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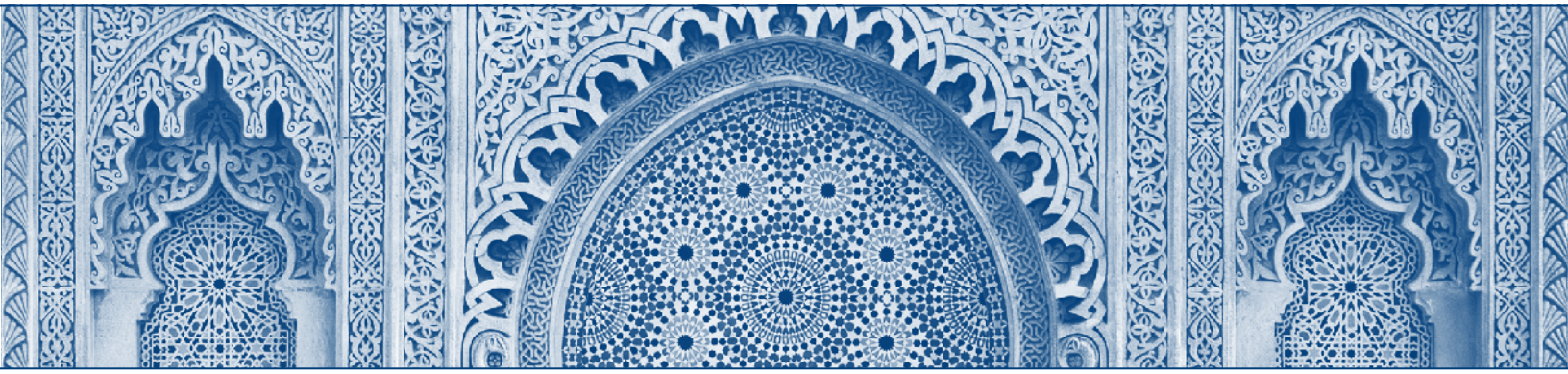

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THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AND POLITICAL ISLAM IN POST-SOEHARTO INDONESIA

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary ix

Introduction 1

Political Islam in Post-Soeharto Indonesia 5

- Socio-Historical Context 5
- The Rise and Spread of RCI in Post-Soeharto Indonesia 6
- The Emergence of Progressive Liberal Islam (PLI) 11
- The Struggle Between RCI and PLI 14
- Moderate Muslims in Indonesia: Challenges and Opportunities 17

U.S. Policy and Indonesian Islam: Toward a Better Understanding Through Cooperation . 21

- Toward a U.S. Policy that Embraces Moderate Muslims 21
- Improving Mutual Understanding 21
- Public Diplomacy Needs a Good Policy 22
- Developing a New Strategy to Counter Islamic Radicalism: Dialogue with Selected Radical Conservative Muslim Leaders? 23
- Combating Terrorism 24
- Sharing Experience with Indonesia 25
- America and "The Yudhoyono Factor" 26

Conclusion and Recommendations 29

Executive Summary

To understand how U.S. policy plays into the politics of Islam in Indonesia, one should analyze it within a global context, specifically in terms of U.S. policy toward the broader Muslim world. The Indonesian response to U.S. policy is intricately tied to the Washington strategy vis-à-vis the Middle East and other Muslim countries. Indonesian Muslims share a strong solidarity with other Muslims given their long shared history, religio-political roots and ideological affinities; but they also possess a unique political culture.

Since independence in 1945, Indonesia has undertaken experiments in democracy, but has also plunged, at certain bloody junctures, into strict authoritarianism. Presently, the Indionesian political spectrum comprises radical, moderate and progressive-liberal groups. While the rise of radical conservative Islam (RCI) groups, whose agenda of imposing *shari'a* is not only controversial but also based on literal, strict and exclusive interpretations of the Koran, poses a serious challenge to Indonesia's fledgling democracy, moderate Muslims and progressive-liveral groups (PLI) provide strategic assets and partners for the U.S.

Whereas RCI groups typically feel a genuine hatred toward all American values, carry out street demonstrations, organize protests, boycott American products and engage in "anti-Americanism," moderate Muslims respect American values and are pleased to cooperate with the U.S. government and funding agencies despite being critical of U.S. foreign policy. PLI groups, on the other hand, accept and adopt some Western values, such as democracy, freedom, pluralism and gender equality and are becoming the "defenders" of these ideals as well. They strongly reject all forms of "anti-Americanism" and provide a counterbalance to RCI groups.

The shape of the U.S.-Indonesia relationship will be strongly influenced by Washington's approach to political Islam, both in Indonesia and in the wider Muslim world. Our conclusion is that the United States should continue to support progressive-liberal Islam and to embrace moderate Muslim, and that it should improve public diplomacy in the Muslim World and address the ideologies that underlie terrorism.

Introduction

To understand how U.S. policy plays into the politics of Islam in Indonesia, one should analyze it within a global context, specifically in terms of U.S. policy toward the broader Muslim world. The Indonesian response to U.S. policy is intricately tied to the Washington strategy vis-à-vis the Middle East and other Muslim countries. To be sure, Indonesian Muslims share a strong solidarity with other Muslims—especially in the Middle East—given their long shared history, religio-political roots and ideological affinities.

Still, it is important to remember that Indonesian Muslims have a unique political culture. The country's sociological makeup is noteworthy. Indonesia is a plural society: it comprises more than 17,000 islands and 400 ethnicities, encompassing various customs, religions and beliefs. It is currently the largest Muslim country in the world, with a total population of 225 million, 87.5% of which is Muslim. Despite its Muslim majority, Indonesia is not an Islamic state. The 1945 Indonesian constitution, *Undang-Undang Dasar*, is not based on *shari'a.* The state ideology is based on *Pancasila* (Five Principles), the first of which is "Belief in One Supreme God." Since 1945 there have been repeated attempts to impose *shari'a*, but each has failed.

Like Muslims in the Middle East and elsewhere, Indonesian Muslims are mostly Sunni and associated with the *Shafi'i* school of thought (*madzab)*. However, Islam followed a markedly different path in Indonesia than it did in the Middle East.[1] Islam did not come by conquest. Rather, it was spread in the 13th century by traders and preachers, the latter of whom skillfully adapted local traditions and beliefs, as well as Hinduism and Buddhism, the previously dominant religions, to Islam. Instead of pushing *shari'a* (Islamic law) on the community, the preachers of Islam or *wali* (saints), especially in Java, developed an Islamic approach by accommodating certain aspects of the existing cultures. As a result, Islam was indigenized and maintained a strong sense of pluralism.

Since independence in 1945, Indonesia has undertaken experiments in democracy, but has also plunged, at certain bloody junctures, into strict authoritarianism. The euphoria that accompanied the fall of Soeharto and his New Order regime in 1998, accompanied by real democratic reform, breathed fresh air into the debate on the compatibility of Islam and democracy in Indonesia.[2] The mushrooming of national and religious parties, which surprised foreign observers, indicates at least

[1] For an in-depth analysis of the development of Islam in Indonesia, see, T.W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, New Delhi, South Asia Book, 1995; M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since 1300-Present,* 3rd edition, Palgrave and Stanford University Press, 2001; Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, Glencoe, The Free Press, 1960.

[2] Jimmy Carter stated that the election was a significant and democratic leap for Indonesia as a predominantly Muslim country. *International Herald Tribune.* July 15, 2004.

on the surface that Indonesia has the capacity for democracy.[3] Indonesia's new openness has also been marked by a vibrant and free press. However painful this has been to certain high-ranking officials, accountability has become a new buzzword.

Most importantly, the successful 2004 presidential election, in which Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was elected, is regarded as the hallmark of democratic change in Indonesia. This election is internationally regarded as an example to be followed, especially in the Middle East where religious authoritarianism is deeply ingrained.[4] While Indonesia's success thus far may prove that Islam is compatible with democratic values, this initial experiment has nevertheless been marred by decidly undemocratic incidents. These parallel the rise of Islamic radicalism, which poses a serious challenge to Indonesia's fledgling democracy.

Indonesians themselves as well as foreign observers are keeping a watchful eye on radical conservative Islam (RCI) groups, whose agenda of imposing *shari'a* is not only controversial but also based on literal, strict and exclusive interpretations of the Koran. There is evidence that RCI leaders transform religio-political ideas from the Middle East, especially the ideology of radical *salafism*, which can be observed among groups such as *Majelis Mujahiddin Indonesia* (MMI), *Hizbut Tahrir*, *Lasykar Hizbullah*, *Lasykar Jundullah*, *Darul Islam*, *Lasykar Jihad, FPI (Front Pembela Islam-Islamic Defenders Front)* and *Ikhwanul Muslimin Hammas*.[5]

The U.S.-Indonesia bilateral relationship is deeply influenced by the growing power of RCI. The two countries have maintained a good rapport for the last six years (2001-2007). Yet in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, Indonesian Muslims have been growing disenchanted with the U.S. This is primarily a reaction to the U.S. war against terrorism, but specifically relates to President Bush's doctrine of pre-emption which led to the U.S invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Reaction to U.S. policy differs of course among various groups and even among individuals within certain groups. RCI groups typically feel a genuine hatred toward all American values. They are the ones who carry out street demonstrations, organize protests, boycott American products and otherwise engage in "anti-Americanism."[6] Meanwhile, moderate Muslims are mostly gracious to the U.S., respecting its advances in technology and education, for example. In general, moderates respect American values such as individual freedom, tolerance, materialism and democracy. Although they may be critical of U.S. foreign policy, they are not anti-American. More importantly, they express their critiques of U.S. foreign policy peacefully and do not justify the use of violence. Many moderate Muslim groups are pleased to cooperate with the U.S. government and funding agencies to improve education, *pesantren* training (Islamic boarding school), healthcare and other social services. Moderate Muslims represent the majority of Indonesian Muslims. Given their role and position in Indonesian politics, they are crucial for U.S. policymakers.

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[3] Karl Schoenberger, *Asia's vibrant new democracies were built from within, unlike Iraq.* Mercury News, posted on 4 July, 2004.

[4] For example, Freedom Institute in its 2003 survey reported that political freedom in most Muslim countries in the Middle East is troubling. *Harmoni Islam dan demokrasi (The harmony between Islam and democracy)*. *Gatra,* November 27, 2004.

[5] Salafism refers to theological and ideological underpinnings that impose pure and pristine Islam practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and the two generations that followed him (the *salafs)*. Radical salafism in this context refers to contemprary movements in Sunni Islam which demand of exclusive implementation of pure and pristine Islam practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. In this regards, they call for a return to a strict, legal, and exclusive interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunna. See, "Salafism," Creedopedia, http://www.creedopedia.com/topics/Salafism; See also, Azyumardi Azra,"Islam in Southeast Asia: Tolerance and Radicalism," paper presented at Miegunyah Public Lecture, The University of Melbourne, 6 April, 2005, pp.16-18, Azyumardi Azra, "Militant Islam Movements in Southeast Asia: Socio-Political and Historical Context," Jornal *Kultur*, Vol. 3, No.1, pp. 17-27.

[6] Alvin Z. Rubinstein and Donald E. Smith, "Anti-Americanism in the Third World," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 497*, May 1988, pp.35-45; cited by Saiful Mujani, "Anti Americanism in Contemporary Indonesia," *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2005, p.185. Furthermore, the RCI groups reject any cooperation with the U.S. government and funding agencies, considering such cooperation as harmful and against their religio-political underpinnings. Indeed, most RCI groups are committed to strict, legal, and exclusive "shari'a minded-ness," which leads to justification of the use of radical action and violence.

In addition to RCI groups and moderate Muslims, there are also the progressive-liberal Islam (PLI) groups. The rise of PLI provides a counterbalance to RCI. PLI groups have developed inclusive approaches to *shari'a*, interpreting it as a fundamental ethical value of Islam. They are deeply concerned with the substance of *shari'a* (*maqashid al shari'a*) in the sense of upholding justice (*al adalah*) as the core mission of Islam. As a result, the proponents of PLI insist that the meaning of *shari'a* is based on contextual, inclusive and pluralist paradigms. Such paradigms have led the PLI groups to accept and adopt some Western values, such as democracy, freedom, pluralism and gender equality. Consequently, they are not only familiar with American values but are becoming the "defenders" of these ideals as well. It would be a mistake for one to assume that the PLI groups do not take a critical stance toward the United States. Evidence shows that PLI groups have strongly criticized the Bush administration for its war against terrorism and its current policy in the Muslim world. However, they strongly reject all forms of "anti-Americanism." Thus, the PLI groups can be a strategic asset and partner of the U.S.

