

ISLAM, POLITICS AND SOCIETY IN ASIA-PACIFIC

¹Sofiandi, ²Imam Hanafi

¹Lecturer in Islamic Economics at IAI Arrisalah, Inhil, Riau

²Institute for Southeast Asian Islamic Studies (ISAIS) UIN Suska Riau

Email: sofiandi88@gmail.com

KEYWORD

Islam
Politics
Society
Asia Pacific

ABSTRACT

This article highlights the phenomenon of Islam and its crucial role in the Asia-Pacific region and its relationship with geopolitics, foreign policy and national and regional security amidst the wave of radicalism that is always associated with Islam. The focus of the study is on three key countries Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia, as the countries with the largest Muslim majorities in the world, though there are significant historical and current differences in the role played by Islam, each of these countries is to a greater or lesser extent searching for an accommodation involving organized Islam.

Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been much debate about the various possible future patterns of international relations that could affect the behavior of each nation-state actor at the global and regional levels. Discussions also include the current state of IR research, such as the reassessment of IR paradigms and the problems that undermine the overall theoretical agenda of IR as a separate discipline. Among the discourses that have received more attention, religion is one. Although organized or unorganized religion has always played an important role in international relations, it is only in recent years that there has been a substantial amount of scholarly and political writing on the role of religion in international relations (Faith and Statecraft, 1998).

The precise reasons why religion is of greater concern to those involved in the study of societies and the relationships between them are complex. Certainly, the end of the Cold War is a key factor. The end of ideological competition, as Francis Fukuyama argues, has shifted the focus of potential friction to religion, or, according to Professor Samuel Huntington, religion as civilization. However, theories about future forms are not the only source of religious revival in IR studies (Philpott, 2000). The actual phenomenon of religious revival is also important. The central paradox of our increasingly materialized world is that religion is making a comeback. The paradoxical phenomenon in which we face a condition that gives rise to a difference in situations that contradict each other in the extreme, that is, on the one hand religious life is strengthening, but on the other hand human morality is also weakening.

Whatever the reason, interest and attention to the role of religion is growing, and the relationship between religion and geopolitics, foreign policy and national security is still a leap forward. Although religious activism or revivalism has been seen in various religions such as Hinduism in India. It can be argued that "*the current wave of religious radicalism was first associated with Islam*" (Nasr, 1998).

Partly for this reason, the author is interested in examining the role of Islam in Asia, and in particular its security implications in the region. Asia, home to the majority of the world's Muslims, is currently the best place to study the place and direction of Islam. Across the region, in Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, domestic political dynamics highlight the possible future role of Islam. Each of these countries has sought, to a greater or lesser extent, a rapprochement involving organized Islam, despite significant historical and current differences in the role that Islam plays in these countries (Mandaville, 2009).

The objective of this article is to better understand the current and possible future role of Islam in the major countries of the Asia-Pacific region. To this end, the author takes an in-depth look at Islam in Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia, and examines the views of experts in other countries, including the United States.

Some of the main issues discussed in this paper relate to the following questions:

- The role of Islamic organizations and political parties in the politics and society of Asian countries;
- The nature of the relationship between Islamic organizations and political parties in the region;
- Attitudes and policies towards regional security by major Islamic parties and organizations, including regional institutions;
- The role of Islam in the armies of major Asian countries;
- How Islamic countries in the region view US strategic policies in the region; and
- The nature of the "Islamic" response to the economic, social and political aspects of globalization?

The writing of this article also draws on the wider literature to produce robust analysis and reflection based on scientific hypotheses.

ISLAM IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan occupies a unique place in the Muslim world. It is the only country explicitly founded in the name of Islam, but fifty years after its independence, the role and place of Islam in the country remains unresolved. This fundamental difference in the relationship between religion and state contrasts those who see Pakistan's need to protect the social, political, and economic rights of Muslims with those who see it as an Islamic religious state. In every parliamentary election for the past five decades, the public has rejected Islamic parties.

However, a combination of domestic and international developments over the past two decades appears to be pushing Pakistan towards a more explicitly religious state. For example, just last year, when the Pakistani government imposed strict Sharia law, violence between Shiites and Sunnis increased. Some analysts have even begun to consider the prospects of the Taliban in Pakistan. Developments in neighboring Iran, Afghanistan and India have influenced the country's shift from a liberal to a more overtly religious character (Khan, 2005).

