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Islamic Legal Studies Program  
Harvard Law School



ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY IN  
INDONESIA: OBSERVATIONS ON  
THE 2004 GENERAL AND  
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

by

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Occasional Publications 6  
December 2005

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 0-88086-059-6

The **Islamic Legal Studies Program** is dedicated to achieving excellence in the study of Islamic law through objective and comparative methods. It seeks to foster an atmosphere of open inquiry which embraces many perspectives, both Muslim and non-Muslim, and to promote a deep appreciation of Islamic law as one of the world's major legal systems. The main focus of work at the Program is on Islamic law in the contemporary world. This focus accommodates the many interests and disciplines that contribute to the study of Islamic law, including the study of its writings and history.

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## Preface

The Islamic Legal Studies Program at Harvard Law School was privileged to host distinguished Indonesianists Prof. *emeritus* Mitsuo Nakamura and his wife Visiting Scholar Prof. Hisako Nakamura from April 2004–April 2005. An irony of the field of Islamic Studies is that the most populous Muslim country, which is also one of the most diverse and open to accommodation of other cultures, is often neglected by the mainstream of scholars. Having the Nakamuras with us for a year, we were able to profit from their extensive knowledge of Islam in Indonesia and their countless first-hand experiences, going back to Mitsuo's first fieldwork in Kotagede, Yogyakarta in 1970–1972, when he studied the development of the Muhammadiyah movement as part of his doctoral research at Cornell University.

While at our Program, Mitsuo presented a talk on the 2004 elections in Indonesia, which he and Hisako had witnessed up close as international observers. The elections were extraordinary events: free and fair voting for only the second time in Indonesia's history,

involving 600 million ballots, 450,000 polling candidates, and more than 560,000 polling stations. Mitsuo's comments, drawing on his long experience, are very valuable, and we are happy to share them with you.

Frank E. Vogel  
*Director, Islamic Legal Studies Program*

# Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: Observations on the 2004 General and Presidential Elections

Mitsuo Nakamura

## *Introduction*

I am a cultural anthropologist specializing in the study of Islamic social movements and Muslim civil society organizations in Indonesia. Following my retirement from Chiba University in 1999, I worked for Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) for three years as a senior research advisor in the field of sovereign risk assessment of Indonesia, one of the Asian countries hard-hit by the economic crisis of 1997. The crisis brought an end to the 32 years of authoritarian rule by President Suharto. From the debris of this crisis, however, Indonesia ushered in the era of Reformasi, multi-faceted reforms which had democratization at the top of the agenda. As a JBIC researcher, I was able to travel widely and obtain first-hand information in various parts of Indonesia as to how Indonesians were coping with the crisis in the country, which had brought it to the brink of

disintegration, and how they were struggling to push the Reformasi forward. In addition to my project with JBIC, the Japanese government sent my wife Hisako and me to Indonesia as members of its international observation team to monitor the general elections of Indonesia held in June 1999 and April 2004. Then on July 5 and September 20, 2004, when direct presidential elections were held for the first time in the country's history, we had a chance to join the international observation team organized by the Asia Foundation. What follows is to a large extent based upon my own observations in the field. I will not go into technical aspects of poll watching, but will rather attempt to present my general observations on the political aspects of democratic transition in Indonesia. In so doing, I will pay special attention to the position and role of Islam and Islamic forces in the process.<sup>1</sup>

Why focus on Islam and democracy in Indonesia? The answer lies in the obvious fact that Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world—87% of its total of 220 million people are Muslim, larger than the total of Arab Muslims in the Middle East and North Africa, and also larger than any of the Muslim populations in the countries of South and Central Asia.

Geopolitically, the Indonesian archipelago occupies a strategic position on maritime routes connecting the Indian Ocean, the South China Sea, and the Pacific Ocean. It has vast natural and human resources closely tied with the global economy, as represented by its membership in OPEC. It has maintained neutrality militarily and diplomatically in international politics and has been playing a leadership role in ASEAN regionally, has often represented the Third World and the global South in the North-South dialogue, and has been a strong voice among the Muslim countries organized in OIC vis-à-vis the non-Muslim world.

I have been frequently asked questions about the process of Indonesia's democratization, as, for example, whether the democratic transition in post-Suharto Indonesia is already solid enough for it to be regarded as the third largest democracy in the world today, or whether the Indonesian case of democratization is a shining exception to what Esposito and Voll have termed "the glaring absence of democratic governments in the Muslim world."<sup>2</sup> I believe that these questions are significant since the fate of democracy in Indonesia will have a direct bearing not only on its own people but also to a great degree on other democ-

racies in the world, or more broadly on the future of humankind in its entirety.