The aim of this paper is to discuss the landscape of political Islam in post-Soeharto Indonesia and its relation to Indonesian Muslims' perception of U.S. policy. In this regard, the paper will catalog the different approaches that the radical, moderate, and progressive-liberal groups have taken. Finally, this paper will discuss the future of the U.S.-Indonesia relationship and make recommendations to U.S. policymakers.

Political Islam in Post-Soeharto Indonesia

Socio-Historical Context

From the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, Soeharto was widely regarded for his repressive approach to political Islam. Himself a Javanese Muslim, Soeharto considered political Islam a serious threat that was hazardous to his power, both ideologically and politically. Consequently, Islam was seen as "political enemy number two" (after communism). This led to mutual distrust and hostility between Islamic groups and the New Order regime. Although Islamic groups had contributed to the fight against communism and the establishment of the New Order, these groups were marginalized in the political arena. In the words of M. Natsir, former Prime Minister and Chairman of Masyumi, the modernist Muslim party, the New Order regime "treated us like a cat with ringworm."[7]

There is no doubt that Soeharto's approach to Islam was too coercive in the early years of his administration. However, by the late 1980s, he began to develop the politics of accommodation, including embracing political Islam, to garner the support of Indonesian Muslims. One of the most important initiatives to institutionalize political Islam was the establishment of ICMI (*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia*, or The Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals), which was to play a significant role in the discourse on political Islam in the late New Order regime. Having succeeded in incorporating political Islam into state politics, Soeharto moved on to the politics of co-optation in the mid 1990s. In the late years of his regime, this led to a kind of state-sponsored political Islam. Consequently, the state favored neither the legal-exclusive model nor the substantive-inclusive model. Rather, it accommodated political Islam based on Soeharto's authoritarian power. In this regard, Soeharto maintained a monopoly over all potential sources of resistance or opposition to his government and power for the sake of his own political interest based on the logic of Soeharto's power and state hegemony.[8]

The conversion to state-sponsored political Islam worked because of the support and pragmatic alliance between the state and "regimist" Muslim leaders associated with KISDI (*Komite Indonesia untuk Solidaritas Dunia Islam,* The Indonesian Committee for Muslims World Solidarity), DDII (*Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia*, The Indonesian Council for Islamic Propagation), Muhammadiyah, ICMI

[7] See, Ruth McVey, "Faith as the Outsider: Islam in Indonesian Politics," in James Piscatori, ed. *Islam in the Political Process*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p.199.

[8] M. Syafi'i Anwar, *Pemikiran dan Aksi Islam Indonesia: Studi tentang Cendekiawan MUSlims Orde Baru*, 1966-1993, Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995. I discussed the political history of Soeharto's New Order Islamic Politics in my dissertation, "The State and Political Islam in Indonesia: A Study of the State Politics and Modernist Muslim Leaders' Political Behavior, 1966-1998." University of Melbourne, December 2004.

and others. However, due to the worsening economic crisis, bureaucratic corruption, state violence, and the withdrawal of critical Muslim support from the New Order regime, Soeharto's administration finally collapsed on May 21, 1998.[9]

The Rise and Spread of RCI in Post-Soeharto Indonesia

RCI groups perceive *shari'a* to be a panacea that will solve Indonesia's multi-dimensional crisis. Obviously, the agenda of imposing *shari'a* stems from a strong belief that the purpose of Indonesian society is to uphold "the law of God." Indeed, the RCI groups can be defined as having a "*shari'a* minded" orientation due to their strong commitment to *shari'a* as the solution to any human problem. What they mean by *shari'a* law is the interpretation of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) based on strict legal and formal approaches. The problem lies in the fact that such approaches tend to neglect the nature and flexibility of *fiqh* itself. More importantly, such approaches tend to promote the notion that *fiqh* is a state law. As a result, they often invite manipulation of *fiqh* for the sake of political interest, hegemony of meaning, and monopoly of religious truth.[10]

The Characteristic and Religio-Political Agenda of RCI

Given the political context behind the rise of RCI in the post-Soeharto era, it is important to observe the RCI mindset and political agenda, especially in relation to democracy. In general, there are three main characteristics.[11]

Strict, Legal, and Exclusive Shari'a Mindset. A strict and exclusive *shari'a* mindset is an obstacle to democratization, especially in Southeast Asia. The RCI groups are mostly committed to implementing a legal-exclusive approach to Islam, meaning that Islam is not only a religion but also a complete legal system. Proponents of the legal-exclusive approach to political Islam strongly believe that Islam is an integrated totality of the three "D's": *din* (religion), *dunya* (life) and *dawla* (state). Consequently, as Nazih Ayubi suggests, this paradigm is designed for application to every aspect of life, reaching from family to economy to politics. In the political realm, it obliges Muslims to establish an Islamic state.[12]

Proponents of this paradigm interpret *shari'a* as Divine Law and thus as the necessary basis of the state and its constitution. Elevating *shari'a* to the divine has altered the meaning of "returning to Islam" to "returning to *shari'a*." This paradigm implies that political sovereignty is not vested in the people but in the hands of God. Consequently, this exclusive paradigm results in the strict obligation for every Muslim to uphold *shari'a* by whatever means available. Muslims who plead for the separation of religion and politics or for the suspension of *shari'a* are judged to be against the spirit of Islam. Moreover, this paradigm appeals to Muslims to follow the example of the "ideal state" established by the Prophet Muhammad and the four successor caliphates (*khulafa ar rasyidun*). Muslims are urged not to implement Western political systems, but to struggle for the implementation of Islam as the basis of the state and *shari'a* as the basis of the constitution.[13] It can be said that this is the fundamental tenet of RCI groups.

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[9] *Ibid.* For a useful account of "regimists' Islam," see Robert W. Hefner's thoughful work, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000, pp.149-150.

[10] See M. Syafi'i Anwar, "Developing Social Fiqh: An Alternative to Counter 'Creeping Shariahization'?" Words From The Editor, *ICIP's Electronic Journal* <www.icipglobal.org>, Vol. 1. No.1, January-April 2004.

[11] For a more detailed discussion on this issue, see M. Syafi'i Anwar, "The Clash of Religio-Political Thought: The Contest Between radical-Conservative Islam and Progressive-Liberal Islam in Post-Soeharto Indonesia" in T.N. Srinivasan, *The Future of Secularism*, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp.186-253.

[12] See Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World*, London and New York: Routledge, 199, pp. 63-64; Muslim scholars who are concerned with this first paradigm are Sayyid Qutb (Egypt), Abu A'la al-Maududi, (Pakistan), Abu Hasan Ali al-Nadvi (India). For a comparative study on this paradigm, see, James P. Piscatory, *Islam in a World of Nation States*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1986; John L. Esposito, *Voice of Resurgent Islam*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983; Munawir Sjadzali, *Islam dan Tata Negara: Ajaran, Sejarah, dan Pemikiran* (Jakarta: UI Press, 1990).

[13] Muhammad Salim al'Awwa, *Fi al-nizam al siyasi li al-dawla al-Islamiyya*, Cairo: al-Maktab al-Misri al Hadith, 1983, p. 22, cited from Bassam Tibi, "The Idea of an Islamic State and the Call for the Implementation of the Shari'a," partially republished by Middle East Information Center from *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder*. Available at <http://middleeastinfo.org/article4480.html, pp.1-16>. Accessed on 6/9/2004.

RCI groups believe that Islam is a blessing for all and will only materialize when *shari'a* is applied comprehensively. They believe that human law should not side with justice and the interests of the majority, but be based on a literal understanding of the Qur'an. Anything proscribed in Qur'anic and Sunna texts, they classify as fixed and immutable; they disagree with any contextual interpretation.

Anti-Pluralism Resilience. Radical conservative Islam has a strong tendency to reject pluralism and considers such an idea offensive. Other religions are regarded as untruthful and designed either by those who have deviated from Islam or by infidels. The radical Islamist often claims that God has made a clear distinction between "Muslim" and "*kafir*." Consequently, they tend to strictly define who is friend and who is foe, making a very distinct demarcation between "us" (*minna*, in-groups) and "them" (*minhum*, out-groups). Out-groups are treated differently. Their claim of absolute truth negates not only non-Muslims but also Muslims with different religious perceptions.[14]

Gender Bias and the Reduced Roles of Women in Society. With regard to women's issues, the RCI groups adopt a conservative view. They mostly refer to literal and textual interpretations of Qur'anic verses that declare men to be leaders of women. RCI groups designate women's primary role as wives who are obliged to obey their husbands and mothers who nurture and educate their children. The public sphere is believed to belong only to men, and women are prohibited from attaining public positions. It is not surprising that radical Islamists reject the notion that women can be elected leaders of nations.[15]

Factors Driving the Rise and Spread of RCI: Structural and Cultural Crisis

By and large, there are two factors driving the rise and spread of RCI in post-Soeharto Indonesia: a structural crisis and a cultural crisis. We will turn first to the causes of the structural crisis.

Weak State. The rise and spread of RCI in post-Soeharto Indonesia suggests that the three civilian presidents, Habibie, Wahid and Megawati, had difficulties improving the condition of the country following the collapse of Soeharto's authoritarian regime. As a result, the state grew weak. During the *reformasi* era, society steered the state and gave a significant push to political change. Muslim political activists capitalized on this by expressing their own political agenda and challenging the state. Part of their agenda was to assert an Islamic political identity and implement *shari'a*.

The implications of a weak state are far-reaching. Having gained political momentum, many groups formed political parties. Muslim activists were most interested in establishing new parties. As a result, during Habibie's presidency from 1998-99, there were at least 114 parties. Of those, 40 were Islamic parties committed, at least generally speaking, to the implementation of *shari'a*.[16] During the 1999 general election process, there was a tendency for groups to reflexively invoke *shari'a* as a way to attract constituents. Islamic parties such as PPP (United Development Party) and PBB (Crescent and Star Party) demanded the re-inclusion of "Piagam Jakarta" (The Jakarta Charter) in their general election campaign. However, the result of the 1999 general election shows that of the 40 Islamic parties, fewer than 10 gained seats. Islamic parties gained 17.8 percent of

[14] See, M. Syafi'i Anwar, "Shari'a, Pluralism, and the Prospect of Democracy in –post-Soeharto Indonesia," paper presented at EU-Indonesia Day Conference on "Pluralism and Democracy: Indonesian Prespective," Brussels, December 2006, p. 24. See, also, "Islam, Radicalism, and Peace Building in Indonesia: The Analysis of Radical Movements and Their Implication for Security Development," Report of ICIP's Research Project, ICIP-Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2004.

[15] Ibid, pp.24-25.

[16] Bahtiar Effendy, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-222; Arskal Salim, *Partai Islam dan Relasi Agama-Negara*, Jakarta: PUSat Penelitian IAIN Jakarta, 1999, pp.7-12.

the seats. Defined broadly to include PKB and PAN, the Islamic parties gained 37.5 percent.[17]

Lack of Law Enforcement. Due to uncertain political conditions and the state's inability to maintain Indonesia's ongoing multi-dimensional crisis, law enforcement was too weak. Corruption was still rampant, involving not only state bureaucrats and deceitful businessmen but also a poor judicial system. The government was unable to bring offenders to justice. Worse, for political purposes, the government indirectly protected many suspected of corruption. In addition, crime rates were rising, and authorities were unable to guarantee security.

The RCI parties capitalized on this situation by promoting *shari'a* as an "alternative law." They reasoned that Indonesia's legal system, which was based on man-made secular law, was incompatible with Islamic teachings. Since RCI defines *shari'a* as the strict application of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), their agenda was to promote the practices of *hudud* (punishment by law), such as cutting off the hand of a thief, caning the body of a gambler, stoning a person to death for illicit sexual relations, etc.

Economic Turbulence. Indonesia's economy was unable to withstand the 1997 Asian economic crisis. This created serious political instability that ultimately led to the collapse of the Soeharto regime. No single president in the post-Soeharto era has since been able to overcome Indonesia's economic turbulence. As a result, many people suffered poverty and unemployment, and lacked confidence in their future.

Against this backdrop, poverty and marginalization were easily transformed into support for RCI movements. Some people, especially those in the younger generation who had trouble finding employment, were easily persuaded to join radical religious movements. These movements channeled protest against the political, economic, and social difficulties faced by Indonesia's youth, in part by exploiting religious symbols. Take for example FPI (Islamic Defenders Front) and Lasykar Jihad (self-dispersed in 2003), their members are generally comprised of the unemployed urban and rural young generation who are interested in becoming jihad paramilitaries because of the religious image and the promise of payment for the actions they are involved in.[18]

Facing the economic turbulence, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia and MMI are at the forefront in disseminating the view that Indonesia's ongoing economic crisis was due to reliance on the Western economic capitalist system. They claimed that Indonesia would never be able to solve its crisis without the implementation of an economic policy based on *shari'a*.

