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## The Political Texture of Islam in Southeast Asia

On April 23, 1981, Indonesia's Vice-President Adam Malik, speaking at the opening of the Islamic University Students' Association in the West Java city of Bandung, expressed his concern that there were those in the country who "under the pretext of Islam" were trying to change the character and constitutional foundations of the Indonesian Republic. Criticizing what he termed the "narrow-mindedness and selfishness" of these alleged Islamic subversives, Malik reminded his audience that while under the Indonesian Constitution each citizen is "guaranteed the freedom of upholding his belief in Almighty God," such a freedom "must not be taken as an unlimited one."<sup>1</sup> He stressed the importance of Indonesia's *Pancasila* ("Five Pillars"), the country's official national ideology. Though the *Pancasila* recognizes belief in God, along with nationalism, democracy, social justice, and humanitarianism as national policy principles, many Muslims in Indonesia regard it as a secular, "man made" doctrine that cannot compete in significance and moral force with Islam's own "Pillars of Faith."

Significantly, Malik was speaking only three weeks after Indonesian commandos, with the approval of Thai authorities, had landed in Bangkok and there stormed and recaptured a Garuda Airlines DC-9. The plane had been hijacked over Indonesia by five followers of the so-called *Komando Jihad* ("Holy War Command"), a fundamentalist Islamic group, and then flown to Thailand. In its statement on the successful recapture of the hijacked plane, the Indonesian authorities noted that the hijackers had demanded unsuccessfully, the release of some eighty imprisoned *Komando Jihad* activists involved in various terrorist acts in Indonesia including attempted assassinations, arson, and raids on police posts during the past four years. Subsequently,

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1. Radio Djakarta, domestic service in Indonesian, April 23, 1981 (Foreign Broadcast Information Service Reports, hereafter FBIS, April 24, 1981).

the Indonesian government alleged that the Garuda hijack attempt had been linked to a "Revolutionary Islamic plot" designed to overthrow Indonesia's Suharto government. A so-called "Indonesian Islamic Revolution Board," in which several Indonesian Army officers were involved, according to Admiral Sudomo, the Chief of Indonesia's internal security agency known as Komkamtib, had sought contact with the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in Iran. In a letter intended to be sent to Khomeini Imron Muhammad Zein, leader of the "Indonesian Islamic Revolution Board," had praised the Ayatollah's struggle to overthrow the Shah and establish an Islamic state in Iran. Zein apparently drew a parallel between the Ayatollah and his own struggle in Indonesia to overthrow the Suharto government, and Zein requested "moral and material support" from Ayatollah.<sup>2</sup>

Whether the Zein letter was actually received by Khomeini, and, if so, what his response was, if any, is not known at this time. But the whole incident underscores again, what is for the governments of Southeast Asia today, the principal question of public policy in matters Islamic, i.e., the tradition of Islamic theocracy and its relation to the modern nation state. The question is a disturbing one, not only for such Southeast Asian countries as Indonesia and Malaysia, whose populations are pre-dominantly Muslim, and which are members of the International Organisation of the Islamic Conference. It is also a problem for a predominantly Roman Catholic country like the Philippines, of whose 46 million inhabitants only 4 million are Muslims. The Philippine Muslims, located primarily on Mindanao and adjacent islands around the Sulu Sea, have long felt that they have been neglected by a distant government in Manila.

The theocratic problem, arising out of orthodox and fundamentalist interpretations of Islam, and structured by the historic development of the Chaliphate and its governmental institutions, expresses itself first of all in terms of political secessionism and/or movements looking toward the creation of a distinctively Islamic state. In such a state family and inheritance law, taxation (such as the *zaked* for social, charitable purposes), and the enforcement of public morals, follow traditional Islamic religious precepts. For nearly a decade Muslim secessionism in the Philippines has found an organisational focus in the guerrilla resistance

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2. Agence France Presse despatch, Djakarta, April 20, 1981 (FBIS, April 20, 1981).

movement of the so-called Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).<sup>3</sup> Led principally by Nur Misuari, a former lecturer at the Mindano State University at Marawi, the MNLF secured funds from the Libyan government of Col. Muammar al-Qadhafi, and in the mid-seventies was strong enough to pin down some 60,000 regular Philippine army and constabulary forces. Though toward the close of 1980, the Manila government claimed that under its amnesty and rehabilitation plan about 50,000 "Moras" had surrendered, and that the MNLF virtually had collapsed, periodic fighting nevertheless has continued. Attempts by the Philippine government to persuade Libya to cease providing assistance and sanctuary to MNLF leaders also have been of as little avail as official promises of increased autonomy for the Southern Philippine provinces.