Two main factors are responsible for the separation of religious and state affairs in Pakistan. First, the way Islam spread across the subcontinent matters. Contrary to the belief that Islam was spread to the subcontinent by Islamic conquerors, it was actually spread through the sermons of Muslim Sufi saints. Sufi Islam stands in stark contrast to the more conservative styles and values prevailing in some Middle Eastern countries and even Afghanistan. Furthermore, most Muslims in the subcontinent are Hindu converts. For these ex-Hindus, although they have embraced the Islamic faith, the basic point of reference is South Asia, not Western Arab countries that have adopted a more conservative approach to Islam. In South Asia the indigenous social and religious practices were more amenable to a “softer” kind of Islam. Nearly 85% of Sunni Muslims in South Asia, indeed, are said to follow the Barelvi school, which is closer to Sufiism. The remaining 15 percent of Sunnis believe in the Deobandi sect, which is more closely related to the conservative practices of Islam. Most Shias on the subcontinent are also more influenced by Sufis. On top of that, Muslims in Pakistan, like other Muslims in the region, tend to follow a less conservative sect of Islam and thus have little support for strong and overtly religious parties.

The second reason why formal religion is excluded from Pakistani national politics is that Muslim scholars and leaders in South Asia are basically “liberal” or “reformist” rather than “conservative” or “fundamentalist” ". Muslim leaders like the great educator Syed Ahmad Khan or the poet philosopher Allama Mohammad Iqbal captivated Muslim intellectuals and even modernists and reformers through their teachings Religious leaders (ulama).

During Pakistan's first two decades as a state, religion rarely interfered with national politics. This is largely because the state apparatus is controlled by a combination of feudal or Western-educated politicians and civil servants trained under the system of the former British rulers of the subcontinent. This state apparatus has no interest in advancing a religious agenda. Furthermore, there is no middle class, which is often a haven for conservatism in countries like Pakistan, and the poorest in society have little representation. Emphasis on Pakistan's early commitment to religious tolerance occurred in the early 1950s. A violent campaign against the Ahmadi sect by groups representing Sunni Muslims was violently suppressed by the government. Key Sunni religious leaders, including Jamaat-e-Islami leader Maulana Mawdoodi, were sentenced to death. Although never carried out, the violent response to the attack on a minority Muslim sect and the harsh sentences that followed symbolized that the state would not allow religious intolerance.

However, when another campaign of mass violence was launched against the Ahmadi community just two decades later, the state acted very differently. Ironically, the then ruling government led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was ideologically strongly socialist and secular. Moreover, she came to power in the country's first truly free and fair elections, which completely crushed the Islamic parties that participated in the elections. Nonetheless, then-Prime Minister Zolfikar Bhutto took the unprecedented decision to use parliament in the early 1970s to amend the constitution and declare the Ahmadi community non-Muslim. Some religious conservatives in Pakistan see the decision as their first major victory.

Islamic Conservatism In Pakistan

Over the past two decades, Pakistan's Islamic conservatives have grown in power, as has communal violence and intolerance. Several factors appear to have contributed to this development:

- The highly conservative military ruler General Zia-ul-Haq came to power in the late 1970s;
- The Islamic Revolution in neighboring Iran;
- The emergence of Islamic Jihad in Afghanistan; and
- Rise of Hindu nationalism in India.

Furthermore, the largely negative attitudes and actions of the West toward the Muslim world have helped advance the Islamic conservative agenda.

During the rule of General Zia al-Haq from 1977 to 1988, the state played a leading role in supporting Islamic conservatives and their values. In addition to amending electoral laws to ban non-Muslim minorities from voting in general elections and strengthening laws restricting the rights of women and minorities, the establishment of madrasahs (theological schools) has been strongly encouraged and supported. These schools are used by Islamic conservatives to support radical movements not only in Pakistan but also in other parts of the world.

The Rise of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan

The Iranian Revolution had a particular impact on neighboring Pakistan. At first, large segments of Pakistani society welcomed the Iranian revolution as it overthrew the Shah's brutal regime. Some mainstream Islamic parties hailed the event as a genuine Islamic revolution. However, as Iran began to support the export of its revolution, it lost favor with Pakistan's majority Sunni community, but gained support from Pakistan's conservative Shiite groups. To further complicate and exacerbate matters, conservative Sunni regimes in the Gulf countries have come to support Sunni groups in Pakistan, which are now turning against the Iranian revolution and its allies in Pakistan. The situation has exacerbated tensions between Sunnis and Shiites in Pakistan. In addition, the free flow of weapons in the Afghan war and the financing of Iranian and Gulf regimes for their respective clients have led to organized sectarian violence in Pakistan. This proxy war between the different Islamic orthodox factions of revolutionary Iran on the one hand and the conservative Gulf sheikhdoms on the other has basically Pakistan as its battleground (Bhattacharya, 2019).

Taliban and Its Impact on Pakistan

The war in Afghanistan has further exacerbated internal religious tensions and weakened Pakistani society. Not only did the war lead to an increase in the flow of weapons, drugs and money into the country, but it also caused a major change in the attitude of Pakistani religious conservatives. Islamic conservatives in Pakistan have followed events in Afghanistan closely and have taken an increasingly active role in the conflict (partly with the help of Western and Pakistani intelligence services). Many see the situation in Afghanistan as an opportunity to push their agenda beyond Pakistan (Khan, 2005).

