as a response to issues related to inequalities of power and wealth in the modern world as conveyed through the ideals, terminology, imagery and symbolism of the Islamic religion.¹ Its evolution must be analysed as a historical and sociological phenomenon, requiring consideration of factors that tend to be relegated to the background in the majority of security-oriented analyses primarily concerned with issues of terrorism and violence (Gunaratna 2002) lately associated with ‘radical’ versions of political Islam.² Unfortunately, after 9/11 the study of political Islam has been increasingly dominated by the concerns of international security experts. These often gloss over the fact that political Islam is internally diverse and, therefore, understanding its emergence anywhere involves complex socio-historical analysis.

In the case of Indonesia, the trajectory of political Islam should be addressed in relation to a number of factors. The first of these is 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 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 the character of political Islam has been forged in relation to the outcomes and imperatives of Cold War politics. It is suggested that in spite of older genealogies (see 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.

1 An earlier version of this article appeared as CRISE Working Paper no.74, March 2010.

2 There is no consensus on what the term ‘radical Islam’ means. It often refers to projects to establish an Islamic state or caliphate, or to promulgate the Syariah as source of all laws, with or without outright violence. The term is also used loosely and interchangeably with ‘fundamentalist’ or ‘militant’ Islam.

After the World Trade Centre

Political Islam emerged as a focus of world attention after the dramatic World Trade Center attacks of September 2001. Interest in it had already been growing, however, because soon after the end of the Cold War, the governments of advanced industrial countries had displayed considerable unease with the anti-Western stance exhibited by many of political Islam's social agents around the globe. Such discomfort was reflected in the work of the influential academic Samuel Huntington (1993; 1996), who referred to Islamic civilisation as a major threat to Western civilisation and to liberal democratic values. It is no surprise that political Islam in Indonesia – a vast archipelagic country with the largest Muslim population in the world – has been under especially intense scrutiny. Moreover, Indonesia experienced considerable turbulence after the fall of Soeharto in 1998, following three decades of uninterrupted rule which began at the height of the Cold War in Southeast Asia. A flawed but astounding democratisation process has taken place since then, initially accompanied by bloody communal conflicts in places like the Moluccas, Sulawesi, and Kalimantan (Aragon 2001; van Klinken 2007; Davidson 2005). 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 attention. It was this event that brought the entity known as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), thought of as being part of a global jihadi movement led by Al Qaeda,³ into the world's consciousness.

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 an Islamic state. The related fear expressed is that the proliferation of violent 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; 2004), and persisting economic hardships.

Political developments in Indonesia have been presented as potentially detrimental to broader Southeast Asian regional security (Gelbard 2001). There has been much emphasis, therefore, on the existence of strong intra-regional links between JI and terrorist outfits across Southeast Asia. So

3 See the several security-oriented essays in the volume edited by Ramakrishna and Tan (2003). Also see several meticulously presented ICG reports, notably that of 2002 (ICG 2002).

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) are crudely lumped together with the agenda JI, which is treated as virtually a regional branch of Al Qaeda. These 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.

A sense of discomfort with the unpredictable nature of Indonesian democracy remains a strong undercurrent of many analyses. There is thus a yearning displayed for 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 'sanctioned the extremists, giving them political platforms to express their pent-up grievances' (Abuza 2003a: 17). He goes on to suggest that:

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 (Abuza 2003a: 18-19).

A related trend has been an obsession with identifying 'good' and 'bad' Muslims, with the latter alleged to be the pool from which the world's terrorists are derived. This point of view is concerned with distinguishing 'good' Muslims (Mamdani 2002: 766) from 'deviants' who use religion for unsavoury political purposes. This is reflected in analyses of Indonesia too – even those imbued with otherwise commendable historical and cultural sensitivity (Fealy 2004; Barton 2004).

Of course the Muslim community in Indonesia is too complex to divide between those who are purportedly 'good' and 'bad', 'moderate' or 'radical', whatever these labels are supposed to mean. For example, there are lingering influences of Leftist-oriented Islam, which has a long history and is today represented mostly by small student groups attracted to 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 often reported in the media. The latter are vocal in their support of both liberal democracy and, as a particularly distinguishing trait, of capitalist free markets (see <<http://islamlib.com/id>>).

