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## REVIEW ESSAY

# RECENT STUDIES ON INDONESIAN ISLAM: A SIGN OF INTELLECTUAL EXHAUSTION?

Jajat Burhanudin and Kees Van Dijk, eds. *Islam in Indonesia: Contrasting Images and Interpretation*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013. 279 pp.

Noorhaidi Hasan. *The Making of Public Islam: Piety, Democracy and Youth in Indonesian Politics*. Yogyakarta: SUKA Press, 2013. 330 pp.

Mirjam Künkler and Alfred Stepan, eds. *Democracy and Islam in Indonesia*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013. 252 pp.

Martin van Bruinessen, ed. *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn."* Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013. 240 pp.

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Islam in Indonesia continues to be a main focus of studies on Indonesian society and politics. Recent research on this subject analyses Indonesian Islam in the context of changing state-society relations in post-authoritarian era. However, despite the proliferation of new studies and empirical findings on post-authoritarian Indonesian Islam, their primary analytical lens remains unchanged. This lens is based on five main

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theoretical assumptions about Indonesian Islam, namely (1) the primacy of culturalist and idealist explanations of Indonesian Islam, (2) the dichotomy between “moderate-progressive” and “conservative-fundamentalist” Islamic groups, (3) a focus on Islamic groups and institutions within society, (4) a presentist view of Indonesian Islam, and (5) methodologically, a crude division of labor between humanities scholars and social scientists.

Such a research agenda, unfortunately, has a number of major weaknesses. First of all, it reifies the “moderate-progressive versus conservative-fundamentalist” view of Indonesian Islam, thereby reducing the complexity and diversity *within* Indonesian Islam and possibly essentializing it. Second, its overemphasis on the role of Islamic groups and institutions isolates the dynamics of these groups from larger structural contexts, that is, the changing nature of political economy, class configurations, and state-society relations in post-authoritarian Indonesia. Likewise, the mainstream approach to studying Indonesian Islam also overlooks the transnational impact of changes in global political economy on Islamic movements worldwide, including Indonesian Islam. Given all of this, the lack of an innovative research agenda for contemporary studies of Indonesian Islam might be symptomatic of intellectual exhaustion.

The recent works on Indonesian Islam under review here are not free from the shortcomings described above. With the exception of Noorhaidi Hasan’s monograph, most of the essays in the other three edited volumes look at Indonesian Islam from a mainstream perspective. As such, although the empirics of their findings are appreciated, their analytical frameworks have been overused. To overcome this barrier, reviving a critical materialist approach that takes into account both ideational and historical-structural dimensions can provide a breakthrough for future research on Indonesian Islam.

### **The Same Old Wine in the Same Old Bottle**

Perhaps the clearest sign of the lack of new theoretical breakthroughs can be found in Mirjam Künkler and Alfred Stepan’s and Martin van Bruinessen’s edited volumes. At the risk of being accused of exaggeration, any serious student of comparative politics, Indonesia, and political Islam will find it difficult to point out what is really new in these two books, despite the fact that the editors and many of the contributors are long-time observers of Indonesian political Islam.

Künkler and Stepan open the discussion in the introduction by outlining the four main foci of their book, namely, theoretical discussion of Indonesia’s democratization, attitudes and behaviors of religious and political actors, religion, and law. The main emphasis here is on the competition and disagreement over political discourses and the need to find a Rawlsian “overlapping consensus”<sup>2</sup> among different religious and political actors (6). They also emphasize the role of public intellectuals in promoting democratic values and combating anti-democratic ideas (7). In the second chapter, William Liddle and Saiful Mujani, two other senior scholars on Indonesian Islam and

