6th ASIAN-EUROPEAN EDITORS' FORUM

Konrad
Adenauer
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6th ASIAN-EUROPEAN EDITORS' FORUM

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AND

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Konrad
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Foreword

It is a great pleasure to introduce this collection of presentations and question & answer sessions held at the Sixth Asian-European Editors' Forum in Jakarta from 28 to 31 August 2005.

The inspiring genius loci of 'The Dharmawangsa' provided a particularly fitting environment for the 35 invited senior journalists – publishers, editors, and foreign correspondents – from 23 countries to discuss issues of common Asian and European interest.

The quality and expertise of the invited speakers, as well as the choice of topics, greatly facilitated the task of learning from and with each other about issues relating to Indonesia, Southeast and East Asia, Islam, and the deadly 26 December 2004 tsunami.

A particular highlight and honour was the presentation by the President of Indonesia, HE Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, about the achievements of his first ten months in office. In the ensuing question & answer session, the Head of the world's fourth biggest country and third-biggest democracy responded to his Indonesian and foreign interlocutors in a candid and open way – unimaginable a few years back.

The success of this Sixth Asian-European Editors' Forum was to no small degree due to the unrelenting efforts and outstanding contacts of our Indonesian partners, most notably Jusuf Wanandi, Mr. Harry Bhaskara and Mr. Sabam Siagian, and their team of The Jakarta Post. It is an excellent example of what Asian-European co-operation can achieve.

Indeed, the promotion of dialogue – be it Asian-European or Asian-Asian – is at the heart of the Singapore-based Media Programme Asia of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation. Besides the provision of bi-regional dialogue forums, Asian-Asian dialogue

is promoted through regional conferences and meetings and the daily exchange of news among the members of the Asia News Network (ANN). This ethos of co-operation further underlies two more key initiatives that equally aim at the support of training and education programmes for journalists and media practitioners: the Council of Asian Press Institutes (CAPI), and the Konrad Adenauer Center for Journalism (CfJ) at the Ateneo de Manila University.

Werner vom Busch
Regional Representative
Media Programme Asia
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THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT CARD: THE FIRST TEN MONTHS

by
HE Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono
President of Indonesia

Sixth Asian-European Editors' Forum, Jakarta, 29 August 2005

Bismilahhirrahmaanirrahim

Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

Let me begin by welcoming all of you to Jakarta.

I know that getting 40 chief editors, managing editors and top journalists from Asia and Europe is a difficult job. Which is why when Mr. Yusuf Wanandi asked me to join you this morning, I immediately agreed. The way I see it: this meeting saves me from going to 40 countries in Asia and Europe to see you all.

So well done, Pak Yusuf, and my special appreciation also to the *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung* for organising this impressive gathering.

Indonesia is a very different country today compared to a few years back. So much has changed in such a relatively short time. Come to think of it, the fact that an Indonesian President is visiting 40 international journalists in their hotel for a brainstorming session is one indication of that change.

Among the many ways Indonesia has changed, I think the most fundamental one is that Indonesia is now transformed as the world's third largest democracy, after India and the US. In

terms of voting turn-out, Indonesia would be ranked number 2, after India, because more people voted in last year's elections in Indonesia than those who voted in the US elections. India of course is an old democracy, the American democracy even older. So if you count only countries that have recently made it into the community of democracies, the so-called "Third Wave of Democracies", then Indonesia would be right at the front.

A key milestone in our democratic transformation were the elections last year. It was a long and exhaustive process, which took nine months to complete. We had three electoral rounds: one for legislative elections, two for presidential elections. What amazes me to this day was that in each of the three elections, over 100 million people turned out to vote. It is a clear sign that democracy is here to stay, that democracy has reached a point of no return.

The 1999 elections have also produced tremendous expectations on the part of the electorate towards the Presidency. This high expectation was a welcome contrast to the public cynicism towards Government and reforms that had developed prior to the elections.

Such high expectations also took place against the backdrop of what I think would rank as the most difficult first year faced by any Indonesian President, and by this of course I am referring to the catastrophic tsunami tragedy.

I believe that the 1999 elections gave the President of Indonesia an overwhelming political and moral mandate for change, directly obtained from the people. Change can come from all directions, but insofar as I am concerned, change must also emanate very clearly from the top, and radiate outward from the centre throughout the whole system.

That is why my first order of business in government was to ensure a credible cabinet, and by that I mean having clean and competent ministers. Before signing them on, I asked each

one of them to sign a "political contract" with me where they are bound to maintain the highest standard of ethics, integrity and professionalism. I also asked them to submit all information pertaining to their personal wealth to an audit committee and make that information public. And I made it crystal clear that no member of their family or friends should benefit from their position in public office.

It is my objective to keep that standard high until the end of my term in office. That standard is particularly important if we are to succeed in fighting corruption.

If you ask me what would be the most important issue to the voters, I would say this: it is corruption. And that remains true to this day, and will remain true four years from now. And Indonesian history has taught us this important lesson: once you lose the people's trust, you lose credibility – and authority to govern – in a way that would be extremely hard to recover from.

Since becoming President, I have given the police and the attorney general permission to investigate 59 high officials throughout the country, including governors, parliamentarians, regents and mayors. I have launched a firm campaign against illegal loggers, so that for the first time hundreds of them are now in jail. I have also formed a Special Team to Fight Corruption (TIPIKOR), consisting of 45 dedicated professionals, to uncover "big fish" corruption cases. And I signed a Presidential Decree ordering all Ministers and Government agencies to undertake systematic efforts to clean up corruption in their respective premises, and to periodically report their efforts to me personally.

What I intend to demonstrate is that no one is untouchable; no one can escape the arms of justice forever.

I am realistic to accept that we will probably not be able to completely eradicate corruption from Indonesia. But I am also realistic to expect that corruption in this country will be the exception rather than the rule.

Another legacy that I wish to create is a peaceful and united Indonesia.

In this context, I think the Aceh peace deal signed on 15 August 2005 in Helsinki between my government and the leaders of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) is a milestone achievement.

To be honest, even though during the elections I had called for peace in Aceh as a top priority, I did not imagine that we would be able to do it in 10 months after my inauguration, but with God's blessing, we did. As a result of the deal, GAM has abandoned its demands to separate Aceh from Indonesia, and has agreed to hand over their weapons – which will be immediately destroyed – in exchange for their full political, economic, social and cultural participation in an autonomous Aceh within the framework of a united Indonesia. That in itself is an incredible breakthrough, and US Congressman Robert Wexler, who came to see me in my office recently, called it as big as the Israel-Palestine peace or the Northern Ireland peace deal. I did not disagree with him, of course.

The Aceh Peace deal is historically and politically significant because it breaks the lingering myth that, after East Timor, Indonesia is on the brink of Balkanisation, breaking into smaller and smaller parts. The reintegration of former GAM members into Indonesian society will make Indonesia more united and stronger. What we need to do urgently for now is to ensure that the various elements of the peace deal are immediately translated into living reality on the ground. And as you all know, implementing a peace agreement is often more difficult than writing it.

The Aceh peace deal, however, was <u>not</u> the biggest news of the year: it was the giant tsunami waves of December 26 last year, a catastrophe that truly consumed national, and global, attention.

The tsunami is the worst natural disaster ever faced by Indonesia. It is certainly the most difficult ordeal that I have

faced in my entire career in public office. I mean, how do you deal with the tragic loss of 200,000 fellow countrymen in a matter of minutes?

In retrospect, I think we in Indonesia responded to the crisis well. We marshalled all our resources to save lives, rescue survivors, collect and bury the dead, provide shelter to the homeless, deliver food and medicine and re-establish Government functions, all on very difficult terrain. We also coordinated and supervised what would amount to be the largest international humanitarian operations in recent memory.

Today, Aceh is slowly but surely getting back on its feet. The challenge now is how to rebuild Aceh speedily with the available resources. We have produced an ambitious blueprint for the reconstruction of Aceh, and we have established an Agency for the Reconstruction of Aceh headed by the respected Dr. Kuntoro to implement this programme and manage the funds and material resources that arc coming in.

I see the Aceh reconstruction project as a window to the new Indonesia. It is a hallmark of transparency, professionalism and integrity.

There is one thought that I want to share with you in relation to the tsunami. The tsunami tragedy has generated a tremendous amount of global goodwill, involving not just governments and international agencies, but civil society, citizens of all layers and age groups. The whole western world reached out to help tsunami victims around the Indian Ocean, especially in worst-hit Aceh, known as the most conservative Islamic society in Indonesia. The world has never seen the kind of global compassion and solidarity that we saw during the tsunami. This, I think, is something new in international affairs.

It is a shame to let that good thing just fizzle by itself. I urge you, in your discussions today, to think about how we can nurture and capitalise on this global goodwill.