Hatred of U.S. Foreign Policy. Based on research conducted by ICIP (International Center for Islam and Pluralism in Indonesia) in 2005, Muslims' hatred of U.S. foreign policy is another determining factor behind the rise and spread of RCI in Indonesia. Key RCI respondents interviewed by ICIP researchers demonstrated extreme hatred of U.S. foreign policy over the past few years. They were disappointed with the U.S. and its allies for invading the sovereign Muslim countries of Afghanistan and Iraq. The invasions aroused feelings of hatred, humiliation and desire for revenge. Moreover, many Muslims believed that the U.S. has blindly defended Israel, despite the fact that Israel kills Palestinians through its occupation and acts of violence. The U.S. unfailingly rejects U.N. resolutions that would condemn Israel.[19]

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[17] The total seats gained by Islamic parties in the 1999 general election include PPP (58 seats), PBB (13 seats), PK (7 seats), PNU (5 seats), PP (1 seat), PPII Masyumi (1 seat), and PKU (1 seat). There are two parties often grouped by observers as "Islamic parties" that gained significant votes, PKB (51 seats) and PAN (34 seats). If these two parties are included, the total seats gained by Islamic parties are 172 seats or 37.5 %. However, both PKB and PAN are very reluctant to be grouped as Islamic parties. Without PKB and PAN, Islamic parties gained only 87 seats or 17.8 %. See, Bahtiar Effendy, *op.cit.*, p. 214.

[18] Robert W. Hefner, "Globalization, Governance, and The Crisis of Indonesian Islam," paper presented for Conference on *Globalization, State Capacity, and Muslim Self Determination*, University of California-Santa Cruz, March 7-9, 2002, p. 14.

[19] "Islam, Radicalism, and Peace Building: The Analysis of Radical Movements and Their Implication for Security Development Prospect," ICIP-JICA (Japan International Agency), 2004, pp. 69-71.

The RCI respondents stated that the U.S. and the West, and Jewish interests in particular, are hostile to Islam. They regard the West as having an interest in ruling Muslim economies and penetrating Muslim cultural hegemony. According to one respondent, U.S. policies are dominated by two interests. The first is ideological because Islam is regarded as an obstacle to Western values, and the second is economic. In this context, the U.S. is believed to be on a mission to Americanize the world, including the Muslim world. They also believe in Samuel Huntington's thesis regarding a "Clash of Civilizations," according to which Islam, after the fall of the Soviet Union, will be the West's next enemy.[20]

Turning now to the cultural crisis, there are several factors that explain the rise and spread of RCI groups in post-Soeharto Indonesia.

Islamic Textual Civilization. According to Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, "textual civilization" is a paradigm according to which authority—religious and sometimes otherwise—is conferred upon those who interpret Islamic texts.[21] Understanding a text merely as a text, not as a discourse, will divorce the historical context and cultural background of the text.[22] Almost all radical activists interpret the Qur'an in this way, which then produces a rigid, literal and intolerant attitude in their daily life.

Indeed, if an interpreter of the Qur'an fails to consider its sociological and historical context, the interpreter can forget what the Qur'an means beyond the text, which is to say he misses the moral and ethical guidance that is the real message of the text.[23] In Indonesia, textual interpretation is generally carried out by scripturalist or militant groups. They do not seek contextual meaning or try to implement Muhammad's message in a contemporary social situation. Instead, they claim that the meaning and agenda of Islam is clearly stated in the Qur'an and Hadith, and we need only to copy and practice it in our daily life.[24]

Identity Crisis and the Negative Perception of Globalization. Predictably, Islamic hardliners or RCI groups strongly reject globalization which, to them, promotes liberal thinking, immoral deeds, permissive society, sexual freedom and other ideas that are dangerous to religious life. Yet moderate Muslims are also conflicted. They see that globalization has brought progress and innovation in technology and communication, yet they understand this as a Western cultural invasion that leads to the dehumanization of Muslim communities.

Particularly in the context of Western hegemony, globalization has created a crisis of identity within the Muslim community. The underlying fear is that the increasing dependency of Muslim countries in the economic, communications, and cultural spheres will lead to more social fragmentation and thus weaken family ties, moral values and cultural character. Many Muslims believe that globalization will weaken national allegiance, destabilize traditional work and career orientations, and affect individual identity.[25] This unease is not just coming from Islamist or hardliner groups; it is shared by moderate Muslims as well.

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[20] See Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 22–49.

[21] Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Mafhum al-Nash Dirasat fi Ulum al-Qur'an*, (Kairo: al-Hai'ah al-Misriyyah al-'Ammah li al-Kitab, 1993), p. 11, cited from "Islam, Radicalism, and Peace Building...," p.65.

[22] Abdul Jawab Yasin, *al-Sulthah fi al-Islam: al-'Aql al-Fiqhi al-Salafi baina al-Nash wa al-Tarikh*, Beirut: al-Markaz al-Tsaqafi al-'Arabi, tt), p. 13, cited from "Islam, Radicalism, and Peace Bulding...," p.65.

[23] Bahtiar Effendy, "Agama dan Politik: Mencari Keterkaitan yang Memungkinkan antara Doktrin dan Kenyataan Empirik," in M. Din Syamsuddin, *Islam dan Politik Era Orde Baru*, (Jakarta: Logos Wacana Ilmu, 2001), p. xvii.

[24] "Islam, Radicalism, and Peace Building...," pp. 66-67. R. William Liddle, "Skripturalisme Media Dakwah: Suatu Bentuk Pemikiran dan Aksi Politik Islam di Indonesia Masa Orde Baru," in Mark R. Woodward (ed), *Jalan Baru Islam, Memetakan Paradigma Mutakhir Islam Indonesia*, ed. I, (Bandung: Mizan, 1999).

[25] Ahmad Shboul, "Islam and Globalization: Arab World Perspectives," in Virginia Hooker, ed, *Islam and the New Millennium*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004, p.56. For an interesting analysis of the impact of globalization on the Muslim world, see, Akbar Ahmed, *Journey into Islam: The Crisis of Globalization,* Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2007, pp. 4-6.

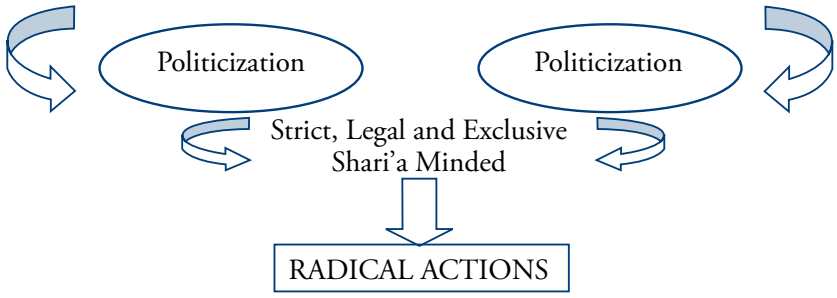
Strong Belief in Conspiracy Theories. A strong belief in conspiracy theories is a hallmark of the radical *salafi* movement and is clearly shared by most RCI groups.[26] In Indonesia, there clearly are some leading RCI figures, and even some moderates, who believe in a Western conspiracy against Islam. Based on ICIP's field research, all key informants agreed that there is an international conspiracy to hamper and paralyze Muslims' power in the world. Regardless of their radical or moderate background, those key informants had a common perspective: Islam is under threat.

Indonesia's structural and cultural crises have encouraged RCI groups to develop a process of politicization. In this context, politicization is an effort to impose *shari'a* by politically manipulating certain structural and cultural crises. In this regard, Indonesia's multi-dimensional crisis after the collapse of Soeharto's authoritarian regime can be arguably divided into two main crises: a structural crisis and a cultural crisis. The structural crisis is caused by fundamental factors that led to Indonesia's Muslims facing a weak state, lack of law enforcement, economic turbulence, and hatred of U.S. foreign policy. Cultural crisis is caused by certain aspects which emerge in response to religious, cultural, and civilizational issues such as a belief in a "conspiracy theory" that the West, especially the U.S., has a hidden agenda to destroy Islamic civilization. Obviously, the two crises are worldly and profane in nature and should be solved objectively and practically. However, the RCI groups develop propaganda saying that the source of Indonesia's ongoing crisis is due to the implementation of Western political and economic systems. This provokes Muslims in thinking that the only alternative to solve Indonesia's crisis is for a radical transformation, replacing Western political and economic systems with a strict, legal and excusive *shari'a*. As a result, such a mindset and approach would encourage the use of radical action.

The following chart shows how the ideologization of crises following a strict, legal and exclusive *shari'a*-mindedness leads to the radicalization of Islamic groups:

Factors Causing the Rise and Spread of Radical Conservative Islam in Post-Soeharto Indonesia

STRUCTURAL CRISIS	CULTURAL CRISIS
Weak State	Islamic Textual Civilization
Lack of Law Enforcement	Negative Perception of Globalization
Economic Turbulence	Crisis of Identity
Hatred of U.S. Foreign Policy	Strong Belief in Conspiracy Theory



[26] Conspiracy theories are based on pre-conceptions and assumptions and are difficult to prove or disprove. They might be called 'paranoia within reason.' The conspiracy theorist also develops what is called 'systematic distortion of information;' information is intentionally distorted so that it is difficult to be justified. The conspiracy theory is also directed towards 'terrorizing of the truth,' because it is difficult to prove.

The Emergence of Progressive Liberal Islam (PLI)

PLI as a Counter-Balance to the Spread of RCI

Although some moderate Muslim groups, such as NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) and Muhammadiyah, have developed critical views toward RCI, they clearly are unable to counter the RCI offensive. One group of young Muslim intellectuals and activists, concerned about both the conservative ideas and violent approach advocated by RCI, established *Jaringan Islam Liberal* (JIL, Liberal Islam Network) in early 2001. The JIL is basically a loose intellectual forum to discuss Islamic liberalism and provide a coherent ideological basis for book publications, syndicated columns and radio talk shows. The members of JIL are mostly young, urban, well-educated liberal Muslims who believe that the entire corpus of Islamic teachings needs to be contextually reinterpreted.[27]

Contrary to RCI's legal-exclusive approach, the JIL is committed to developing a liberal-inclusive approach to Islam. It would be a mistake to judge the emergence of PLI as a new phenomenon. Rather, it reflects the continuation of a kind of liberalism promoted by Muslim intellectuals and activists in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1960s, there was the Limited Group in Yogyakarta, and in the 1970s there was the GPPI (*Gerakan Pembaruan Pemikiran Islam*, The Renewal of Islamic Thought Movement) initiated by Nurcholish Madjid. Indonesian Muslims were shocked by the ideas of GPPI; JIL is more liberal, provocative and well-organized.[28]

It is important to note that the JIL is not the only group with a liberal-progressive approach. Other groups have also promoted Islamic liberalism, such as Paramadina, LkiS (*Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Sosial*, the Institute For Islamic and Social Studies), P3M (*Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat*, the Indonesian Society for Pesantren and Community Development), Lakpesdam (*Lembaga Kajian dan Pengembangan Sumberdaya Manusia,* the Human Resource Development and Study Institute), JIMM (*Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah,* The Young Muhammadiyah Intellectuals Network), ICIP (The International Center for Islam and Pluralism), and the like. These are generally non-government organizations (NGOs) committed to the idea of strengthening civil society by promoting the compatibility of Islam with democracy, human rights, pluralism and gender equality. They collaborate with several U.S. and Western funding agencies, and can be grouped as proponents of PLI.[29]

In its manifesto, the JIL declares it necessary to implement *ijtihad* (rational analysis and judgment of Islamic texts) in all aspects of human life. JIL believes that *ijtihad* is the main tenet that enables Islam to endure. JIL rejects a literal reading of the text and endeavors to interpret the spirit of the Qur'an and the Sunnah for a contemporary era. By using an ethical-religious interpretation, JIL believes that Islam can live and grow creatively linked to a universal "humanistic civilization." JIL is based on the notion of "truth" (in religious interpretation) as a *relative* thing, since interpretation itself is a "human activity" shackled to a particular context; as an *open* thing, since each interpretation contains an erroneous possibility; and as a *plural* thing, since each religious interpretation, in one way or another, is a reflection of the interpreter's need in a constantly changing environment.[30]

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[27] Ihsan Ali Fauzi, "Political Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: A Closer Look at Liberal Islam," *ICIP's Electronic Journal* <www.icipglobal.org>, Vol. 1 No. 2 August - Dec 2004, pp.2-3. Among the leading figures of JIL are Ulil Abshar Abdalla, Luthfi Assyaukanie, Hamid Basyaib, and Ahmad Sahal.