It should be emphasized that the quicker and more thorough the secular change and cultural modernization impact upon Muslim areas, the stronger the theocratic reaction is apt to be. Philippine officials and commentators have noted that Muslims in their country draw parallels not only between themselves and the plight of the dispossessed Palestinian Arabs, but also between themselves and Iranians reacting to the modernization effort of the late Shah Reza Pahlevi.<sup>4</sup> Land and industrial development projects, state-supervised secular schools, urbanization, greater individualism in family and other kinship relations, all these and more have caused an accelerating turmoil in traditional Philippine Muslim life. The reaction for some has been a flight to the symbols of theocracy. A recent report notes that "pictures of the Iranian leader, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, are plastered in homes, offices and market places, especially in Basilan islands, three kilometres from Zamboanga city," a major centre of Philippine Muslim life.<sup>5</sup> The MNLF also has a representative in Iran, one Hashem Adamin. In an interview with the Teheran daily *Keyhan*, on September 27, 1981, Adamin was quoted as saying that Iran's revolution led by Khomeini, "provides wide political and spiritual support to the Moro Front" and that military aid is under discussion.

3. T.J.S. George, *Revolt in Mindanao. The Rise of Islam in Philippine Politics* (London, New York : Oxford University Press, 1980).
4. Mamintal A. Tamano, "The Expectations of Muslims as Philippine Citizens" *Solidarity* (Manila), Special Muslim issue, July-August, 1975, p. 32.
5. Abby Tan, "Philippine Muslims Look to the Ayatollah," *The Sarawak Tribune* (Kuching), June 12, 1980.

A theocratic Islamic tradition also has long been endemic in Indonesia, most of whose 140 million inhabitants are Muslim. In Indonesia, as in other Asian Islamic regions, there has long been a profound division between a minority (usually called *santri*) who consider themselves orthodox practitioners of the Prophet's teachings, and the vast majority (usually called *abangan*) who are less consistently observant of ritual and tend to mix Islamic precepts with all manner of pre-Islamic, indigenous animistic beliefs and, especially on Java, Hinduistic beliefs. Between *abangan* and *santri* communities in Indonesia differences extend themselves to the whole range of life-styles, social and recreational values, economic practices, and, not least, political identity and action.<sup>6</sup> Especially on Java, the *abangan* value system tends to be far more pragmatic, adaptive to modernization, tolerant of other faiths, and, therefore, of a constitutional separation between religion and politics, than is usually the case with the values of the *santri*.

The *abangan* world includes Hinduized indigenous Javanese values mixed with Islam, plus a penchant for animistic and mystical beliefs, which Islamic orthodoxy generally eschews. Moreover, especially in Central Java, the cultural traditions of the old Javanese aristocracy, and the social stratification that accompany them, still make themselves felt. From this point of view Islam is much too egalitarian and violates ancient perceptions of family, rank and status that are still observed in modern, "democratic" Indonesia. Ethnic factors intrude into the *abangan-santri* relationship as well. *Santri* Islam is strong in the province of Aceh in North Sumatra and in the Menangkabau country of West Sumatra. Ethnic differences between, say, Acheneese or Menangkabau and Central Javanese are accentuated further by the *santri-abangan* religious dichotomy.

Finally there is the relative flexibility toward secularism and modern consumption patterns. The *santri* community, whether in Malaysia, Indonesia, or Southern Thailand, is not inherently opposed to modern science and technology, any more than, for example, is apparent in Saudi Arabia. But the social and cultural values associated with a modern scientific and technologically oriented life—ranging from secular recreational interests, to less restrictive family relationships—

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6. Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1960) esp. pp. 121-130.

tend to be more readily adopted by those who, though considering themselves Muslims, do not profess their faith with *santri* intensity.