Another defining event this year is the rising oil price. As we all know, this is a global problem which affects every country.

There was a time in the past when we in Indonesia rejoiced every time the oil price increased. But today, due to greater consumption and growing imports, we sweat every time it happens, because that means we will have to pay more subsidies.

In March this year, I took the decision to reduce government subsidies on some of the petroleum products, a move that sparked some protest but was economically necessary. But the problem remains. Today, oil price remains stubborn at around USD$ 65, much higher than the budget assumption of USD$ 40. If this trend continues, this means we have to pay about 145 trillion Rupiah for subsidies, which constitutes more than one-fourth of our national budget. That is a lot of money: money can be used to build schools, hospitals, roads and other things that can stimulate growth and productivity. What's more, the bulk of those subsidies are enjoyed by those who are economically capable of paying the international market price for their gasoline needs.

We all hope that the oil price will go down again sooner than later, although there is no certainty at the moment about this. The oil situation has hindered our capacity to achieve greater growth figures, and it is already a factor in the weakening of the Rupiah against the US dollar.

Thus, the question of rising oil prices, government subsidies, and the need to protect the energy needs of the poor (who are reliant on kerosene) will continue to be at the forefront of my Government's economic agenda. And you can be sure that such a decision will have political and social ramifications. The question is how we can minimise those ramifications.

The answer to this problem is a comprehensive energy policy for Indonesia. A fundamental solution to the fundamental energy problem.

This means many things. It means that Indonesians will need to become more energy efficient, and currently my government has launched a nation-wide campaign urging people to save energy. We will need to diversify our energy sources, away from oil, to more use of gas, solar and other alternative sources, including bio-diesel. It also means we have to increase our oil production, and my aim is to raise it from 1.1 million barrels per day today to around 1.4 million barrels per day in the next four years.

I am hopeful that we can do this, with Cepu and Jeruk field, and with new oil refineries built. Just yesterday, I took great pleasure in opening the *Kilang Langit Biru*, Blue Sky Refinery Operation in West Java, with a capacity of producing 50,000 barrels per day.

Another problem of global proportion that we face is terrorism.

Indonesia had a series of major attacks: the Bali bomb of 2002, the Marriot bomb of 2003, and the car bombing of the Australian Embassy in Jakarta in 2004. Indonesia therefore has been at the frontline in the global struggle against terrorism.

This year, we have been rather fortunate not to have experienced so far a major terrorist attack. But we know that the terrorist cells are still active. They are still hiding, recruiting, networking, trying to find new funding sources, and even planning. We are still actively looking for dangerous bomb makers, Malaysians Dr. Azahari and Noordin Muhammad Top. And we suffered from bombing attacks in Poso a few months ago.

Fighting terrorism will continue to be our top priority in Indonesia. We will continue to pursue these terrorist groups wherever they may be hiding. We will continue our international cooperation involving the police, intelligence and immigration. We will strengthen the hands of the religious moderates.

And most importantly, I assure you that Indonesia will remain firm in maintaining a tolerant nation where freedom of

religion is respected. You may read from time to time the voice of small radical groups, but these voices will not change the fact that mainstream Indonesia will continue to be moderate and tolerant and democratic. If you look at our election results last year, you can derive the same conclusion.

So this is, in a nutshell, an overview of some of Indonesia's key events and issues. It is hardly an exhaustive list, but if you want a comprehensive report, you should have been at my budget speech at Parliament a few days ago.

In any case, I hope from these short remarks you will get a sense of the enormity of the challenges faced by Indonesia, and also share my optimism that Indonesia can meet those challenges, in the same way Indonesia overcame past trials and tribulations.

Earlier in my remarks I referred to Indonesia being the world's third largest democracy. While that is a great thing in itself, I think the real challenge is not about the status of being a largest democracy, but about the honour of being a successful democracy, a functioning democracy, and in Indonesia's case that means being a tolerant and stable and unified multi-ethnic democracy. And that also means building a democracy that actually gives our people real democracy.

Ladies and gentlemen,
I have come to the end of my remarks. I was told that this is the session where I am expected to submit my report card on the past 10 months of my Presidency.

Well, in all honesty, I think it is you who will have to write that report card on me.

My only hope is that as you write my report card, it is good enough so that you won't have to ask me to stand in the corner!

Thank you, and I look forward to our discussions.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

with

HE Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono
President of Indonesia

Sixth Asian-European Editors' Forum, Jakarta, 29 August 2005

Competently moderated by Jusuf Wanandi, Indonesia's President, HE Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, answered a range of questions, ranging from the peace process in Aceh to domestic fuel subsidies.

WAR AND PEACE IN ACEH

The 15 August 2005 peace agreement in Aceh being one of the key achievements of Indonesia's new president, the first question put it into historical perspective: would the Indonesian military, ABRI, play a more constructive role than in the past? The President replied that he had been dealing with Aceh for the past forty years and that he had learned from this. Furthermore, the failure of previous peace deals was not entirely ABRI's making. Thus the GAM (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka –* Free Aceh Movement) was not fully united at the time of the peace agreements of three years ago. Because too many factions were not in line with the top level, the military had had to defend the situation. In contrast, the President strongly believed that the present peace deal would be far more successful.

THE MENACE OF FUTURE TERRORIST STRIKES

The Republic of Indonesia having been on the receiving end of Islamic jihadi terrorist attacks aimed at places of Western presence, but also hitting fellow Indonesians, several questions naturally turned toward Indonesia's anti-terrorism policies and the prospect of future attacks.

In response to the scenario of a surge of terrorist attacks, Dr.Yudhoyono answered that the coming months of September and October 2005 were special months for an attack. In fact, an increase in terrorist activity in the entire region was likely, given the network of regional terrorists in Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

The President called for vigilance to prevent further attacks as terrorist groups still maintained communications. He had consequently instructed all authorities to increase their awareness and expressed hope that neighbouring countries would do the same.

NEW PAN-ISLAMIC ANTI-TERRORISM INITIATIVES?

Given that Indonesia is a predominantly Muslim country, in fact the country with the biggest Muslim population, Indonesia's President was queried whether he would take the initiative to link up with other Muslim countries to fight the menace of terrorism with new strategies.

Dr. Yudhoyono stressed that Indonesia's relations with the United States, the ASEAN countries, Japan, and Europe were good and expressed the hope that relations with Muslim countries could be good too as their problems were very similar. Better and closer cooperation was therefore important.

JOINT PHILIPPINE-INDONESIAN ANTI-TERRORISM EFFORT

President Yudhoyono also stressed already existing bi-lateral anti-terrorism measures, such as between the Philippines and Indonesia. During his recent visit to the Philippines, he had hence met a military commander stationed in the southern Philippines. In 2006, there would be a conference to improve regional operations in Indonesia's and the Philippines' peripheral zones, which could only be better controlled through closer relations, improved intelligence, and continuous evaluation of bilateral security efforts.

HOW TO DEAL WITH ANTI-CHRISTIAN VIOLENCE?

Indonesia being a country with a substantial Christian minority population, the next question turned toward the reported [this very morning] attempt by certain groups to close down churches in Java, Indonesia's most heavily populated island.

Dr. Yudhoyono condemned these unconstitutional and unlawful attempts – one near Bandung, the other near Tangerang – and demonstrated that he was on top of events. Last night, he had thus ordered the local chiefs of police to be vigilant. Later today, he would meet with Christian leaders and groups. The President emphasised that the Indonesian constitution needed to be defended and that it was not true that the government was inactive.

THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD OF GLOBALISATION

From the threat of global and regional terrorism, the questions then turned towards the challenges of globalisation: What

programmes would Dr. Yudhoyono initiate during this Presidency to create jobs – given that cheaper labour was increasingly available in the two rising giants of India and China?

According to Indonesia's President, globalisation was a double-edged sword with both positive and negative sides. To profit from globalisation, Indonesia had to improve its efficiency, competitiveness, and productivity by creating a better climate for business and good economic policies – this was surely one of the biggest challenges to his Presidency.

DOMESTIC OIL SUBSIDIES IN A PERIOD OF RISING OIL PRICES

The assembled journalists did not fail to address the issue of Indonesia's domestic oil subsidies as a particularly interesting illustration of the relationship between global and domestic challenges. As the rise in international oil prices considerably drained the Indonesian budget, was it not easier to reduce them in the next few months? This had been done very successfully in the Philippines where the population had accepted the government's rationale for this unpopular measure, because everyone understood that it was because of the world market rather than the government.

President Yudhoyono replied that an entire package of policies was required. Hence domestic oil production needed to be increased to avoid imports from other countries. The country's energy sources furthermore needed to be diversified. A national campaign for more efficient energy use had to be launched. These measures had to go hand in hand with a better enforcement of the law, an appropriate policy to deregulate the energy market, while at the same time protecting the really poor from the effects of subsidy cuts.