The Afghan civil war has other specific implications for South Asian security. For example, the fact that many of the most loyal Muslim conservatives have fought in Afghanistan creates a pool of militants for other conflicts. One of these conflicts is Kashmir. Although the roots of the conflict lie elsewhere, the presence of large numbers of dedicated, well-trained, experienced and sometimes well-equipped fighters has undoubtedly intensified the fighting in Kashmir. Moreover, given the role played by these fighters and the availability of Afghanistan as a sanctuary and training ground for militants, the Kashmiri insurgency has shifted from a place that favored self-determination to one where a new Islamic conservative and even extremist agenda exists.

After all, the rise of the Taliban phenomenon is largely a situation not only in Afghanistan, but also in Pakistan. It is clear that the rise of religious conservatism in Pakistan provided the basis for the rise of the movement. More specifically, the network of madrasahs promoted by General Zia provided a steady stream of dedicated fighters for the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. Today, some Islamic conservatives in Pakistan see the Taliban as a source of inspiration and support for their cause in Pakistan.

Hindu Nationalism in Pakistan

Islamic conservatism trends in Pakistan have been consolidated by the rise of Hindu conservatism, or chauvinism, in neighboring India. The 1992 demolition of the Babri Masjid in the northern Indian city of Ayodhya marked the pinnacle of contemporary Hindu zealotry. The incident not only alienated many Muslims in India, but further marginalized Pakistan's small Hindus minority. Dozens of Hindu temples, large and small, have been attacked by Pakistani Muslim fanatics in retaliation for the destruction of the Babri Mosque. The election of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to power in India has further strengthened the hand of Pakistan's Islamic conservatives. They have used these developments to oppose any dispute settlement with India, branding Pakistanis who support the peace process as anti-Muslims (Sarwar, 2009).

Islamic Political Parties and Militant Movements in Pakistan

The most powerful and organized Islamic organization in Pakistan is Jamaat-e-Islami. Jamaat is both a political party and an activist organisation. It contested the Pakistani elections but did not fare well. During the last parliamentary elections in 1997, Jamaat boycotted the process, arguing that the country's current parliamentary system was corrupt. Although she did not gain traction in the election, there are signs that she may gain power as mainstream parties falter, failing to address socioeconomic development and Pakistani concerns about law and order.

There are several other religious-political forces in Pakistan. One of these is the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), which consists of two factions. She also ran for office with little success. In general, Islamist parties and movements in Pakistan appear to be moving away from organized politics to more active and, in some cases, militant positions. Of particular concern to some are links between various Islamic extremist groups in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Kashmir (Khan, 2005).

Can Pakistan Become a Fundamentalist State?

For the past fifty years or more, Pakistan has rejected the option of becoming a fundamentalist Islamic state. There are signs, however, that the Islamists' hand may be growing stronger. Recently, there has been a push by extremists or conservatives to implement Sharia law in parts of certain provinces of Pakistan such as the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). Some say the central government has succumbed to this pressure. At the same time, the government tried to counter Islamist trends by amending the constitution itself to introduce more Islamic laws. Indeed, this attempt to undermine more extremist claims could backfire if the Islamist movement interprets the government's move as a sign of weakness.

Overall, the chances of a Taliban-style insurgency in Pakistan are slim, mainly because Pakistan has not experienced the turmoil that Afghanistan has, nor is it a monolithic society with a strong Islamic fundamentalist supporter base. A major threat that could bring a radical Islamist group to power is the collapse of the current democratic system. This can happen if it becomes discredited by inefficiency and corruption. The unrest and chaos that may follow such an event could offer radical Islamic groups the opportunity to seize power, especially if some kind of alliance between the various Islamic groups can be forged. They have learned from past electoral defeats that they have little place in the current parliamentary democracy. So they might want to help dismantle the current system, which they can do through street protests and other extra-parliamentary activities. It would be in the interests of the country's Islamic conservatives if the current system collapsed. When a wave of Islamic militancy begins in a country like Pakistan, it is likely to show strong anti-Western and anti-American tendencies.

The only key institution capable of stopping the breakdown of parliamentary democracy and extremist Islamists is the Pakistani army. In the past, the military could be relied upon to suppress any Islamist-oriented insurgency, as it is usually a secular force in the Pakistani context. In fact, even today, many senior officers in the Pakistan Armed Forces are considered "liberal" when it comes to religion. It has been suggested that the Pakistani military's takeover of power in October 1999 was motivated, at least in part, by confronting Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's perceived leanings toward conservative religious parties and his support for Sharia law. However, like other aspects of Pakistani society, the past two decades have seen increasing Islamization of the Pakistani military, especially at the lower ranks. It is therefore difficult to predict what position the military will take if the current political system collapses and Islamist parties vie for power.

Pakistan's political future is more uncertain than ever. But the rise of Islam is undeniable. How many years it will take for Islamic hardliners to coalesce to pose a real and imminent challenge to the existing political order is a key question. But the colossal failure of Pakistan's feudal democracy makes it impossible to believe that intolerance and liberalism will persist. This suggests that the Islamists may come to power sooner rather than later (Roy, 2001).