Even before Indonesia became independent in 1949, the Dutch colonial authority had had to contend with quasi-Messianic revolutionary Islamic movements, protesting against social and economic conditions and centering around the expected return of the Muslim saviour (the Imam Mahdi).<sup>7</sup> Various theocratic organisations, like the *Darul Islam* (litt. "House of Islam") had emerged in West Java. After Indonesia acquired its freedom from colonial rule, the *Darul Islam* movement persisted. Indeed, in portions of Java, and in the North Sumatra province of Aceh, guerrillas of a *Tentara Islam Indonesia* ("Indonesian Islamic Army") movement, a direct forerunner of today's *Komando Jihad*, took the field against the newly independent Indonesian Republic. The reason was that the leadership of the new Indonesian state, moderate Muslims included, refused to accede to the demands of the fundamentalists to transform Indonesia into formal Islamic state. All through Indonesia's subsequent parliamentary and political history the struggle—whether by violence or by constitutional means—of Muslim fundamentalists has continued in an effort to make Islamic law the foundation of all Indonesian public policy and jurisprudence.<sup>8</sup>

The theocratic Islamic movement in Southeast Asia and its formal religious-political demands are made even more complex if racial and economic questions obtrude. This is the case particularly in Malaysia, of whose 14 million inhabitants, at least 7 million are Muslim. These Muslims are primarily ethnic Malays. The remainder of Malaysia's population is made up of some 5 million Chinese, one million or so Indians and Pakistanis, with the rest scattered over various indigeneous tribal communities, like the Iban and Dusun of Malaysian Borneo. Because of the commercial and financial dominance of Malaysia's Chinese, the predominantly agrarian occupation structure of ethnic Malays, and the resulting policy decisions over recent decades to assist the ethnic Malay group in education, government service and economic

7. Sartono Kartodirdjo, *Protest Movements in Rural Java* (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), esp. pp. 31, 50-51, 77-78, 182.

8. See, for example, Herbert Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1962); Justus M. van der Kroef, *Indonesia After Sukarno* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1971).

life generally, rivalry with the Chinese has aggravated endemic and frequently bloody Sino-Malay racial hostilities over the years. In their struggle to achieve equality with their Chinese fellow-citizens, the Malay community has periodically turned to its Islamic identity in its most fundamentalist form in order to project its demands in the country's political life and parliamentary arena. Such renewed Islamic consciousness has been expressed, as in the case of Indonesia and the Philippines, through violent anti-government action, or sometimes in a more peaceful demand for reforms of the educational system, for prohibition of allegedly immoral forms of public entertainment (including certain motion pictures or dancing), or increased public financial assistance for those Malay Muslims who wish to go on the *haj* (the pilgrimage to Mecca).

During the nineteen-seventies, underground terrorist and anti-government agitational groups of Muslim fundamentalists such as the *Angkatan Jihad* ("Holy War League"), *Tentara Sabillah* ("Holy Army"), and, more recently, the *Pertubuhan Angkatan Sabillulah* ("Organisation of Holy Fighters") have been identified by the Malaysian government as responsible for violent mass demonstrations.<sup>9</sup> In January, 1980, for example, leaders of the *Pertubuhan* were charged with having organized such a demonstration, involving some ten thousand dissident Malay rice farmers in the city of Alor, capital of the state of Kedah. The farmers were demanding higher prices for their rice and protesting against depressed rural economic conditions generally. The size and well-organized character of the demonstrations, which had to be quelled (after several government buildings were attacked and officials threatened) by tear gas, a curfew and numerous arrests, surprised the authorities. The Muslim theocratic and fundamentalists' ability to capitalize on economic grievances and translate them for the Malay peasantry into religious-political terms was not lost on the Kuala Lumpur government. One former Malay state legislator, who subsequently confessed to having been a member of *Pertubuhan*, declared in a television press interview that the *Pertubuhan's* objective was to transform Malaysia into a "pure" Islamic state, in which non-Muslim minorities would have only limited rights.<sup>10</sup>

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9. Radio Kuala Lumpur, April 2, 1980 (FBIS, April 4, 1980).

10. *The Asia Record*, January 25-31, 1980, p. 4, and May, 1980, p. 6; *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 22, 1980, pp. 28-29, 41-42.

