

Robert W. Hefner. *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. 286 pages, index.

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This book is the product of ten years of "studying up" by an anthropologist who began his career in more traditional fashion. Between 1977 and 1980, Robert Hefner conducted fieldwork among one of the last groups of Javanese to remain "Hindu," the Tengger who live high on the mountains of East Java. Their relative isolation from the main currents of global economic and religious activity made them accessible to study through the methods of traditional anthropology, particularly that of participant observation.

In 1991, Hefner began a study of the group most involved in global economic and religious currents: the political, economic, and religious elites of the national capital, many of whom hold doctoral degrees from American, European, or Middle Eastern universities. Hefner's method was to conduct a series of interviews with key players on the national and international stage during a decade of "annual summer visits to Indonesia . . . to talk with Muslim intellectuals, business people, and activists about democracy, markets and social justice." Hefner achieved a remarkable degree of access to influential individuals during the last decade of Suharto's rule, especially to Nurcholish Madjid (PhD Chicago) and to the Chair of the Nahdatul Ulama (NU), Abdurrahman Wahid, until very recently President of Indonesia. He uses this access to good effect in the book, taking the reader behind the scenes to discuss the key players' perceptions of the motives of their adversaries and their own thinking as they pondered their next moves in the struggle to define Indonesia's political and religious future.

Hefner notes that when he began his study, American anthropologists thought that his central concepts—democracy and civil society—were too tied to Western civilization to be applicable to Indonesia. While the first response by Western political scientists was to hail the break-up of the Soviet bloc as the final triumph of Hegel's universal vision of liberal democracy, a new form of cultural relativism soon became fashionable in political science circles. As intolerant ethnic and religious movements took off around the world, authors like Samuel Huntington proclaimed democracy to be the legacy of the "Graeco-Judeo-Christian" West and not suited to other "civilizations." Paradoxically, as the 1990s wore on, many anthropologists came to be more open to discussions of transnational phenomena under the rubric of "globalization" and "post-colonial hybridity."

Despite this recent anthropological theorizing on globalization, Hefner's agenda is drawn more from the disciplines of sociology and political science than from anthropology. His aim is to contribute to the current discussion in the latter disciplines concerning the social conditions that make democracy possible. During the Cold War, Eastern European intellectuals who yearned for the "normality" of the Western European democracies called for a "public sphere" and a "civil society" that were distinct both from the monolithic state and from the atomized private life that characterized the Soviet era. These notions—public sphere, civil society—can be traced back to Western European critics of the French revolution, such as Burke, Tocqueville,

and Hegel. They acquired a new relevance as the end game of the Russian revolution was finally played out. Then, in the 1990s, political scientists specializing in the study of post-colonial societies, formerly known as the "Third World," began to apply these concepts to their own areas of expertise.¹

In this context, Hefner's "immediate concern is to explain the emergence of a democratic, religiously ecumenical, and boldly reformist movement in Indonesian Islam in the 1980s and 1990s" (p. xvii). It would seem to be the most telling example of a predominantly Islamic society taking up these values in the modern world. To explain this movement, he turns to sociologists like Putnam, who ask what cultural and social institutions are most favorable to the development of democratic sentiments and actions. As Hefner sees it, democracy rests on three foundations: robust civic organizations in which people can learn the habits of voluntarism and tolerance; a public culture which endorses pluralism and democracy; and, just as importantly, a strong, but self-limiting, state willing and able to protect the rights of individuals and minority groups.

Hefner begins by recalling the legacy of pluralism in Indonesian Islam. In an early phase, Islam in Indonesia was characterized by the coexistence of a number of autonomous city states, and in many areas it spread peacefully and was mixed in with pre-existing legal and religious systems. In a second phase, the Dutch East India Company allied with absolutist monarchs to put an end to the independent merchant class, and during this period Islam tended to be dominated by the needs of royal courts. In a third phase, the royal courts were delegitimated or destroyed by the Dutch, and Islam was pushed out of the state and into society. There Islam survived in the extra-state organization of the religious school, or *pesantren*, and in various Sufi orders. Although these were organized internally on a hierarchical and quite undemocratic basis, they did provide an arena of public action independent of the state.