THE "GLOCAL" EFFECTS OF GLOBALISATION

Taken Indonesia's vast size and regional diversity, the next question asked how globalisation would play out locally, in particular with regard to security and environmental issues.

The President argued that a policy of regional development combined with the cross-regional allocation of resources had to be implemented. At the national level, funds had to be redistributed in order to close the gap between the richer and poorer districts and provinces. A more equal development had to be instituted. Of crucial importance was Dr. Yudhoyono's regular call to local governors not only to act as administrators and bureaucrats but also as developers and entrepreneurs: they would have to take the initiative rather than simply manage existing problems.

LEADERSHIP STYLE

The President's leadership style also came under scrutiny: how would he react to those critics who characterised him as a good president but not so good as a decision-maker?

President Yudhoyono shared that he had heard a lot of such criticism during the presidential campaign. As a general, he knows how to take decisions, though as a President, he has to do so democratically.

TRUST AND INVESTMENT: PERFORMANCE OF HIS GOVERNMENT

The final question shifted from the President's leadership style to the performance of his government. Ten months into his

Presidency, was there any way to improve the government and to maintain foreign investors' trust in it?

Dr. Yudhoyono stated that he would keep his promise of having competent ministers. He stood for improved coordination between ministers and better communication between ministries. The improvement in their performance was key and he would evaluate it in two months' time by looking at factors such as problems related to personalities and capability.

A STRENGTHENED INDONESIA IN THE FRAMEWORK OF SOUTH EAST ASIA'S ECONOMY

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

with

HE Dr. Sri Mulyani Indrawati
Minister of State for National Development Planning

Sixth Asian-European Editors' Forum, Jakarta, 29 August 2005

FUEL SUBSIDIES AND CONFIDENCE IN THE MARKET

As during the Question and Answer session with Indonesia's President, Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the country's practice of subsidising fuel was one of the hottest issues: Could the entire system be changed? Would there be a transitional period? Why wait rather than change the system now?

In response, the Minister, Dr. Sri Mulyani Indrawati, provided a glimpse into the problems relating to government subsidies. She indicated a preference for a move from indirect to more directed subsidies. The lack of appropriate data, however, made the identification of possible recipients extremely difficult. In fact, a population survey would be required to get a more accurate picture, yet budget issues imposed limits.

These statistical problems aside, the introduction – or not – of a transitional phase would also depend on the still

undetermined final designs of more directed subsidies. To date, there was a lack of experience – as far away as Latin America – with regard to its potential positive and negative effects. Another issue was whether these measures should be processed through the banking or other systems, should improvements in the fields of education, health, and infrastructure be combined with subsidies? Given these issues, the Minister concluded, the decision-making process was still ongoing.

Personally, however, she thought that a transition phase would be worse, but she was just one among 34 ministers. She did not think the president would wait four months to restore confidence, or that they would backtrack or take a shortcut because a policy change required a lot of determination.

DIVISION OF LABOUR IN ACEH

The next question constituted the division of labour between Bappenas, Indonesia's National Development Planning Agency, of which Dr. Mulyani was the Chairperson, and other agencies with regard to the supervision of reconstruction relief in Aceh.

The Minister replied that Bappenas had a supporting role and that, overall, there was a division of labour rather than an overlap. There were supervisory, monitoring, and executing agencies, and an inspectorate, all to counter the threat of corruption.

A GROWING AND AGEING POPULATION?

Indonesia being blessed with one of the world's biggest populations, the Minister was asked whether she intended to moderate it or was happy with it.

Dr. Mulyani referred to a recent publication that projected a population size of 275 million for the near future, of whom more than half would be living on Java. In view of this, Indonesia would maintain its family planning policies which include fertility treatments such as oral contraceptives or the use of condoms. She further pointed out that population growth was also due to a decline in mortality rates. As the population grew older and more mature, it was hence also important during the next ten years to save human capital in order to take care of this new age structure.

CURRENCY POLICIES: DISCONNECTING THE RUPIAH?

Concerns about the stabilisation of the Indonesian currency, the Rupiah, led to the question why Indonesia did not use similar policies as Malaysia or China.

According to the Minister, Indonesia could not adopt similar systems of disconnection with the US-Dollar as the Republic simply lacked the resources to do so. There was, furthermore, a credibility problem due to the perception of a fair degree of corruption and low confidence in the country's regulatory institution. The central question, for the Minister, was not whether Indonesia would follow foreign disconnection models but rather whether it could actually do so.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CROSS-BORDER RELATIONS

The next question focused on the extent to which cross-border relations between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines were affected by the need for national development.

Dr. Mulyani explained that Indonesia tried to engage Malaysia in further talks with regard to divergences of interest in the Borneo area and border developments more generally. She further pointed out that there were no controversies between the government and those of other ASEAN member states as Indonesia's commitment was regional.

CORRUPTION

Finally, the Minister was asked about her position with regard to corruption and the kind of institutional measures and mechanisms that could curb it.

Dr. Mulyani indicated that the population was frustrated about the President's December 2004 framework to combat corruption. Indonesians wanted to see people in prison and not accept anything else. This attitude and the public's perception that the President's measures were ad hoc rather than part of a more sound long-term policy in fact were seen to hamper the efforts of the President.

One key in the struggle against corruption was confidence in the judicial process. The performance of the judges would need to be improved, for instance by increasing their salaries so they would feel financially secure rather than be susceptible to corruption. The current number of only 3,000 judges would have to be increased, first in the four biggest cities as there was not sufficient money to take nation-wide measures. The monitoring system would have to be improved too. It was important to bear in mind, however, that the system was already there and that the President was aware of public pressure.

INDONESIA AFTER THE TSUNAMI:
EIGHT MONTHS AFTER THE DISASTER

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

with
Dr. Kuntoro Mangkusubroto
Head, Aceh and Nias Rehabilitation and
Reconstruction Agency (BRR)

Sixth Asian-European Editors' Forum, Jakarta, 29 August 2005

EARTHQUAKES – LIVING ON A TECTONIC FAULTLINE

Eight months after the devastating tsunami of 26 December 2004, Dr. Kuntoro Mangkusubroto first had to answer whether earthquakes were still active.

He highlighted that Aceh, and Indonesia generally, were located in an active area. There had been an earthquake almost every day since his arrival in Aceh, some of which could be felt. About every three weeks, there has been a quake on the scale of 5 to 6 on the Richter scale. The reality was that Acehnese and Indonesians had to live with the unavoidable reality of earthquakes and tsunamis. In contrast to the latter, which would take up to twenty minutes to reach the coast, there was no warning phase for earthquakes.

The administration's stance was to let the population do what they wanted, but to provide them advice and guidance on their options as people could not possibly be moved.

EARLY TSUNAMI WARNING SYSTEM

From earthquakes the discussion quickly moved on to the possibilities of pre-empting the devastating effects of a second tsunami.

Dr. Kuntoro highlighted that no early warning system had been installed in Aceh or Flores yet, although the German GTZ (*Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit*) was working on this. The key problem about early warning systems was not so much the technology and knowing whether a quake would be followed by a wave. Instead, the crucial issue was how to create an effective system of administration and information dissemination. The situation in Aceh hence starkly contrasts with Japan where people can be warned of earthquakes or tsunamis by TV or radio. What could be used, however, were Aceh's omni-present mosques.

TSUNAMI AND PEACE PROCESS

The Head of the Aceh and Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency then turned to the relationship between the tsunami and the peace process in Aceh, and in particular whether this would affect the reconstruction process.

In his view, both were closely related. The tsunami had destroyed the entire economy, including the logistical support for the GAM (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* – Free Aceh Movement).

His position was non-partisan. When army officers had asked him whether he would screen the contractors who would build new houses for potential links to the GAM, he had replied 'no'. To him, this did not matter as long as the targeted goal of houses was being built.

Even now, however, the reconstruction effort was affected by the political situation in the country. Hence, it was

recommended for workers not to go out before 7am or after 7pm. Due to his responsibilities, however, he had to be on the road at 5am or at 10pm; so far, they had encountered unidentified armed men on only two occasions.

FINANCIAL FLOWS INTO ACEH

The next question dealt with the flow of financial aid into Aceh. In particular, it tried to clarify what the Head of BRR Aceh-Nias had meant in his presentation regarding not having any money of their own.

Dr. Kuntoro highlighted four main channels of financial aid into Aceh, of which 6 to 8 billion US Dollars had been pledged over the next four years: money by the government of the Republic of Indonesia; international donor moneys (e.g. by the Asian Development Bank) that were channelled directly through the government's budget; international donor contributions (e.g. USAID) that first passed through the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) before being allocated to the government's budget or off-budget funds; and international donations (e.g. AusAID) that directly went to off-budget funds; finally, NGOs and private sector donors also provided off-budget funds by being channelled directly to Aceh or Nias.