### ***1. Review of Reformasi up to the 2004 Elections***

In order to appreciate the significance of the 2004 elections, a broad review of the achievements of Reformasi from 1998 to 2004 may be in order.<sup>3</sup> The most remarkable achievement was undoubtedly a series of constitutional amendments:

(1) The 1945 Constitution was amended four times by the MPR [Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat], the People's Consultative Assembly, between 1999 and 2002; as a result, of its 37 articles, 31 or 84% of the original articles were amended while only six remained untouched. The most important point of amendment was to eliminate the possibility of presidential dictatorship. This was not only the most popular demand of Reformasi but it also became the consensus of the members of the Assembly. In addition, a number of amendments were made with regard to the devolution of powers concentrated and accumulated in the office and person of the president over the 32 years of Suharto's reign. Significant amendments included: (a) a limit on the terms of president and vice president

to two five-year terms, to be elected by direct popular vote; (b) a move from presidential to parliamentary democracy with enhancement of the powers of the legislature and the judiciary vis-à-vis the executive by introducing the principle of separation of the three powers with various mechanisms for checks and balances among them; (c) a guarantee of basic human rights, which was phrased in almost the exact wording of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international conventions on human rights; (d) a devolution of centralized powers in Jakarta and their transference to other regions—provinces, regencies, and municipalities—with the principle of forming local councils by popular vote; and (e) a separation of the police from the armed forces and a definition of the different roles for each: internal security and maintenance of law and order for the former and defense against external threats for the latter.

(2) Prior and parallel to the constitutional amendments by the People's Consultative Assembly, a number of new related legislations were made by the DPR [Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat], or Council of People's Representatives (Parliament). These included the legislation of a series of political laws, for example, on the legislative

structure of MPR, DPR, DPRD [Provincial and Local Councils of People's Representatives], and DPD [Dewan Perwakilan Daerah, Council of Regional Representatives]; on political parties; and on elections.

Finally, a number of presidential decrees and instructions were issued by the successive presidents Habibie and Abdurrahman Wahid, to rescind or replace old ones of a repressive nature. The new ones promised freedom to form new political parties; freedom of press, mass-media, and broadcasting; freedom of association, i.e., the removal of the requirement of Pancasila<sup>4</sup> as the sole principle of any organization; guarantee of the freedom of union for workers, peasants and fishermen; assurance and enhancement of minority rights (for Chinese, Christians, and indigenous peoples); and approval of a referendum in East Timor and admission of its subsequent separation.

## ***2. The Significance of the 1999 General Elections***

These reform efforts were to a great degree legitimized and enhanced by the victory of the pro-democracy forces in the first post-Suharto general elections held in June 1999. The election results put an end to the control of an overwhelming majority of legislative seats by the

government party, Golkar, which characterized the pattern of election results during the period of Suharto's rule. The first fair and free general elections held in 45 years, since the 1955 general elections of the newly born Republic, pushed Reformasi further ahead. In the new legislature, the PDI-P, or the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, headed by Megawati Sukarnoputri, a daughter of the Republic's first president Sukarno, represented the pro-reform forces.<sup>5</sup> The party obtained an impressive 33.68% of the total votes but not a majority; the new legislature was rather characterized by a multiplicity of parties (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Results of the 1999 Parliamentary Election**

PARTY NAME	VALID VOTES	VALID VOTES %	PARLIAMENT SEATS	SEATS %
PDI-P	35,706,618	33.7	153	33.1
GOLKAR	23,742,112	22.4	120	26.0
PPP	11,330,387	10.7	58	12.6
PKB	13,336,963	12.6	51	11.0
PAN	7,528,936	7.1	34	7.4
16 Others	14,200,921	13.4	46	10.0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>105,845,937</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>100.1</b>

Source: M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1200* (Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 304.

Pro-reform forces also included two new political parties, the PKB or National Awakening Party, obtaining 12.6%, and PAN or National Mandate Party, receiving 7.1%, both organized on the basis of their respective Muslim constituencies, the former on the Nadhlatul Ulama, an organization of traditionalist ulama (Islamic scholars), mostly found in the countryside, and the latter on the Muhammadiyah, a modernist Muslim association for education and social welfare, mostly found in urban areas. Abdurrahman Wahid, a renowned democrat advocating pluralism and tolerance in Islamic terms, headed PKB and Amien Rais, a university lecturer and a long-time critic of Suharto's abuse of power and corruption, headed PAN.

The post-election MPR, then the highest decision-making body of the state, elected Amien Rais as its Chair, Wahid as president of the Republic, and Megawati as vice president. Thus, three of the highest positions in the state were represented by pro-democracy figures.

The party of the ancien régime, Golkar, lost a vast number of its supporters, but still retained the second most important position in Parliament in terms of the share of seats; the party head Akbar Tanjung succeeded

in obtaining its chairpersonship. The party also retained its majority hold in local councils in many parts of Indonesia. In addition, the newly constituted MPR and DPR were left with other remnants of the Suharto regime, i.e., the presence of appointed members of the armed forces/police faction.

This paper will not delve into the deals and manipulations among politicians, and the mobilization of the masses and regional inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts, which colored and caused the rise and fall of the three consecutive presidents and their cabinets between 1999 and 2004. Suffice it to be said that the post-Suharto era up to the eve of the 2004 general election was a period still full of contestation, competition, and conflict between pro and con Reformasi forces. In the midst of this situation Harold Crouch, a long-time Indonesia watcher from Australia, wrote:

In Indonesia it is not as if the state is trying to implement good policies but is too weak to impose its will on many powerful vested interests in society that block reform. In reality the state is weak because it itself is made up of powerful competing vested interests. The state has been penetrated by interests that are opposed to reform.<sup>6</sup>

The expression “muddle through” was coined by World Bank experts almost at the same time to depict the Indonesian situation and soon became quite popular.<sup>7</sup> As an illustration of the agonizingly slow and zigzag course of reform efforts, the expression was particularly apt. The question that was often posed was whether the coming general election and the first-ever direct presidential election would halt the muddling-through process and bring about a fresh breakthrough by constitutional means.