[28] See, Ahmad Gaus, "How Liberal Can You Go?" *Kompas,* 13 Desember 2002, republished in Dzulmanni, ed., *Islam Liberal dan Fundamental: Sebuah Pertarungan Wacana*, Yogyakarta: Elsaq Press, pp. 79-84. For a comparison, see M. Kamal Hassan, Muslims Intellectual Responses to "New Order" *Modernization in Indonesia,* Kuala Lumpur:Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1980.

[29] Most NGOs associated with the PLI groups receive partial or significant financial support from funding institutions such as The Asia Foundation, The Ford Foundaton, European Commission, UNDP (United Nation Development Program), JICA (Japan International Corporation Agency), FES (Frederick Ebert Stiftung), KAS (Konrad Afdenaur Stiftung), AusAID, and others.

[30] See the website of Liberal Islam Network, "About us," <www.islamlib.com/en/aboutus.php>.

The Substantive-Inclusive Approach of PLI: Islam as An Ethical Value

Unlike the RCI, PLI groups are more concerned with the substantive-inclusive approach to Islam as a set of ethical values. This is the fundamental tenet of PLI's political theology. They believe that Islam as a religion does not stipulate any theoretical concepts related to politics. They maintain that there is no single text in the Qur'an which calls upon Muslims to establish an Islamic state. Rather, they argue that the Qur'an contains ethical and moral guidance regarding good governance, including how to achieve justice, freedom, equality and democracy. Islam is a religion that aspires to create the most refined and ethical civilization on earth.

A key assumption of this paradigm is that the mission of the Prophet Muhammad was *not* to establish a kingdom or a state; this directly contradicts RCI's belief in an "ideal state." Rather, like other prophets, they see his mission as preaching the virtues of Islamic values. However, the Prophet Muhammad and his successors governed in the spirit and ethical framework of Islam. This does not mean that Islam as a religion is bound to the state. The concern of the Prophet Muhammad when he spread Islam was to achieve unity among followers of Islam (*al-wihda al-ijtimai*) rather than create a state.[31]

Substantive-inclusive notions of Islam assert that *shari'a* need not be bound to the state. *Shari'a* doesn't specifically address government or political systems. According to Al-Ashmawi, an Egyptian Muslim legal scholar, the Qur'an itself stipulates that *shari'a* is a source of ethical orientation and does not provide an underpinning for any sort of state.[32] Ashmawi points out that *shari'a* neither was revealed at once nor has it existed as an abstract issue. It was always related to existing realities and it drew upon prevailing traditions and customs and derived its own rules from them. It also adapted to changes in those traditions and customs. If shari'a were to be implemented today without considering the ethical values and the existing realities of the human being, it would be contradictory to the spirit of the fundamental tenet of Islam as a religion of peace (*as salam*) and the public purpose of shari'a to upholding justice (*al adalah*).[33]

Proponents of the substantive-inclusive paradigm argue that Islam provides opportunities and freedom for adherents to set up or develop a political system based on their own choice. In this regard, Western concepts such as pluralism, tolerance, equality, freedom and democracy are most welcome, provided there is an understanding that upholding justice is the public purpose of *shari'a*. Consequently, *shari'a* in the PLI model is not merely embedded in Islamic law; it is a fundamental ethical value that adapts and reconfigures to living realities. Proponents of PLI insist that the meaning of *shari'a* be based on a contextual, inclusive and pluralist paradigm. The following chart describes the substantive-inclusive approach to political Islam:

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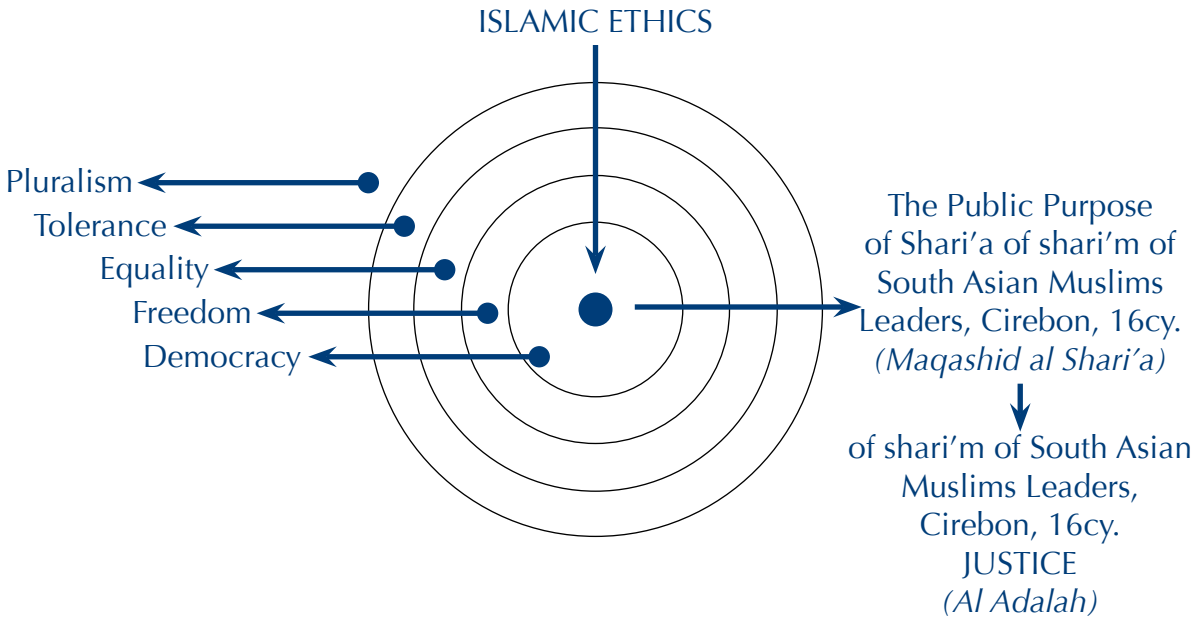
[31] Husain Fawzi al-Najjar, *al_Islam wa al-Siyasa: Bahth fi Usul al-Nazariyya al-Siyasiyya wa Nizam al-hukm fi al-Islam*, Cairo: Dar al-Sha'b, 1977, p.74, cited from Bassam Tibi, *op. cit.*, p.6. For a fuller concept of this paradigm, see, for instance, Qamaruddin Khan, *Political Concepts in the Qur'an*, Lahore: Islamic Book Foundation, 1982, pp.75-76; Fazlur Rahman, *Islam,* New York, Chicago, San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966, p.101; Mohammed Arkoun, "The Concept of Authority in Islamic Thought," in Klauss amd Mehdi Mozaffari (eds.), *Islam: State and Society*, London: Curzon Press, 1988, pp. 70-71, M. Din Syamsuddin, "Islamic Political Thought and Cultural Revival in Modern Indonesia," *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 2, No.4, 1995, pp.51-68.

[32] Al-Ashmawi, *Usul al-Shari'a*, Cairo: Maktabat Madbuli, 1983, pp.53 and 93, cited from Bassam Tibi, *op. cit.*

[33] *Ibid.*



The Main Agenda of Progressive-Liberal Islam

PLI groups are committed to the following three objectives, which are in direct opposition to RCI ideals.

The deconstruction of strict, legal and exclusive shari'a. The proponents of PLI strongly advocate the necessity to deconstruct *shari'a* based on historical study. This is to counter the perception that *shari'a* is immutable. To the proponents of PLI, imposing *shari'a* is a form of weakness that has driven wedges between Muslims and betrays a failure to solve problems using rational methods. Ulil Abshar Abdalla, Coordinator of JIL, points out that the view that *shari'a* is a "complete package," ready to use, a formula by God for solving problems in all millennia, is a form of ignorance and an inability to understand God's will itself.[34]

Zuhairi Misrawi, a P3M activist and alumnus of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, suggests that *shari'a* as a text is in fact a cultural product. It is historically constructed; hence, it cannot be untangled from its socio-cultural background. During its inception, *shari'a* was infused with the character of an early Islam that faced the political "*tauhid*" culture. Therefore *shari'a* is attached to a specific territorial, geographical, and social-political culture. Thus there emerges the idea to deconstruct the historicity of *shari'a* and to find the inclusive and plural dimensions of Islam.[35]

The promotion of pluralism. Pluralism, or *al-ta'addudiyyah*, is a fact of life. It cannot be denied that Indonesia is a plural state. Indonesia acknowledges its citizens not based on their religious beliefs but on their nationalism. Indonesia gained independence as a result of efforts by all members of the

[34] Ulil Abshar Abdalla, "Menyegarkan Kembali Pemahaman Islam," *Kompas*, 18 November 2002. This article created a long polemic and public debates between proponents and opponents of Liberal Islam. It was republished in a book entitled *Islam Liberal and Fundamental: Sebuah Pertarungan Wacana*, Yogyakarta: Elsaq Press, 2003, (p.7) edited by Dzulmanni. Former President Wahid wrote an epilogue with the title, "Ulil Abshar Abdalla dengan Liberalismenya," pp.257-262.

[35] Zuhairi Misrawi, "Dekonstruksi Shari'a: Jalan Menuju Desakralisasi, Reinterpretasi, dan Depolitisasi," *Tashwirul Afkar,* Edition No.12, 2002, p. 15-17.

nation, not only Muslims, but also non-Muslims, not only Javanese, but also non-Javanese. With this background, Indonesia does not recognize the concept of second-class citizens. Indonesian non-Muslim communities cannot be called *dzimmi* or *al-dzimmah* in the political *fiqh* of classical Islam.

Given the reality of pluralism, what is needed is a mechanism to deal with it. Mere antipathy will be counter-productive. Therefore, the PLI groups argue that nationality must be the main axis on which Indonesian Islamic law is formulated. This means that the richness of Indonesian nationality and culture should be the foundation for Islamic laws. What happens to Islam and Muslims has implications for others (*al-akhar*). Of course, this effort is not easy to apply given the tendency and continuous efforts of some groups to revive classical *fiqh*. However, in formulating Islamic laws in Indonesia one should be reminded that pluralism is, or should be, the determinant factor. Ignoring this reality will only cause the failure of Islamic laws (*miskram*).

Gender equality. Relations between men and women must be put in an equal and just context. Gender injustice is against the spirit of Islam because it marginalizes and dehumanizes women. Islam clearly states that men and women have equal status. The Qur'an does not confer superiority or inferiority on the basis of gender, but on the basis of faith. Islamic laws must be based absolutely on this principle because gender equality is the core unit in social relations. It is here that problems regarding the social construction of Islamic law emerge. The Islamic laws which we believe, understand and practice in daily life are often considered natural. Similarly, in patriarchal cultures where men are the center of power, misogynist attitudes towards women are often accepted without criticism. The reconstruction of Islamic law (*fiqh*) today should include not only the reinterpretation but also the deconstruction of ideologies binding the *fiqh*.[36]

The Struggle Between RCI and PLI

Anti-PLI Publications

The contest between RCI and PLI has carried on for four years now. It has manifested itself as a religio-political debate covered by print, electronic and other media, either affiliated with RCI or PLI. The voice of RCI is usually published in *Sabili,* one of the most radical Islamic magazines. According to surveys conducted by AC Nielsen, *Sabili*, which reaches more than 100,000 people, has the second largest circulation in Indonesia after the women's magazine, *Femina*. Other hardline Islamic magazines, less radical than *Sabili*, are *Hidayatullah* (50,000 copies) and the Islamic women's magazine *Ummi* (75,000 copies). However, ICIP's researchers have found that 3 out of 4 readers read at least one of these magazines, especially *Sabili*. *Sabili* is often used by *da'i* or *mubaligh* (preachers) to deliver sermons beyond the mosques and religious gatherings.[37]

In addition to these publications, RCI groups have been publishing and selling cheap books, as well as distributing free pamphlets and brochures. They have translated and published books written by Hassan Al Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Said Hawwa, Taqiyuddin al-Nabhani, Abul A'la Al Maududi, and others. Such publications are mostly used to publicize their ideological underpinnings and to counter the PLI. By so doing, the RCI groups hope to gain wider public support.[38]

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[36] See, Nasaruddin Umar, "Women's Liberation Theology," *Liberal Islam Network,* English Edition, 29 July 2001. For an in-depth analysis of the position of women in Islam, see, Syafiq Hasyim, *Understanding Women in Islam: An Indonesian Perspective,* Jakarta: ICIP, 2005.

[37] Agus Muhammad, "Jihad Lewat Tulisan: Kisah Sukses Majalah *Sabili* dengan Berbagai Iron," *Jurnal Pantau*, Yer II, No.015, July 2001. See: <www.pantau.ir.id/txt/15/06.html>.

[38] Hasan Al Banna, Sayyid Qutb, and Said Hawwa are prominent leaders and ideologues of Ikhwanul Muslim in Egypt. Taqiyuddin al-Nabhani is founder of *Hizbut Tahrir* in Jordan, Abul "Ala al Maududi is founder and ideologue of Jamaat Islam in Pakistan. See "Islam, Radicalism, and Peace Building…," pp.94-96.