<sup>2</sup> For an elaboration of the notion of “overlapping consensus,” see John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

politics, discuss Indonesia's democratization using Linz and Stepan's classic work on democratic transition and consolidation as a benchmark.<sup>3</sup> The focus of their essay is on the attitudinal, behavioral, and constitutional dimensions of democratic consolidation in five arenas: civil, political, and economic societies; the rule of law; and the state's apparatus. The second part of the book discusses the discursive aspect of relations among different Muslims groups and religious minorities. Künkler analyzes the emergence of pluralist democracy as one, if not the most prominent, political discourse among secular and nonsecular Muslims in Indonesia in chapter three, whereas the famous Catholic priest and intellectual Franz Magnis-Susen, who is more known as "Romo Magnis" by Indonesians, looks at state policies and the attitude of the Muslim majority toward Christian and Muslim minorities in chapter four. In the third part of the book, three leading scholars on Indonesian politics—Marcus Mietzner, Sidney Jones, and Edward Aspinall—discuss, respectively, the declining influence of the military, government policies on radical Islam, and the survival of the Indonesian state amidst separatism, all in the context of post-authoritarian Indonesia. Finally, in the last chapters of the book, John Bowen discusses the politics of shari'a-inspired regulations and Tim Lindsey and Simon Butt highlight challenges regarding legal reforms.

This edited volume by Künkler and Stepan tries to be ambitious in its scope, but it leaves a number of theoretical and empirical gaps unexplained. The book overly focuses on the discursive and ideational aspects of Indonesian political Islam, neglecting other factors, such as material forces that also shape and influence it. Particularly lacking is an attempt to situate Indonesian political Islam apropos of *class factors*, especially in the context of changing class relations in the late years of the New Order era and after authoritarianism. The book could have pointed out more explicitly, for instance, the role of religious civil society organizations (CSOs) and social movements in promoting *cross-class alliances* for democratization, a point that is already well-rehearsed in the literature.<sup>4</sup> In fact, there is almost no mention at all of class analysis in Liddle and Mujani's chapter on Indonesia's democratization, and very little analysis of liberal discourses within Indonesian Islam as the expression of the *middle class values* of the newly emerging Muslim intellectuals in Künkler's chapter on Muslims' reception of the discourse of pluralist democracy.

At the same time, the book overstates the importance of public intellectuals in promoting a democratic Indonesian Islam, and subsequently glosses over an important question: what is the relationship between intellectuals and subaltern classes in the struggle for a democratic Indonesian Islam, and the impact of said relationship on post-authoritarian Indonesian Islam? This question is worth asking because it has important ramifications for the very issue that this book is concerned with, that is, the spread and deepening of what is broadly conceived as "democratic values" among Indonesian Muslims. More importantly, this question also touches on a series of unspoken yet serious concerns of many scholars, activists, and religious practitioners

<sup>3</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance: Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Dan Slater, *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 197–98; 203–10. Testriono also brings to my attention the fact that the focus on the middle class character of *Santri* Muslims has been discussed quite extensively in the literature on Indonesian Islam in the 1990s.

regarding the development of Indonesian Islam—such as the tension between liberal and leftist discourses in Indonesian Islam; the kind of agenda that is being promoted by religious movements, institutions, and CSOs; and the political economy of the promotion of “democratic” discourses within Indonesian Islam. As Elizabeth Hurd rightly points out in her articles, the promotion and globalization of certain types of “progressive” religious discourses (e.g., religious freedom and tolerance) and religious groups and figures that promote such discourses can sometimes be shaped by powerful interests, for example, by the United States government in pursuit of its own agenda. As such, outside interests can limit the development of alternative religious discourses and the participatory space for other religious groups because those are not given the same opportunity to present their views by the powerful interests.<sup>5</sup> It is also a truism that various external and structural factors, such as the influence of donor agencies, the hegemony of particular political discourses, and the social milieu of intellectuals, shape the way certain discourses and CSOs emerge and develop over time.<sup>6</sup> To evade this kind of question not only misses important points but also perpetuates the gap between what the pro-democratic intellectuals deem important, regardless of their good intentions, with what the Muslim public at the grassroots level really needs. In other words, all the talk about civil and political liberties (“rights”) and religious tolerance by pro-democratic Muslim intellectuals means little if those intellectuals do not really contextualize their arguments and address the pressing issues for ordinary Muslims.