### ***3. How Were the 2004 Elections Performed?***

An overwhelming majority of the Indonesian electorate went to the polling booths three times within a period of six months during the 2004 year. The total number of registered voters exceeded 150 million. They voted on April 5 to elect national representatives in the DPR (the Council of People’s Representatives) and DPD (the Council of Regional Representatives), and in the local DPRD (councils) in 32 provinces and some 400 regencies<sup>8</sup> and municipalities. On July 5 they voted for their top executives, the president and vice president, from among the five pairs standing at the first round of presidential election; on September 20 they voted again to choose between the two pairs in

the second and final rounds of the presidential election.

Voting was held all over the country at approximately 580,000 locations, which were open for an average of fewer than 300 voters each. The polling stations were organized and managed by national and local general election committees (PKU) made up of approximately five million members in total. The entire election process was supervised and inspected by election oversight committees (PANWASLU), comprising a total of approximately 50,000 individuals at the regency level and up. The voting, vote counting, and tabulation were observed and monitored by more than one million voluntary domestic and international observers. A European Union election observer commented after the elections, “The Indonesian general elections of 2004 were perhaps the largest in scale, the most complicated and tiresome in terms of voting and counting, ever held in recent years in any part of the world.”<sup>9</sup>

The entire operation was for the most part “free and fair,” according to foreign as well as domestic observers. There were some reports of mistakes and irregulari-

ties but, in contrast to the elections held during the Suharto era, there was not a single incident of violence or vote rigging. Mistakes and violations were immediately amended both administratively and legally, and the newly established Constitutional Court resolved irregularities and contested vote counts within a limited time. The entire process was smooth and orderly all the way up to the official finalization of the voting results on October 5. Then, on October 20, the new president and vice president were sworn in. This fact alone seemed to be enough to suggest that democratic transition in Indonesia had entered the phase of its consolidation.

#### ***4. Who Won the Parliamentary Elections?***

As in the 1999 elections, no one party obtained a clear majority. Indonesian politics has continued to be defined by a multi-party system. Out of 24 political parties qualified to participate in the parliamentary elections, 17 secured seats; among these, seven obtained a significantly larger share of seats. These seven are as follows:

**Table 2. Results of the 2004 Parliamentary Election**

PARTY NAME	VALID VOTES	VALID VOTES %	PARLIAMENT SEATS	SEATS %
GOLKAR	24,480,757	21.58	128	23.27
PDI-P	21,026,629	18.53	109	19.82
PPP	9,248,764	8.05	58	10.55
DEMOKRAT	8,455,225	7.45	57	10.36
PAN	7,303,324	6.44	52	9.45
PKB	11,989,564	10.57	52	9.45
PKS	8,325,020	7.34	45	8.18
PBR	2,764,998	2.44	13	2.36
PDS	2,414,254	2.13	12	2.18
PBB	2,970,487	2.62	11	2.00
14 Others	14,483,392	12.76	13	2.36
<b>Totals</b>	<b>113,462,414</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: PKU (General Election Committee) / MK (Constitutional Court).

The old party of Golkar, which had been the backbone of the Suharto authoritarian regime, occupied first place, having received the largest share, 21.58%, of the total valid votes. The party had tried to get rid of its negative image by changing its leadership nationally as well as locally, and frequently showed professional sophistication in facilitating parliamentary consensus

on reform-oriented legislation. It certainly survived its worst days and has re-established its position in post-Suharto politics. It has apparently succeeded in stopping the trend of a drastic fall in its popularity, which began taking place at the beginning of the Reformasi era.

PDI-P, headed by the incumbent president Megawati Sukarnoputri and winner of the previous general election of 1999 with 33.67% of the votes, fell to second place after Golkar in 2004; with 18.53% of the votes, it lost nearly 40% of the voters who supported the party previously. This was clearly the expression of popular dissatisfaction with the “muddle through” situation. Golkar and PDI-P, however, have maintained the position of the “big two” in the new parliament.

Five political parties are clustered in the next group of “medium-sized parties”: PKB (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, or National Awakening Party), PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, or United Development Party), PAN (Partai Amanat Nasional, or National Mandate Party), Partai Demokrat (Democrat Party), and PKS (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, or Prosperous Justice Party). Three of these, PKB, PPP, and PAN, were old, in the sense that they had participated in the previ-

ous 1999 election, and two were new—the Democrat Party was formed two years before the 2004 election and PKS was the successor of PK (Partai Keadilan, or Justice Party; it changed its name so as to participate in the 2004 election as a new party). The older three parties, all of them Islamic or Muslim-based parties, lost some of their previous supporters to the rising Islamist party PKS in different degrees. The brand new Democrat Party, which was later to become the party supporting the victorious presidential candidate Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, emerged at the expense of the old parties, PPP and PDI-P in particular.