As of 18 August 2005, 4.6 billion USD worth of projects had been received and catalogued by BRR, of which 4.1 billion had been approved. The task of his agency was to help match resources to needs.

CORRUPTION

As for the previous two question and answer session, the topic of 'corruption' continued to be a popular topic.

Dr. Kuntoro explained that his policy was to use the money effectively and to build the required number of houses, etc. With regard to corruption, he could always refer to the document that all BRR partners had had to sign. So far, it seems to have worked as they could show this paper to extortionists. Even though it did not provide an absolute guarantee, it seemed to work quite well. A further anti-corruption measure was the hiring of external auditors for monitoring purposes.

INDUSTRIALISING ACEH?

The concluding question was whether the tsunami was the ideal chance to industrialise and thus to diversify this traditionally agricultural society.

The Head of BRR Aceh-Nias pointed out that private sector investment had been very limited even though any private company was naturally welcome to come in because Aceh was an area rich in agricultural produce such as cocoa, coffee, or base oils for cosmetic products. Big companies, however, had not shown any commitment yet.

LOOKING FORWARD: EMERGING CHALLENGES FOR THE EAST ASIAN REGION

by

Mr. Jusuf Wanandi
Co-Founder, Member of the Board of Trustees,
and Senior Fellow,
Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

Sixth Asian-European Editors' Forum, Jakarta, 29 August 2005

There are three main challenges for the East Asian Region: globalisation, international terrorism and looking for a new equilibrium among the great powers.

Globalisation

There are new emerging challenges in the Asia Pacific and globally. Some are already reality but others are looming on the horizon and could soon become new realities. The challenge of globalisation has been with us since the early 1990s. Its impact was fully felt by the region in 1997 when hit by the financial crisis, resulting in severe setbacks.

Norms, practices and institutions in the Asia Pacific region have not completely adjusted to this challenge although the region has recovered economically and is in a rather strong position financially. However, the challenge remains broad-ranging and exerts pressures not only in the economic field but also in the political field and even on value systems.

Globalisation continues to be a very strong force as can be seen from the continuing trends towards outsourcing and

the migration of manufacturing capacity to countries that can produce at a lower cost, such as China.

In the economic field there are serious problems – such as the trans-Pacific imbalances – which the region tries to overcome. However, it may well be that adjustments will be far more difficult in the political and cultural fields. Developing societies that have weak political institutions and systems with little transparency have been forced to open up and to implement the rule of law, often with destabilising results. Values or cultural systems are also under pressure for change. Groups in society that enjoy the benefits of globalisation welcome the changes, but the poor and those who have been deprived from the fruits of globalisation resist the change because they cannot adjust to its speed and consequences. In response they will cling harder to their old traditions based on religion, ethnicity, and race, which give them a sense of certainty and security in the face of globalisation. That is why there is the strong trend towards conservatism.

Globalisation challenges are not only faced by developing nations, but also developed ones; the EU was facing a constitutional crisis partly due to globalisation; Japan has to change its traditions in her labour relations, while the US is facing the challenge of outsourcing and the flight of its manufacturing capacities to overseas locations.

The growth of world trade and economic growth have been the result of opening up national economies to globalisation. But many societies have not been able to deal with the "other" (negative) impacts of globalisation: social injustice, growing income gaps, marginalisation of the weak and the poor, and the rapid changes of political and cultural values and systems. That is why education and training and the provision of health care are the most important instruments for overcoming the negative impacts of globalisation. Everybody has to get the same chance to participate in and thrive on globalisation.

International Terrorism

The second new challenge, global and regional, is the threat of international and regional terrorism. The evil genius of Osama bin Laden was to use the war against the USSR in Afghanistan to create solidarity amongst terrorist organisations everywhere and to employ them against the US and the West after the USSR was defeated in Afghanistan.

International terrorism is also present in the Asia Pacific region, organised through regional extremist groups that have their own agenda and objectives beyond targeting the US and the West, such as Jemaah Islamiyah and other local groups. They have been assisted by networks, technical expertise, training, weapons and money from al Qaeda.

These globalised networks are also the reason why there has to be international and regional cooperation to fight them, especially in the areas of intelligence, police work, border control, legal cooperation, and in intercepting outside funding. Military means might be possible in very few instances but is not the rule. Democracy, human rights and the rule of law must be observed in order to have the moral high ground and the political upper hand in fighting terrorism.

For East Asians, international terrorism is important, but it is not the only important security issue. Poverty, the challenge of development and nation building are still the more urgent political and security challenges. For instance, Indonesia, with its moderate Muslims in the majority, always had to deal with small groups of "extremist" Muslims who want to establish a Muslim state or to implement the "Syariah" law.

In the end, national, regional or international efforts must address the root causes of extremism and radicalism that are prone to using terrorist means. The ideological struggle between "modernist" and "traditionalist" is a critical development in the

Muslim world. The modernists should be supported in their effort and struggle to establish a viable "democracy" and a successful economy with "social justice". Only if they are successful in such endeavours, can they argue with the traditionalists that going back to the idea of a Muslim state, a "khalifah", is no longer relevant. And only then can they demonstrate that Muslims can run a modern state.

Thus, while cooperation against terror is welcomed, the US and the West should recognise the need to support countries in East Asia in their efforts towards national development and modernisation. Failure to do so could increase the threat of terrorism in the region.

The Rise of China and the Implications for East Asia

Asia Pacific and the world are faced with a new challenge, namely the rise of China. This could be followed by the rise of yet another large country and economy, India. The impact of China's rise is already felt. It is imperative that some political, economic and even security arrangements that involve China be established in the Asia Pacific region. The sooner this can happen, the better it will be for the region and for the world.

In the economic field there are growing trade imbalances between the US and China to the amount of more than US$ 150 billion in favour of China. This is a problem because of the huge overall trade deficit of the US. Rather than addressing the overall trade imbalance, the debate in the US has been focused on the value of the Yuan, problems of outsourcing and the migration of manufacturing capabilities to China, job losses due to infringement of intellectual property rights and piracy by China. But cheap imports from China have contributed to controlling inflation in the US, and China has become a major creditor nation to the US by purchasing large amounts of US

Treasury Notes. Moreover, a large portion of imports from China consist of products from US multinationals operating in China as well as in other parts of the region to be assembled in China and then exported to the US. This shows how interwoven the US and China have become economically.

This is also the case with Japan. China has become Japan's main trading partner and Japanese investments in China in the last few years have multiplied. Japan's economic recovery has been partly aided by its increased exports to China, given their large complementarities. Their bilateral trade is now over 250 billion US dollars worth.

This means that putting pressure on China in finance and trade or trying to hamper her economic growth through various rules and means will not work because the interdependence between the US and China as well as Japan and China has become real and deep.

This is also happening in the political field. China's political influence in the region is real, but is as yet not extraordinary. She is a newcomer and has had some problems in her relationships with the region, when in the 1950s to the 1970s she was subverting Southeast Asian countries by assisting local communist parties to oppose the legitimate governments.

Relations with Southeast Asia have improved. China has employed astute diplomacy, including trade diplomacy. However, there are limits. She is not a big investor in ASEAN yet, and her investments are mainly in the development of energy and resources, which she really needs. It seems that she is mainly using her trade as a vehicle of influence in Southeast Asia.

China will and has the right to become a major player. However, it is the suddenness of her emergence, the magnitude of her economic expansion and the assertiveness of her diplomacy that have aroused a sense of anxiety, especially amongst her neighbours. There are no obvious reasons why

China could not maintain her economic growth of 8 to 10% annually in the next 20 years or so. She will definitely emerge as a major power.

The history of the rise of Germany in the 19th and early 20th centuries shows that it was never easy to cope with a new rising power. It is also not immediately obvious why this would not be the case with China's rise.

Throughout the 1990s, China's economic expansion did not create major disruptions in global trade as her exports were mainly in labour intensive and low-tech manufacture, which is complementary to industrialised countries' output. However, this is rapidly changing. As her export in advanced technological products increases rapidly, especially in the telecom and information technology industries, the resistance will be greater and more formidable.

It needs to be noted, however, that as distinct from Germany's case earlier, China's economy is already much more integrated with its major partners, the US and Japan, as well as the EU. Therefore, boycotts or other trade restricting actions, such as quotas for textiles or the imposition of high tariffs on imports will hurt the US, Japan and the EU themselves.