To paraphrase the question in a more concrete manner, what do pro-democratic Muslim intellectuals say about the potential role that Indonesian Islamic CSOs (e.g., Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, or the once-famous Jaringan Islam Liberal) can play in dealing with pressing issues for subaltern classes (many of whose members are Muslims), such as agrarian conflicts and continuing human rights violations by state and corporate authorities? A good example of this gap is actually Romo Magnis’s own chapter in the book. With all due respect to his long engagement in promoting religious freedom and interreligious tolerance in Indonesia, his analysis of attacks against Christians and their churches from the late 1990s to early 2000s (76–79) is highly essentialist, seeing the attacks primarily in terms of “ancient hatred” arguments, and thereby neglecting other important factors at play in those attacks, such as state policies toward religion and elite manipulation of religious identity.

Despite these serious omissions and shortcomings, probably one of the few “new” things that the book offers is Bowen’s chapter on the politics of Shari’a regulations in Indonesia. It touches upon a novel, growing body of literature on the political role of state-backed or state-affiliated religious elites, in particular the Indonesian Ulama Council (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI) in post-authoritarian Indonesia.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Two of her recent articles on this subject are Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, “Religious Freedom, American-style,” *Quaderni di Diritto e Politica Ecclesiastica* 1, (2014): 231–42; and “The International Politics of Religious Freedom,” *IIC Quarterly*, Special issue on Living with Religious Diversity (2014): 225–37.

<sup>6</sup> A classic article that settles this issue once and for all is James Petras, “NGOs: In the Service of Imperialism,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 29, no. 4 (1999): 429–40.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example: Syafiq Hasyim, “The Council of Indonesian Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI) and its Role in the Shariatization of Indonesia” (PhD Dissertation, Free University of Berlin, 2013); Moch Nur Ichwan, “Towards a Puritanical Moderate Islam: The Majelis Ulama Indonesia and the Politics of Religious Orthodoxy,” in *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the Conservative Turn*,

This kind of intellectual repetitiveness and lack of innovative analyses can also be found in Martin van Bruinessen's edited volume. To start, he introduces the recent conservative turn of Indonesian Islam and gives an overview of Muslim organizations in Indonesia in the first and second chapters, respectively. In chapter three, Moch Nur Ichwan discusses the role of MUI in the politics of religious orthodoxy. Afterward, Ahmad Naji Burhani discusses the tension between liberal and conservative discourses in Muhammadiyah in chapter four. In chapters five and six, Mujiburrahman and Muhammad Wildan discuss the role of an Islamic fundamentalist organization, Komite Persiapan Penegakan Syaria Islam (KPPSI, Preparatory Committee for the Implementation of Islamic Sharia), on the politics of shari'a regulations in South Sulawesi and radical Islam in Solo, Central Java, respectively. Van Bruinessen wraps up the book by discussing the prospect of liberal and progressive discourses in Indonesian Islam.

Again, this book lacks a thorough discussion of the impact of capitalist development on Indonesian Islam and Muslims. For example, van Bruinessen could have linked his discussion in the Introduction of the decline of institutional channels for the reformers in various Islamic organizations and social movements, with rising conservatism, not only within the said organizations and movements but also among the Muslim middle class as well. This conservatism is a phenomenon that has structural roots in the way capitalist development unfolds during an authoritarian or illiberal period in many Asian countries, including Indonesia.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Ichwan's chapter could have emphasized the role of material factors in the political ascendancy of the MUI, thus making his chapter more comprehensive by elaborating on MUI's new source of revenue and how it influences MUI's socio-political power. Another research niche that needs further elaboration is the connection between social movements and politicians in the context of the implementation of Islamist agendas, a topic that has generated a lot of scholarly attention<sup>9</sup> and might have been explored in greater detail in Mujiburrahman's chapter.

A particular exception is Wildan's chapter on the proliferation of radical Islam in Solo, which highlights two important points: the coexistence of the strange bedfellows—orthodoxy and syncretism—in Islam in Solo and the rise of radical or fundamentalist Islam as a perverted and dislocated expression of lower class interests, two issues that are also echoed by other scholars as well.<sup>10</sup> But in general, the book puts

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ed. Martin van Bruinessen (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013), 60–104; and Dani Muhtada, "The Mechanisms of Policy Diffusion: A Comparative Study of Shari'a Regulations in Indonesia" (PhD Dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> See Richard Robison and David S. G. Goodman, eds., *The New Rich in Asia: Mobile Phones, McDonalds, and Middle-class Revolution* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996). For the Indonesian context, see Richard Tanter and Kenneth Young, eds., *The Politics of Middle Class Indonesia* (Victoria: Center of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990).