### ***5. Islamic and Muslim-based Political Parties in the Reformasi Era***

As for the Islamic and Muslim-based political parties that emerged in the Reformasi era, they were helped in large part by the political freedom proclaimed by President Habibie in August 1998, which gave impetus to the birth of new political parties in general. The lifting of the ban on Islam as the foundation for a political party meant the green light for Islamic or Muslim-based parties. The emergence of Islamic parties is without doubt a distinctive feature of Reformasi politics. Two American scholars of Islamic politics,

John Esposito and John Voll, commented already in 1996 in their book *Islam and Democracy* on the phenomenon of the resurgence of Islam and the demand for democratization going hand in hand as “the most important developments of the final decades of the twentieth century.”<sup>10</sup> The Reformasi politics of Indonesia seem to have proved them right.

Interestingly, these Islamic or Muslim-based parties in Indonesia did not speak with a single voice. They differed among themselves about important matters such as the amendment of the constitution. In fact, only the PPP and the smaller PBB proposed inserting a clause demanding the application of Shari‘a law for Muslims, a demand taken as the revival of the so-called Jakarta Charter, which was once a part of the draft constitution at the beginning of the Republic.<sup>11</sup> When it came to an actual debate in the Assembly, however, their proposal did not survive a session in a committee meeting and was soon overwhelmed by opposition coming from in and outside the Assembly. Not only the secular Golkar and PDI-P, but the two newly formed Muslim-based parties of PKB and PAN also rejected firmly the move to revive the Islamic state controversy in the Assembly. They took the stand that

the national consensus of Pancasila, the five principles of Faith in One Supreme God, Humanism, Nationalism, Democracy, and Social Justice, should be continued as the state foundation. Thus, alongside all the significant amendments in the constitution mentioned above, its preamble containing Pancasila and Article 29 guaranteeing the freedom of religious belief and practice were both left intact throughout the debates on the constitutional amendment.<sup>12</sup>

### ***6. The Presidential Race: A Contest between Forces for the Status Quo and Change***

As mentioned above, no single party performed well enough in the 2004 general election to be able to put forward its own candidate as a sure winner in the upcoming first round of the presidential election. The first round of the presidential election was thus regarded as a survival game for a run-off election. First, Golkar, in a strange turn, chose as its candidate former Armed Forces Commander General Wiranto over the official party head, Akbar Tanjung. With the disqualification of Wahid as the PKB's presidential candidate for medical reasons, Wiranto chose Salahuddin Wahid, a younger brother of Abdurrahman, as his running mate in anticipation of PKB/NU sup-

port for his team. PDI-P had no choice but to field Megawati as its presidential candidate because of all the advantages arising from her incumbency as president. Because of the absence of Abdurrahman Wahid in the race, Megawati and her strategists intended to attract the NU voters by nominating Hasyim Muzadi, the head of NU, as her partner, which caused further internal splits among the NU and PKB circles. Amien Rais, who had been aiming at the presidency for a long time, wanted to find a sure vote-winner as his running mate and settled with the secular nationalist Siswono Yudo Husodo, the leader of the national farmers' association.

The dark horse was Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, or SBY, the incumbent minister of politics and security affairs. Although the newly emerged Democrat Party, which nominated him as presidential candidate, received only 7% of the votes cast during the general election, his personal popularity was rapidly rising in contrast to the other candidates. His campaigners made significant inroads among the electorate from the bureaucracy, military, business, urban middle-class, and on campuses. He chose as his running mate Jusuf Kalla, or JK, a fellow cabinet member in charge of

social welfare affairs and a successful businessman with extensive personal as well as business networks in Eastern Indonesia. The final pair, Hamzah Haz and Agum Gumlar, was not regarded as serious candidates.

The results of the first round of voting held on July 5 did not produce a winner, which required 50% plus 1 of valid votes (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Results of the First Round of Presidential Election by Candidates**

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES	VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES	VOTES	PERCENTAGE
Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono	Muhammad Jusuf Kalla	39,838,184	33.57
Megawati Sukarnoputri	Hasyim Muzadi	31,569,104	26.61
Wiranto	Salahuddin Wahid	26,286,788	22.15
Amien Rais	Siswono Yudo Husodo	17,392,931	14.66
Hamzah Haz	Agum Gumelar	3,569,881	3.01
<b>Total Votes</b>		<b>118,656,888</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: PKU (General Election Committee) / MK (Constitutional Court)

SBY-JK had received the largest number of votes, but the margin between them and the percentage voting for Megawati-Hasyim was not decisive. To decide the winning pair, a run-off election was needed. The final outcome would depend upon the choice of those voters who had voted for the three pairs of unsuccessful candidates. A strategist of the PDI-P met his counterpart from Golkar and struck an agreement to form a grand alliance between these two big parties and jointly organize the campaign for the Megawati-Hasyim ticket. Hasyim and his aides from the original campaign team also agreed that they would form an alliance with Golkar so as to join the post-election government if successful. A sizeable segment of NU's central leadership joined the Megawati-Hasyim campaign in spite of the fact that a majority of PKB, the party officially set up as the political instrument of NU, favored SBY.