Furthermore, even 'fundamentalist' Islamic politics can have a variety of expressions and thus Muslim fundamentalists obviously need not be terrorists (Mamdani 2002: 767-768). In fact many, including in Egypt – the birthplace of the Muslim Brotherhood – 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 achieved some electoral success.

The security-oriented view of recent Indonesian history is thus overly simplistic at best. Because of the propensity to equate political Islam with outbreaks of violence, it is merely viewed as the product of irrational action born of religious zeal. This risks shifting political Islam outside the domain of social analysis, and into the realm of approaches concerned with individual psychological pathologies. 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) perceives as being disconcertingly 're-orientalising'.

Any substantive effort to understand political Islam must commence, therefore, from the position that it is the product of the tensions and contradictions inherent in the contemporary world order. Even what is termed 'Islamic radicalism' is not some vestige of a pre-modern cultural anomaly (Al Azmeh 2003) that has somehow survived the ravages of the modern world, and now seeks vengeance upon it. Political Islam can be fruitfully understood through historical and sociological lenses, rather than dismissed as a manifestation of some inscrutable pre-modern 'other'.

Political Islam as Populist Response

Political Islam is treated here as a populist response to the tensions and contradictions of global capitalism. 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 political Islam in connection with issues of class transformations and the evolution of state power, these works provide insights largely ignored in the Indonesian literature. Attending to such insights, the populist response is related here to the grievances and aspirations of various sections of society, including the urban poor, whose membership has swelled with the modernisation process.

For example, Colas refers to political Islam in the Maghreb as a populist response to the social problems engendered by capitalist development, but more specifically in the phase of neo-liberal economic globalisation. He also notes how

class-based political movements have fared more poorly 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 continues to draw upon, even as it reinvents, ‘a long-standing populist tradition of anti-imperialism [...]’ (Colas 2004: 233). Significantly, this happens in the absence of a Left political stream that had been the major anti-imperialist standard-bearer because communist parties were already being suppressed throughout North Africa by the 1960s, and Leftist forces which remain live but a precarious existence. Halperin (2005) notes similar state repression of Leftist, and even merely social-democratic and liberal, elements in the Middle East, in the context of the Cold War, which were often viewed as threats to nationalist or so-called ‘Arab-socialist’ projects.

At the same time, modernising authoritarian regimes came to view Islamic forces as a useful tool in domesticating Leftist 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. Thus ‘Islamist organisations’ came to establish ‘themselves as the principal alternative to traditional nationalist, socialist and liberal organisations’ (Colas 2004: 238). One observer in Egypt has noticed even the personal and career transformations of former Leftist intellectuals into Islamic activists (Shadid 1997).

Another view is offered by Lubeck, who sees political Islam as 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 modernising projects led by the same authoritarian or corrupt state elites who had developed an interest in curbing Leftist political and redistributive tendencies typically alleged to pose threats to national unity. Significantly, loyalty to nation and community was often mediated by religious identity while simultaneously cast in opposition to Western neo-colonial intentions. However, contradictions came to emerge as political Islam eventually developed into a major vehicle, following the departure of the Left, through which dissatisfaction with entire social orders were expressed in an environment of new social dislocations.

Lubeck analyses, in particular, the effect of the 1970s international oil boom which created the impetus for the development of ‘large-scale state controlled uncompetitive industrial projects and unrealistic macroeconomic policies’. According to Lubeck, the oil boom also resulted in the intensifica-

tion of rent-seeking behaviour among state-connected elites (1998: 296-297), thereby also stimulating social animosity against rapacious state elites and cronies. Scholars of Indonesia would recognise parallels here, as the oil boom also provided the Indonesian state with windfall profits to pursue large-scale, upstream industrial projects. Many of these were ill-considered, but created 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 social criticism.

In Colas' case studies, societal contradictions sharpened particularly after the phase of state-led, resource-based industrialisation had been superseded by compliance to the dictates of neoliberal economic globalisation. Here hostility quickly emerged toward austerity measures undertaken in line with such dictates. These typically involved acquiescence to structural adjustment policies promoted by international development organisations that were widely perceived as being detrimental to the poor. In Algeria, the economically-liberalising Chedli Benjedid government (1979-1992) gave rise to a 'political-financial mafia' and 'a new capitalist *nomenklatura*' (Colas 2004: 237). On the other side of the coin, 'a highly alienated generation of Algerians epitomised in the figure of the *bittiste*' – a term describing 'young urban men who prop up walls' while 'listlessly watching life passing them by' (Colas 2004: 237-238) – became increasingly prevalent amidst declining general living conditions and worsening unemployment.

