Islam and Democracy in Indonesia

Indonesia's Islamic organizations sustain the country's thriving civil society, democracy, and reputation for tolerance amid diversity. Yet scholars poorly understand how these organizations envision the accommodation of religious difference. What does tolerance mean to the world's largest Islamic organizations? What are the implications for democracy in Indonesia and the broader Muslim world? Jeremy Menchik argues that answering these questions requires decoupling tolerance from liberalism and investigating the historical and political conditions that engender democratic values. Drawing on archival documents, ethnographic observation, comparative political theory, and an original survey, *Islam and Democracy in Indonesia* demonstrates that Indonesia's Muslim leaders favor a democracy in which individual rights and group-differentiated rights converge within a system of legal pluralism, a vision at odds with American-style secular government but common in Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe.

Jeremy Menchik is an Assistant Professor in the Pardee School of Global Studies at Boston University, and a Faculty Affiliate in Political Science and Religious Studies. He has been Shorenstein Postdoctoral Fellow in Contemporary Asia at Stanford University and Luce Fellow at Columbia University. His research focuses on the politics of religion, with a particular interest in Indonesia and the Muslim world. He has published articles in journals such as *Comparative Studies in Society and History* and *South East Asia Research*. His work has been recognized by several prizes, including the Fulbright award to Indonesia, the Mildred Potter Hovland Journal Article Prize, the Paper Award from the Southeast Asian Politics Group, and honorable mention for the Aaron Wildavsky Dissertation Award.

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The most enduring and illuminating bodies of late nineteenth century social theory – by Marx, Weber, Durkheim and others – emphasized the integration of religion, polity, and economy through time and place. Once a staple of classic social theory, however, religion gradually lost the interest of many social scientists during the twentieth century. The recent emergence of phenomena such as Solidarity in Poland, the dissolution of the Soviet empire, various South American, Southern African, and South Asian liberation movements, the Christian Right in the United States, and Al Qaeda have reawakened scholarly interest in religiously-based political conflict. At the same time, fundamental questions are once again being asked about the role of religion in stable political regimes, public policies, and constitutional orders. The series Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion, and Politics will produce volumes that study religion and politics by drawing upon classic social theory and more recent social scientific research traditions. Books in the series offer theoretically-grounded, comparative, empirical studies that raise "big" questions about a timely subject that has long engaged the best minds in social science.

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Islam and Democracy in Indonesia

Tolerance without Liberalism

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Acknowledgments

This book has been a long time coming. In the summer of 2005 I lived in the Bulak Sumur neighborhood of Yogyakarta, where I divided my time between language study at Gadjah Mada University and weekends traveling around Java in search of an interesting dissertation project and the most delicious fried bananas (*pisang goreng*). I found both and have had the good fortune of accumulating debts to many institutions and people in the ensuing years.

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permit were rejected multiple times by US and Indonesian government agencies that thought my project was 'too sensitive.' NU, Muhammadiyah, and Persis, meanwhile, welcomed me. In particular, I owe Arsul Sani, Nasaruddin Umar, Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, Syahrul Wahidah, Syarul Iskandar, Mifthal Huda, Kahfi Amin, the late Siddiq Amin, Amin Djamaluddin, Maman Abdurrahman, Dody Truna, Untoro Abu Nabilain, Fajar Riza Ul Haq, Zainal Zainuddin, and Hilman Latief a lifetime of gratitude.

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Before leaving Indonesia, I had the good fortune of working with the distinguished democratic theorist Alfred Stepan in September 2009, then again for three months at the end of 2010 as a Luce Fellow at Columbia University's Center for the Study of Democracy, Toleration, and Religion. Al and I conducted forty-nine joint interviews in September and October 2009, and I am grateful for his permission to use them here. Besides being a distinguished scholar, Al is a role model for ethically engaged scholarship, and I am thankful for his mentoring. Chapter 7 is dedicated to Al and Daniel Philpott, who together convinced me that taking a normative stance in support of democracy would be an asset, not a liability. Like many scholars, I have reservations about communitarianism and religious modes of government, as well as with liberal imperialism, but I do not think it is necessary to insert those preferences into the book. I am, however, convinced that trying to make democracy work is a common, worthwhile, goal.

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Any errors are my responsibility alone.

Note on Transcription

There are numerous orthographical problems that arise when writing in English about Indonesia and Islamic institutions. These concern the changes in the spelling of the Indonesian language over the past 100 years, the spelling of individuals' and organizations' names, and the transliteration of Arabic terms.

The Indonesian language has undergone tremendous changes in the twentieth century affecting names, places, and concepts. The organization Nahdlatul Ulama, for example, was originally written as Nahdlatoel Oelama or Nahdhatoe'l 'Oelama. I follow the modern convention, which is to render 'dl' as 'd,' 'y' rather than 'j,' and 'u' rather than 'oe' as set out in Echols and Shadily (2002). For personal and organizational names, however, the actor's preferred spelling is used, thus Nahdlatul Ulama rather than Nahdatul Ulama and Soeharto rather than Suharto. Where multiple variants are accepted, I use the one that is most frequent in official documents except for direct quotes.

Arabic terms are spelled in accordance with Indonesian usage and based on Federspiel (1995). Terms that do not appear in either Federspiel or Echols and Shadily are copied verbatim. In cases where the Indonesian or Arabic term is awkward to the ear, such as the plural of fatwa (fatwa-fatwa in Indonesian and fatāwā in Arabic), I follow the common English usage (fatwas).

All translation is by the author unless otherwise noted.