<sup>9</sup> Some recent works on this topic are Quintan Wiktorowicz, ed., *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) on the theoretical plane; and, for a focus on the Indonesian context, Michael Buehler, "Subnational Islamization through Secular Parties: Comparing Shari'a Politics in Two Indonesian Provinces," *Comparative Politics* 46, no. 1 (2013): 63–82.

<sup>10</sup> For a recent discussion on the coexistence of orthodoxy and syncretism, see Ota Atsushi, "Orthodoxy and Reconciliation: Islamic Strategies in the Kingdom of Banten, c. 1520–1813," in *Islam in Contention: Rethinking Islam and State in Indonesia*, ed. Ota Atsushi, Okamoto Masaaki, and Ahmad Suaedy (Jakarta: Wahid Institute; Kyoto: Kyoto University Center for Southeast Asian Studies; and Taipei: Academia Sinica Center for Asia-Pacific Area Studies, 2010), pp. 393–420. For a recent discussion on Islamic

too much emphasis on ideational factors, such as contestation of ideas and ideologies, and less on material or structural factors. This overly ideational perspective risks misspecifying the appropriate unit of analysis and overlooking various causal mechanisms that connect ideas with existing institutional and structural conditions in explaining the conservative turn of Indonesian Islam. All in all, these two edited volumes show the limit of the idealist perspective in explaining recent changes in Indonesian Islam.

### **Bringing Class Back In: Some Attempts at Intellectual Breakthroughs**

The other two books under consideration here, Burhanudin and van Dijk's edited volume and Hasan's monograph, show a more promising effort to make some intellectual breakthroughs in the already-saturated research field of Indonesian Islam. In these two works, a more balanced story is given to structural and material factors shaping Indonesian Islam and Muslims without neglecting the ideational dimension of the overall story, although Hasan's single-authored book seems to be the only work under review here that properly "does justice" to both ideational and material dimensions.

In the edited volume, Kees van Dijk starts with an introduction on the different streams within Indonesian Islam. Then, Ahmad Najib Burhani and three senior scholars on Indonesian Islam—Robert Hefner, Azyumardi Azra, and Taufik Abdullah—discuss, in chapters two to five, the classical theme of Indonesian Islam and its role in domestic state-society relations and the international arena. An interesting topic that receives extensive elaboration in this volume, chapters six to nine, is women's issues—Dian Maya Safitri discusses a Yogyakarta-based Islamic boarding school for the third gender (*Pondok Pesantren Khusus Waria*), Nina Nurmila raises the issue of the Indonesian Muslim feminist interpretation of inheritance, Euis Nurlaelawati highlights legal reforms pertaining to family issues, and Andrée Feillard and Pieterella van Doorn-Harder situate the emergence of the new generation of feminists within traditional Islam in the Indonesian context. In chapter ten, Asfa Widiyanto focuses on the role of two prominent Islamic scholars, Mustofa Bisri and Emha Ainun Nadjib, commonly known as Gus Mus and Cak Nun in Indonesia. The last four chapters of the volume cover the impact of societal changes on Indonesian Islam—Hilman Latief elaborates on the middle class and the new patterns of Islamic social activism, Sunarwoto looks at *Dakwah* radio stations for religious proselytizing in Surakarta, Didin Nurul Rosidin discusses the case of Islamic fundamentalism among Muslim student associations in high schools in Cirebon, and Syaifudin Zuhri observes the case study of an Islamic group, Majelis Tafsir Qur'an.