All in all, Megawati's name, Golkar's voting machine, and NU's huge membership, often claimed as 40 million, seemed to assure the victory of the Megawati-Hasyim ticket. But, as is now well known, SBY-JK won over Megawati-Hasyim by 60 to 40% (see Table 4).

**Table 4. Results of the Second Round of Presidential Election by Candidates**

PAIR OF CANDIDATES	VOTES	PERCENTAGE
Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono/ Muhammad Jusuf Kalla	69,266,350	60.62
Megawati Sukarnoputri/ Hasyim Muzadi	44,990,704	39.38
<b>Valid Votes</b>	<b>114,257,054</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: KPU (General Election Committee)

Analysts viewed this outcome as being the expression of popular expectation for a change of the status quo under the firm leadership of a pious general (SBY) and a successful businessman (JK), whose position was much stronger than that of Megawati-Hasyim, who had attempted to defend the meager achievements of Megawati's presidency. A majority of the electorate was certainly dissatisfied with the increasing corruption, which they witnessed daily, and the inefficiency of government in combating it. The fact that all the conservative forces had gathered together behind the Megawati-Hasyim pair also alienated many of the electorate wishing for the further advancement of reform.<sup>13</sup>

### ***7. The New President and Vice President***

The new president SBY was born in 1949 into a pious Muslim family from a small town in the countryside of East Java. His mother came from a religious teacher's family at Pesantren Tremas, one of the most prestigious institutions in East Java with a long connection to ulama networks in the Middle East.<sup>14</sup> His father, a low-ranking military officer who died young, once studied at the famous modernist madrasa, Gontor. SBY thus grew up in an Islamic environment espousing natural reverence for ulama and one's parents. Every time SBY makes an important decision or faces a challenge, he goes to his mother and asks for her advice, consent, and blessing. He also consults frequently with ulama. He was a distinguished student soldier at Armed Forces Academy, winning a number of medals of excellence. He graduated from the Academy *adhi makayasa* (the equivalent of magna cum laude), and worked for several years as an assistant to the governor of the Academy, whose daughter he married. He was sent by the Army to various places in the U.S. to study on several occasions, and obtained a master's degree in management from Webster University in Missouri. He was also sent to Bosnia as commander of the U.N. team of peace observers. He is a hard worker, and

recently earned a Ph.D. in agricultural economics from Bogor Institute of Agriculture in the final days of the election campaign. During his military career he specialized as a political officer in charge of socio-political affairs. He was a moderate reformer of the so-called “double function doctrine” of the military, advocating its altered approach of “not to control but to participate in the national affairs.”<sup>15</sup> He was first appointed as Mining and Energy Minister in the Wahid cabinet and later transferred to Politics and Security Affairs Minister. He ceased to be an active military officer then, turning full-time to politics.

In Megawati’s cabinet, he was appointed to the position of Politics and Security Affairs Minister, but experienced difficulty in working with Megawati who was too close to the active military. In 2002, the Democrat Party was established by a group of SBY’s ex-military colleagues and subordinates and a number of intellectuals. The founder party head was an anthropology professor at the University of Indonesia. SBY’s wife sat as one of the vice chairpersons of the Party. Finally, SBY quit the cabinet in early 2004 to run for the presidency on the Democrat Party ticket.

The Democrat Party's presidential campaign relied heavily on the organization of "voluntary posts" of nationwide networks. SBY and JK also made frequent appeals to public opinion via TV campaign coverage. They made skillful use of TV news reportage in addition to commercial spots. The public received favorably their performance in presidential debates on TV in the style of the U.S. presidential election. SBY's call for change and his anti-corruption stance under firm soldierly leadership and discipline made a convincing impression upon the electorate.

His running mate, JK (b. 1942), brought in the element of national/indigenous business people in the private sector to their campaign forces. In addition, his East Indonesian networks via Golkar and the OB networks of HMI (Muslim Student Union) helped the team greatly. His reputation as a successful peacemaker in the bloody ethno-religious conflicts in Maluku and Poso helped inform his image as well. The result was a handsome victory for the SBY-JK team.<sup>16</sup>

### ***8. Prospects for Islam and Democracy in Contemporary Indonesia***

Among the Islamic or Muslim-based political parties, PKB and PAN are the most influential in terms of their real powers inside as well as outside the Parliament. The Islamist PKS is a rising star, but its position seems to be more significant as an indicator of the popular mood vis-à-vis the government. They reflect popular dissatisfaction with the status quo. However, its continuous growth as a parliamentary force remains to be observed. PPP seems to be already a spent force.

It is evident that the compatibility of Islam and democracy is no longer a theoretical matter but a practical challenge in contemporary Indonesia. As stated above, Islamization and democratization have marched hand in hand under the leadership of Muslim democrats for many years. This movement has faced the difficult task of effectively combining and coordinating “the demand for both Islamic authenticity and popular democratic participation.”<sup>17</sup> The danger of becoming part of the establishment in the name of Islamization and then forced to compromise on democratic principles, as, e.g., the guarantee of non-Muslim minority rights, has always been present.