Thus far the Malaysian and Indonesian movements of Islamic theocracy are no immediate threat to the stability of their governments, although the ever-increasing upsurge of one such movement, the so-called Pattani United Liberation Organisation (PULO) to be discussed presently, is a matter of growing concern to Malaysian and Thai security analysts. It should be noted first, however, that the Islamic revival in Southeast Asia need not always take the path of violent anti-government resistance. An example is the so-called *dakwah* (litt. "a Call to the Faith") movement in Malaysia.<sup>11</sup> *Dakwah* began during the nineteen-sixties by leaders of the often militant youth wing of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), one of Malaysia's largest political parties which has dominated national politics for more than a generation. The movement has often been viewed as an expression, through the vehicle of Islamic fundamentalism, of ethnic Malay nationalism and the search for a Malay identity, as they are confronted by the economic and educational power of the Chinese in the country. Devotion to the *shariah* (Islamic law), an emphasis on education in *madrrasah* (Islamic religious schools) rather than in secular institutions, frequent Koran instruction and readings from early age on, a strict observance of Islamic dietary, dress, and recreational codes—all these have been part of *dakwah's* emphasis. Inevitably, this involves the state's legislative processes and a drive to give Malaysia a more distinctive Islamic political texture.

The *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* ("Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia") or ABIM, with a claimed membership of some 50,000 and with branches throughout Malaysia, has been the chief organisational vehicle of the *dakwah* movement.<sup>12</sup> Yet, even though ABIM is dedicated to peaceful means, *dakwah* has led to confrontations. On October 16, 1980, for example, the Malaysian government imposed a curfew on the town of Batu Pahat, in the southern part of the state of Johore, after a group of Malay Muslims, armed with knives and iron rods had attacked a local police station. Eight of the attackers were killed and several scores of civilians and police were injured. The attackers, according to the government, were identified with the *dakwah* movement. They had demanded that the Johore state government observe more strictly the *shariah* and other Islamic precepts and

11. Judith Nagata, "The New Fundamentalism: Islam in Contemporary Malaysia," *Asian Thought and Society*, September, 1980, pp. 134 ff.

12. "Islam's Rising Cry," *Asiaweek* (Hongkong), August 24, 1979, pp. 21-25.

close all bars, night-clubs and massage parlours in Batu Pahat. The government reportedly had declined to meet this demand, on the grounds that these establishments were essential to the town's economy "since businessmen travelling through the area demanded such services."<sup>13</sup>

The theocratic dimension of Islamic politics in Southeast Asia underscores the proposition that the *ummat* or Muslim community in any state does not, or as many of its leaders believe, should not readily conform to a secular or non-Islamic political culture even if that political culture provides for religious freedom. This position of course is not peculiar to Islam alone. It has historically been characteristic also of Calvinism and some other Protestant dominations, of orthodox Judaism, and of certain stages of Roman Catholic political thought, to cite a few other examples. Disregarding the special position of orthodox Judaism in the state of Israel today, in all predominantly Christian countries the theocratic approach has lost favour. This is much less the case in many (though not all) parts of the Islamic world, particularly in the "peripheral" areas of that world, such as Southeast Asia. One reason for this is that in the multifaceted ethnic and racial mosaic of modern Southeast Asian nation states, the old Muslim theocratic thrust has a way of combining with other contemporary and politicized cultural and ethnic demands and interests.

A striking example is offered by the secessionist movement launched by the afore-said PULO more than a decade ago. Of Thailand's 45 million inhabitants, there are perhaps no more than 2 million Muslims—some 75% of whom reside in the Southern Thai provinces of Satun, Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala near the Peninsular Malaysian border. Historically this is disputed territory, alternately claimed and occupied by Malay and Thai rulers. PULO was founded in 1967 by a prominent Pattani political figure, Kabir Abdulrahman, who reportedly maintains close connections with a major Islamic Party (PAS) in the nearby Malaysian state of Kelantan. PULO, officially committed to making Pattani into a self-governing Islamic state, has been aided by some member nations of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. According to Thai authorities, PULO has received financial assistance from both Lybia and Syria. At least one PULO guerrilla

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13. Agence France Presse despatch, Kuala Lumpur, October 16, 1980 (FBIS, October 16, 1980).



leader, Na-Sae Ban Niang, has acknowledged getting military training in Syria. Besides PULO, which with a hard core of about 550 members is the largest, there are other Muslim secessionist bends in Pattani. Many are composed of "fugitive criminals who have been given political indoctrination" or who mask their simple dacoity under highsounding slogans.<sup>14</sup>