ISLAM IN MALAYSIA

Islam in Malaysia, practiced by about 55 percent of the country's 22 million people, is both a religion and a national identity, as the majority of the country's Muslims are also Malay. While Islam is the religion of half the country's population, its influence on Malaysian life is crucial given the political and cultural dominance of the Malay-Muslim population. The rest of Malaysia's population is made up of Chinese (35%), Indians (8%) and minority indigenous groups (2%). Most of these latter groups are non-Muslims. Islam in Malaysia is different from Islam in the Middle East. Islamic practices in Malaysia, like other places of religious belief, are rooted in the local culture. Buddhism and Hinduism in particular have had significant pre-Islamic influences on Malaysia.

The Politics of Islam in Malaysia

The Malay community is politically divided and thus needs the support of the Chinese or Indians to achieve political dominance. This situation has led to a central fact in the country's political life: Malay-Muslim dominance has been negotiated between different forces. In post-independence politics, interracial and interreligious coalition parties, both in opposition and in power, have dominated the electoral politics of the country (Wiss, 2004).

The contemporary political context in Malaysia is crucial to understanding the present. In the 14th century, when Islam entered what is now Malaysia via Indian and Chinese traders, the influence of Buddhism and Hinduism faded. Islam became the source of legitimacy for Malay feudal rulers. During this period, Islamic and Malay identities were combined, but many Hindu and pre-Hindu customs and practices remained part of cultural and social integration. The arrival of British colonialism in the 18th century fundamentally changed the makeup of Malaysian society. Britain imported thousands of laborers from India and China to grow rubber, palm oil and coffee on millions of acres of tropical forest.

The Japanese occupation of 1941-1945 sparked ethnic and religious conflicts. While one faction of the Malay nationalist movement welcomed the Japanese occupation, other Malays joined the British in their anti-Japanese front. Due to the massacre of Chinese by the Japanese army, almost all Chinese in Malaysia at that time strongly opposed Japan. With the end of World War II, the wartime division took a sharp turn, with the Malays seen as collaborators with the Japanese against the Chinese.

The British, who remained the colonial rulers of Malaysia after the war, sought to contain racial conflict by creating a united state that abolished feudalism and granted equal citizenship to all. However, this single state attempt failed and in 1948 a federation was formed. It is this federal system that exists as the governance structure of the country today. However, the constitution that established the Federation of Malaysia was not enough to prevent further racial conflict. In fact, the worst riots occurred in May 1969 and led to new policies aimed at further strengthening Malay-Muslim rule.

The New Economic Policy (NEP) was launched in 1971 in response to the 1969 riots. The policy was designed as a pro-Malaysian affirmative action policy. Its immediate impact was to lead to an Islamic revival, especially among Malaysian Muslim youth. While the NEP in its early years focused on correcting socioeconomic imbalances, today it also deals with issues of identity and culture with Islam at its core. The NEP not only brought major economic and social changes to Malaysia, but also redefined its politics. Islam in Malaysia today is more visible than ever. The proliferation of Muslim financial institutions, medical centers and social work organisations, as well as travel agencies and supermarkets testify to a modern "consumer Islam". Moderate Islam has gone unchallenged in Malaysia. The country's main Islamic party, Parti Islam SeMalaysia, remains a credible alternative definition of Malay.

As Islam enjoys universal appeal across class lines within the Malay community, it is difficult to pinpoint a particular ideological interpretation, voice or personality that predominates.

A complication is that the growing emphasis on Malay and Islamic identities in economic and public life has exacerbated the problem of relations between Malay Muslims and non-Malay non-Muslims. The idea of Malaysia as a united nation-state or *Bangsa Malaysia* has been called into question. Still, most religious and ethnic minorities choose to remain in Malaysia and enjoy the benefits of the country's relatively strong economy. It is worth noting, for example, that the recent economic crisis did not lead to an outflow of Chinese and Indians, as has happened in some other financial crisis-affected countries. Indeed, these minority groups have at times publicly supported Mahathir's beleaguered government. The main reason for this support may be the desire to ensure a stable political system to ensure their economic interests are safeguarded (Delfolie, 2012).

In fact, a large proportion of Malaysian Muslims are believed to be sympathetic to the ousted former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who was ousted in September 1998. Some observers fear this because Mr Ibrahim was a leader of the Islamic youth movement in the 1970s and the political uncertainty created by his ouster could make Islam an unstable factor. In fact, however, Mr Ibrahim's embrace of a moderate, revitalized Islam may instead shape the formation of genuine non-communal politics in Malaysia. Essentially, Islam has gained prominence in Malaysia since the 1970s and is perhaps the most progressive element in Malaysian society today. This progressive Islam has led to civil society movements and efforts to protect human rights as part of a broader social justice movement.