"Death Fatwa" and Condemnation

RCI groups often use threats or violence to spread their message. This happened in 2006 when certain clerics of West Java, on behalf of the so-called FUUI (*Forum Ulama Ummat Indonesia*, The Indonesian Muslims Forum of Ulama), issued a death *fatwa* for Ulil Abshor Abdalla, coordinator of JIL. Most moderate Muslims were contemptuous of the *fatwa*. Even though some may oppose Ulil's ideas, they considered a death *fatwa* unnecessary and a challenge to freedom of expression. Moderate Muslim leaders, such as Syafi'i Maarif, former Chairman of Muhammadiyah, also strongly criticized the death *fatwa.* M. Dawam Rahardjo, a Muslim intellectual of ICMI, shares Maarif's concerns regarding the *fatwa* ordered on Ulil. Dawam fears that it could encourage someone to kill Ulil in an act of "vigilante justice."[39]

Fatwa on Prohibiting Pluralism, Secularism and Liberalism

One of the most important developments relating to Islam in Indonesia is the controversy over MUI *fatwas*. On July 28, 2005, the MUI (The Indonesian Ulama Council) issued eleven *fatwas*, the most controversial of which were the ones that condemned liberalism, secularism and pluralism. The MUI *fatwas* defined liberalism as the belief that reason is higher than the Qur'an and sunna, secularism as the belief that religion should be separate from worldly life, and pluralism as the belief that all religions are equal and the truth of each is relative. "Muslims are strongly prohibited to follow those three haram concepts, because they can trivialize the Islamic faith," said KH Ma'ruf Amin, chair of MUI's Fatwa Commission.[40]

Since the MUI issued its *fatwas*, the level of violence in the name of religion has increased. MUI claims that its *fatwas* were seriously discussed by respected *ulama* from various Islamic organizations, and were launched to liberate Muslims from any thoughts which might poison Islam. Yet this leads lay Muslims to think that such *fatwas* are religiously justified, or at least condoned by representatives of Islamic organizations. As a result, they are not assessed critically. Lay Muslims do not necessarily know that, even if a *fatwa* is issued by a noted *ulama* and is religiously justified, it still is merely a legal opinion. However, the RCI groups have capitalized on the MUI's *fatwas* to serve their own political interests. In sermons and speeches, they have convinced lay Muslims that MUI's *fatwas* are legally binding. In addition to being misleading, such information has encouraged violence.[41]

The PLI, American Values and U.S. Foreign Policy

The PLI's Appreciation of American Values

It is important to note that most proponents of PLI consider America to be a great nation that has inspired the world community toward democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and pluralism. Most PLI activists have no problem promoting these values in intellectual and public discourse and declaring them compatible with Islam. The PLI's respect for American values can be seen in their publications, trainings, seminars, research and public advocacy. PLI activists praise the U.S. for its progress in education and information, and communications technology. They admire the U.S. as a center of knowledge, acknowledging that of the 20 best universities in the world, 18 are in the U.S. They also praise the U.S. because it has produced many Nobel Prize winners. There is no doubt that the PLI's respect for the U.S. is genuine and generally positive.[42]

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[39] See, *Gatra*, 21 December 2002; see also, "Tokoh Baru, Pemain Baru," Main Report of *Panjimas* magazine on JIL and the death fatwa. *Panjimas*, 26 December 2002-8 January 2003, pp.22-27.

[40] See, "Tapal Batas Tafsir Bebas," *Gatra,* 6 August 2005, pp.75-79; "Gonjang-Ganjing Fatwa Ulama," *Tempo,* 14 August 2005, pp.110-113.

[41] See my interview, "M. Syafi'i Anwar: Pluralisme Dalam Bahaya," *Perspektif Baru* 491, 6 August 2005.

[42] As a participant observer of PLI groups, I have had private and public dialogues with the PLI's leaders and activists. Most of them are supportive of American values, and they consider the U.S. not only a superpower but also a center of knowledge and progress.

The PLI Critique of U.S. Foreign Policy

Notwithstanding the above, PLI groups are disappointed with U.S foreign policy, especially with regard to President Bush's administration and its handling of issues related to Islam and Muslim countries. In the beginning, they supported the "war against terrorism." However, after observing President Bush's mishandling of this "war," PLI proponents consider that it has gone too far and created problems in the Muslim world. They feel that U.S. anti-terrorism policy regards U.S. security as central and necessary for the maintenance of human rights throughout the world. Unfortunately, because the perpetrators of the 9/11 tragedy were Muslims, U.S. anti-terrorism policy has a tendency to foster stereotypes of Islam as a religion that promotes radicalism and violence. A highly targeted security approach, including individual measures such as profiling, can easily lead to discrimination against Muslim groups or individuals.

As a result, the war against terrorism has been interpreted by many Muslims as a war against Islam. President Bush, in a meeting with American Muslim leaders in Washington, declared the contrary, that the war on terror is not being waged as a war against Islam. PLI groups in Indonesia have also tried to publicly spread this message. Nevertheless, Indonesian Muslims' perceptions of U.S. policy remain highly negative.

Most PLI groups are critical of U.S. policy in the Middle East, especially for its unremitting support of Israel. Previously, PLI critiques were unpublished and disseminated only in very limited forums. Since last year, however, there is a new trend where PLI groups have begun to publicly criticize the U.S. They have published critiques on the Internet and even in the Indonesian national media. To give but one example, Ulil Abshor Abdalla, an Islamic scholar from Indonesia who leads the Jaringan Islamic Liberal (Liberal Islam Network), strongly and publicly criticized President Bush's policies in the Middle East. According to Ulil, the U.S.'s continuous support of Israel vis-à-vis Palestine is unfair and unjust, and has victimized the Palestinian people. He also criticized Mr. Bush's statement concerning Israel's actions to defend its rights and territory from the attack of Hezbollah as ridiculous, unfair and unacceptable.[43]

Furthermore, Ulil stated that Palestinians and Hezbollah have the right to defend their territory from Israeli attacks, and that whereas Israel has a powerful military and nuclear arsenal, the Palestinians and Hezbollah have little power by comparison. In terms of the "democracy project," Ulil argued that it has undoubtedly failed. "Let alone the U.S. is able to promote the American model of democracy in the Middle East, what is happening right now is Washington's total failure. The situation in Iraq is currently uncontrollable and yet it has created new 'terrorists' spreading in the region." Ulil expressed his feelings bluntly. "I am proud of America as a nation and civilization, as a leading country which promotes freedom values. However, I am greatly disappointed by the hypocrisy of the U.S. government in solving the Middle East issue."[44]

According to Dr. Luthfi Assyaukanie, the cofounder of the Liberal Islam Network (Jaringan Islam Liberal, JIL), it is important that the U.S. rethink its policies in the Middle East if it wants to be regarded as a great nation. "Unfortunately, America has lost its rational mind. Many critics of U.S. policy and action have always faced a great wall because Washington always puts aside those critics," Luthfi wrote. He also pointed out that U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East is distressing and will become a serious threat not only for the American people but also for democracy and human rights. He worries that U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East will create a

[43] See, "Islamlib.com/en/page.php/page.php?page=article&id=1094," July 31, 2006.
[44] *Ibid.*

deeper and unresolved crisis, and will sow seeds of hatred and anti-Americanism in the world.[45]

Even PLI groups are becoming disaffected with U.S. foreign policy, despite their appreciation for American values. U.S. policymakers should take heed since the PLI groups have the potential to counter radicalism and terrorism.

Moderate Muslims in Indonesia: Challenges and Opportunities

Current Political Position of Moderate Muslims

Considering the danger that RCI and other clandestine movements pose for Indonesia, one might hope that NU and Muhammadiyah can tackle the growing problem of radicalism. With 35 million members, NU is the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, and possibly the entire Muslim world. Ideologically, NU follows various schools of thought (*madzab*), particularly *ahlus sunnah wal jamaah*.[46] NU has two important doctrines dealing with religious issues. The first is *tawassuth* (moderate), meaning that NU is committed to avoiding radical action and using prudence when expressing opinions. The second is *tasamuh* (tolerance), meaning that NU is committed to respect for other faiths and religious beliefs. Consequently, as Hasyim Muzadi suggested, NU will avoid *tathoruf* (violence) and *irhab* (terror).[47]

The social base of NU is *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), which promote traditional and classical Islamic education under the supervision of *ulama* or *kyai*. The three mainstream schools of thought of *pesantren* are *tauhid* (theology), *fiqh* (Islamic law), and *tasawuf* (Islamic Sufism), all of which are concerned with instilling in people doing good deeds, being kind and helpful, and avoiding conflict, violence or any other destructive action.

Muhammadiyah is Indonesia's second largest Islamic organization. Established in Yogyakarta in 1912, Muhammadiyah is regarded as moderate based on the doctrine of *amar makruf nahi munkar* (upholding good deeds and avoiding bad conduct). Unlike NU, Muhammadiyah's ideology does not follow particular schools of thought; its constitution simply reaffirms fundamental tenets of Islamic doctrine, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah. Muhammadiyah's social base is mostly urban and middle class. The organization is acknowledged for its success in maintaining *dakwah* (Islamic teaching, education, health care, and other social welfare activities). In terms of education, Muhammadiyah is well-regarded for its success in combining secular systems with an Islamic orientation.[48]

These two leading Islamic organizations play a vital role in Indonesian Muslim social communities. While they are not political movements, they are regarded as pillars of civil Islam and have significant political leverage in Indonesia. NU and Muhammadiyah have also appealed to the government to take harsh measures against RCI groups that transgress the law, and they strongly condemn terrorism as a misinterpretation of *jihad* (holy war).[49]

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[45] See, Luthfi Assyaukanie, "Matinya Akal Sehat Amerika," *Kompas*, 2 August 2006.

[46] The literal meaning of *ahlu sunnah wal jamaah* is "followers of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions." However, the theological doctrine of NU refers not only to the tradition derived from the Qur'an and sunnah but also the principles and guidance of the great classical *ulama*. In terms of religious belief, NU refers to the ideas of Al Asy'ari and Al Maturidi, whose teachings have become pillars of Sunni theology. Regarding *fiqh* (Islamic law), NU refers to the Syafi'i school of thought (*madzab Syafi'i*), Syafi'i being one of four prominent ulama (Syafi'i, Maliki, Hanafi and Hambali). In terms of sufism, NU refers to the ideas of Junaid al Bagdhadi and Al-Ghazali. These two great *ulama* emphazise mystical practices based on *shari'a*. See Greg Fealy, *Ijtihad Politik Ulama: Sejarah NU 1952-1957*, Yogyakarta: LkiS:, 1998, translated by Farid Wajidi, et.al, pp.25-26.

[47] Hasyim Muzadi, "Peran Nahdlatul Ulama dalam Menghadapi Radikalisme," *Kompas*, 16 January 2004.

[48] For more detailed information on Muhammadiyah, see its website <www.muhammadiyah.or.id>.

[49] See, Azyumardi Azra, "Recent Developments in Indonesian Islam," *ICIP Electronic Journal*, Vol.1 No.1, January-April 2004, p.5.

Moderate Muslims and the Fight against Radicalism and Terrorism

It should be noted that NU's leadership is moderate or even liberal. For instance, Abdurrahman Wahid, the former chairman of NU and the former President of Indonesia, is widely regarded for his contribution to the development of an inclusive, modern and liberal theology.

Wahid pointed out that Islam strongly condemns radicalism and terrorism. He suggested two important factors behind the rise of RCI groups. First, alienation from a materialistic and pervasive Western culture has led some to violence. For these individuals, violence is considered the only way to counter Western cultural hegemony and protect Islam from a permissive and immoral Western culture.[50]

Second, according to Wahid, the rise of RCI groups is related to the trivialization of religion within the Muslim community itself, especially among the younger generation. They limit themselves to literal and textual readings and do not bother to study the various interpretations of Islamic law. Indeed, their ability to memorize Qur'anic verses and hadiths are amazing, but they lack understanding of the substance of Islamic teachings. Consequently, according to Wahid, their understanding of true Islam is weak. Interestingly, Wahid argued that such trivialization is most commonly practiced by students in the hard sciences, such as physics, medicine, engineering and the like.[51]

Like NU, Muhammadiyah strongly rejects radicalism and terrorism. Ahmad Syafi'i Maarif, a noted Muslim intellectual and former chairman of Muhammadiyah, argued that radicalism would end in disaster and suicide as it tends to avoid the wisdom and openness of religious teachings. He pointed out that the history of the prophets shows that their struggles were full of bitterness, yet they carried on with wisdom and resolve. This should remind us that radical-emotional methods lead to failure and defeat. So far, the Indonesian experience shows that religious radicalism almost always ends with bitterness and psychological trauma within the Muslim community and fear within the non-Muslim community. "Using radical and violent action in gaining the sacred purpose of religion is a form of betrayal and contaminates the sacred values of religion [*sic*]," Syafi'i wrote.[52]

Moderate Muslims' Response to Shari'a Based Bylaws. Regional autonomy was granted to all Indonesian provinces at the beginning of the reform era. To date, 53 cities and regions have implemented *shari'a*-based bylaws. Some regencies claim a dramatic drop in crime and note that their regional income has increased significantly since the laws were implemented. Still, moderate and progressive Muslim leaders warn of the implications for democratization. They argue that the poor, women and minority groups suffer under such laws.