Arson, extortion, kidnappings, robberies, and gang attacks on police and military posts, all in an insecure border region where scattered and ideologically divided guerrilla elements of the Communist Party of Malay (CPM) also are roaming about, seem, at first, to lend little substance to PULO's avowed objectives and claims. Nevertheless, PULO taps an important wellspring of unassuaged ethnic grievances among Thailand's Southern Muslim population. Like the Philippine Muslims, so the Thai Islamic community has long felt estranged from the central government in a distant capital with a feeling of being treated as "second class" citizens. Like Mindanao in the Philippines, Thailand's Pattani or Narathiwat provinces until recently were not exactly major targets of the government's national economic development programmes. Civil servants regarded their postings in Southern Thailand as tantamount to exile, and tended to treat the local population accordingly. Shortly before his retirement, at the end of September, 1981, the commander of Thailand's Fourth Army in the Southern area said to the local press that there were 36 "bad and influential" bureaucrats in the South which he wanted transferred or prosecuted for alleged malversations.<sup>15</sup>

Thai history and political culture is deeply interwoven with Buddhism, just as Philippine cultural traditions reflect Roman Catholic influence. The Muslims of Southern Thailand do not share in that culture. The Thai veneration for the reigning monarchy (also Buddhist) in any case flouts traditional Muslim concepts of the need for an Islamic head of state. In recent months scores of Thai Buddhists in the border region were killed by PULO. Until recently public schools in the Southern Thai provinces had mostly Buddhist teachers. These,

14. Paisal Sricharatchanya, "The Muslims Move In," *For Eastern Economic Review*, October 9, 1981, p. 28. See also *The Bangkok Post*, July 7, 1980; *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 20, 1980, pp. 19-20; and *The Asia Record*, September, 1980, p. 9, and October, 1980, pp. 10, 11.

15. Sricharatchanya, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

like many Thai officials in the area, did not speak Malay, the common language of the Thai Muslims. An ostensible attempt recently by the Bangkok Education Ministry to improve the general quality of the Islamic schools in Southern Thailand led school authorities to a decision to reduce the time spent on Islamic religious instruction. All this only infuriated Thai Muslims further and sharpened the appeal of groups like PULO.

A younger generation of Thai Muslims, meanwhile, inflamed by the Islamic renaissance and upsurge of religious fundamentalism in neighbouring countries, has now begun to clash with its Buddhist Thai counterpart. The pattern of terrorism is spreading. In June, 1980, a number of bombings in Bangkok were claimed by PULO, which asserted in letters to local news media that their guerrilla campaign would become nationwide unless the Thai government stopped the alleged "suppression" of Thai Muslims. Moreover, in various parts of Thailand, the insurgents of the Communist Party of Thailand show no sign of slackening their guerrilla deprivations. Hence PULO leaders are urging local Muslims to place themselves under the banner of PULO's "protection." PULO charges that the Thai government, presumably, is unable to provide the required security.

A disturbing racial factor has entered PULO's tactics. Ethnic Chinese—especially the younger generation—in the Thai Malaysian border area have been particularly susceptible to the blandishments and recruiting efforts of the nearby (largely Chinese) Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) underground movement. The CPM has for a long time found it convenient to seek sanctuary, across the Malaysian border, in Thai territory, especially the Betong area in South Yala province. PULO, in addition to its anti-Buddhist appeals, is now developing an anti-Chinese propaganda theme. Younger and better educated Thai Muslims seeking to improve their status today, usually find a strong concentration of Chinese in local business, management, and professional positions. This condition is ready-made for PULO's new anti-Chinese appeals. Reflecting Islam's generally strong anti-Marxist and anti-Communist position, PULO has found it easy to combine simultaneously its opposition to the CPM and to the border Chinese community. In recent months PULO, reportedly, has been urging its followers to kidnap and hold to ransom wealthier Chinese merchants in the Thai border province areas.

There are parallels in other parts of Southeast Asia. The Moro National Liberation Front in the Philippines today has been competing with the Philippine Communists' "New People's Army" for followers in the Mindanao region. Similarly, PULO and kindred Muslim groups compete today with the Thai and Malaysian Communists for power in the unstable, murky underworld of the Thai-Malaysian border.

Where the Muslim theocratic thrust tends to be so heavily influenced by local racial and economic competition, as it is in the case of Southern Thailand and the Philippines, the purity of religious or ideological precepts becomes all the more difficult to maintain. Competing ideologies which, like Marxism-Leninism, historic Calvinism, Roman Catholicism, or theocratic Islam, could deeply affect the character of the state and various political institutions, therefore tend to result in the development of defensive or protective ideological counter-measures by the governments concerned.