Security Issues and Islam in Malaysia

Two possible effects of Islam on Malaysia's security relate to the country's political stability and regional relations. Questions have been raised as to whether Mr Ibrahim's Islamic connections (he once led Malaysia's Islamic Youth Movement) were in the fight against Dr Ibrahim. Mahathir was used. However, the general consensus is that these relationships will not have a decisive impact on the stability of the country. Furthermore, it has been suggested that whoever is involved in the current political struggle between Mr Ibrahim and Dr. After Mahathir wins, there may not be fundamental changes in the country's governance structure.

A second possible security issue affecting Islam has to do with Singapore-Malaysia relations. Singaporeans sometimes anxiously describe themselves as a Chinese enclave in a sea of Muslims. However, it is widely believed that recent tensions between Singapore and Malaysia stem from differences between the countries and have little to do with Islam.

ISLAM IN INDONESIA

Indonesia is the largest Islamic country in the world, with almost 90% of the population Muslim. However, Islam has never played a central role in the country's politics. Still, tensions persist between advocates for a more prominent and formal role for Islam in the country and those who oppose its emergence as an organized political player.

In the late 80s, during the New Order era of former President Suharto (now defunct), there was an effort to engage Muslims and Islam more explicitly. The main reason for this was President Suharto's desire to expand his power base beyond the military and the secular ruling party, Golkar. President Suharto's decision in 1990 to make his first pilgrimage to Mecca, the Hajj, was a symbolic effort. Other steps toward the Islamization of the New Order regime include the lifting of a ban on female students wearing jilbabs (head scarves) in state-run schools and the establishment of the country's first Islamic bank.

About a decade after Suharto tried to bring Islam into the political sphere, the new order collapsed. On May 21, 1998, President Suharto resigned. Essentially, Suharto's efforts to broaden his political base by turning to Islam did not prevent his regime from falling. While Suharto's efforts to foster Islam in recent years may have revived Islamic groups and organizations, the current evolving role of Islam in post-Suharto Indonesian politics and policymaking is likely to be stronger than it was at the beginning of the Suharto New Order era. Longer. A major reason for this expectation is the rise in religious awareness in many circles of the Indonesian Muslim community in recent decades.

Relations between Islam and the State in Indonesia

A key point about Islam in Indonesia is that it is not monolithic. Aside from the differences between traditionalists, modernists and fundamentalists, there is a huge divide between those who work for the Islamization of Indonesia and those who want it. To some extent, the debate over the role of Islam in Indonesia is between *santri* (devout Muslims) and *abangan* (nominal Muslims). The New Order era has largely succeeded in suppressing this fundamental (and simplistic) dichotomy (Ali, 2007).

In fact, soon after the independence of parliamentary democracy, Muslim political parties played an important role in politics. Many prime ministers of this period belonged to Masjumi, the largest Muslim political party. But divisions and divisions among the various elements that make up the party have contributed to the weakening of Indonesian political Islam.

When Sukarno emerged in the era of managed democracy, the fortunes of nearly every political party began to falter. Masjumi was outlawed in 1960 after being accused of its leaders' active participation in a regional insurgency. Other Islamic organizations were also under Sukarno's control. The rise of the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) and Sukarno's growing support for it has put Islamic parties and groups on the defensive. However, given the cooperation between Islam and the military after the fall of Sukarno in 1965, it seems likely that Islam will once again play a stronger role in the country's politics. However, this didn't happen. As Rizal Sukma writes:

“However, that coalition was in fact only temporary in nature and the brief period of honeymoon between Islam and the military-backed Suharto’s government soon came to a close. The early years of the New Order marked the beginning of a long and difficult period for political Islam in Indonesia. Muslim groups found that their expectation and hope for a renewed political role was pushed aside by a number of policies introduced by Suharto’s New Order government. Political Islam soon became subject to the process of marginalisation, and the strength of Islam as a political force was reduced remarkably due to a number of measures undertaken by the government” (Sukma, 1999).

While working to reduce the role of Islam in the politics of the New Order, the government simultaneously encouraged Islamic religious and ritual practices to flourish. This encouragement took the form of state-sponsored preaching, the proliferation of Islamic publications and the construction of mosques. In essence, Suharto's new order took a two-pronged approach to Islam. On the one hand, it resisted any political role for Islam, and on the other hand, it promoted Islam as a private religion.

Between the political and the private, the third dimension of Islam in Indonesia is its social role. In this field, Islam maintains an important position, and even has an increasing influence. For example, Islamic organizations remain an important aspect of the Indonesian landscape, as mass movements focus on social and educational activities. However, Islam itself as a social force is not monolithic in Indonesia, as suggested by the two largest Muslim organizations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. Nonetheless, three developments in the role of Islam in society during the past decade of Suharto's rule laid the groundwork for Islam's role in the state today. First, members of today's Muslim middle class are more culturally and intellectually confident than their predecessors. Second, the Muslim middle class does not support the Islamic state, while acknowledging that religion and society, including government and politics, are inseparable. Finally, there is growing religious awareness among the Indonesian middle class. The contemporary significance of these developments is that long-standing distinctions between santri and abangan, and between modernism and traditionalism, are now giving way to a more complex picture of the role of Islam in Indonesian society.