The voice of moderate Islam in Indonesia is quite clear: it does not support *shari'a*-based bylaws. Syafi'i Maarif's column in *Republika* is instructive:

> "Why is the desire to strive for Islamic values through regional bylaws not just integrated into normal regional bylaws, not in the form of Shari'a bylaws which can weaken the pillars of social and national integration. This is very dangerous. Isn't the struggle to eradicate immorality ultimately a struggle for all groups? And all of that can be done underneath the umbrella of Pancasila (the Five Principles—Indonesia's national

[50] M. Syafi'i Anwar, ed, "Islamku, Islam Anda, Islam Kita: Membingkai Pemikiran Politik KH Abdurrahman Wahid," foreword for Abdurrahman Wahid's forthcoming book, *Islamku, Islam Anda, Islam Kita*, Jakarta: The Wahid Institute, 2005.
[51] *Ibid.*
[52] A. Syafi'i Maarif, "Radikalisme," *Pers Release Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah*, 23 January 2005, pp.1-2.

> ideology), especially the first principle (the principle of belief in the one God)… ultimately Shari'a regional bylaws will become like a boomerang. If this is the case, from a propagation (*dakwah*) point of view, this truly becomes a great disaster."

The current Muhammadiyah Committee Board has no formal position on *shari'a*-based bylaws. However, it is useful to be acquainted with the opinion of Professor Din Syamsuddin, the head of Muhammadiyah, on this issue. In a public lecture organized by the United States-Indonesia Society in Washington, April 2006, Professor Din Syamsuddin pointed out that Pancasila is the state doctrine of Indonesia. He himself opposes the adoption of *shari'a* and objects to those who equate it with criminal law. "*Shari'a* means 'path,' and it is mainly related to ethical and moral values. It does not specify what is criminal nor what punishments apply."

Meanwhile, NU has stated its formal opposition to *shari'a*-based bylaws. In NU's *ulama* conference in Surabaya last July, Sahal Mahfudz, chief of the NU lawmaking body *Syuriah*, said that the NU needs to reaffirm its commitment to Indonesia's secular traditions as a way to repress movements that would use *shari'a* as a basis for drafting legislation. Mahfudz pointed out that:

> The NU upholds pluralism in line with Pancasila as a state ideology. We oppose the implementation of shari'a-based bylaws because this will only lead to disintegration. Shari'a can be implemented without being formalized … the NU should continue to be at the forefront in campaigning for the preservation of local values.[53]

> NU chairman Hasyim Muzadi agrees, noting that "regions can make their own laws, but shari'a-based bylaws cannot be allowed…What is most important at the moment is not applying Islamic laws textually, but rather taking their essence and using them for common good."[54]

Leading figures of moderate Islamic groups clearly favor Pancasila and oppose the implementation of *shari'a*-based bylaws. The majority of Indonesians also favor Pancasila over *shari'a*. Moreover, recent field observations show that the implementation of shari'a based bylaws does not work well and people are still committed to the state ideology Pancasila. In this regard, Pancasila is believed to be the best common platform of the Indonesian society.[55]

Moderate Muslim Critiques of U.S. Foreign Policy. It is important to note that moderate Islamic groups such as NU and Muhammadiyah have been very critical of U.S. foreign policy. As previously stated, these very large moderate organizations provide a counter to Indonesia's RCI groups and should be taken seriously by U.S. policymakers. The leaders of NU and Muhammadiyah, K.H. Hasyim Muzadi and Professor Din Syamsuddin, have often stated that U.S. policy in the Middle East is a great failure and has threatened the unity of the Muslim *ummah* (community). Both leaders have criticized the Bush administration's war against terrorism for going too far and backing Muslims into a corner.

A survey conducted by LSI in 2004 showed that 4 out of 10 Indonesians believe that the purpose of the war against terrorism is to attack Islam, while 3 out of 10 believe that the campaign is truly to prevent terrorism. Regarding anti-American attitudes,

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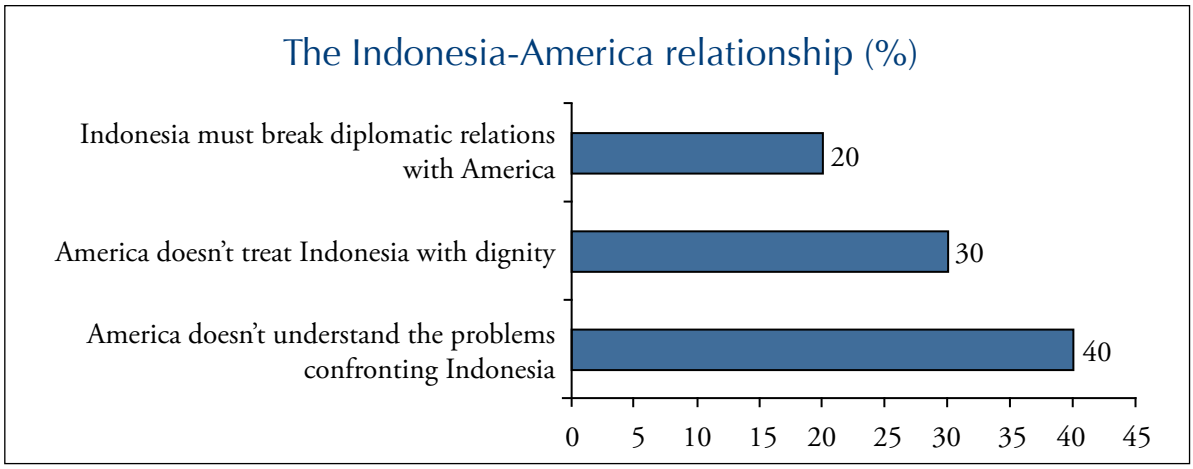
[53] See, "NU States Opposition to Shari'a Based Bylaws," *The Jakarta Post*, 29 July 2006.
[54] See, "NU Menolak Perda Syari'ah," *Koran Tempo*, 29 July 2006.
[55] See, National Survey Analysis of LSI (The Indonesian Survey Circle) on "Response Publik Atas Praturan Daerah (Perda) Bernuansa Syari'at Islam" (Public response on Shari'a-Based Bylaws), 28 July-3 August 2006. For critical accounts related to the implementation of shari'a-based by laws and its relation with the current development of Indonesian politics, see also Andrew MacIntyre and Douglas E. Ramage, *Seeing Indonesia as A Normal Country: Implications for Australia*, Australia Strategic Policy Institute, May 2008, pp.31-34; Robin Bush, "Regional "Shari'ah" Regulations in Indonesia: Anomaly or Symptom?" paper presented at the Indonesian Update Conference 2007 "Islamic Life and Politics," September 7-8, 2007, Coombs Lecture Theatre, Canberra: Australian National University.

only 1.5% of respondents on the LSI survey said they had demonstrated against American policy. At most, anti-American demonstrations, which often take place in front of the U.S. embassy, involve hundreds of thousands of participants. This is not a small number, but its magnitude is often exaggerated by the Indonesia media. In general, it is too small to make a claim that Indonesian society is anti-American.[56]

Regardless, Indonesian perceptions of America need to be considered properly. In the LSI survey, four out of ten Indonesians answered "yes" when asked if America had failed to understand the problems confronted by Indonesia. Three out of ten Indonesians said "no" when asked if America treated Indonesia with respect and dignity. However, when asked whether Indonesia should break diplomatic relations with the U.S., only two out of ten Indonesians said "yes."[57]



[56] Saiful Mujani, "Anti-Americanism in Contemporary Indonesia," *Studia Islamika*, Vol.12, No.2, pp.195-215.
[57] *Ibid.* p.208.

U.S. Policy and Indonesian Islam: Toward a Better Understanding Through Cooperation

Toward a U.S. Policy that Embraces Moderate Muslims

Indonesian Muslims are generally moderate. Therefore, maintaining a relationship with moderate groups is important and strategic. Moreover, Indonesia has made admirable advances toward democracy. The 1999 and 2004 general elections proceeded fairly and peacefully. International observers and world leaders declared Indonesia a model of democratic practice.

It should be noted, however, that even within moderate Muslim organizations, elements of conservatism have emerged during the last five years. Although the number of conservative factions is still limited, this needs to be taken into consideration. Washington should develop strategies to embrace the leaders and elites of moderate Muslim organizations as this is the most effective way to reduce such conservative elements.

Improving Mutual Understanding

Another important aspect of U.S. policy regarding Indonesia is to improve mutual understanding. It is true that the current administrations of both countries have maintained good working relations. "We are pleased that the U.S. and Indonesia bilateral relationship is running well and we have made significant progress during the last 2½ years. I am an optimist about the future of our bilateral relationship," said Sudjadnan Partohadiningrat, the Indonesian Ambassador to the U.S.[58] Still, while U.S. academicians and government and business professionals may be familiar with Indonesia, most Americans are not; they lack knowledge and a clear understanding of the unique characteristics of Indonesian Islam.[59] In fact, many Americans view Indonesian Islam as the same as, or similar to, Middle East Islam.

The problem of misinformation is exacerbated by unbalanced media coverage in the U.S. about the rise of Islamic radicalism and terrorist activity in Indonesia. When certain U.S. media outlets report on Islamic radicalism, they focus on RCI and exaggerate the importance of these groups in shaping the future of Indonesia. Some U.S. media analyses have reported that Indonesia is a hotbed of terrorism.[60] However, it is a mistake for the U.S. media to think

[58] Interview with Sudjadnan Partohadiningrat, the Indonesian Ambassador to U.S, Washington D.C., July 27, 2007.

[59] From my experiences as a Fulbright Visiting Specialist/Professor in Kansas (October-November 2005), there were many students, lecturers, and ordinary Americans who did not understand Indonesian Muslims and their culture. Some perceived that Indonesian Muslims were the same as Middle Eastern Muslims.

[60] It is erroneous to describe Indonesia as a hotbed of terrorism, despite the fact that terrorist actions have led to attacks on Indonesia. Portraying Indonesia thus undermines the strength of moderate and mainstream Muslims, and also disturbs the solemn efforts of the Indonesian government in combating terrorism.

that RCI will determine the future of Indonesia. The fact is that the majority of Indonesian Muslims remain moderate, and they will not follow the RCI agenda. Importantly, overreaction from the U.S. could alienate moderate Muslims. This is precisely what radical groups seek, and could lead to political instability in Indonesia.[61]

It is worth noting that the majority of Indonesians also have a limited understanding of America. Lay Muslims, in particular, have the simple impression that the U.S., by committing cruelties in Iraq and torturing prisoners in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, operates on a double standard. They do not understand and perhaps are not well-informed about American politics, or about the positive dimensions of U.S. policies toward Indonesia and other Muslim countries. Lay Muslims are unable to distinguish between Mr. Bush's policies and the divided America concerning Iraq and the war against terrorism. They do not know that Democrats won the November 2006 election due to the disappointment of many Americans regarding Mr. Bush's handling of Iraq. They also do not know that certain Republican senators have withdrawn their support for President Bush because of his Iraq policy. RCI propaganda decrying the dark side of America and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East feeds this lack of understanding. Indonesians do not know about the success story of Islam in America, which was eloquently conveyed in a story by *Newsweek*.[62] Finally, they have no knowledge that the State Department and other U.S. funding agencies have supported projects to improve education, health, the environment, and other services in Indonesia.

While young Indonesian Muslims are interested in American pop culture, such as American Idol, McDonald's, and Britney Spears, they are not interested in in-depth news about American politics and U.S. foreign policy. Educated middle class Muslims, however, are relatively well-informed and have a more balanced perspective. Still, even among the limited number of Indonesians who have been to the United States or are alumni of U.S. universities, there is strong opposition to U.S. foreign policy.