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 through civil society organisations that delivered social goods especially to those experiencing new economic hardships. The urban poor 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 envisage that a milieu emerged that was conducive to religiously-oriented activism that would help forge new solidarities and self-identities, particularly among large numbers of young, mainly urban or peri-urban people facing dire circumstances (Berman and Rose 2006). These contributed to the development of political Islam as populist response to the contradictions of neo-liberal globalisation as experienced by the populations of the sprawling cities and towns of a number of Muslim societies.

Significantly, Halperin also emphasises how anti-Left campaigns had typically expanded to suppress a range of liberal, reformist and broadly progressive elements. Halperin asserts that a long-lasting historical legacy of the Cold War is the lack of sufficiently organised Left, Centre or even mod-

erate Right-wing forces in most Middle Eastern societies today. She sees, therefore, few channels other than political Islam through which the economically marginalised can articulate their discontent. Halperin also refers to links within the religious establishment in Arab societies with traditional land-owners as well as the urban petty-bourgeoisie who feared the impact of radical redistributive coalitions on their own social positions.

There are clearly some striking parallels with recent Indonesian history. 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 destruction of the Indonesian Communist Party – then the third largest in the world – and its related organisations. 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, an authoritarian system of pre-empting the emergence of autonomous civil society-based movements then emerged. This meant that the representatives of social or liberal reformist streams suffered from the consequences of state authoritarianism as scores of intellectuals and students found themselves behind bars throughout the New Order era. The 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, selective economic liberalisation and export-led industrialisation, again supported by international development organisations, were pursued. Thus growth rates were maintained until the advent of the Asian Economic Crisis – after which more structural adjustment took place.

It is useful to recall that although the New Order's apparatus of violence was adept at crushing political opposition, and that Soeharto was usually able to point to economic achievements to help legitimise his authoritarianism, there always remained a strong undercurrent of hostility toward his rule. Eventually much of it was directed at the Soeharto family itself as well as largely ethnic-Chinese owners of giant business conglomerates (Chua 2008). The forces of political Islam in Indonesia, importantly, 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 traditions of Indonesian political Islam. These traditions were born of the anti-colonial struggles of the early twentieth century during which Islam was an

important element in the forging of Indonesia's nascent nationalism. Their main social agents were sections of the traditional petty bourgeoisie whose social position was becoming increasingly precarious within the colonial social order.

The New Order period was crucial because it saw the most distinct development of 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 main point, however, is that with the concurrent weakening of Leftist tendencies, Islam came to represent the main source of a populist critique against the prevalent model of authoritarian capitalist modernisation. The Indonesian experience, in terms of the dynamics of the relationship between the state, political Islam and the Left, is not unique.

In Iran, for example, after sporadic growth following the Bolshevik Revolution in nearby Russia, the Left almost collapsed 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 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 merged 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.

In this case, Skocpol (1982: 267) points to how the 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 large numbers. These 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 represented a direct attack on them.

Taken together, the analyses above show how the emergence of 'radical Islam' 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 towards secular nationalist state projects that are often both strongly authoritarian and corrupt. 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 modernising projects. Many 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 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 had inserted 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.

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. Furthermore, 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 viewed 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 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 remembered, furthermore, 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 early twentieth century. Political Islam was also shaped 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 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 the ‘Muslim-as-communist’ or Leftist was not yet a sociological oddity at this juncture. Muslim communists and assorted Leftists were historically important in the Dutch East Indies where social movements inspired by various forms of global Pan-Islamism, socialism or communism were simultaneously appearing as responses to the social injustices of the colonial order. Thus, the legendary Indonesian communist leader, Tan Malaka, who eventually broke with the PKI, 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, people such as Java's Haji Misbach (1925), who thought that it was not possible to be a real Muslim without being a communist, and West Sumatra's lesser known Haji Datuk Batuah (Anwar 2004), were an historical reality. It is interesting that 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).⁴ Even the anti-communist 'moderate', Haji Agus Salim, 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 advocates of social justice 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 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 it. In Indonesia's neighbour, Malaysia/Malaya, colonial and early post-colonial 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. Today, the struggles of such individuals are not strongly imprinted in the collective memory of Malaysians 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.