This collection makes an effort to provide a nuanced view of Indonesian Islam, although it still can be improved. Take the example of the volume's introduction. Van Dijk's review of different streams of Indonesian Islam, as well as different approaches of studying Indonesian Islam, is comprehensive. However, he misses an important

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fundamentalism as an expression of lower class interests, see Vedi Hadiz, "Indonesian Political Islam: Capitalist Development and the Legacies of the Cold War," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 30, no. 1 (2011): 3–38.

theoretical approach in studying religion and society, including Indonesian Islam, namely, the class-centered critical political economy approach.<sup>11</sup> Chapters two to five do not really offer a new theoretical angle for studying Indonesian Islam, but these chapters touch upon some interesting points. For instance, Burhani mentions the influence of postmodernism on the intellectual landscape of Indonesian Islam, a topic that deserves additional serious attention in the future.

What these chapters overlook is also interesting. Abdullah's discussion about liberal currents in Indonesian Islam misses the fact that there are tensions *within* the liberal and progressive streams of Indonesian Islam, especially between the liberals and the leftists.<sup>12</sup> The omission in Hefner's chapter is even more interesting. Essentially, he examines Indonesian Islam and its place in the global context through his culturalist or Tocquevillean perspective, which is an echo of his earlier seminal work, *Civil Islam*,<sup>13</sup> but, strangely enough, here he is silent on the impact of global neoliberalism on Indonesian Islam and Muslims, despite the fact that he himself has discussed this issue quite extensively elsewhere!<sup>14</sup> A reader familiar with studies on Indonesian Islam might wonder why the Tocquevillean Hefner does not really speak to the structuralist Hefner. But this lack of novelty in the early chapters of the volume is compensated for by the extensive and good discussion on women's issues in chapters six to nine, which deserve appreciation. From these chapters, Safitri's analysis of *Pondok Pesantren Khusus Waria* is particularly interesting and enlightening from both theoretical and empirical viewpoints. These chapters highlight the increasing visibility and role of Muslim women and feminists in Indonesia in recent years, and that leads to an interesting question: does this change indicate a change in state-Islam and state-society relations, at least in the context of women's issues?

Another fascinating empirical contribution is Sunarwoto's chapter on Surakarta's *Dakwah*, or religious proselytizing radio stations, which is a rather understudied topic. But even more interesting are Latief's and Rosidin's chapters. Latief rightly points out the main characteristic of contemporary Islamic humanitarian activism as a socio-political expression of the urban middle class, whereas Rosidin's study of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism among Muslim student associations in high schools might illuminate the social origin of Muslim middle class conservatism in educational institutions.

<sup>11</sup> For a comprehensive review of various approaches in studying Southeast Asian Islam and Muslim societies including the political economy approach, see Kikue Hamayotsu, "Beyond Doctrine and Dogma: Religion and Politics in Southeast Asia," in *Southeast Asia in Political Science: Theory, Region, and Qualitative Analysis*, ed. Erik Martinez Kuhonta, Dan Slater, and Tuong Vu (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> One of the most well-known groupings of liberal Muslim intellectuals is the Liberal Islam Network (*Jaringan Islam Liberal*), which has generated a lot of controversy and received a significant degree of scholarly attention, whereas some examples of the left-leaning Muslim social movements are the Institute for Islamic and Social Studies (*Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Sosial*, LKIS) and Islam Bergerak (<http://islambergerak.com/>), an online magazine managed by left-leaning Muslim activists. Even some intellectuals and activists who manage a leftist online magazine, IndoPROGRESS (<http://indoprogress.com>), also have some background in Islamic activism.

<sup>13</sup> Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> See Robert W. Hefner, "Religious Resurgence in Contemporary Asia: Southeast Asian Perspectives on Capitalism, the State, and the New Piety," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 4 (2010): 1031–47.

All the topics that the three books deal with receive a more complete elaboration in Noorhaidi Hasan's monograph. Hasan explores the origin and emergence of public Islam and its impact on politics and society in contemporary Indonesia. In his exploration of the impact of a more assertive expression of Islam in Indonesia, he looks at a number of different aspects, namely, the challenge of Islamist militancy, the mobilization of Islam in local politics in the two provincial towns of Kebumen and Martapura, the socio-political impact of the public performance of Islamic rituals, the relationship between Islam and the middle class, the performance of Islamic parties, and the relationships among Islam, educational institutions, and youth. In the first chapter, Hasan identifies some major causes that led to the emergence of public Islam in Indonesia, namely, the growing middle class; the rise of Islamic media and Islamic representations in mainstream media; the rise of a global Islamic *umma*, or community, as an "imagined" community and identity; political liberalization and democratization; and increasing commodification of Islam.