The development of a public culture favorable to democracy in the twentieth century was more problematic. In the late colonial period, the nationalist movement included both secularist creole functionaries like Sukarno and Muslim modernists who argued that Islam could not be separated from the state in the way Christianity had been in the West. Islamic modernists differed from one another on whether the Islamic state should take a democratic or theocratic form. All such debates were suspended in the 1930s in the interest of achieving independence as quickly as possible. They remained in suspension between 1945 and 1955, with all parties agreeing to Sukarno's Five Principles, which finessed the issue of the religious foundations of the state.

The accommodations made by Muslim politicians were called into question when the Muslim parties unexpectedly received only 20.9 percent of the vote in 1955. Islamic political movements were further discredited by Islamic rebellions in Sumatra and Sulawesi in the late 1950s. In 1959, Sukarno declared that Indonesia would be a "Guided Democracy," and in 1960 he banned the largest Muslim political party, the Masyumi. The Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) enjoyed increasing influence at the center.

¹ See, e.g., Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

Muslim fortunes were at a low ebb at the beginning of the 1960s, but the Communists overplayed their hand. They launched a land reform campaign in 1963 that disproportionately threatened the interests of "traditionalist" Muslim clerics in Java, who had often accumulated large areas of land due to pious endowments (*waqaf*), mercantile profits, and a general ethic of hard work. The organization that represented these rural clerics—the Nahdatul Ulama—cemented an alliance with elite factions in the military who opposed the PKI for their own reasons. This led to growing vertical cleavages within the state itself, with each state faction reaching out into society for allies.

Here Hefner arrives at a first, critical, conclusion. Where political scientists like Benedict Anderson see "the state" as a coherent entity standing in opposition to a democratic "society," Hefner argues that the relation between the state and democracy is not a zero-sum game. Democracy requires a strong, but self-limiting, state willing to enforce the rules of the democratic game, including equitable enforcement of the law, mass education, and control of rival leaders. None of these was a function of pre-modern states. Conversely, extra-state organizations which undermine state authority are as likely to lead to the emergence of a political nether world of patronage and vigilantism as they are to bolster participatory democracy. When the state weakens and dissolves into vertical factionalism, it is the poor, the marginal, and the peasants who suffer the most. The only people who benefit from a weakened state are the members of what Hefner calls "mobilized political syndicates."

One result of these vertical cleavages was the mass murder of Communists in 1965. Another was the emergence, in the aftermath of the murders, of the most powerful, centralized, and ideologically cohesive state to rule Indonesia since the Japanese invasion of 1942. But Suharto's New Order contained the seeds of future factionalism. Hefner goes on to detail the background of and conflicts between four factions within the New Order state: anti-communist Fabian-style social democrats associated with the Socialist Party (PSI); "nominally Muslim" Javanists who generally supported secular nationalism; the "traditional Muslims" of the NU; and the "modernist Muslims" of the banned Masyumi Party. He shows how Suharto maintained his hegemony by skillfully playing each group off against the others. Until the late 1980s, Suharto favored the first two groups, recruiting many Socialists into his development projects, and favoring mystical Javanist teachings, leading commentators to think he was acting out of "Javanist" convictions rather than political calculation.

In fact, however, Suharto never neglected Islam. Religious education was made compulsory from elementary through university education in 1966. The staff of the Department of Religion grew by 60 percent between 1967 and 1971, at a time when it was under the control of "traditionalist" Muslims of the NU. The NU was tolerated by the army since its leaders had never supported the regional Islamic rebellions of the 1950s and had enthusiastically participated in the attacks on the PKI in the 1960s. NU leaders were embedded in an array of social and economic enterprises that supported their educational endeavors, and this led them always to take a more pragmatic political position than modernist Muslims. Hefner observes that their decentralization and pragmatism could have provided fertile soil for the growth of democratic dispositions, but that the authoritarianism of Suharto's state smothered it.

The modernist Islamic Masyumi party remained banned under the New Order. Having been forced out of formal politics, modernists turned to predication. The elder generation retreated into increasingly hard-line demands for an Islamic state and saw predication as a means to this end. As their base in the old urban middle class and among merchants eroded, they moved their appeal down market to a newly urbanized lower middle class and increasingly took their cue from the anti-Western ideologies of Maududi's Pakistani Jamaat-i-Islami and the Brotherhoods of the Arab Middle East.