That is why Jeffrey Garten, Dean of the School of Management at Yale, in the *International Herald Tribune* on June 4, 2005, has argued strongly that there should be immediate talks between China, the US, Japan and the EU, about what to do together about the rise of China in order to prevent more bouts of tensions and potential conflicts. So far, China and the region have been lucky that the repercussions have been limited, and other countervailing developments have occurred, such as the importance and common concern with the threat of global terrorism. However this will not be sufficient in the future.

Politically there is a real danger that China will be demonised by right wing politicians in the US Congress and

officials in the US Department of Defense (DOD), who always seem to need an enemy. Sam Huntington predicted that after the Cold War was over, China would immediately come to mind. The fight against terrorism has diverted this somewhat, but the rise of China and the "feeling" in the DOD that China is starting to hamper US interest everywhere (Iran, Sudan, Middle East, Central Asia, North Korea and Japan) has rekindled the feeling. On her side, China feels that in fact she is being besieged by the US who has made inroads into and allies in Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, ASEAN, Australia, Japan, and South Korea.

If in the future the quest for energy and natural resources becomes acute, serious competition could emerge between China and the US (plus India and Japan). It will be a real mistake for the rightwing in the US Congress and the DOD to view China as another USSR. China has no ideological contradiction with the US and has no ambition to rule the world as the USSR did. It is normal that in the relationship between two great powers there will be cooperation and competition. China-US cooperation is of critical importance for the peace, stability and development of East Asia and the wider Asia Pacific region.

Regional Cooperation and Integration

It is clear to East Asians that they must find a way to cope with a rising China in a positive manner. ASEAN gives great importance to the creation of an East Asian Community in which China will be an integral part of the region's efforts to deal with the problems that arise due to China's enormous growth and development. It is hoped that in such an arrangement China would be encouraged to maintain being a status quo power.

This arrangement could also assist in the development of more positive relations between China and Japan that since normalisation in 1980 have never been at such a low point as

they are today. The problem is not only about the history between the two, but also about arising nationalism in both countries and a sense of competition for future supremacy in the region. That is why the East Asian Summit in Kuala Lumpur in December of this year could help create the environment for better relations between the two. Improvement of the relations depends first and foremost on the efforts by the two countries themselves, but ASEAN could be a catalyst or interlocutor through the creation of the right environment and perhaps by taking some initiatives. The US has a certain role to play by encouraging normalisation and restraint. However, she cannot go too far, because she is an ally of Japan and is always less nuanced in her approaches to be able to handle this very delicate situation and relationship.

Importantly, Japan must first take responsibility for her past and openly discuss this with the region. If visits by the Prime Minister to the Yasukuni shrine are seen by the region – not only by China and Korea – as highly disturbing, Japan and PM Koizumi had better listen seriously. A more serious offence about Yasukuni is the museum annex in the compound, which gives an appalling interpretation of Japan's role in World War II, including the killings in Nanjing. The region, including the more silent ASEAN, has been taken aback by PM Koizumi's attitude on this matter. In the end it also could reflect Japan's willingness or not to be a part of Asia completely. She could indeed be both part of the West and part of Asia, but East Asians feel that being part of Asia is only secondary for Japan. East Asia is changing fast and is going to become the most dynamic part of the world. It seems to others in East Asia that Japan is only grudgingly accepting this fact and her role in it. That has to change because she has the most vital role of being an interlocutor between East Asia and the West, especially the US. On the other hand, China also has to restrain her reactions and should find a modus vivendi with Japan if they

want to have a peaceful environment in East Asia, which is so critical to the establishment of an East Asian Community.

In the end, the East Asian Community also has a role to contribute to the future stable relationship between China and the US. This could be the most critical relationship in the future, with the greatest danger for potential clashes. As said earlier, it has always been difficult to accept and adjust to a rising power. This is especially the case with China's sudden rise, and the magnitude of her power and growth. The good thing in the case of China is that she is already integrated in a number of respects with the region as well as with the US and the EU: in trade, finance, and even politically, as in the fight against international terrorism and the proliferation of nuclear arms in North Korea.

However, these cannot be taken for granted because there are many groups in the US who, for various reasons, might want to establish a united front against China. That is why the relationship has never been completely stable. The region could help overcome this by showing that China is friendly and cooperates positively with her neighbours in East Asia. The US can cooperate better with China through cooperation with the region as a whole (including China) rather than only in a bilateral setting.

To make this possible, East Asia has to be embedded in the Asia Pacific region as a whole. This means that the East Asian regional initiative should form an important caucus in APEC and the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (PECC), where the US is present. For this to happen credibly and effectively, APEC and PECC will have to be reformed. PECC should become more pro-active and flexible. PECC should strengthen its role as a forum to develop strategic concepts of regional community building. It should involve the many stakeholders of the Asia Pacific Community, such as politicians,

parliamentarians, the mass media, the youth, civil societies, and business. Community building is too complex a process to be left to the governments (APEC) alone. PECC should be at the forefront in Asia Pacific Community building.

In the security field it should be clear that the US military presence and dominance in East Asia and its role of last arbiter is most critical for peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region. The region, even including China, is not against US military presence in East Asia. No government will oppose or confront the US openly in this part of the world, because besides US hegemony, there is no regional security arrangement to maintaining peace and stability in this part of the world.

The region must anticipate and begin to develop a regional security architecture that can accommodate a rising China with a military might. US dominance today is being implemented through its alliance system, of which Japan is the most important one. In addition, ASEAN has already initiated the establishment of a CBM (confidence building measure) mechanism, called the ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum), where all regional countries and others that have a security "footprint" in the region could discuss a range of security matters and cooperate in a number of areas. However, this forum cannot solve hard military tensions or conflict.

The six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear weapons problem are an ad hoc effort to coordinate policies towards North Korea – no more and no less. If successful, North East Asia could use them further in the future as an instrument for solving potential conflicts or discussing arising tensions in North East Asia.

ASEAN is a CBM institution par excellence for South East Asia. It has prevented open conflicts since 1967 among the five founding members. It has contributed to finding a political solution to end the Cambodian problem. ASEAN still has to find

a solution for Myanmar's isolation due to its military authoritarian rule. ASEAN agrees to strengthen its role in the region by establishing an ASEAN Community that encompasses all fields: economic, security, socio-cultural.

The big question is how East Asia can complement the US role in the region. With the rise of China, the existing "hub and spokes" arrangements might no longer be adequate. The rise of India, and its strategic partnership with the US, could form another pillar of the regional security architecture.

The idea of a "concert of powers", consisting of the US, China, Japan, Russia, India and ASEAN, has been aired before. Since the US in security terms has to be included in East Asian Community building while in economic terms its presence will be guaranteed through APEC (and PECC), the East Asian Community could entertain the idea of such a security framework for the future. Perhaps this framework could incorporate various sub-regional institutions that have a security purpose, such as ASEAN Security Community, the ARF, and the six-party talks.

How the relationship between the major powers will evolve in the future will influence East Asia's development. The relationship between China and Japan is a key to the region's development. Their mutual adjustments will be critical. It is for the first time in East Asian history that both are big powers at the same time. Their huge economic relations could help alleviate the tensions, but they might not be adequate to overcoming their deep emotional problems.

China-India relations still have some lingering problems due to the war in 1962. Although the situation has greatly improved and economic relations have increased, they have not completely overcome their past animosities. But it is too much to expect at this stage of development that India is willing to play the role of ally of the US against China. She seems to be rather playing an astute game of some equidistance with

the two big powers. As stated earlier, the most critical relation in the longer term is between China and the USA because China's rise could challenge the USA as the only superpower. Some of the right wing public opinion and the US Congress as well as the Department of Defense will never accept the rise of another superpower, emotionally and politically.

The region does not think that China is an ideological state that intends to conquer the world and to impose a different political and economic system as the USSR tried to do before. China is mostly capitalistic in her economic strategy and while she is not a democracy, she is acutely aware that she has to open her political system. However, she is doing this with a lot of trepidation and extremely slowly. In actuality she no longer has a communist political system, but she has an authoritarian one. Being a communist country is only a façade to maintain the leadership's legitimacy.

China is likely to become just a "normal" great power, with which the US will have a competitive and cooperative relationship. She has sided with the US in the fight against terrorism, and is trying to help in the denuclearisation of North Korea. But she is also putting more stress on multilateral approaches in dealing with new and old challenges and problems, and in so doing might oppose some of the US tendency to behave unilaterally.

A potential area of conflict between China and the US is in the area of securing energy needs. China's needs for resources will be tremendous. Therefore, cooperation in this area should be promoted. China has to be more frugal and economic in the use of energy and resources, and she has to pay more attention to pollution and the environment. In fact, her idea of creating a new model of development, distinct from that of the West, especially the US, could have a significant effect for her own future and that for the region and the world. Her development

should aim at becoming less wasteful, less resources intensive, use more renewable resources, and give more attention to the environment and human security. It is not clear whether the leadership has enough authority to implement such a model of development that is also more transparent and more accountable to the people.