Indonesia provides an example. Since 1978, when the People's Consultative Assembly (*Madjelis Permusjawaratan Rakjat*), Indonesia's highest policy-setting body, passed appropriate favourable legislation, all Indonesian civil officials below cabinet rank have been obliged to take courses dealing with the principles of the country's national ideology, the *Pancasila* ("Five Pillars"), already mentioned above. The courses are dubbed by acronym-minded Indonesians "P4" courses (an abbreviation of the full Indonesian name for the course, which translates into "Improvement Course on the Rules for Becoming Aware of and Applying the *Pancasila*"). From senior department heads to junior clerks some two million Indonesian civil servants have participated in these intensive two week courses. The cost to the Indonesian government (including absences from normal duties) runs into millions of dollars. Yet, the programme of compulsory indoctrination is now being extended to university students, journalists and other news media professionals, Muslim scholars of the *shariah*, business and trade union leaders. Even some foreign company executives stationed in Indonesia voluntarily take the course in order to impress their Indonesian hosts and presumably, acquire a better understanding of the country in which they are working. For the civil servants no excuses for absences from or failures to take the course have been accepted, and the grade on a final examination taken at the close of the *Pancasila*

indoctrination course has become part of Indonesian officials' permanent personnel records.<sup>16</sup>

In February, 1978, shortly before the "P4" courses were started, Indonesia's Interior Minister Ahmir Mahmud, in an address to leading academicians and university administrators, as well as in subsequent remarks, emphasized the government's position that Indonesians should not adopt ideologies other than the *Pancasila* or disregard its principles. To many Indonesians, it is evident that the Suharto government has been particularly and, perhaps, primarily motivated in its *Pancasila* campaign by its concern over the appeals of Indonesian Muslim theocratic ideologists. Conservative Muslim members of parliament walked out as a mark of protest, when the "P4" course bill came up for a vote.<sup>17</sup>

In the clash between Islam and national ideologies like *Pancasila*, all political positions tend to become polarized, turning the national ideology itself into an unquestioned dogma, a kind of civil religion."<sup>18</sup> In Malaysia there is a similar if less severe problem. Malaysia, too, has its official national doctrine, called *Rukunegara* ("Pillars of the State"). This consists of belief in God, loyalty to king and country, support for the Malaysian Constitution, commitment to the Rule of Law, and "proper conduct and moral behaviour." Like *Pancasila*, the precepts of *Rukunegara* are so broadly formulated as to allow for wide variations of interpretation; for example, what exactly is meant by "social justice" in the case of *Pancasila* or "moral behaviour" in the case of *Rukunegara*?

To ask for specificity, however, in "civil religion" is to miss the point in the formulation of all such national ideologies. For the national doctrine is essentially a policy weapon, used by existing governments in Malaysia and Indonesia to maintain political stability and orderly economic development at almost any cost. The very vagueness

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16. Michael Morfit, "Pancasila: The Indonesian State Ideology According to the New Order Government," *Asian Survey*, August, 1981, pp. 838-851; and David Jenkins, "Pancasila—A Strategy for Development," *The Straits Times* (Singapore), July 31, 1981.

17. Jenkins, *op. cit.*

18. On the "civil religion concept," see, for example, Daniel Regan, "Islam, Intellectuals, and Civil Religion in Malaysia," *Sociological Analysis*, Summer, 1976, pp. 95-110.

of the national creed therefore permits it to be interpreted in the context of the particular policy needs of the moment felt by the government. These needs may change, and hence what is "social justice" or "moral behaviour" at one time will not necessarily be considered to be so in the future. Endowing *Pancasila* and *Rukunegara* with the qualities of near religious dogma, in effect, place them - and therefore the government's policies based on them - essentially beyond the parameters of permitted public discussion. As a politically stabilizing mechanism *Pancasila* or *Rukunegara* can therefore not even be questioned by those Muslims or followers of other creeds who may have a theocratic bent.