Relations between Islam and the Military in Indonesia

Relations between Islam and the Indonesian military have been problematic (Samson, 1972). Many reasons are given for this difficult and sometimes suspicious relationship. First, some within the military elite are unhappy with what they see as the partisan and rebellious nature of the Islamic community. Military elites especially suspect Islam of being a driving force behind insurgencies in areas such as West Java, Aceh and South Sulawesi. Second, military leadership is often controlled by Abangan Javanese or secular nationalists. Non-Muslims in the military often shy away from defining national identity in terms of religion. Moreover, the military leadership, acting as a guardian of national unity in an ethnically and religiously diverse society, often views Muslim attempts to express political interests by protesting economic and cultural ills with hostility. Third, in terms of power politics, ABRI has tended to deny Islam a formal role, fearing that it would challenge the military's prominence in the New Order system of government. However, in the early 1990s and beyond, there appeared to be signs of a larger agreement between Islamists and ABRI. ABRI's distrust of the insurgency and divisive tendencies in the Islamic community appear to have receded (Federspiel, 1973).

The Foreign Relations of Indonesia’s Islam

Overall, Islam has not played a significant role in shaping Indonesia's foreign policy. There are two main reasons. First, the formation of foreign policy is dominated by state institutions, and non-state forces are not allowed to infringe on government power in this regard. Second, Muslim

leaders themselves deal with a relatively narrow range of international issues; especially those with a clearly Islamic dimension or focus on the Islamic world or the Middle East. This is also subject to change. Emerging leaders in Indonesia's new post-Suharto political climate, such as PAN party leader Amien Rais, are questioning Indonesia's foreign policy. For these people, two pressing issues are the state's international identity and the state's place in the Islamic world. Related to these issues is Indonesia's relationship with the West. It is clear that new voices are emerging on foreign and security policy views in the new political climate, but it is not clear what those voices will say. However, it seems unlikely that the Islamic factor will be a major factor or determinant of Indonesian foreign or security policy.

Islam is not a monolithic force in Indonesian politics. There are differences of opinion among several Islamic organizations and movements, most notably NU and Muhammadiyah. The New Order government's policy of reducing the role of political parties, combined with the military's mistrust of Islam, led Islamic groups to focus on religious, social, and educational activities rather than politics. It was this shift in focus that led to a greater Islamization of Indonesian society, including the rise of a Muslim middle class entering the government and military. The changes have partly led the military to reassess its views on the role of Islam in Indonesia. Moreover, Islam may have emerged as the most important force in the post-Suharto context of Indonesian politics. Islam is likely to be a major force in Indonesian politics for the foreseeable future.

THE SECURITY DIMENSIONS OF ISLAM IN ASIA

For most Americans, Islam is a Middle Eastern faith. Consequently, Islam's security influence often stems from thorny issues in the region, including but not limited to the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab dispute, the Iranian revolution, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and its illegal nuclear weapons program, the oil embargo, and other terrorism. The drama of the past two decades in the region has only confirmed the connection between Islam, the Middle East and security issues commonly imagined by Americans.

Partly for these reasons, the changing role of Islam in Asia has been largely ignored. To be sure, apart from the former Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan and the country's ongoing civil war, the development of Islam in Asia has been far less dramatic, directly threatening the interests of the United States and its allies. Therefore, relatively little attention has been paid to them. But there were also important developments that affected Islam in Asia, albeit more "distant" and sometimes subtle developments. These developments include:

- General Zia Al-Haq's takeover of power in Pakistan and the growing Islamization of the country;
- The rise of Hindu nationalism in India and its impact on relations with Islamic neighbours;
- The stubbornness of Chinese Muslims, partly due to their extensive ties to the world;
- The changing social, economic and political role of Islam in Malaysian and Indonesian politics; and
- The most localized Moro rebellion in the Philippines.

As important as all of these trends and developments are, they simply do not compare to the tragic scenes visible in the Middle East, most recently the Gulf War. So, based on the above overview of the status and role of Islam in major Asian countries, how do you view the impact of Islam on Asian security? More specifically, how, if any, has the changing role of Islam in Asia affected the United States? At the national or state level, the security implications of Islam take the form of political stability and the ability to accommodate minorities where Islam is the majority religion. At the regional level, the role of Islam in security appears to either foster cooperation or

create tension. At the international level, an important issue is the role of Islam in Asia in international Islamic movements and organizations, especially its relationship with the Middle East.