A younger generation of modernists saw predication more as a means of Islamizing society than of Islamizing the state. This generation argued that good Muslims had to avoid the "low politics" of political power and patronage, and to develop a "high politics" of social justice and democracy. During the tenure of Sjadzali as Minister of Religion from 1983–1993, many of their leaders were sent to the United States and Europe to study, where they came under the influence of liberal modernists like Fazlur Rahman at the University of Chicago. Among the most prominent of these travelers was Nurcholish Madjid, who cited Bellah and Cox in favor of the development of a "secular" society that drew strict boundaries between what was truly sacred and what should be treated as profane, including the state and party politics.

The younger modernists found their base in a new middle class of state-educated Muslims who found employment in the government and government-backed businesses. State schools produced a whole generation of self-conscious Muslims who maintained no formal ties to titled clerics, Islamic parties, or Quranic schools. Literacy in Indonesia jumped from 40 percent to 90 percent between 1965 and 1990, and high school graduation went from 4 percent to 30 percent between 1970 and 2000. Attendance at state schools for higher Islamic education (Institut Agama Islam Negeri, State Islamic Institute, IAIN) quadrupled to 100,000 between 1979 and 1991. These students had a very different attitude toward authority than did the pupils of traditional masters in *pesantren*.

By the early 1990s, cosmopolitan modernists like Madjid were well situated to capture this new class as advocates for an anti-authoritarian version of Islam. Suharto also recognized the potential importance of this group, and in 1990 he tried to coopt it for his regime by sponsoring the formation of All-Indonesia League of Muslim Intellectuals, ICMI (Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim se-Indonesia). He also hoped to use these new Muslims to increase his leverage against those in the army who were becoming increasingly critical of the growing power of his cronies in the state sector of the economy.

ICMI brought together a diverse array of individuals, whom Hefner groups together as government bureaucrats, political activists, and independent intellectuals. Official positions in the organization were dominated by Western-educated government bureaucrats like the Minister of the Environment, Salim, a Berkeley-educated economist, and the Minister of Technology, Habibie, a German-educated engineer. These government elites saw ICMI as a way of increasing the presence of Muslims in the state and the private sector to offset the disproportionate political and economic power of Christians and Chinese in those arenas. At first it was assumed the organization was only a scheme to shore up the Islamic vote for the government party in the 1992 elections, but when three hundred ICMI members were appointed to the one thousand-member assembly in 1993, middle level bureaucrats rushed to join. Pro-

and anti-ICMI factions developed throughout the state and university systems, evidencing the first open splits within the ruling elite since the 1960s.

Secondly, an assortment of political activists became involved in the organization. One group, led by Adi Sasono, hoped to use Suharto to reduce military influence over the state and the economy. Sasono had an independent political base in the non-governmental organization sector that advocated economic development controlled by "indigenous" Indonesians. Sasono evolved from an anti-imperialist socialist to an anti-Chinese nationalist. By 1995, he was Habibie's right-hand man and had become Minister of Cooperatives. Sasono operated through a think tank called CIDES (Center for Information and Development Studies). A second group of activists was more conciliatory toward the military and advocated a more gradual reform of the New Order. A third group of activists hoped to use ICMI to Islamize the government party, Golkar, and had no problem allying itself with the "Green" (Islamic) faction in the army to do so. They operated through a think tank called CPDS (Center for Policy and Development Studies). Suharto sided with the Habibie-Sasono faction from 1990 to 1994, then turned to the ultra-conservative Golkar faction from 1994 to 1998.

A third category active in ICMI included independent intellectuals. Hefner makes much of their moral and intellectual influence, and he seems to have had the closest rapport with them. This is hardly surprising, since many were educated at US universities. Many of them were openly committed to a pluralist democracy. While they apparently played an important role in the first three years of the organization, independent scholars like Nurcholish Madjid seem to have lost all influence by 1993.

Internally factionalized itself, ICMI also faced opposition from old-school, anti-Muslim generals in the army and from Muslim leaders who feared a return to the low politics of state patronage. An uneasy alliance developed between some generals and Abdurrahman Wahid, the leader of the NU. Wahid had withdrawn from the state-mandated Muslim party in 1984 and supported the government party in the 1987 elections. He was given a Golkar seat as a reward. But when Wahid refused to support ICMI in 1990, Suharto abruptly turned against him and launched a covert campaign to remove him from the leadership of the NU.