In this connection it is important to note, however, the differences between existing political élite and the prevailing "civil religion" or national ideology. *Pancasila*, though frowned upon by orthodox Muslims in Indonesia, does permit a political consensus to emerge. In this consensus the present Indonesian political élite of senior military, technocrats and leading business circles can function, maintain itself, and execute systematic economic development. The Muslim political élite in Indonesia—the leaders of Muslim parties, senior Muslim scholars of holy writ and *shariah* (there is no priesthood in Islam), the heads of major Islamic school and foundations, prominent land-owners and merchants - can participate in this political consensus only to the extent that it under-emphasizes or even negates any serious religious fundamentalism. The "civil religion" of *Pancasila* or *Rukunegara* thus makes modernization possible. Their very vagueness even allows élite participation for modernist Muslims in both Indonesia and Malaysia who, though evidently with some reluctance, agree not to press too hard so as to break up the secular foundations of public policy and the separation of religion and the state. On the other hand, an orthodox Muslim élite, if ever placed in a position to set by itself the terms of the prevailing national ideology (i.e. Islamic fundamentalism) would destroy the political consensus. It would set *abangan*, Christian and non-believer against the *santri* element, and thus plunge Indonesia or Malaysia into the kind of isolation, economic stagnation and political chaos that has characterized the Khomeini era in Iran.

It should be noted also that the purveyors of "civil religion" in Southeast Asia believe that their doctrine is broad enough to include followers of Islam. Of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam's (SRV) present population of about 53 million, there are today perhaps no more

than 40,000 avowed Muslims mainly in such southern provinces as Kien Giang and Minh Hai. Though the ideological primacy of Marxism-Leninism in the SRV is always stressed by the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam, party and public officials maintain that private religious belief and practice is respected. The late Sukarno, Indonesia's first National President, who most vigorously propagated the *Pancasila* concept (he did not claim to be the actual originator) once he came to power, is viewed as having undergone himself what may be called an "Islamic phase" in his own intellectual development. Sukarno's first *sila* ("pillar"), like the first principle of Malaysia's *Rukunegara* is "belief in God." Various official interpreters of *Pancasila* over the years, from Sukarno himself on down, have always insisted that this assures not just the religious foundation of the state, but, more particularly it guarantees the Muslim that he can live by his Islamic precepts.

What the concept has meant in practice, however, both in the Southeast Asian states where Muslims are in a minority (Burma, the SRV, Singapore, the Philippines and Thailand), as well as where they nominally predominate but where a non-Islamic "civil religion" prevails (Malaysia and Indonesia) is the practice of "voluntary submission" to the *shariah*. This means, for example, that in the critical areas of marriage, family and inheritance laws the state *allows* consenting Muslims to submit themselves to the jurisdiction of recognized Islamic courts and jurisprudence. Both in Indonesia and Malaysia, however, judicial practice has been loath for political reasons to set clear and unequivocal limits to the application of Islamic law even to consenting Muslims. Thus there remains the problem of so-called "conflict of laws" (i.e. irreconcilable differences between Islamic and non-Islamic codes). Application of Islamic fundamentalist types of punishment (e.g. hacking off the hand of a thief, stoning to death those caught in acts of adultery) as, reportedly, has occurred in contemporary Saudi Arabia and Khomeini's Iran, would not be permitted—even if, presumably, the guilty party desired such punishment in expiation of the committed crime.

Throughout Indonesia and Malaysia one finds the Islamic religious courts (*pengadilan agama*). But their appearance at least—in contrast to that of the state's courts—does not suggest that they play an important role in a nominally Muslim country. As one authoritative writer has described them in Indonesia :

You have to hunt for *pengadilan agama*, which are variously placed. Usually they are near the city mosque, occasionally but rarely on its grounds, or at least in the *kauman*, the devoutly Islamic quarter of the city. Sometimes, however, the court is located in an alley, or on the second floor of a government building where other Islamic administrative offices are found. With very few exceptions religious courts are cramped and poorly furnished. One normally finds even in the major city courts only two tiny rooms or so, in one of which a small table covered with green felt serves as the judicial bench. In a crowded front room or corridor, administrative staff receive and register people with business at the court. Archives barely exist, though there are usually a few books in Arabic on a shelf, or perhaps some registration books or even packs of old decisions in a cupboard. Funds are too scarce for anything like elaborate decor, nor are most judges inclined enough toward research to require impressive libraries.<sup>19</sup>

The persistent problem of defining the jurisdictional competence of Islamic courts has been met in recent years by significant legislation in Malaysia and Indonesia. Much less has been done in Thailand and the Philippines. The 1974 Indonesian marriage law, for example, has strengthened generally the scope of the Islamic courts including in it the controversial areas of polygamy and divorce and in the application of the *shariah*.<sup>20</sup> Christians and non-orthodox Muslims in Indonesia have been far less pleased, however. Since the function of the Islamic courts directly conflicts everywhere with a non-religious political value system, the real issue of identifying the judicial character of the Indonesian polity remains unresolved.