What is important in establishing the East Asian Community is the region's ability to cope with China (and also India). The US needs to be involved in the new equilibrium of power for East Asia. She needs to get involved in the security field, where she is the most prominent power in the region.

Many regional institutions in East Asia and the Asia Pacific region are complementing the US strategy of "hub and spokes" security alliances: the ARF for confidence building purposes and the six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear problem, as well as APEC, which focuses on trade and investment. In the East Asia Community the US is not directly involved, but is present through her allies (Japan, South Korea, Australia, Thailand and the Philippines) and also through APEC, where an East Asian economic community will be embedded.

In the end, however, this alphabet soup of regional institutions might not be adequate to solve the problem of the new balance of great powers in the Asia Pacific region and East Asia. Therefore, there must be an East Asian G-8, consisting of the US, China, Japan, India, Russia, Korea, Australia and ASEAN, to coordinate and streamline all these activities. This could be called the Concert of East Asian Powers, which, like the G-8 at the global level, will be organised as an "informal" meeting but well-prepared by so-called "sherpas". Regional institutions need time to develop, while the need for coordination and streamlining is new. The East Asian G-8 is needed soonest.

Concluding Remarks

The forces of globalisation are so huge and come with such a speed that even a regional institution such as the EU has difficulties coping with them. Even the US, as the only superpower, experiences some difficulties adjusting, although she appears to be doing better than others.

The new challenge of international terrorism has caused great damage globally because al Qaeda has been able to involve local and regional terrorist groups. International and regional cooperation is critical, but the main effort should be focused on assisting in the establishment of a real democracy and economic development with social justice.

The rise of China and India poses new challenges that are no less complicated to deal with. The main effort here is in promoting cooperation in many fields (economic, political, energy, and eventually security) amongst all-important actors (US, Japan, China, ASEAN, and India) with the aim to alleviate the possible negative impact of the rise of new regional powers. Another effort should be to encourage China (and India) to search for a new model of development that is prudent in the use of energy and natural resources, environmentally friendly, politically accountable, and focuses clearly on enhancing human security.

The East Asian Community, established through an active role of ASEAN, could make an enormous contribution to regional peace and prosperity in the wider Asia Pacific region. The idea of a Concert of East Asian Powers (USA, China, Japan, India, Russia, Korea, Australia and ASEAN) should be explored as it can complement regional efforts that have been initiated with the establishment of the ARF.

In the end, however, the region should be concerned with global changes and global responses in which it will make

significant contributions. Many of the challenges for the region are global in nature and ultimately can be solved only through global efforts and global institutions. Regional efforts must be seen as complementing global efforts. But that needs a separate article by itself.

with

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CHINA'S FUTURE REGIONAL ROLE

Several questions took issue with Jusuf Wanandi's largely positive assessment of China's development. Would the Chinese be less friendly – see for instance their manoeuvres off Taiwan – if they saw their interests threatened?

Jusuf Wanandi replied that the People's Republic of China would primarily focus on modernisation during the next twenty years. They would have no time for military adventures as this was their only chance to modernise. Instead, considering the many domestic challenges, the key question rather was whether they would have the strength and unity to develop.

Within China, problems might be at the local rather than national level and one should not forget that the Chinese Communist Party was currently transforming itself into a nationalist party. For all these reasons, the regional presence of the United States was important, and this was also the reason why they needed Australia too.

Moreover, the leadership in Beijing would be far more cautious because the killing of so many of their citizens would not be accepted in the future, as shown by the reaction to the Tiananmen massacres.

CHALLENGES TO CHINA'S CONTINUED ECONOMIC GROWTH

Beijing's ability to maintain an annual growth rate of eight per cent led to the next question, given serious problems such as environmental pollution and, more importantly, the lack of a political framework to deal with the increase of social problems.

In response, Jusuf Wanandi identified two main views on China's capacity to deal with its domestic problems. The optimistic view was that Beijing would be able to overcome these problems. Hence China had solved similarly daunting problems before, even though everyone predicted they would not be able to do it. The more optimistic view was therefore that the younger, Harvard-trained generation could push through.

NORTH KOREA

Asked about the future of North Korea, Jusuf Wanandi thought there was no other way for the North Koreans to survive other than to engage in the six-party talks.

INDONESIA AND ASEAN

The next set of questions turned away from China towards more ASEAN- and Indonesia-specific questions: was Jakarta's

role in ASEAN fading away because of internal problems, even though other Asian countries had similar problems, but seemed to cope better with them?

Jusuf Wanandi recalled his own presence at ASEAN's creation in 1967 and the historical factors that had led to it: Bung Karno's [President Sukarno] policy of *konfrontasi* (1960-6) and the perceived need of an indigenous model of regionalism. As a confidence-building measure, ASEAN had proven its value because there had never been any serious inter-state confrontation in the ASEAN region. He personally believed that the current Indonesian President might be better suited to deal with globalisation than his predecessors.

ON THE FUTURE OF ASEAN

In which direction would ASEAN develop given its expanded membership base and new regional and global challenges?

Jusuf Wanandi argued that the expansion of ASEAN's membership base, just before the Asian economic crisis, had rendered the organisation's consensual decision-making style more difficult, to the extent that one should perhaps reduce it to really vital cases.

ENERGY RESOURCES: COMPETITION OR CO-OPERATION?

Would the depletion of energy resources lead to competition rather than co-operation, and what solutions would there be?

Wanandi replied that a study by the Asia-Europe Council had led to the following suggestions: energy conservation was a big part of the solution, along with better supplies,

more reserves and reduced pollution. Europe had gone a long way in all these matters, whereas the United States still were extremely wasteful of natural resources. The rapid economic rise of China and India and new consumption patterns would naturally lead to more pollution. However, one should also watch the new Chinese model of development.

TERRORISM AND ISLAM

Jusuf Wanandi also answered a question on terrorism, co-operation between Muslim countries and why they faced extremist movements. In his view, the fate of democracy in this region would depend on what Muslims would do, taken that 90 per cent of Indonesians were Muslims. What was definitely not needed was the 7th century model, but the present-day model of Islam.

FORTY YEARS AFTER: THE 1965/6 MASSACRES

How was Indonesia dealing with the 1965/6 massacres of up to half a million Indonesians suspected of being members of the Communist Party of Indonesia, and the detainment and stigmatisation of scores of others during the New Order regime of President Suharto?

   Jusuf Wanandi replied that Indonesians had not been so sensitive about this issue forty years ago. All of the political prisoners had since been liberated and compensated. He expressed his hope that they would receive some recognition in the future, as it was a terrible mistake. It was therefore important to come to terms with this and then to move on.

SOME NOTES ON THE CONGENIALITY OF ISLAM AND CIVIC SOCIETY IN INDONESIA

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Sixth Asian-European Editors' Forum, Jakarta, 30 August 2005

Introduction: Words of Caution

The ongoing discourse on Islam and civic society – or Islam and democracy, for that matter – has generally focused on the positive trends. Working under the assumption that the basic tenets of Islam include the principles of justice, consultation, voluntarism, and egalitarianism, many believe that Islam is compatible with democracy, and that the idea of civil society in no way is inimical to Muslim institutional or organisational customs and traditions. The victory in the Cold War of the United States over the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, after more than four decades of socio-economic, political, and ideological confrontation, has only sealed the prophetic nature of democratic-civility. In circumstances such as these, it is very difficult and highly unpopular not to adhere to civic and democratic norms and values. Because of that, some countries have worked hard to share other nations' experiences with democracy.

The reality in the Muslim world, however, does not seem to automatically support the above viewpoint. Many students of democracy and Islam are often startled by the fact that civic or democratic arrangements have rarely been in existence in most of the Muslim world. When political and intellectual interests in civil society and democracy were rejuvenated in the

late seventies or mid-eighties, for instance, no serious attention was actually given to the Muslim world to at least be included in the study of democracy – let alone be regarded as a new and potential frontier where democracy could take place and flourish. Though recognising that "the exclusion of most of the Islamic world" as "less justifiable", the seminal three-volume work edited by Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset still upholds the notion that "the Islamic countries of the Middle East and North Africa generally *lack much previous democratic experience, and most appear to have little prospect of transition even to semidemocracy.*"[1]

Complementing his colleagues' intellectual stance, Samuel P. Huntington also casts doubts on the congeniality of Islam with democracy. "Egalitarianism and voluntarism", he writes, "are central themes in Islam." And yet, he also notices that "Islam, however, also rejects any distinction between the religious community and the political community. Hence there is no equipoise between Caesar and God, and political participation is linked to religious affiliation."[2]

If the suggestions by the above-mentioned scholars are not enough to convince us what lies before us in our attempt to connect Islam with democracy or civil society, then perhaps we should reflect upon Freedom House's 2002 report. It mentions that none of the so-called Islamic countries was put in the "free" (democratic) category. A handful of them were put in the category of "partly free" (partly democratic), including Bangladesh, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Turkey, and Malaysia. The vast majority of the Islamic countries – which include Algeria, Egypt, the Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Brunei, Sudan and Syria – were put in the category of "not-free" (not-democratic). For this the report believes that "there is a dramatic, expanding gap in the levels of freedom and democracy between Islamic countries and the

rest of the world." More distressing, it concludes that "a non-Islamic country [this may include North Korea!] is more than three times as likely to be democratic than an Islamic state."[3]

What has been said is not intended to discourage anyone's efforts to bring democracy or civil society to the Muslim world. Nor is it aimed at posing socio-theological challenges for those who aspire to Islam playing an important role in crafting democratic civility. Rather, it is directed solely to providing words of caution that whatever position we have on the relationship between Islam and democracy cannot be taken for granted. We simply cannot develop the idea of automaticity on this issue – as if Islam is amicable or inimical to democracy.