He notes in chapter two that one of the main challenges of this increasing public profile of Islam in recent years is the rise of Islamist militancy. In chapter three, he discusses how Islam was mobilized by political and religious elites in Kebumen and Martapura to reach out to local citizens, a contribution that adds to the growing studies on Indonesian Islam and provincial towns.<sup>15</sup> In chapter four he links this increasing public role of Islam and its mobilization by elites with the performance of symbolic rituals that have significant socio-political impact. But the meat of his argument is in chapter five, in which he emphasizes the visibility of public Islam as *an expression of Muslim middle class values*. Basically, he sees the phenomenon of public Islam from a political economy perspective, a reading that is not widely shared by many other scholars of contemporary Indonesian Islam. In the rest of the book, that is, chapters six to eight, he focuses on the rising popularity of public Islam, including its political Islam and Islamist variants among Indonesian youth, its dissemination through educational institutions, and its relationship with Islamist electoral and socio-cultural mobilization. The book's focus on the politics of education is important and should be appreciated because, from a comparative perspective, the politicization of educational agendas by religious groups is not unique to Indonesia; other Islamic and religious movements in other countries have embarked on this strategy,<sup>16</sup> including Catholic social movements and Christian democratic parties in Western Europe that also followed this strategy in the past.<sup>17</sup> He concludes by reiterating his main argument: Islamic revival in contemporary Indonesia in its moderate, conservative, and Islamist manifestations is a result of not only ideational but also structural changes globally and domestically. The impact of such a revival, however, is mediated by various local contexts and

<sup>15</sup> The examples of studies on Indonesian Islam at the local level are too numerous to mention here, but for recent works on Indonesian provincial towns, see Gerry van Klinken, *The Making of Middle Indonesia: Middle Classes in Kupang Town, 1930s–1980s* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014); and Gerry van Klinken and Ward Berenschot, eds., *In Search of Middle Indonesia: Middle Classes in Provincial Towns* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> For a thorough discussion on the implementation of this kind of strategy in the Egyptian context, see Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> For a thorough discussion on the implementation of this kind of strategy in the Western European context, see Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996).

institutions, such as local elite politics, class relations, cultural repertoire, and educational institutions.

Despite Hasan's theoretical breakthrough, however, there is still room for improvement. For example, he asserts that democracy "requires a liberation of public spaces from the domination of narrow religious, ethnic, and primal sentiments" (76). While Hasan is right that the domination of parochial and sectarian discourses will inhibit the functioning of democracy, his framework of understanding state-religion relations is still confined within the parameters of a Lockean regime of toleration<sup>18</sup> and Rawlsian public reason.<sup>19</sup> In reality, meanwhile, there are competing notions of secularism and the separation of religion and state,<sup>20</sup> and different arrangements of democratic state-religion relations,<sup>21</sup> including a rather distinctive arrangement of state-religion relations in Indonesia.<sup>22</sup> This is not to say that Hasan's inclination toward the Lockean-Rawlsian framework of state-religion relations is invalid; quite the contrary. From a philosophical standpoint, a Lockean-Rawlsian framework might be the most ideal arrangement of state-society relations, but such an ideal can take different institutional manifestations, something that Hasan could have discussed more thoroughly. Furthermore, he could have addressed the difference, if any, in the way big city and small town middle class Muslims express their religiosity. Related to that, he also could have linked the limits and potential of local alliances between civil society and Islamic social movements in promoting democratic space at the local level in the context of patronage-ridden civil society landscape in Indonesia.<sup>23</sup> Lastly, he might have examined the issue of whether the Islamist Prosperous Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*, PKS) has been successful in forming a cross-class alliance, given that such an alliance is commonly adopted by religious parties to broaden its support base, an issue which has been discussed quite thoroughly elsewhere.<sup>24</sup> But overall, Hasan's work manages to make a theoretical breakthrough by taking class and other material and structural factors that shape Indonesian Islam seriously, an effort which deserves appreciation.