As we have seen, the Middle East also saw the rise of diverse 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

4 This is an autobiography written by a mid-ranking West Sumatran PKI member, Hasan Raid, who was imprisoned without trial after the demise of the communists. The autobiography can be translated as 'The Struggle of a Communist Muslim'.

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 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 social order. Because of its social and class bases, it was geared toward changes that would benefit the perennially declining petty bourgeoisie that was to face new pressures with rapid capitalist industrialisation. A new self-consciously Muslim middle class and (to a lesser extent) bourgeoisie, however, also emerged as a result of the same capitalist transformations. They would be more concerned with exercising power to reduce the economic influence of the giant conglomerates that were owned by ethnic Chinese businessmen and their families, and who enjoyed the protection of the New Order. In obvious ways, therefore, this replayed the conflict between the Muslim merchants who began to associate a century ago, partly in response to competition from Chinese rivals perceived to have been favoured by the colonial state.

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 Britain. The aim of this broad coalition was to curtail the authority of the radical-nationalist President Soekarno and to stem Indonesia's perceptible drift to the Left. For the Western powers, Soekarno was becoming a growing concern as he took up increasingly Third-Worldist and anti-Western political stances. 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 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, 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 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 by a communist takeover of state power, even if this were to be achieved only 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 courted by the West, to whom the military establishment had turned for a source of external support against the PKI.

While key bureaucrats were provided with scholarships to study for postgraduate degrees in American universities, military officers also attended training courses in the USA (Hadiz and Dhakidae 2005). They would play important roles in the consolidation of state power and the subordination of civil society throughout the New Order. 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 the PKI.

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, 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 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. The Banser, a civilian militia linked with the Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest Muslim association in Indonesia, and 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. 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 to play the lead role in the establishment of the New Order, ostensibly premised on 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, 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 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.

These contradictions ensured that the military-Islamic-Western alliance against the Left 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 were former participants in armed separatist rebellions such as the Darul Islam (DI), which had emerged in the 1940s as a reaction by some militia groups to the perceived inability of the leadership of the fledgling Republic to protect Indonesia's interests in independence negotiations with the Dutch (Van Bruinessen 2002). Though many were rehabilitated over the years, a significant number would continue to be marginalised and develop great antipathy towards the New Order. Significantly, one ICG report (2005)

identifies the genealogies of some perpetrators of recent terrorist activity within the old DI.

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 welcoming once the common enemy, the PKI, had been eliminated. Operating continually on the fringes of the formal institutions of political and social life, they would at times become subject to intense state repression. Eventually they would offer a major source of opposition to Soeharto in the 1970s and 1980s.

All this was a great disappointment to the social agents of political Islam, 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 them 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 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.

Indeed, with the help of key aides like the late General Ali Moertopo, Soeharto had been gradually developing new institutions governing state and society relations throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s. These institutions were prominently characterised by their function of demobilising non-state actors and social forces through a system of strict controls over associational activities (Robison and Hadiz 2004) and of selective co-optation.

That political 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 – in the late 1960s. The concern was that it 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 further machinations to undermine its appeal. It is instructive that the party's name did not suggest any Islamic orientation, which was surely a move calculated to reduce its Muslim credentials.

For Muslim activists, the New Order's abandonment was also seen in the apparently 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 Muslim marginalisation were such developments as the rise of CSIS (Centre for Strategic and International Studies) in the 1970s, a think tank under the direct protection of Ali Moertopo (Moertopo 1973). Within 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 large Chinese business groups. 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 the holders of state power (see Bouchier 1996).

Another key advocate of such a strategy was the elusive 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 (see Bouchier 1996). He had long been associated with the military and was part of the inner circle of the CSIS group. Though Beek's political role was always behind-the-scenes, he remains a legend among Catholic intellectuals, while veteran Muslim political figures still recall him with considerable revulsion, even though he died nearly three decades ago.

As mentioned above, an 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. 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 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.

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. 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. Also prominent among those who opposed Soeharto in the 1970s and 1980s were individuals whose political socialisation was in the networks of the Masyumi – Natsir's old party – and those of the old Darul Islam. Given the highly authoritarian context, political opposition 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.⁵

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 acquire stronger Muslim credentials to avoid being targeted as communists – such sermons were also given in mosques situated in the congested, lower-class urban neighbourhoods of Jakarta and other cities. As Raillon noted,

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. (1993: 211).