The example of ICMI in the early 1990s is a reflection of this danger.<sup>18</sup> ICMI (Ikatan Cedekiawan Islam Se-Indonesia), or Muslim Intellectuals Society of Indonesia, was established in 1991 on the initiative of Bacharuddin J. Habibie, then the state minister of research and technology, with his mentor Suharto's explicit blessing. Against the social background of an emerging highly educated urban middle class in search of a Muslim identity, the organization grew rapidly as a bandwagon for Muslim intellectuals supporting, in effect, Suharto's "Islamic turn."<sup>19</sup> In its early days Abdurrahman Wahid was almost the sole voice warning against the double-edged danger of Islamization heightening Muslim communalism, leading to antagonism with other religious communities, and the undue legitimatization of the establishment in the name of Islam. In response to ICMI, he deliberately set up a counter organization, Democratic Forum, with a number of non-Muslim colleagues.<sup>20</sup> Although small in size, this forum kept up a barrage of warnings to the public against the danger of undemocratic religious communalism throughout the final period of Suharto's rule, up to the beginning of the Reformasi. Then Wahid established PKB, the National Wakening Party, and many of his non-Muslim colleagues from the Democratic Forum joined it. For Wahid and PKB, anti-communalism

is one of the foremost principles of their politics.

Equally, in a less ideological but more dramatic manner, another Islamic leader, Amien Rais, the head of Muhammadiyah, formed and led MARA (Majelis Amanat Rakyat, or Council of the People's Mandate) as a broad organization that included almost all of the anti-Suharto forces towards the end of his reign. Amien Rais planned to lead a giant demonstration of one million people on May 20, 1998 in the capital, but he called it off knowing of Suharto's imminent resignation from the presidency as well as the real danger of military provocation, another Tienanmien. After the fall of Suharto, he formed PAN, the National Mandate Party, with many of his MARA comrades, including non-Muslims. The Muhammadiyah provided the core of its national constituency, but PAN has maintained its openness towards non-Muslim members.<sup>21</sup>

The presence of these two Muslim-based but non-communal political parties seems to provide eloquent evidence of Islam and democracy being indeed compatible. They will be an effective block on the Muslim side against the growth of any tendency leading to religious communalism.

### ***9. The Islamist Parties and Muslim “Uncivil” Society***

The first Islamist party to deserve mention is PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, or United Development Party), which revealed its true color as Islamist in the Reformasi era. It has been and will be playing identity politics for some time. It still holds the loyalty of a large cadre nationwide, but the top leaders, including Hamzah Haz, are ageing, and there is no prospect of a new generation rising up to replace them. The likelihood is that in the next several years it will dwindle to a small number of loyalists like the present PBB has.

The PBB (Partai Bulan Bintang, or Crescent and Star Party) is also playing Muslim identity politics as the successor to the grand old Masyumi Party from the 1950s. The Party “inherited” the symbol of the Masyumi, i.e., the Crescent and Star. It is attempting to bring in elements of Shari‘a law into government via its strong influence in the Department of Justice and Human Rights. Its cadre is presently involved in the preparation of a draft National Penal Code by the Department, in which elements of Islamic law may be included. For example, adultery may become punishable for the first time in the Republic’s legal history. But parliamentary approval is not assured.

As for the rise of PKS (Partai Keadilan Sejahterah, or Prosperous Justice Party), the party is primarily the child of the Islamization process of Indonesian society, which has been progressing on college campuses in particular since the 1980s. The party's recent upsurge is remarkable and requires our attention.<sup>22</sup> The elements of its name, justice and welfare, are both derived from Islamic values. The influence of the thought and practice of the Muslim Brotherhood in its Egyptian original form is obvious in the party's program and the style of its activities. The party is non-violent and quietist, made up of disciplined, well-educated middle-class individuals as its cadre. It has been receiving enthusiastic support from young urbanites, especially from young women. Its party activists are dedicated to social welfare activities among the urban poor. In the recent tsunami disaster, for example, PKS volunteers were the first to arrive in Aceh. Its popularity shot up in the 2004 elections mainly because of its sharp criticism of the continued corruption of government officials and politicians. The phenomenon seems to have been a counterweight to the "muddle through" situation of Reformasi. The party will, however, have to decide sooner or later on its future direction in relation to the well-established Nadhlatul Ulama and

Muhammadiyah in terms of doctrines and organizational strategies.

In passing, mention should also be made of what Robert Hefner has called “uncivil” society, i.e., groups of “Islamist paramilitaries/militia,” some of which are engaged in terrorism.<sup>23</sup> They include FPI, or Islamic Defenders Front, a group of fanatic urban poor youths, led by an “Arab” Indonesian,<sup>24</sup> and sponsored and utilized by certain elements of the military to counter the advance of Reformasi movement via street fights. They have lent themselves to anti-American-Jewish campaigns, but more recently have quieted down, perhaps because of the prospect of rapprochement between the militaries of the U.S. and Indonesia.

Another is Laskar Jihad, or the Militia of Jihad, a Yogyakarta-based, well-trained, well-armed, and very well-funded group led by another Arab Indonesian. It sent its members to Afghanistan and Pakistan in the 1990s to engage in actual fighting. It was well connected in and financially assisted by the Jakarta military elite, and, since early 2000, has sent its fighters to Maluku to fight Christian militia. After the Bali bombings in October 2002, the leader distanced

himself from other militants and “returned” to educational activities.