<sup>18</sup> For further elaboration on the notion of regime of toleration, see John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983).

<sup>19</sup> For further elaboration on the notion of public reason, see John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 64, no. 3 (1997): 765–807.

<sup>20</sup> For a proper treatment on this subject, see: Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); and Ahmet T. Kuru, *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> On this subject, see Alfred Stepan, *Arguing Comparative Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> Probably one of the most recent and comprehensive works on this issue is Jeremy Menchik, "Tolerance without Liberalism: Islamic Institutions and Political Violence in Twentieth Century Indonesia" (PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2011).

<sup>23</sup> For a recent discussion on the impact of patronage politics and neoliberalism on civil society in Indonesia, see Edward Aspinall, "A Nation in Fragments: Patronage and Neoliberalism in Contemporary Indonesia," *Critical Asian Studies* 45, no. 1 (2013): 27–54.

<sup>24</sup> Vedi R. Hadiz, "No Turkish Delight: The Impasse of Islamic Party Politics in Indonesia," *Indonesia* 92 (2011): 1–18.

### Toward a New Trend in Research on Indonesian Islam

Based on the these four recent works, what can we tell about the current state of studies on Indonesian Islam? Some of these works, namely the essays on the MUI and women's issues in the context of Indonesian Islam, present interesting empirical findings. Moreover, they also pose a thought-provoking question: given the increasing role of MUI and the visibility of women's issues and Muslim feminists in Indonesia, what does such a change tell us about the relations among Islam, state, and society in post-authoritarian Indonesia? Nonetheless, I argue that the overall picture of recent studies on Indonesian Islam has been a mixed one. There are a lot of interesting empirical findings in recent years, but this development does not necessarily translate into analytical novelty or theoretical breakthroughs in studying Indonesian Islam. In order to break this wall of intellectual exhaustion, the study of Indonesian Islam needs a significant reorientation, which can be done. I will now propose some possible theoretical and methodological strategies for future studies on Indonesian Islam.

First of all, from theoretical and methodological standpoints, the study of Indonesian Islam should move away from an essentialist conception of Indonesian Islam and better specify its unit of analysis. It is strange that some remnants of a static Geertzian *santri-abangan* dichotomy<sup>25</sup> in conceiving Indonesian Islam still lingers in some essays in the four works under review, despite evidence that that dichotomy has been discredited. While in general the field has moved beyond the crude Geertzian dichotomy, the dualistic view of categorizing Indonesian Islam and Muslims is still embraced and has transformed into the distinction between "moderate-progressive" and "conservative-fundamentalist" Muslims. This distinction between "good" and "bad" Muslims is precisely what Mahmood Mamdani criticizes in his seminal work.<sup>26</sup> The dualistic categorization and binary opposition of good "moderate and progressive" versus bad "conservative and fundamentalist" Muslims in Indonesia perpetuates an essentialist view of Indonesian Islam. Moreover, it also neglects other factors that led to the rise of conservatism among Indonesian Muslims and, more importantly, the kind of dominant discourse or ideology that creates and popularizes the said dualism. To brush off this issue risks not only misrepresenting the empirical reality, but also provides justification for bad policy proposals (e.g., a continuing neglect of the importance of social justice issues for many ordinary Muslims, the securitization of religious freedom and tolerance issues, and further marginalization of religious minorities, to name a few), and overlooks the *structural* nature of rising Islamic conservatism in Indonesia.

A part of this problem is misspecification of the *unit of analysis*, that is, the major object or factor being analyzed, in studying the influence of religion in society: would it be possible to make an entirely ideational explanation of the impact of religious texts and ideas on society *without* taking into account the existing local cultural matrices,

<sup>25</sup> *Santri-Abangan* dichotomy refers to the distinction between observant and nominal Muslims in Indonesian context. Further elaboration on this categorization can be found in Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976).

<sup>26</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004).

institutions, and political economy structures,<sup>27</sup> especially given that there is always a cultural gap between the elites and the masses in any society?<sup>28</sup> This problem also implies that there is a need to treat ideas, including religious texts, not only as an explanatory variable, but also as a phenomenon to be explained, especially in the study of Indonesian Islam.