Fearing an alliance between the secular nationalist "reds" of the PDI (Partai Demokrat Indonesia, Indonesian Democratic Party) under Megawati Sukarnoputri and the "greens" of the NU in 1994, Suharto worked to split both organizations by creating pseudo-factions within them. This task was undertaken by the "regimist Muslim" CPDS faction in ICMI under the leadership of Abul Hasan, a wealthy business man tied to Suharto's daughter, Tutut, and General Hartono, the head of Sospol. Their campaign of dirty tricks had inconclusive results, and in 1996 the regime turned to more extreme measures, mobilizing paramilitaries trained by Suharto's son-in-law, General Prabowo. Many Muslim leaders, including Amien Rais of the Muhammadiyah, were taken in by government claims that the violence fomented by the paramilitaries was actually produced by communists. Wahid was not taken in, and the slander campaign against him intensified. Paramilitaries escalated the violence by fomenting anti-Christian and anti-Chinese riots in late 1996. Wahid openly blamed the violence on Sasono's faction in ICMI, not daring to name the "green" generals who were really behind them. Suddenly, in 1996, Wahid publicly reconciled with Suharto, who distanced himself from Habibie and ICMI. Habibie was seen by Suharto's daughter,

Tutut, as her main rival for succession to the presidency, and she made overtures to Wahid. The green generals, including Prabowo, gave their support to Habibie.

This was how the factional line-up stood when the economic crisis hit in August 1997. Wahid abruptly changed course again, shifting his support from Suharto to Megawati, and calling on the President to resign. They were now joined by Rais of the Muhammadiyah, who had been expelled from ICMI earlier in the year. In January 1998, Wahid was temporarily disabled by a stroke. When Suharto announced a new cabinet full of cronies in March 1998, Rais stepped forward as the leader of the Muslim democratic opposition, despite his dubious record of attacks on the Chinese and Megawati.

In desperation, Suharto turned to the most unsavory characters in the ultra-conservative group. The CPDS/IPS (IPS, Institute for Policy Studies) think tank circulated a booklet claiming that Suharto had been under the influence of a Jewish-Jesuit-US cabal until 1988, when Suharto himself had discovered the plot and brought good Muslims into government. In March, 1998, an assortment of pro-Suharto extremists, including Sasono of ICMI, Lukman Harun of Muhammadiyah, and Lieutenant General Syarwan Hamid, called for a campaign to eradicate the "rats" that had brought Indonesia to its knees, meaning the Chinese business class. The actual violence was orchestrated by General Prabowo, but the latter was kept in check by General Wiranto. Suharto was forced to resign on May 5, 1998 by Wiranto.

In the elections of June 1999, Megawati's party got 35 percent of the vote, and pro-reform Muslim parties won another 25 percent of the vote, for a total of 60 percent. In the negotiations that followed, Wahid ended up as President, Megawati as Vice President and Rais as head of the People's Consultative Assembly.

In summary, Hefner argues that all of Suharto's attempts to coopt the Muslim movement after 1984 failed. From 1984 to 1990 he worked with Wahid's NU. From 1990 to 1994, he worked with Habibie's ICMI. From 1994 to 1998 he worked with the ultra-conservatives of the CPDS. In every case, the Muslims who were prepared to shore up his authoritarian regime proved to be in a small minority compared with those in favor of democratic pluralism.

Faced with stalemate among the elite, in early 1998 the Prabowo clique had reached out into society to mobilize ultraconservative civilians against its rivals. This desperate action showed that there was no neat opposition of state and society in Soeharto's final days; the state's loss of cohesion was not society's gain. If anything, in fact, the conflict resembled that of 1948 and 1965. In those years, factionalism in the state led rival elites to exacerbate ethnoreligious antagonisms in society, creating segmentary alliances that exploited communal tensions for their own narrow ends. (p. 212)

In his conclusion, Hefner returns to his argument that democracy requires the training in civic virtues provided by participation in civic organizations, that this experience must be "scaled up" to the society as a whole, and that a well-ordered state must guarantee the peace and order required for these lessons to be learned and applied. The weakest of these three links in Indonesia was the state. Faced with a threat to his power, Suharto deliberately fomented a climate of incivility and intolerance whose effects will last for many years to come. But Hefner is optimistic

that in the long run the forces of global modernity will make authoritarian solutions untenable and that all societies will have to evolve their own forms of pluralism and tolerance. Democracy is not the product of some essential civilizational culture of the West, but of the balance of forces in the world today.