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 injustices.

This was not the only form of Islamic-oriented opposition, however, for more overtly violent reactions were also to appear. The Komando Jihad, in operation in the late 1970s and early 1980s, is depicted in New Order propaganda as an underground organisation intent on seizing power by violent means, in order to establish 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 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.

It is widely believed that Abdullah Sungkar and Abubakar Ba'asyir – allegedly the founders of Jemaah Islamiyah – had ties to the DI. Through DI networks, it is possible they also had ties to Komando Jihad. What is clear is that they were part of a broader community of Muslim leaders who had become progressively disenchanted with the New Order. The late Sungkar, in particular, was a noted fiery speaker and charismatic individual who became widely admired for not shying away from admonishing authority

5 Interview: Ustad Taufik Usman 2007.

figures.⁶ The pair founded the Al Mukmin *pesantren* in Ngruki, near Solo, Central Java, in the early 1970s, which was opened by no less a luminary than Mohammad Natsir himself. Al Mukmin subsequently gained world attention when it was named by the ICG (2002) as a focal point of Indonesian terror networks.

Nevertheless, the origins of the Komando Jihad – headed by 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. Supporting this allegation is Haji Wahyudin, a religious teacher who was imprisoned in the 1980s for supposed involvement in the related Teror Warman group. Presently the head of Al Mukmin, he now believes that Komando Jihad was created by the Moertopo clique to flush out Islamic ‘hard-liners’. 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.⁷

Given the involvement of many Muslim organisations in the decimation of the PKI, individuals such as those in Ngruki would have had reason to be concerned. Wahyudin now accepts that he and others were essentially duped by Moertopo, and that no such communist resurrection was taking place. There is much independent anecdotal, as well as written, evidence for this view. In 1982, for example, two sons of Kartosuwiryo, the 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 to recruit Muslims in a new fight against resurgent communism (Raillon 1993: 215).

Whatever the truth of the matter, tensions between the New Order and various Muslim groups reached new heights by the mid-1980s. These 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 Chinese businessmen that benefited from close association with President Soeharto. The government response was to arrest several prominent Muslim critics, 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.

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

7 Interview: Ustad Wahyudin 2007.

The infamous massacre 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 on 12 September 1984. Among those killed was the leader of the protesters, Amir Biki. Instructively, Biki was not always an opponent of the New Order. On the contrary, he previously had a notable role as a student activist who supported the military-led toppling of Soekarno, and 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.

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). Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces (1983-1988) and Minister of Defence (1988-1993), the widely feared Moerdani was another key Soeharto aide. 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 province of Lampung, Sumatra. Here security forces under his command (then as a Colonel) attacked and killed members of a *pesantren* believed to have been clandestinely attempting to resuscitate the Darul Islam movement (Van Bruinessen 1996).

The tensions between sections of political Islam and the state were also reflected in the rejection by a number of Muslim organisations 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. 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 in such a way was widely resented (see Burchier and Hadiz 2003:

Chapter 6⁸); 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,⁹ which carried an injunction for Muslims to carry out their religious duties. 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.

Such 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 and which had developed new aspirations (Ramage 1995: 7; also see Hefner 1993). 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).

Among the former category was 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.

But ICMI was more notably a playground for state bureaucrats. In 1993, a number of ICMI-related bureaucrats, including allies of Habibie such as Wardiman Djojonegoro and Haryanto Dhanutirto, 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

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

9 Interview: Sobarin Syakur 2007.

(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 Prabowo. 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:

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 (2004: 117).

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.

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 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).

As many ethnic Chinese businesses enjoyed close state connections, there was soon a discernable rise in public concern about their growing influence and with issues of socio-economic inequality. The reaction essentially merged concerns that were simultaneously class-oriented and ethno-religious in nature. The development of the conglomerates was 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.

Indonesia went through a tough period, however, as the economy contracted dramatically during the Asian Economic Crisis, which among other things swelled the ranks of its vast army of unemployed young people. It is worth recalling that, more than in any other country, the Asian Crisis would manifest itself in Indonesia both in economic and political terms, thus precipitating the unravelling of the once seemingly impregnable New Order.