A possible theoretical and methodological solution to address this problem is to consider using both a critical political economy approach and comparative historical methodology to examine Indonesian Islam, an approach not entirely alien to the the topic.<sup>29</sup> Using a critical political economy approach, which takes seriously the role of the state, social forces, and capitalist development in shaping society, including its religious practices, and historicizes the development of social structures and practices, will help us to better understand the historical development of contemporary Indonesian Islam and Muslims and thereby avoid the “sin” of cultural essentialism.

Research from a critical political economy perspective can problematize the assumption of the importance of Muslim identity as something given, and explain why religious expression emerges and becomes socially and politically salient. Additionally, a comparative historical perspective avoids too much of an Indonesia-centric explanation of Indonesian Islam, puts the Indonesian case into the broader global context, and, subsequently, provides for a more comprehensive understanding of Indonesia Islam.<sup>30</sup> Using this analytical lens, however, requires taking seriously not only Islamic social forces but also other structural factors, such as state and class relations.

Recent reflections on new studies on Indonesian Islam have highlighted the need to state-related issues and policies.<sup>31</sup> To that, I would also add that there is a need to consider *class* relations as well. Turning this proposal into reality means seeing contemporary Indonesian Islam from a historical point of view, and going beyond the crude division of labor between social science and humanities scholars toward an interdisciplinary approach in researching Indonesian Islam. In fact, just such an attempt to historicize the recent development of Indonesian Islam and put it in a larger structural context has been seriously considered and discussed by Indonesian

<sup>27</sup> For a good discussion on this issue, see David Laitin, “Religion, Political Culture, and the Weberian Tradition,” *World Politics* 30, no. 4 (1978): 563–92.

<sup>28</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

<sup>29</sup> Some examples of historical works using this perspective are: Takashi Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912–1926* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990); and Ken Young, *Islamic Peasants and the State: The 1908 Anti-Tax Rebellion in West Sumatra* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1994).

<sup>30</sup> Vedi Hadiz is one of, if not the most, leading scholars that take political economy and comparative historical approaches in the study of Indonesian and Southeast Asian Islam seriously. He has published a number of works on this subject; for his latest work, see Vedi R. Hadiz, “Islamic Politics in Southeast Asia: A Critical Reassessment,” *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 1, no. 2 (2013): 215–35.

<sup>31</sup> See: Michael Buehler, review essay, “State Management of Religion in Indonesia by Myengkkyo Seo; The Roots of Terrorism in Indonesia: From Darul Islam to Jema’ah Islamiyah by Solahudin; Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the “Conservative Turn,” ed. Martin van Bruinessen,” *Democratization* 22, No. 3 (2015): 1–5; and Kikue Hamayotsu, “Conservative Turn? Religion, State, and Conflict in Indonesia,” *Pacific Affairs* 87, no. 4 (2014): 815–25.

intellectuals and activists.<sup>32</sup> We will see how this development unfolds in the years to come.

Based on this reflection, what will the future be like for studying Indonesian Islam? At the moment, there is not a definitive answer to that question. But one thing for sure is that the study of Indonesian Islam needs a serious theoretical reorientation, otherwise we will end up with more of the same kind of intellectual exhaustion and repetitiveness that has been going on in recent years. A purely ideational and culturalist explanation of Indonesian Islam is *passé*.

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<sup>32</sup> See, for instance, Muhammad Al-Fayyadl, "Menaja Kembali Pergerakan Kajian Islam," *Diskusi Kamisan NU Online*, November 1, 2010, <http://www.nu.or.id/a,public-m,dinamic-s,detail-ids,4-id,25117-lang,id-c,kolom-t,Menaja+Kembali+Pergerakan+Kajian+Islam+1-.phpx>, accessed March 3, 2015; and Airlangga Pribadi, "Mendaras Islam Progresif, Melampaui Islam Liberal," *IndoProgress*, May 4, 2011, <http://indoprogress.com/2011/05/mendaras-islam-progresif-melampaui-islam-liberal/>, accessed March 3, 2015.