Third and last, Laskar Mujahidin or the Militia of Jihad Fighters, a much smaller group than the above two, is the armed wing of MMI, Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia, established in August 2000. MMI is dedicated to what its members call the implementation of Islamic law and the establishment of an Islamic state. Ideologically and genealogically it is connected with earlier generations of the Darul Islam movement in Indonesia. The core element of this group was formed by two ulama of Arab Indonesian descent as early as 1973. They were persecuted by the Suharto regime, but regained their freedom after his fall. Already in the 1990s, both secretly sent several hundred militants from Java via networks of Jama‘ah Islamiyah (JI) to Afghanistan and Pakistan to assist the Afghan mujahidin fighters; in this way JI reportedly came to cooperate closely with al-Qa’ida and helped spread its networks in South-east Asia. The involvement of JI activists in the Bali bombings was beyond doubt, and perpetrators have already been tried and jailed, but their leader, Ba’syir, was spared a heavy penalty since he was regarded as being only their “spiritual leader.”<sup>25</sup>

### ***10. Concluding Remarks***

To borrow Hefner's terminology, the uncivil society groups are "minuscule" in size, but they certainly roil the domestic political stability of Indonesia and damage its external image.<sup>26</sup> However, with the deepening professionalism of the police and the strengthening of civilian control over the armed forces, a still unresolved item on the Reformasi agenda, these uncivil presences and activities in society will hopefully be contained and controlled effectively in the near future. In addition, the presence of Muslim democrats across party lines in and outside government, which has been more accentuated by the 2004 elections, will hopefully contribute to the enhancement of democratic civility among the public, which is one of the surest guarantees for the growth of democracy. It is also expected that the ongoing persuasion and education provided by democratically-oriented Muslim civil organizations will in the long term be able to contain and minimize the growth of violent Islamist tendencies among the youth. Progress on this front is still sporadic, but there seem to be signs of a growing synergy between democratic actors in Muslim civil society organizations and "democratic partners in the state and among the country's fractious political parties"<sup>27</sup> in the post-2004

election situation. In this regard, knowing Muslim civil society organizations in Indonesia so well and for such a long time, I am fundamentally optimistic about the future development of parallelism between Islam and democracy.

## Appendix

### A List of Major Political Parties in Indonesia

**PDI-P** (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan, or Democratic Party of Indonesia of Struggle): A secular nationalist party under the leadership of Megawati Sukarnoputri, fifth president of Indonesia, daughter of Sukarno, the first president of the Republic.

**Partai Golkar** (Golkar Party): Formerly an alliance of “functional groups” (civil servant associations, farmer cooperatives, worker unions, military, and police families associations, etc.) formed to mobilize popular votes for the legitimization of the Suharto regime through general elections held every five years from 1971 to 1997, every time “winning” the majority of votes.

**PKB** (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, or National Awakening Party): An NU—the largest traditionalist Muslim organization—sponsored, Pancasila-based party, open to non-Muslims, headed by Abdurrahman Wahid, former NU head and the fourth president of the Republic.

**PPP** (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, or United Development Party): The only “Islamic” party sanctioned by Suharto, formed by the fusion of four Islamic parties—NU, Parmusi, PSII, and Perti—in 1973.

**PAN** (Partai Amanat Nasional, or National Mandate Party): A Muhammadiyah—the largest modernist Muslim organization—sponsored, Pancasila-based party, open to non-Muslims, headed by Amien Rais, former Muhammadiyah head and the chairperson of the People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR), 1999–2004.

**PBB** (Partai Bulan Bintang, or Crescent and Star Party): The self-claimed successor to the Masyumi Party, the largest Islamic party of the early Republican era; pursuing the goal of establishing an Islamic state, it is headed by a law professor, Yusril Ihza Mahendra.

**PKS** (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, or Prosperous Justice Party, formerly PK [Partai Keadilan], or Justice Party): Formed by young Islamist intellectuals to pursue by peaceful means the establishment of the Islamic Civil Society and State (Masyarakat Madani) modeled after the Medinan society under the Prophet Muhammad’s leadership.

**PDS** (Partai Damai Sejahtera, or Prosperous Peace Party): Established in 2002 by Christian (Protestant) political activists.