It is also notable that in the months following Soeharto's resignation on 21 May 1998, thugs were organised under the aegis of a civil defence militia known as the Pam Swakarsa, backed by the military (*Tempo* 1998), to quell student demonstrators who were still demanding 'total reform'. In many ways the Pam Swakarsa was a precursor to various militias which are now found 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).

The manpower for such militias is predominantly supplied by Indonesia's underclasses. There are clear sociological reasons for this. For large sections of the rural and urban poor, there has been long 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. Due to New Order authoritarianism, what has been offered to many is Islam, with Soekarno's secular nationalism – as preserved in much milder forms by successor organisations to the old PNI – as a possible alternative. Significantly, these milder forms had coalesced in the mid-1990s into enthusiastic lower-class support for his daughter Megawati (President of Indonesia, 2001-2004). But even this did not fill the yawning gap that was left by the destruction of the PKI, one which had become more apparent as the Indonesian 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* (Sidel 2006: 52). Such mobilisation was facilitated by social welfare and educational activities undertaken by a variety of Islamic organisations through vast networks of mosques and boarding schools. 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 latter were understood as being synonymous with 'Muslim', the economic growth generated under Soeharto 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.

Soeharto made his own interventions in the early 1990s to assuage the problem 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 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, it too was not able to absorb all of political Islam into its 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 would be among the key social agents advocating an Islamic state, partly in opposition to Western democracy, but also the global capitalism that had helped to prop up Soeharto.

Islam and *Reformasi*: the Case of Solo

This section analyses the role played by the forces of political Islam in the post-Soeharto period that have largely remained on the fringes of state and society and outside of the framework of electoral democracy. Many are associated today with ‘radical Islam’ – in the sense of a rigid adherence to the idea of an Islamic state and antipathy towards the democratic process that is viewed as Western or alien. The analysis focuses on the case of Solo – also known as Surakarta – which has been a focal point of activity of organisations widely considered to be ‘radical’ in the post-Soeharto period (Wildan 2007).

As mentioned above, conversions to Islam had taken 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. The DDII also established itself in the area, to ‘morally cleanse’ the formerly heathen population.¹⁰

Nevertheless, Solo is actually a melting pot of 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.¹¹ Adding to the rich cultural mix, Solo has a significant Christian minority population.

Historically, Solo was a major centre of traditional, petty bourgeois economic activity, focussed 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 and hence their key role in the founding of Sarekat Islam in 1912 (Mulyadi and Soedarmono 1999). 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. The

10 Interview: Ustad Taufik Usman 2007. Interview: Sudirman Marsudi 2007.

11 Interview: Soedarmono 2007. Interview: Hari Mulyadi 2007.

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 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 a prominent textile manufacturer in the city.

It is this environment that gave rise to several organisations now operating outside of electoral democracy. These include the FKAM (Forum Komunikasi Aktivistis Masjid; Communications Forum for Mosque Activists), which initiated a militia group called the Lasykar Jundullah. In the same vein, the FPIS (Front Pemuda Islam Surakarta; Surakarta Islamic Youth Front), would give rise to the FPIS Brigade. 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. Other organisations, such as the local representatives of the FPI (Islamic Defenders Front), headquartered in Jakarta, are also active in Solo and its surroundings. Such groups have attained prominence, in part through their vocal activities in promoting public morality. Some techniques they use have elicited controversy, include 'sweeping': actions designed to force the closure of entertainment venues like pubs, cafes, massage parlours and the like.

It is useful at this point to consider the social backgrounds of the leading figures of this type of organisation. 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 serious political activity by the end of the New Order. The leader of the Korps Hisbullah – 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 a former HMI activist. 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. 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 highly-controlled parliamentary elections of the Soeharto era. It is also of interest that none of these actors received formal religious training in *pesantren*, although they came from devoutly Muslim, and anti-communist, families.¹² Nevertheless, many are informally connected with the community surrounding the so-called Gumuk *pesantren*, led by the influential Ustad Mudzakir, an associate of Ba'asyir and the late Sungkar (UI Haq 2008).