To correct misperceptions it is necessary to enhance the quantity and quality of shared information about politics, economics, education, culture, security and, most importantly, Islam. The role of the media in both countries is crucial, especially in developing and enhancing mutual understanding. Cultural and educational exchange, and other initiatives formerly carried out by the United States Information Service (USIS) are also extremely valuable.[63]

Public Diplomacy Needs a Good Policy

Responding to America's declining popularity in the Muslim world, President Bush introduced a new public diplomacy initiative in the second term of his administration. While this is certainly necessary, such a policy must be accompanied by a better strategy. There is no doubt that most Muslim communities feel a comfortable commonality with American values, education and technology. Nevertheless, since the September 11, 2001 attack on America, and as a result of the war on terrorism and the U.S. incursion into Afghanistan and Iraq, there remain strong, negative perceptions of the U.S. among Muslims, including in Indonesia. Polling conducted by several institutions during the last four years shows this. The most recent Pew Global Attitudes Project survey (released June 27, 2007) shows that Muslims' negative view of the U.S. is still high. In Indonesia, favorable views of the U.S. have significantly declined over the past five years,

[61] Azyumardi Azra, *op. cit.,* p.5.
[62] See the interesting cover story and special report on "Islam in America: A Success Story," *Newsweek,* July 30, 2007, pp. 24-33.
[63] See, Howard M. Federspiel, "Indonesia, Islam, and U.S. Policy," The Brown Journal of World Affairs, Spring 2002, Vol. IX, Issue 1, pp.112-113.

from 65% in 2002 to 42% in 2007.[64] The positive response to American-style democracy has also declined sharply, from 51% in 2002 to 28% in 2007 (23 point decline).[65]

To further public diplomacy, President Bush named Karen Hughes as Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy. However, there was no significant progress on this front during her September 2005 until October 2007 years of tenure. Critics cited Karen Hughes' poor performance, noting that she has no experience in international affairs and lacked understanding about Muslim traditions and cultures.[66] Even Indonesian students studying in the U.S. were skeptical; when asked to comment on Hughes' planned visit to Indonesia in 2005, they tended to question Hughes' ability to handle the task assigned to her.

One problem, critics charged, was that Hughes lectured people on the correctness of the Bush administration without considering other perspectives.[67] Even with James Glassman on board as the New Assistant Secretary, public diplomacy is likely to be plagued by the lack of an effective strategic direction, the lack of coordination among U.S. institutions, and inadequate funding.[68]

Still, public diplomacy is not the solution to the problem. The most important problem is U.S. policy itself. Public diplomacy is crucial to explaining the U.S. national interest and to influencing foreign audiences, but public diplomacy will never be effective without good policy. The Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World has observed that much of the anger toward America stems from displeasure with U.S. policies vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the U.S incursion into Afghanistan and Iraq.[69]

In Indonesia, it is clear that these same factors are at play. Indonesians feel that America's Middle East policies favor Israel too much (69%). More than 80% of Indonesian respondents want the U.S. to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan, and 84% want it to pull its troops out of Iraq.[70]

Developing a New Strategy to Counter Islamic Radicalism: Dialogue with Selected Radical Conservative Muslim Leaders?

The idea of engaging selected RCI groups in a dialogue is based on field observations of these movements during the last four years. U.S. foreign policy tends to push to one side RCI groups and force them into a corner. In part, this is because current policy is based on building networks with moderate Muslims.[71] In fact, however, the current policy does not necessarily yield a better outcome and can even be counterproductive.

It is important for U.S. policymakers to understand the profile and characteristics of RCI groups in Indonesia. Obviously, although all RCI groups are influenced by the militant ideology of *salafism*, each

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[64] See, "The Pew Global Attitude Project," 27 June, 2007, p.4.
[65] *Ibid.* p.25.
[66] See, Peter W. Singer, "The 9-11 War Plus 5: Looking Back and Looking Forward at U.S-Islamic World Relation," The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, *Analysis Paper*, Number 10, September 2006, p. 7.
[67] *Ibid*, p.12.
[68] For an in-depth analysis of U.S. public diplomacy and its relations with the Islamic world, see Hady Amr, "The Need to Communicate: How to Improve U.S. Public Diplomacy with the Islamic World," The Brookings Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World, *Analysis Paper*, No. 6, January 2004.
[69] See the Report of Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab World and Muslim World, "*Changing Minds-Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab World and Muslim World,*" 2003, p.9.
[70] Cited from "The Pew Global Project Attitude," p.24.
[71] Such strong encouragement can be seen from a recent study conducted by Rand Center for Middle East Public Policy. See, Angel Rabasa, et. al, *Building Moderate Muslim Network*, Rand Corporation, 2007.

group has different leadership styles and a different strategy. Depending upon the personal character of each leader and the mission of each group, RCI groups such as FPI, MMI and Hamas often justify the use of violence in pursuing their religio-political agenda. However, groups such as Hizbut Tahrir reject the use of violence, despite promoting the idea of an Islamic caliphate and rejecting democracy as an appropriate modern political system. Hizbut Tahrir has a strong base on university campuses and claims to have 100,000 members in various chapters. Currently, the President of Hizbut Tahrir is Muhammad Ismail Yusanto, a former Islamic student activist and geologist who studied Islam at Gadjahmada University in Yogyakarta.

Unlike other RCI leaders, Yusanto is friendly and polite and is always ready to talk to other groups, despite his conservative mindset. In my experience, he is willing to discuss and debate any issue, he is not afraid to express a contrary opinion but always rejects the use of violence. Indeed, he has strongly criticized U.S. foreign policy, but his criticisms are genuine and should be debated, countered, and disseminated in a proper and democratic way.[72]

U.S. policymakers and diplomats in Jakarta should not make generalizations about RCI groups, and should develop better strategies to address them. They should engage in dialogue with leaders of selected groups such as Hizbut Tahrir. Such an approach would help to reduce the anti-Americanism embedded in the mindset of RCI groups. Furthermore, the U.S. should consider giving them opportunities to study at American universities since such an experience could change their mindset and attitude toward the U.S.

Combating Terrorism

U.S. Mistakes in Fighting Terrorism

Both the U.S. and Indonesia have been victims of terrorism. Therefore, it is reasonable that the two countries would cooperate in combating this threat. So far, cooperation to enhance security has gone well. Yet President Bush and President Yudhoyono have both declared that the war against terrorism goes beyond security. It is interconnected with the fight against ideologies of hatred and intolerance disseminated by extremists who justify the killing of innocent people. Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair suggested that the war against terrorism is "the battle for global values." If indeed it is a war of ideas, between universal human values on the one hand and hatred and violence on the other, then the U.S. and its allies deserve support from the world community, including the Muslim world.

The problem lies in the fact that not all of the world community is comfortable with the U.S. approach to fighting terrorism. Specifically, suspicion is widespread that the war on terror is designed to occupy Muslim countries and destroy Islam as a religion and a civilization. Judging from the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as current policy toward Iran and Syria and the U.S.'s alleged blind support of Israel, they believe that the "clash of civilizations" proposed by Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington exists. In Indonesia, too, many Muslims appear to subscribe to such a view. Most troubling, many in the PLI groups are critical of U.S. foreign policy and the war against terrorism.

As Stephen Van Evera, Professor of Political Science at MIT has observed, the Bush administration has

[72] Despite my strong criticism of all concepts and strategies of Hizbut Tahrir, Indonesia, in its idea of upholding Islamic Caliphate, I fully appreciate the way Yusanto and his fellow HTI disseminate their ideas and their non-violence approach in response to socio-political issues. In this regard, I have different perceptions from Jane Perlez on her suspicion of Hizbut Tahrir, particularly in the U.K. See her article, "Radical Islamic Party Convenes in London," *International Herald Tribune*, 5 August 2007.

made at least three mistakes. The first was that the U.S. has ignored the war of ideas and has not countered al-Qaeda's propaganda. Consequently, al-Qaeda's propaganda has taken hold in the Arab and wider Muslim world and there is widespread belief that the West, specifically the U.S., has a hidden agenda to destroy Islam. Evera also quotes the results of the Pew Global Attitude survey in June 2006, which shows that large public majorities in Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan and Indonesia still do not believe that Arabs carried out the 9/11 attacks in the U.S. "The U.S. efforts to destroy al-Qaeda cannot succeed while such attitudes endure," Evera stated.[73]

The second mistake, according to Evera, was that the U.S. public diplomacy efforts have been poorly funded and poorly led, which in turn has affected its ability to win the war of ideas. In fact, the Bush administration allocated a small fund for the State Department Office of Public Diplomacy, which received only $1.36 billion in funding for FY 2006. A small fraction of the funds were devoted to the Muslim world. This financial commitment is far too small for the task at hand. The third mistake was that the Bush administration has invested little in programs to revive post-war Iraq and Afghanistan and not having selected the best people to handle those two troubled countries after the U.S. invasion. In this regard, Evera compares the failures of the Bush administration with the success of the Roosevelt administration in handling the occupation of Germany and Japan following World War II. While Roosevelt's policy to rebuild those two countries was successful, President Bush is regarded to have failed to rebuild Afghanistan and Iraq. As a result, both Afghanistan and Iraq have become failed states.[74]

Sharing Experience with Indonesia

Washington's counterterrorism strategy continues to assume that the terrorist threat will end when their leaders are killed or imprisoned. As Bruce Hoffman has observed, the U.S. military and intelligence community is focused almost exclusively on hunting down militant leaders or protecting U.S. forces. Attention is not directed toward understanding the enemy.[75] "This is a grand failure, not only because decapitation strategies have rarely worked in countering mass mobilization terrorists, but also because al-Qaeda's ability to continue its struggle is ineluctably predicated on its capacity to attract new recruits and restock its resources," says Hoffman.[76]

Furthermore, Hoffman points out that the success of the U.S. strategy depends on Washington's ability to counter al-Qaeda's ideological appeal. Therefore, the U.S. should address three elements of al-Qaeda's strategy: (1) the continued resonance of their message; (2) their continued ability to attract recruits; and (3) their capacity for continual regeneration and renewal. To do this, Washington must understand the mindset and details of the al-Qaeda movement. It must understand the animosity and arguments that underpin the radical movement and the regions of the world from which it emanates. "Without knowing our enemy," Hoffman writes, "we cannot successfully penetrate their cell; we cannot knowledgably sow discord and dissension in their ranks and thus weaken them from within, and we cannot fulfill the most basic requirements of an effective counterterrorist strategy: preempting and preventing terrorist operations and deterring their attacks." [77]

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[73] See, Stephen Van Evera, "The War on Terror: Forgotten Lessons from World War II," *Middle East Policy*," Vol. XIV, No.2, Summer 2007, p.62.
[74] *Ibid*, pp.61-66.
[75] See, Bruce Hoffman, "The Global Terrorist Threat: Is Al-Qaeda on the Run or on the March?" Middle East Policy, Vol. XIV, No.2, Summer 2007, p.56.
[76] Ibid.
[77] *Ibid*. pp. 56-57.

Evidence shows that in Indonesia, too, terrorists have been able to disseminate their message, recruit new members and train new leaders. Fortunately, the Indonesian authorities have developed good counterterrorism strategies which, to an extent, may be in line with Hoffman's recommendation. The difference is that Indonesia does not detain suspected terrorists and does not practice any severe interrogation techniques. "We have to balance our needs for security with upholding the democratic process, rule of law, and human rights. This is why more than 200 perpetrators of various bombings in Indonesia were brought to trial. We do not have the practice of detaining them forever," Indonesia's Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda insisted.[78] Wirajuda suggests that law enforcement by the security agency is key to Indonesia's ongoing efforts to combat terrorism.

Interestingly, Indonesian authorities have employed a former member of Jamaah Islamiyah, a terrorist movement linked to al-Qaeda, in their counterterrorism efforts. This individual has preached that violence has no place in Islam. This is perhaps one of the most effective strategies of combating terrorism: it reminds the public of the ideology behind terrorist actions.

America and "The Yudhoyono Factor"

President Yudhoyono and Indonesia's Political Stability

Under President S.B. Yudhoyono's administration, Indonesia has become relatively more stable, despite the many domestic challenges it faces. President Yudhoyono is the only president in 62 years to have a popular mandate. He was elected in a direct, fair and democratic election, gaining 61% of the popular vote.[79] President Yudhoyono has dominated Indonesia's political landscape since the 2004 general election, and barring any unprecedented event, he is politically secure.

In his first two years in office, President Yudhoyono made significant progress in stabilizing the country. His reform-oriented administration has committed itself to maintaining good governance, eradicating corruption, and achieving peaceful settlements of regional conflicts. President Yudhoyono appointed professional commanders of the armed forces and police, and strengthened the role and function of the KPK (Committee for Eradicating Corruption) in investigating corruption involving regents, governors and ministers.