**PBR** (Partai Bintang Reformasi, or Reform Star Party): A split group of PPP led by a popular Islamic preacher, Zainuddin MZ.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Samantha Knights and Hisako Nakamura, both visiting researchers at the Islamic Legal Studies Program, Harvard Law School, during my residence there in 2004-2005, for their editorial improvements to this paper.
- <sup>2</sup> John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 143.
- <sup>3</sup> For a critical overview of this period in the perspectives of political science, see Baladas Goshal, "Democratic Transition and Political Development in Post-Soeharto Indonesia," in *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 26/3 (2004), pp. 506-29. Also cf. a diplomat's basically optimistic assessment: Lex Rieffel, "Indonesia's Quiet Revolution," in *Foreign Affairs* 83/5 (September/October 2004), pp. 98-110.
- <sup>4</sup> The "Five Principles" stipulated in the 1945 Constitution as the state foundation: Faith in One Supreme God, Humanism, Nationalism, Democracy, and Social Justice.
- <sup>5</sup> For the names of major political parties and their abbreviations, see the list in the Appendix.
- <sup>6</sup> Harold Crouch, "Political Update 2002: Megawati's Holding Operation," in Edward Aspinall and Greg Fealy (eds.), *Local Power and Politics in Indonesia: Decentralization and Democratization* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003), p. 33.
- <sup>7</sup> See World Bank, *Indonesia: The Imperative for Reform* (Jakarta: World Bank, 2001), Chapter 1, p. 11.
- <sup>8</sup> A regency (*kabupaten*) is an administrative unit, between province and sub-district (*kecamatan*).
- <sup>9</sup> EUEOM (European Union Election Observation Mission to Indonesia 2004), *Final Report* ([www.id.eueom.org](http://www.id.eueom.org)).
- <sup>10</sup> John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 3.
- <sup>11</sup> The Jakarta Charter contained in the clause that guaranteed freedom of religion the seven words in Indonesian that can be translated as "with the obligation to practice Islamic law

(Shari'a) for the adherents of Islam." See Arskal Salim and Azyumardi Azra (eds.), *Shari'a and Politics in Modern Indonesia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003), p. 191, n. 19. This phrase was removed from the official version of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia upon the request of the Christian politicians at the last minute before its promulgation on August 18, 1945, the day after the Declaration of Independence.

- <sup>12</sup> The two largest Muslim civil organizations, Nadhlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, supported the MPR's decision to retain Article 29 of the Constitution. See Mohamad Atho Mudzhar, *Islam and Islamic Law in Indonesia: A Socio-Historical Approach* (Jakarta: Office of Religious Research and Development, and Training, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, 2003).
- <sup>13</sup> Anthony L. Smith, "ASEAN 10: Indonesia," in *Regional Outlook: Southeast Asia 2005–2006* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004); Yusuf Wenandi, "Lessons from the First Direct Presidential Election," in *The Jakarta Post*, October 6, 2004.
- <sup>14</sup> Leo Suryadinata, "Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono: A Retired General Turned Politician," in *Regional Outlook*, *ibid.*; Munawar Fuad Noeh, *Wajah Ke-Islam-an Ke-Bangsa-an SBY* [The Islamic and Nationalist Face of SBY] (Jakarta: eLSAKU, 2004), pp. 19–20. Also cf. "Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono: Presiden RI Pertama Pilihan Rakyat" [The First President of the Republic of Indonesia Elected by the People] and "Jusuf Kalla: Tokoh Pemulihan Ekonomi" [A Leader for Economic Recovery], *Ensiklopedi Tokoh Indonesia* [Encyclopedia of Distinguished Indonesians] ([www.tokohindonesia.com](http://www.tokohindonesia.com)).
- <sup>15</sup> See Jun Honna, *Military Politics and Democratization in Indonesia* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), especially pp. 162–66.
- <sup>16</sup> See "Jusuf Kalla: Tokoh Pemulihan Ekonomi [A Leader of Economic Recovery]," *op. cit.*
- <sup>17</sup> Esposito and Voll, *loc. cit.*
- <sup>18</sup> See Robert W. Hefner, "Islamization and Democratization

- in Indonesia,” in Robert W. Hefner and Patricia Horvatic (eds.), *Islam in the Era of Nation States: Politics and Religious Revival in Muslim Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), pp. 75-128.
- <sup>19</sup> See R. William Liddle, “The Islamic Turn in Indonesia: A Political Explanation,” in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (1996), pp. 613-34.
- <sup>20</sup> See Douglas E. Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), especially Chapter 5.
- <sup>21</sup> For an overview of Muhammadiyah and PAN vis-à-vis Reformasi, see Greg Barton, “Islam and Politics in New Indonesia,” in Jason F. Isaacson and Colin Rubenstein (eds.), *Islam in Asia: Changing Political Realities* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2002), pp. 35-47.
- <sup>22</sup> No detailed study of this party seems to have appeared except that by Ken Miichi, a Japanese political scientist, “Islamic Youth Movements in Indonesia,” in *IIAS Newsletter* (IIAS = International Institute of Asian Studies, Leiden, The Netherlands) 32 (November 2003), p. 22. Also cf. his *Indoneshia Isuramu-shugi no Yukue* [The Future of Indonesia’s Islamism] (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2004), in Japanese.
- <sup>23</sup> Robert W. Hefner, “Muslim Democrats and Islamist Violence in Post-Soeharto Indonesia,” in idem (ed.), *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 273-301.
- <sup>24</sup> The descriptive “Arab” is a self-styled term used by Indonesians who trace their ancestry back to Middle Eastern immigrants.
- <sup>25</sup> For JI and other Islamist violence in Indonesia, see a series of reports prepared by the International Crisis Group (ICG), of which the most recent is “Recycling Militants in Indonesia: Darul Islam and Australian Embassy Bombing,” in *Asia Report*, no. 92, February 22, 2005 ([www.icg.org](http://www.icg.org)).
- <sup>26</sup> Hefner, op. cit., p. 297.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.