Not surprisingly, none of the paramilitary leaders were 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 Al Mukmin's top officials insist that since the departure of Sungkar and Ba'asyir to Malaysia to escape imprisonment in the 1980s (Sungkar died soon after returning from 'exile' in 1999), it has been an educational institution without a political role.¹³ So far away from the action were today's 'radical Islamists' that they were essentially bystanders in the events leading to Soeharto's fall. This is the case even though Solo, alongside Jakarta, was a focal point for anti-Soeharto protests. It is no surprise that one Solo-based intellectual describes those now involved in radical Islamic organisations as having 'laid low' during the entirety of the anti-Soeharto struggles.¹⁴ Moedrick Sangidoe, who was politically ostracised after his 'Mega-Bintang' effort, asks with some disdain where the *lasykar* were 'when we fought the Javanese Pharaoh' – a derisive allusion to Soeharto.¹⁵

There are exceptions to this rule, however. Also prominent is the Majelis Mujahidin (MMI) – which spawned yet another militia group, the

12 Interview: Kalono 2007. Interview: Warsito Adnan 2007. Interview: Yanni Rasmanto 2007. Interview: Moedrick Sangidoe 2007. Warsito Adnan remains employed as the headmaster of a secondary school.

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

14 Interview: Hari Mulyadi 2007.

15 Interview: Moedrick Sangidoe 2007.

Lasykar Mujahidin. Based mainly in nearby Yogyakarta, rather than Solo, the MMI was closely linked to Abubakar Ba'asyir and was formed out of a congress held in Yogyakarta in August 2000, which was attended by about 1,500 individuals.¹⁶ 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', 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.¹⁷ 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 as subjects 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 that organisation.¹⁸

That those associated with 'radical' Islam today remained 'out in the cold' towards the end of the New Order does not mean that they were necessarily the most overtly 'radical' representatives of Islamic politics. 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 Soeharto aide as merely an extension of the New Order. In fact, the distinction between KISDI and the groups that remained on the fringes was not primarily ideological, but lay in proximity and access to centres of resources and power.

It was during these mobilisations 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. The outcome of the session was to quash the demands for *reformasi total* and to provide legitimacy for a course of legalistic gradual reforms with which Habibie forces hoped they could, but ultimately failed to, ensure a favourable outcome in the 1999 presidential election.

16 Interview: Sobarin Syakur 2007.

17 Interview: Sobarin Syakur 2007.

18 Interview: Sobarin Syakur 2007.

It is also significant that ‘many of the rank-and-file of these new militia-type groups’ 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) have characterised such paramilitaries as vehicles where, in general, ‘criminals meet fanatics’.

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 the competition is not especially bloody, violent clashes have taken place. 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. 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.¹⁹ 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, Islamic organisations evolved in an environment in which Leftist elements were largely absent in 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 rivals, 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 after Soeharto’s fall undoubtedly helped to re-activate a host of vehicles that have come to represent ‘radicalism’, including those based on networks marginalised by the New Order.

19 Interview: Yanni Rusmanto 2007. In this clash, he claims that one PDIP militia member was decapitated. He also claims that the proprietors of Café 2000 were connected to the incumbent then mayor and to the Kopassus, the Indonesian special forces.

Concluding Observations

It is instructive, first of all, that when New Order elites were faced with their most serious crisis ever, 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. Such 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 notwithstanding the close connections some have forged with factions of 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 with the obvious failure of ostensibly Islamic political parties to articulate the interest of the Muslim community. The predilection of these parties for mutual competition is seen to have resulted in the fragmentation and weakening of the *ummah*. Thus, 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 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, partly explaining why political opposition in Indonesia during the New Order was not fully Islamic in nature, as had been largely the case in 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 powerful interests. Not only have the social agents

of political Islam been traditionally involved in small business activities, but given the ideological legacy inherited from times of the Sarekat Islam, staunch anti-capitalism cannot be expected to be a defining political marker. This is even reflected in a group normally considered to be hard line, as well as particularly anti-imperialist – the Pan Islamic-oriented Hizbut Tahrir – which appears to favour a state-commanded economy within which private enterprise would be the domain mainly of the pious.²⁰ Such a position in fact reflects some continuity with the era in which political Islam was largely petty bourgeoisie-dominated. Their strong rhetoric about morality and the virtuous way of conducting business and state activity – contrasted with the immorality of global capitalism or of big Chinese business, can thus be explained. In a nutshell, the awaited Islamic state 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 had expected to be rewarded with privileges.

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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