Civil Society and Democracy

The term "civil society" has re-emerged rather markedly over the last two decades. As the term may imply, many have argued that its reappearance is related to the recent phenomenon of global socio-economic and political liberty, beginning with Southern Europe in the mid-1970s (Spain, Portugal and Greece); Latin and Central America (Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Mexico) in the early 1980s; Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, and the former German Democratic Republic) and a number of Asian countries (most notably South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines) in the early 1990s. Certainly, such is the rising tide of what Samuel P. Huntington has called "democracy's third wave", where "between 1974 and 1990, at least 30 countries made transitions to democracy, just about doubling the number of democratic governments in the world."[4]

The fact that the revival of the idea of civil society has often been associated, quite closely in fact, with the world-wide trend of democratisation is not too difficult a subject to

understand. Millions of pages have been written to capture and explain "what democracy is and is not". In spite of the existing differences – whether democracy is understood in term of procedure or substance; whether such dubious adjectives such as "guided", "elitist", "vertical", "popular", "liberal", "bourgeois", "formal", "rational", "direct", "representative", "polis", "empirical", and even "Pancasila" are attached to it – there has been a remarkable consensus concerning "what democracy is not". Writing under the guise of political philosophy perspective, Giovanni Sartori has suggested that democracy is not authoritarianism, is not totalitarianism, is not absolutism, is not dictatorship. Elaborating this view, he writes that "democracy is a system in which no one can choose himself, no one can invest himself with power to rule and, therefore, no one can arrogate himself unconditional and unlimited power."[5]

In other words, democracy is not despotism. Here is where the association of democracy with civil society lies. In essence, as John A. Hall has put it, "civil society was seen as the opposite of despotism." As such it is "a space in which social groups could exist and move – something which exemplified and would ensure softer more tolerable conditions of existence."[6]

Other than the fact that the recent "global democratic revolution" has been associated with the resurgence of civil society, it has been equally suggested that a paradigm shift in state-society relations has also contributed to the rebirth of the idea of civil society. In this regard, there is no better case to present other than the experience of the peoples of Eastern Europe in their attempt to – borrowing John A. Hall's term – "establish decency in societies where it had most conspicuously been absent" in the midst of hegemonic states of the region. The legendary movement of Lech Walesa's Solidarity, for instance, which spear-headed the course of action against the hegemonic Polish state under the military-communist regime

of Jaruzelski, worked under the spirit of a civil society perspective. In fact, the term civil society had been used as Solidarity's main rallying point.[7] In their view, civil society is vital to democracy – "that there can be no democracy without a civil society."[8]

As widely understood, state-society relations in a hegemonic state are undoubtedly skewed. This is in a sense that the former dominates the latter not only in a socio-economic, cultural, and political sense, but virtually in all aspects of life. In such a situation, the chances of society having its own sphere is bleak – at best extremely limited. It is against these odds that, as quoted earlier, sociologists like John A. Hall see civil society as "the opposite of despotism"; that the crux of the matter in civil society discourse is to create "a space in which social groups could exist and move." If this is the case, then the problem of civil society could be very *existential* in nature.

The Function of Civil Society

Having established the relationship between democracy and civil society, let us now turn to the question of what this "creature" (i.e. civil society) is really all about. Comparable to the case of academic discourse on democracy, the literature on this subject does not offer a single unified accepted definition of civil society. In their 771 pages of work on civil society – the most comprehensive book on the subject so far – Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato define civil society "as a sphere of social interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (especially the family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations), social movements, and forms of public communication." Furthermore, they write that "modern civil society is created through forms of self-constitution and self-mobilization. It is institutionalized and generalized through laws, and especially subjective rights, that stabilize social differentiation. While the self-creative and

institutionalized dimensions can exist separately, in the long term both independent action and institutionalization are necessary for the reproduction of civil society."[9]

Nonetheless, using Solidarity as a reference to explain the case of Poland, Cohen and Arato magnify the importance of civil society for being not only an outsider but also a rival of the state. In this regard, they state: "the opposition of civil society and the state made its most dramatic return in East Europe, particularly in the ideology of the Polish opposition from 1976 to the advent of the early Solidarity and beyond. The juxtapositions are well known: society *against* the state, nation *against* state, social order *against* political system, *pays réel* against *pays légal* or *officiel*, public life *against* the state, private life *against* public power etc."[10]

In a somewhat different perspective, civil society has been identified chiefly with "associational revolution". This refers to the development of "a massive array of self-governing private organizations, not dedicated to distributing profits to shareholders or directors, pursuing public purposes outside the formal apparatus of the state. The proliferations of these groups may be permanently altering the relationship between states and citizens." In the context of Asia and the Pacific, this has been seen as an indicator that civil society is emerging.[11] This is notwithstanding the fact that some of the existing non-governmental organisations do not always share the ideological ethos of Lech Walesa's Solidarity. In fact, they do not necessarily represent a threat as far as their relationship to the state is concerned.[12]

In spite of this, the tendency has been to develop the notion of civil society in terms of non-governmental institutions. In line with the need and perhaps even the necessity to create free public or societal spaces other than those traditionally regulated by the state, Ernest Gellner's definition of civil society

might contribute to our understanding of the concept. For him, "civil society is that set of diverse non-governmental institutions, which is strong enough to counterbalance the state, and, whilst not preventing the state from fulfilling its role of keeper of the peace and arbitrator between major interests, can nonetheless prevent the state from dominating and atomizing the rest of society."[13]

Taking all the definitions presented above into consideration, it is clear that there are different ideas with regard to what constitutes civil society. However, there has been a remarkable consensus in how the term should be understood. As the term may indicate, it is the idea of "civility" that makes up the essence of the concept. This central claim does not refer to only, as Robert W. Hefner has correctly put it, "material prosperity but for tolerance of dissenting viewpoints, limits on state power, and the freedom to express their views and choose their own way of life."[14] This is what civil society is really all about.

If what constitutes civil society may have sparked some differences, this has not been the case with the question of its origin. Civil society was born in Europe. This point of origin is not simply a matter of birth-place. Quite significantly it refers to the socio-economic, cultural, and political circumstances which may have influenced and shaped the contour of the concept of civil society. Thus, as Serif Mardin has suggested "civil society is a Western dream." Furthermore, it is their "historical aspiration; it is also, in the concrete form this dream has taken, *part of the social history of Western Europe*."[15]

Being so, civil society is an idea which did not grow out of a vacuum. Instead, it is a product of Western socio-cultural and political fabrics. Whether or not such a dream is exportable or transferable to different socio-cultural, economic, and political backgrounds remains an interesting puzzle in today's nearly

borderless world. Mardin himself indicates that even with some luck the exportability of civil society is somewhat limited. Yet, as mentioned earlier, the idea of civil society has been shared by non-Western subjects. Joining these groups are portions of the Muslim world that in recent years "are beginning to acquire a skeleton of institutions" compatible to those developed earlier in the West. Even so, "the dream of Western societies has not become the *dream* of Muslim societies."[16]

If this idea of transferability of civil society beyond Western contexts should be pushed further, then certain caveats are in order. First, John A. Hall is correct in suggesting that the Western tone of civil society should be adjusted to non-Western contexts. This endeavour is meant to increase "the capacity and right to move between – even shop around for – such identities; diversity is valued within certain bounds."[17] Second, like the democratic system of governance, the ideal of civil society needs to be placed in certain structural and cultural plateaux in order to be able to flourish. It is in this later perspective that the religio-cultural basis of civil society should be examined.