President Yudhoyono appears committed to democracy. Despite his military background, he shuns authoritarian rule. President Yudhoyono successfully resolved a long, bitter and bloody conflict between Indonesia and the rebellious Free Aceh Movement (GAM), pushing them to a peaceful resolution involving the international community. This solution also settled other conflicts that previously threatened the national unity and stability of Indonesia. President Yudhoyono has also maintained a relatively steady economy, despite unprecedented natural disasters such as tsunami, earthquakes, floods and volcanic eruptions. His administration has reached a growth rate of around 5.6% over the past two years, the highest GDP growth since the 1997 financial crisis. With banks and companies restored, the economy grew 5.5% in 2006, and is predicted to grow 6% in 2007. He has managed to keep the rupiah (Indonesian currency) stable against the U.S. dollar at Rp.9100-9200. Inflation is around 6%, while per capita income is around US$1,592. Analysts suggest that the Indonesian economic tiger is recovering.[80]

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[78] See, Interview with Hassan Wirayuda: "Unity through Diversity," *The Report of Emerging Indonesia 2007*, London: Oxford Business Group, 2007, pp.24-25.

[79] For an excellent analysis on this matter, see Douglas Ramage, "Indonesia: Democracy First, Good Governance Later," *Southeast Asian Affairs 2007,* Singapore: ISEAS, 2007, pp.150-152.

[80] See, Interview with Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, "Defining Moment," *The Report of Emerging Indonesia 2007,* pp.20-21. See also, James Castle and Craig Charney, "A Democratic Indonesian Tiger?," *Washington Post*, 1 August 2007.

Finally, President Yudhoyono has developed a proactive and dynamic foreign policy. Internationally, President Yudhoyono is well-respected for his moderate and compassionate approach to sensitive and controversial issues, such as the Danish cartoon incident in which a Danish newspaper published a religious cartoon satirizing Prophet Muhammad. He suggested that despite Muslims' disappointment with the way the *Jilland Posten* published a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims should not use violence in solving this issue. Also, President Yudhoyono has encouraged dialogue between Islam and the West. He is committed to empowering Indonesian Muslims and strengthening their voice and message of balance in dealing with international issues. In the last two years, the Department of Foreign Affairs has been very active in promoting interfaith dialogue and cooperation in Indonesia and across the world.

Despite his strong mandate, President Yudhoyono faces several challenges. His critics charge that he does not act as firmly and decisively as he should. He is said to compromise too much with regard to the interests of political parties, certain elites, and even businessmen who are now supporting or joining his administration. Consequently, his critics say that he is indecisive and often takes too much time in arriving at decisions. Another challenge is that during the *reformasi* era, following the collapse of the Soeharto regime, the role and position of Parliament grew much stronger than it had been in decades. In the 2004 election, President Yudhoyono's party, the Democrat Party, gained only 7% of the total vote and therefore has limited seats in Parliament. The majority of seats are dominated by several large parties with their own agenda.

Given this situation, President Yudhoyono seems to be very careful in making any decisions that might affect the coalition of parties supporting his presidency. Moreover, President Yudhoyono still has to contend with the opposition party, PDI Perjuangan (The Indonesian Struggle Democratic Party) belonging to former President Megawati, which gained 23% of the total vote. In the meantime, other big parties such as Golkar (Functional Group), PPP (The United Development Party), PKB (The National Awakening Party), and PAN (The National Mandate Party) are already rallying public support in advance of the 2009 general election. Provided that President Yudhoyono continues to be an effective leader and to run his administration properly, most Indonesians believe there is no strong contender for the presidency in 2009.[81]

[81] See Lembaga Survei Indonesia, *Evaluasi Publik atas Kinerja Presiden dan Wakil Presid*en, 11 October 2006. <http://www.lsi.or.id>.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The shape of the U.S.-Indonesia relationship will be strongly influenced by Washington's approach to political Islam, both in Indonesia and in the wider Muslim world. To foster a healthy bilateral relationship, U.S. policymakers should consider several points:

1) The U.S. Must Continue to Support Progressive-Liberal Islam and Embrace Moderate Muslims

The PLI groups are a strategic asset for the U.S. They embrace the values of democracy, freedom, equality and tolerance, and they are at the forefront in countering the religio-political agenda of RCI. Although they face many challenges, specifically condemnation and even threats from RCI groups, they enjoy support from the educated middle class and the young Muslim generation. They actively promote democracy, pluralism, gender equality and human rights based on an Islamic perspective.

PLI programs should be fully supported by the U.S., both through the State Department and U.S. funding agencies. Curtailing this funding would not only be counterproductive but would instead strengthen the RCI groups. Moderate Muslims represent the Indonesian mainstream and are the guardians of civil Islam. They are potentially the U.S.'s most strategic partner, and they should have full U.S. support.

Both NU and Muhammadiyah, Indonesia's two leading moderate Islamic organizations face conservative elements within their own organizations. These conservative elements take issue with PLI's "liberal" ideas, fearing that such ideas will undermine Islam. Much of this, however, is due to poor understanding and, to a degree, propaganda put out by RCI groups. Given this reality, it is important for the U.S. to build a strong network with all moderate Muslim organizations, particularly developing better relationships and more open communication with all leaders and key persons of moderate Muslims groups. Having a close personal relationship with them is crucial, specifically in building strategic alliances to counter the spread and influence of the ideology of the RCI groups.

In addition, the U.S. should develop a better strategy toward RCI groups. U.S. foreign policy toward radical and conservative Islamic groups seems to alienate those groups. U.S. diplomats in Jakarta should initiate dialogue with leaders of selected RCI groups to better understand the mindset, vision and mission of those leaders and their organizations. Furthermore, it would be useful for the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta to give select leaders an opportunity to visit the U.S.

The results of such an approach would not be immediate. But in the long term, it would be useful in bridging certain misunderstandings, and it is also a part of searching for a better approach for U.S. public diplomacy.

2) U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Muslim World Should be Improved

Public diplomacy is vital to winning hearts and minds and improving the U.S.'s relationship with the Islamic world. Considering that the U.S.'s image has been declining over the last four years, especially following the war against terrorism and the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, improving public diplomacy is crucial. This will require a significant budget as well, since without sufficient financial support, it will be almost impossible to improve the quality of public diplomacy. Finally, public diplomacy requires good policy, which means that the U.S. needs to develop a better strategy for approaching the Muslim world.

U.S. diplomats in Indonesia must be well-versed in Islam and knowledgeable about Indonesia. They should be given full support in sustaining relationships with Islamic organizations and their leaders. Although the U.S.-Indonesia bilateral relationship is improving, both countries need to enhance their ties, especially at the society level. Raising awareness and understanding is important, and requires that U.S. policymakers understand the cultural identities of Indonesian Muslims and their vast differences compared to Middle East Muslims.

In addition, it is clear that the role and function of the ACC (American Cultural Center) is vital in improving understanding between U.S. and Indonesian societies. From my field observations more than a decade ago, specifically when the ACC was established in Jakarta, ordinary Indonesian citizens, students, and the young generations were very curious about America. For them, America was the center of knowledge, innovation and progress in the world. Indonesians were also interested in understanding American politics, education, culture and religion. They wanted to know about their fellow Muslims in the U.S. and how the U.S. government treated them. As a result, the ACC was always crowded, with many visitors every day attending seminars, exhibitions, films, and Indonesian-American cultural exchange programs. Indeed, the ACC was able to disseminate important information about American culture, politics and civilization to the Indonesian public.

Unfortunately and to the disappointment of many Indonesians, the ACC in Jakarta was closed more than a decade ago. Considering the important role the ACC played in developing mutual understanding between the U.S. and Indonesia, it is time for U.S. policymakers to re-establish the ACC in Jakarta and other major cities. Currently, the State Department supports the so-called "American Corner" in certain universities, and facilitates the inclusion of books in American libraries.

3) The U.S. Should Address the Ideologies that Underlie Terrorism

The war against terrorism is a war of ideas. Thus, it is important for Washington to improve its strategy by attending to terrorists' ideological appeal. This includes: (1) the continued resonance of their message, (2) their continued ability to attract recruits, and (3) their capacity for continual regeneration. However, it is also important that in combating terrorism, the U.S. balance the need for security with upholding the democratic process, rule of law and human rights. It is important to avoid practices of inhumane interrogation and treatment of suspected terrorists. Interrogation techniques such as those used in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib must be changed. Such practices not only violate human rights per the Geneva Convention—as well as American values—but also help radical and conservative groups galvanize anti-American feeling. Instead of placing suspected terrorists in a camp or prison and mistreating them, it would be better to bring them before a court of justice. Meanwhile, it may be useful for the U.S. to try to carefully employ selected former terrorist activists, particularly those who are willing to admit and regret their mistakes, to be informants or preachers who would remind the public about the danger of terrorism and its deviation from the true message of Islam.

Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World

The Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World is a major research program housed within the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. The project conducts high-quality public policy research, and convenes policy makers and opinion leaders on the major issues surrounding the relationship between the United States and the Muslim world. The Project seeks to engage and inform policymakers, practitioners, and the broader public on developments in Muslim countries and communities, and the nature of their relationship with the United States. Together with the affiliated Brookings Doha Center in Qatar, it sponsors a range of events, initiatives, research projects, and publications designed to educate, encourage frank dialogue, and build positive partnerships between the United States and the Muslim world. The Project has several interlocking components:

- The U.S.-Islamic World Forum, which brings together key leaders in the fields of politics, business, media, academia, and civil society from across the Muslim world and the United States, for much needed discussion and dialogue;
- A Visiting Fellows program, for scholars and journalists from the Muslim world to spend time researching and writing at Brookings in order to inform U.S. policy makers on key issues facing Muslim states and communities;
- A series of Brookings Analysis Papers and Monographs that provide needed analysis of the vital issues of joint concern between the United States and the Muslim world;
- An Arts and Culture Initiative, which seeks to develop a better understanding of how arts and cultural leaders and organizations can increase understanding between the United States and the global Muslim community;
- A Science and Technology Initiative, which examines the role cooperative science and technology programs involving the United States and the Muslim world can play in responding to regional development and education needs, as well as fostering positive relations;
- A "Bridging the Divide" Initiative which explores the role of Muslim communities in the West;
- A Brookings Institution Press Book Series, which aims to synthesize the project's findings for public dissemination.

The underlying goal of the Project is to continue the Brookings Institution's original mandate to serve as a bridge between scholarship and public policy. It seeks to bring new knowledge to the attention of decision-makers and opinion-leaders, as well as afford scholars, analysts, and the public a better insight into policy issues. The Project is supported through the generosity of a range of sponsors including the Government of the State of Qatar, The Ford Foundation, The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories, and the Institute for Social Policy Understanding. Partners include American University, the USC Center for Public Diplomacy, Unity Productions Foundation, Americans for Informed Democracy, America Abroad Media, and The Gallup Organization.

The Saban Center for Middle East Policy

The Saban Center for Middle East Policy was established on May 13, 2002 with an inaugural address by His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan. The creation of the Saban Center reflects the Brookings Institution's commitment to expand dramatically its research and analysis of Middle East policy issues at a time when the region has come to dominate the U.S. foreign policy agenda.

The Saban Center provides Washington policymakers with balanced, objective, in-depth and timely research and policy analysis from experienced and knowledgeable scholars who can bring fresh perspectives to bear on the critical problems of the Middle East. The center upholds the Brookings tradition of being open to a broad range of views. The Saban Center's central objective is to advance understanding of developments in the Middle East through policy-relevant scholarship and debate.

The center's foundation was made possible by a generous grant from Haim and Cheryl Saban of Los Angeles. Ambassador Martin S. Indyk, Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy Studies, is the Director of the Saban Center. Kenneth M. Pollack is the center's Director of Research. Joining them is a core group of Middle East experts who conduct original research and develop innovative programs to promote a better understanding of the policy choices facing American decision makers in the Middle East. They include Tamara Cofman Wittes, a specialist on political reform in the Arab world who directs the Project on Middle East Democracy and Development; Bruce Riedel, who served as a senior advisor to three Presidents on the Middle East and South Asia at the National Security Council during a twenty-nine year career in the CIA, a specialist on counterterrorism; Suzanne Maloney, a former senior State Department official who focuses on Iran and economic development; Stephen R. Grand, Fellow and Director of the Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World; Hady Amr, Fellow and Director of the Brookings Doha Center; Shibley Telhami, who holds the Sadat Chair at the University of Maryland; and Daniel Byman, a Middle East terrorism expert from Georgetown University. The center is located in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at Brookings, led by Brookings Vice President Carlos Pascual.

The Saban Center is undertaking path breaking research in five areas: the implications of regime change in Iraq, including post-war nation-building and Persian Gulf security; the dynamics of Iranian domestic politics and the threat of nuclear proliferation; mechanisms and requirements for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; policy for the war against terrorism, including the continuing challenge of state-sponsorship of terrorism; and political and economic change in the Arab world, and the methods required to promote democratization.