Islam and Domestic Political Stability in Asia

Presentations on the role of Islam in Pakistan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and China show that, with the exception of the Philippines, where the Islamic insurgency is coming to an end, the role of Islam in politics, society, and the economy has grown. Despite the growing role of Islam and the rise of a more radical and devout Muslim middle class (Hassan, 1998), there seems to be little evidence of Islamic fundamentalist trends in Asia. It has been repeatedly pointed out that in much of Asia, Islam must compete with other identities, especially race. Also, Islam in Asia in general builds on pre-Islamic influences, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, which are still present. All of these factors tended to shape Islam in Asia from the more doctrinal influences of the Arabian Peninsula.

In only one country, Pakistan, Islam has threatened to assume an extra-parliamentary role in politics. Islamic street politics aimed at undermining Pakistan's barely functioning democracy could pose a real threat to the country's political stability. How serious and for how long Islam is a threat to Pakistan's political system is a matter of speculation. But there is no question that factional fighting between Sunni and Shia Muslims in Pakistan has increased, and with it comes intolerance towards minorities in the country, whether they are Christian, Hindus or Ahmadi.

In India, it is not the rise of Islam that has raised concerns about political stability, but the rise of the Hindu majority. In particular, the 1992 destruction of the Babri Masjid, a mosque in northern India believed by Hindus to be the birthplace of the god Ram, led to some of the worst Hindu-Muslim riots in post-independence India. Some observers have questioned whether such incidents herald a long-term trend of severe Hindu-Muslim violence that could eventually destabilize the Indian state. The renewed victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its coalition partners in recent national elections shows that political Hinduism is now on top of things. However, conflicts between Hindus and Muslims across India appear unlikely.

In Indonesia and Malaysia, where Islamic identity and activity has increased socially, economically and politically, political stability from the role of Islam is not a critical issue. Instead, the most important issues appear to be accommodating Islamic radicalism and protecting the rights of minorities in both countries' evolving policies. Suharto's new order in Indonesia has not collapsed because of Islamic radicalism, nor has Islam been behind the harsh political dynamics in Malaysia over the past two years. But as both countries go through an era of political change, Islam is sure to be one, if not the most important, factor shaping the future.

All in all, it appears that, with the exception of Pakistan, none of the Asian countries considered in this workshop were in danger of being thrown into chaos and instability by the Islamic Revolution. However, the role of Islam can affect the stability of some of these countries in a number of ways; for example by incorporating Islamic political parties into Indonesia's new institutions, or by ensuring the confidence and security of non-Muslim minorities in Malaysia and Indonesia. In India and the Philippines, non-Muslim majorities must work to ensure the confidence and safety of Muslim minorities. There are also valid questions about the extent to which Islam will shape the nationalist definitions of the region's Muslim-majority countries.

Islam and Asian Regional Politics in Asia

The role of Islam in Asian regional politics is remarkably complex and varies across subregions, let alone Asia. In South Asia, for example, Islam did not prove to be a unifying bond, as illustrated by the split of East Pakistan (Bangladesh) from sectarian West Pakistan in 1971. (The Hindu-

majority states of India and Nepal certainly don't always have good relations). Intraregional relations in South Asia are of course complicated by religion (whether it is Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism), but religion does not affect these relations. Nationalism, power politics, and ethnic identity are more important factors in intraregional relations.

Likewise, in Southeast Asia, intraregional relations are only partially influenced by religion. Intra-regional cooperation has been carried out on issues of Islamic significance such as the Moro insurgency. In this case, both Malaysia and Indonesia played a role of moderation and support. In other cases, however, the Islamic "factor" appears to have had a different impact on regional relations. For example, after Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim was ousted by Prime Minister Mahathir, several Southeast Asian leaders came forward to defend him. At least one report found that Mr Ibrahim's most outspoken supporters were, like him, moderate Muslims and suggested a network of moderate Muslims had come to power in Southeast Asia (Jane's Information Group Foreign Report, 1998).

The only problem with this view, of course, is that the man who put Mr Ibrahim in jail, another of his staunchest supporters is the Catholic Philippine president, is also a moderate Muslim. Mr. Strada. Likewise, religion, whether Islamic or otherwise, appears to be a less compelling variable in shaping intraregional cooperation or tension than other factors.

In terms of regional organisations, Islam appears to have played an important organizational role, bringing NGOs together for youth exchange, education and other forms of social engagement (such as the World Muslim Youth Congress). But the regional organizations that are considered most important at the regional or subregional level in terms of government and government policy have little to do with faith (such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations). At the regional or subregional level in Asia, the bottom line about Islam is that it has little immediate or decisive power, either to encourage cooperation or to create tension. Therefore, the role of Islam in regional security is limited.

ASIAN ISLAM AND THE WORLD

Islam has always been a cosmopolitan religion, but one with special ties to holy sites in the Middle East, the birthplace of the faith. Like Christians, Jews and others, Muslims will always be concerned about the fate of believers around the world. Whether this will prompt concrete policy action by the government is less certain. For example, although the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan attracted great attention from the Islamic world, few Muslim countries severed relations with the Soviet Union. Muslims are also very concerned about the world's reaction to the situation in Kosovo. Many Muslim countries are encouraged by the actions of the United States and other Western countries to provide humanitarian aid to Muslims. However, other governments with large Muslim minorities, such as China and India, have been critical of Western actions in Kosovo.