A final consideration of the Islamic political texture in Southeast Asia today is the area of foreign relations. In principle, Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as the more fundamentalist Muslim communities in Thailand and the Philippines, are sympathetic to the concept of an "Arab nation," i.e. the political unity of the Muslim core countries in the Middle East, as for example, advocated by the Baath Socialist

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19. Daniel S. Lev, *Islamic Courts in Indonesia. A Study in the political Bases of Legal Institutions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 112.
  20. June S. Katz and Ronald S. Katz, "The New Indonesian Marriage Law: A Mirror of Indonesia's Political, Cultural, and Legal Systems," *The American Journal of Comparative Law*, Fall, 1975, pp. 653-681.

Party in Iraq today. Quietly Djakarta and Kuala Lumpur also have recognized the diplomatic existence and political aspirations of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, while retaining diplomatic relations with the state of Israel, however. As a member of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Indonesia's diplomatic interaction with the Islamic heartland is strengthened further, and both in Malaysia and Indonesia various government agencies facilitate, for example through subsidized travel arrangements for those Muslims who wish to go on a *haj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca.

Yet it is also evident that Muslim Southeast Asia's foreign policy interests are primarily determined by regional imperatives rather than by a sense of Muslim unity. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), founded in 1967, and comprising Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia, is the principal matrix of international diplomacy for the region today—not the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Furthermore, in the Philippines the assistance rendered by Libya to the MNLF, and Manila's close strategic ties with Washington, tend to obviate or limit a commitment to policy interests of the more militant Muslim organizations like the PLO, or too aggressively anti-Israeli posturing. Still, where it concerns a matter of general international legal principle, even the Philippines would be ready to go against the U.S. and vote with the rest of the members of the UN General Assembly to condemn Israel for its recent air attack on the nuclear plant in Baghdad.

The result of this ambivalent position is that Southeast Asia's 138 million Muslims today are as a rule not much of a force either in the various forums of the Islamic states, or in the international affairs of the Arab "nation." One consequence of all this, it may be suggested, is a particular tendency toward extremist positions in political-theocratic terms. Though historically Islamic modernism and reform, for example, adherents of the Wahabhi movement in Arabia, of the Al-Manar circle in Egypt, and of the Ahmadiyah in India, have had a significant effect on the Islamic renaissance in Southeast Asia early in this century, today it is the fundamentalist style of the *Komando Jihad* or of the *dakwah* which has the relatively greater appeal.

One may suggest a parallel here with the popularity today of fundamentalist, evangelical, or "charismatic" churches and movements in North American, Australian, and to a lesser degree in West European



Christianity. In Africa south of the Sahara, where Islam is contested by Christianity as well as many indigenous religions, Christian churches and sects have often exhibited a similar "charismatic" or evangelical character. Precisely to the degree that Islam in Southeast Asia today feels itself to be but on the periphery of the international Muslim community, or under attack from secular "civil religions," its fundamentalist character tends to be emphasized. Hence the earlier noted sympathy for the Ayatollah Khomeini in various parts of the Muslim community in Southeast Asia today.

In conclusion one should note that probably the major determinant of Islam's place in the political life of Southeast Asian countries in the future is likely to be the extent to which the religion is perceived as facilitating economic growth and political stabilization. An upsurge of fundamentalist religious fervour, however satisfying as a "revenge" tactic towards neglected or repressed social strata seeking to combat ruling élite, is unlikely to last as a meaningful programme of political action in a modernizing state. For an indefinite time, therefore, Islam's theocratic dimension in Southeast Asia will have its impact as a national security or jurisprudential problem. But it is not the wave of the future. It is well to stress again that not even in Indonesia or Malaysia is Islamic orthodoxy numerically sufficiently dominant to the extent that it can hope to succeed in determining national political life. To be sure, in both Indonesia and Malaysia Islam has a broad symbolic significance, serving as a major cultural reference point even for those less ardently committed to the faith. But such factors as the *abangan* orientation, which is deeply interwoven with indigenous, pre-Islamic values and traditions in Indonesia, racial differences—particularly the prominence of the Chinese in Malaysia, and, in both countries, a steadily advancing secularization of lifestyles, will continue to limit greatly Islam's cultural and political roles.