Hefner certainly provides us with the best available narrative of the totality of political developments under Suharto's New Order. He focuses to good effect on the role of the authoritarian state in undermining tolerance, and on the difficulties leading Muslims had in "scaling up" their activities in voluntary organizations to meet the task of creating the pluralistic and tolerant culture required for a democratic society. It would perhaps be unfair to ask one book to do more than this. But it would be nice to know more about how the interests and attitudes of the political and religious elites he discusses articulate with those of ordinary Indonesians, and how the rapidly changing world of political intrigue articulates with more stable features of the Indonesian landscape, such as Muhammadiyah *madrasahs*, NU *pesantren* and Christian mission schools.

A fuller confrontation with some of the peculiarities of Dutch, Dutch colonial, and Indonesian "modernization" might have served Hefner better than the generalities of "civil society" theory he uses to frame his narrative. Recent work by anthropologists on Dutch colonial missions has seen in them an equivalent of the religiously inflected political "pillars" that developed in the Netherlands in the late nineteenth century. Schrauwers argues that these pillars represent a peculiarly Dutch form of modernization.² Certain "governmental" functions militantly claimed by the secular state in post-revolutionary USA and France—such as schooling, relief for the poor, and health care—were ceded in the Netherlands to rural religious elites and ostensibly depoliticized. These functions are associated with the "disciplining" of working populations in the transition from agrarian to industrial economies, a transition which took place only at the end of the nineteenth century in the Netherlands. Dutch rural elites were simultaneously religious, political, and economic leaders in a manner that resembles the situation of the rural Javanese *ulama* who make up NU's constituency. Parallel Conservative Protestant, Liberal Protestant, Catholic, and secular "pillars" developed outside the state, and, in 1901, took over and transformed the state itself.

The "Ethical Policy" applied in Indonesia after the electoral victory of the Anti-Revolutionary Party in the Netherlands grew out of the "Ethical Theology" of the new Christian missions. Finally liberated to work freely among the non-Muslim peoples of Indonesia, these missions adopted the strategy of converting whole ethnic groups by coopting existing elites into the Church structure and by Christianizing existing "tribal custom." Micro-national churches in which Christianity was thoroughly imbricated with local culture was the result, with divisive potentials that are only becoming fully apparent today.

After the nationalist uprisings of 1927 in Indonesia, overt native political activity aimed at capturing the state itself was banned, but Christian, Modernist Muslim, and Traditionalist Muslim pillars were allowed to develop and to engage in schooling and social welfare activities. After independence, Muhammadiyah *madrasahs* and Christian

² Albert Schrauwers, *Colonial "Reformation" in the Highlands of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, 1892-1995* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

mission schools had remarkable success in placing their graduates in the state apparatus, to the detriment of the traditionalist *pesantrens*. A fourth “pillar” was created with the introduction of modern education and text-book based religious instruction on a massive scale under the New Order. It remains to be seen whether this last pillar will absorb the Modernist one. But what Hefner sees as the healthy development of “extra-state organizations” in civil society can also be seen as the institutionalization of hierarchically organized socio-religious pillars.

Secularist-Christian (PNI/PDI), Modernist Muslim (Masyumi/PPP-PAN), Traditionalist Muslim (NU/PKB)³ and now Regimist Muslim (Golkar) *aliran*/pillars promise to remain stable features of the Indonesian landscape, each jockeying for positions in the state bureaucracy and seats in the DPR (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, Indonesian Parliament) into the foreseeable future, whatever the outcome of the current political crisis. The existence of these pillars would seem to insure the survival of some degree of political pluralism in Indonesia, even if there is a recurrence of authoritarian or military rule. This has as much to do with the “non-political” educational and welfare functions of religiously based organizations as it does with the development of a tolerant and pluralistic political culture.

³ PNI is Partai Nasional Indonesia, the Indonesian National Party. PPP is Partai Persatuan Perbangunan, Unity and Development Party. PAN is Partai Amanat Nasional, Party of the National Message. PKB is Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, Party of the Awakening of the Nation.