Another international issue affecting Muslims in Asia is globalization (Eickelman, 1999). The trend of globalization has increased contacts among Muslims. This has particularly important and potentially ultimately destabilizing implications in countries where Muslims elsewhere are relatively isolated from their co-religionists, such as China.

International Islamic organizations such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) provide an important venue for representatives of Islamic countries to exchange views and reach common positions on issues. However, like other secular international organizations, there is no guarantee that the OIC will act by consensus. In fact, the various Islamic countries within the OIC often adopt very different strategies on specific issues. One example is the Moro insurgency; on

this issue, Indonesia and Malaysia have worked hard to soften Libya's highly critical stance against the Philippines in OIC deliberations and actions. Nor can the OIC be expected to provide full or generous support for its colleagues. The OIC reportedly provided Pakistan with just \$20 million in aid following the May 1998 nuclear test and sanctions that brought Pakistan's economy to the brink of collapse.

A final aspect of Asia's Islamic international linkages concerns the Middle East. The Middle East is important to Asian Islam not only because it is the holiest place of the faith, which every Muslim must visit at least once in their life, but also for more secular reasons. Islamic countries in Asia depend on the Middle East for oil supplies, markets for commodities, remittances from local workers, and economic support. Of course, there is also overlap between Asian and Middle Eastern countries in organizations such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, OPEC, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the United Nations. As mentioned earlier, these overlapping memberships do not guarantee common goals on all issues, but they are important avenues for dialogue and consultation on issues of mutual concern.

Conclusion

Islam in Asia is very complex. Its impact on national, regional and international security is limited. U.S. interests in Asia are shaped more by developments in the role of Islam in the region itself than by a coherent Islam in the region or in the world. Islam itself does not, per se, pose a monolithic challenge to US interests, and if the US sees Islam as an enemy, they may become one. Recent events, especially in Kosovo, have allayed some skepticism about hostile attitudes toward Islam and Muslims in the United States and other Western countries.

REFERENCES

- Ali., Muhamad, (2007). "Categorizing Muslims in Postcolonial Indonesia," *Moussons: Social Science Research of Southeast Asia*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2007.
- Bhattacharya., Sanchita., (2019)., *Pakistan: Sectarian War Scourging an Entire Nation*, *Liberal Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Jan 2019.
- Delfolie., David (2012)., "Malaysian Extraversion towards the Muslim World: Ideological Positioning for a Mirror Effect," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, Vol. 31, No. 4, 2012.
- Eickelman, Dale F., *The Coming Transformation of the Muslim World*. *Foreign Policy Research Institute - Wire*, Vol. 7, No. 9, June 9, 1999.
- Faith and Statecraft, (1998), *A Special Issue on Religion in World Affairs*, *Orbis*, Vol. 42, No. 2, Spring, 1998.
- Federspiel., Howard M., (1973), *The Military and Islam in Sukarno's Indonesia*, *JSTOR*, Vol. 46, No. 3, Autumn 1973.

- Hassan., Riaz, (1998)., "Islamic Militancy: Is it the new paradigm?," Jakarta Post, November 16, 1998.
- Jane's Information Group Foreign Report, (1998)., "Anwar's 'Islamic Network'," , Secember 17, 1998.
- Khan., Aarish Ullah, (2005)., The Terrorist Threat and the Policy Response in Pakistan, *Sipri*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2005.
- Mandaville., Peter., *et al*, (2009)., Transnational Islam in South and Southeast Asia: Movements, networks, and conflict dynamics, *The National Bureau of Asian Research*, 2009.
- Nast., Vali, (1998)., Religion and Global Affairs: Secular States and Religious Oppositions, in *Symposium on Religion and Global Affairs in SAIS Review*, Summer-Fall 1998, p. 33
- Philpott, Daniel., (2000)., The Religious Roots of Modern International Relations, *JSTOR*, Vol. 52, No. 2, Jan 2000.
- Roy., Olivier, (2001)., The Changing Patterns of Radical Islamic Movements, *CSNS Policy Paper 2* Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University, November 2001.
- Samson., Allan A. Samson., (1972)., Army and Islam in Indonesia, *JSTOR*, Vol. 44, No, 4, Winter 1971-1972.
- Sarwar., Beena., (2009)., Islam and State in Pakistan: Threat or Solution?. *Learning from Each Other; Muslim Societies in Indonesia and South Asia*, PPMN, 2009.
- Sukma., Rizal., (1999). Islam, Politics and Society in Indonesia, *paper presented to the seminar on Islam in Asia*, Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies, Honolulu, 16 April 1999
- Weiss., Meredith L. (2004)., The Changing Shape of Islamic Politics in Malaysia. *JSTOR*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Jan 2004.