Islam and Civil Society: Cultural Impediments and the Problem of Interpretation

Samuel P. Huntington has provoked an argument that non-Western culture is – quite inherently in fact – inimical to democracy, and therefore to civil society. This is not only because of the central claim of the incompatibility of non-Western cultures to democracy, but also due to a chauvinistic belief that only the West has "attitudes, values, beliefs and related behaviour patterns conducive to the development of democracy."[18] This cultural perspective of democracy has its historical base – unfortunately quite convincing. As suggested by George Kennan, "democracy was a form of government which evolved in the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in northwestern Europe, primarily among those countries that border on the English Channel and the North Sea (but with a certain extension into Central Europe) and which was then carried into other parts of the world, including North America, where peoples from that northwestern European area appeared as original settlers, or as colonialists, and laid down the prevailing patterns of civil government."[19]

Based on this historical perspective, the argument goes on that democracy actually has "a relatively narrow base both in time and in space." And because of that, Samuel P. Huntington – compatible to Kennan – concludes that "democracy is appropriate only for northwestern and perhaps central European countries and their settler-colony offshoots."[20] When it comes to the developing nations, Confucianism and Islam have been singled out as the main sources of cultural obstacles to democracy or civil society. For Huntington, "Confucian democracy" is clearly a contradiction in terms. It is unclear whether 'Islamic democracy' is".[21]

This viewpoint, I would argue, derives chiefly from a monolithic perception of Islam, with an exclusive reference to militant or radical Islam, especially those forms which develop in the Middle East. As John L. Esposito has pointed out, "actions, however heinous, are attributed to Islam rather than to a twisted or distorted interpretation of Islam by certain individuals or political movements." Thus, the term radical or militant Islam "is used facilely and indiscriminately to encompass a broad and diverse array of leaders, states and organisations."[22] And largely because of this, for Huntington, Islam does not only contradict the idea of democracy, but represents a threat to Western civilisation.[23]

Obviously the monolithic tendency of many Western observers in understanding Islam is due largely to their limited

knowledge of the nature of Islam. While it may be true that secular bias, as Esposito contends to believe,[24] has contributed to the failure of many non-Muslim scholars in understanding Islam properly, their major pitfall resides in their ignorance of the fact that Islam is a poly-interpretable religion.

Religion, as some have argued, may be seen as a divine instrument to understand the world.[25] Islam – in comparison to other religions – is conceivably the one with the least difficulty to accept such a premise. An obvious reason lies in one of Islam's most conspicuous characteristics: its "omnipotence". This is a notion which recognises that "everywhere" the presence of Islam should provide "the right moral attitude for human action".[26]

This notion has led many adherents to believe that Islam is a total way of life. The embodiment of this is expressed in the *shari'a* (Islamic law). A sizeable group of Muslims even push it further, asserting that "Islam is an integrated totality that offers a solution to all problems of life." Undoubtedly, they "believe in the complete and holistic nature of revealed Islam so that, according to them, it encompasses the three famous 'D's (*din*, religion; *dinya*, life and *dawla*, State). .... [Thus] Islam is an integrated totality that offers a solution to all problems of life. It has to be accepted in its entirety, and to be applied to the family, to the economy and politics. [For this group of Muslims] the realisation of an Islamic society is predicated on the establishment of an Islamic State, that is, an 'ideological State' based on the comprehensive precepts of Islam."[27]

In its present context, it is not surprising, though it is sometimes alarming, that the contemporary world of Islam witnesses many Muslims who want to base their socio-economic, cultural, and political life exclusively on Islamic teachings, without realising their limitations and constraints. Their expressions are found in today's popularly symbolic terms such

as Islamic revivalism, Islamic resurgence, Islamic revolution, Islamic reassertion, or Islamic fundamentalism. While such expressions are well motivated, they are not well thought out and in fact are rather apologetic in nature. Their central ideas, as Mohammed Arkoun has put it, "remain prisoners of the image of a provincial, ethnographic Islam, locked in its classical formulations inadequately and poorly formulated in contemporary ideological slogans." Furthermore, "[their] presentation [is] still dominated by the ideological need to legitimate the present regimes in Muslim societies."[28]

The holistic view of Islam as described above has its own implications. One of these is that it has excessively encouraged a tendency to understand Islam in its literal sense, emphasising merely its exterior dimension. And this has been carried out so far at the expense of the contextual and interior dimensions of Islamic principles. Thus, what might lie beyond its textual appearances is almost completely neglected, if not avoided. In the extreme case, this tendency has hindered many Muslims from understanding the message of the Qur'an as a divine instrument which provides the right moral and ethical values for human action. On the question of the holistic nature of Islam, Qamaruddin Khan noticed that "there is a prevailing misconception in the minds of many Muslims that the Qur'an contains exposition of all things. This misunderstanding has been created in the following verse of the Qur'an. 'And We have sent down on thee the Book making clear everything and as a guidance and a mercy, and as good tiding to those who surrender' (16:89). This verse is intended to explain that the Qur'an contains information about every aspect of moral guidance, and not that is provides knowledge about every object in creation. The Qur'an is not an inventory of general knowledge."[29]

Recognising the Islamic *shari'a* as a total way of life is one thing. Understanding it properly is quite another. In fact,

it is in the context of "how is the *shari'a* to be known" as noted by Fazlur Rahman, that the crux of the problem is to be found.[30] There are a number of factors which can influence and shape the outcome of Muslims' understanding of the *shari'a*. Sociological, cultural, and intellectual circumstances are significant in determining the forms and substances of interpretation. Different intellectual inclinations in the effort to understand the *shari'a* may lead to different interpretations of a particular doctrine. Thus while accepting the general principles of the *shari'a*, Muslims do not adhere to a single interpretation of it.

The emergence of a number of different schools of thought in Islamic jurisprudence or various theological and philosophical streams, for instance, shows that Islamic teachings are poly-interpretable.[31] The interpretive nature of Islam has functioned as the basis of Islamic flexibility in history. In addition, it also confirms the necessity of pluralism in Islamic tradition. Therefore, as many have argued, Islam could not and should not be perceived as monolithic.[32]

Islamic polities, including their relation with democratic civility, cannot escape this history of poly-interpretability. On the other hand, many have generally admitted the important role of Islamic principles in politics. At the same time, because of Islam's potential for differing interpretation, there has been no single unified notion of how Islam and politics should be properly related. In fact, as far as can be deduced from both the intellectual and historical discourses of Islamic political ideas and practices, there has been a wide range of different or contradictory opinions regarding the proper relationship between Islam and the modern political system (democracy).

By and large, there are two different intellectual currents in contemporary Islamic political thinking. While both recognise the importance of Islamic principles in all spheres of life, they

differ greatly in their interpretation, their congeniality to the modern situation and their applicability in the real world.

On one end of the spectrum, there are those who argue that Islam should be the basis of the state; that *shari'a* ought to be adopted as the state constitution; that political sovereignty rests in the hands of the Divine; that the idea of the modern nation-state is contradictory to the concept of *umma* (Islamic community) which recognises no political boundary; and while recognising the principle of *shura* (consultation), its realisation is different from the contemporary notion of democracy. Put differently, within such a perspective, the modern (Western) political system is placed in a contradictory position to Islamic teachings.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are those who believe that Islam does not "lay down any clear cut and dried pattern of state theory [or political theory] to be followed by the *umma*."[33] In the words of Muhammad 'Imara, an Egyptian Muslim thinker, "Islam as a religion has not specified a particular system of government for Muslims, for the logic of this religion's suitability for all times and places requires that matters which will always be changing by the force of evolution should be left to the rational human mind, to be shaped according to the public interest and within the framework of the general precepts that this religion has dictated."[34]

According to this theoretical stream, even the term state (*dawla*) cannot be found in the Qur'an. Although "there are numerous expressions in the Qur'an which refer or seem to refer to political power and authority, [t]hese expressions are, however, incidental remarks and have no bearing on political theory." Indeed, they argue, "the Qur'an is not a treatise on political science."[35]

Nonetheless, it is important to note that this position recognises the fact that the Qur'an does contain "ethical values

and injunctions on human socio-political activities." These include the principles of "justice, equality, brotherhood, and freedom."[36] For them, therefore, as long as the state and its system of governance adhere to such principles it conforms to Islamic teachings.

In this line of argument, the establishment of an Islamic state in its formal-ideological terms is not terribly significant. What is important is that the state guarantees the existence of those basic values. As long as this is the case, there is no theological/religious reason to reject the idea of popular sovereignty, the nation-state as the legitimate territorial modern political unit, and other general principles of modern political theory. In other words, there is no legitimate basis to put Islam in a contradictory position to the modern political system (democracy).

Having argued this far, where does the affinity of Islamic values and the idea of civil society lie? Briefly reiterated, the above exposé suggests the existence of two different modes of political Islam or Islamic political theorising. A sizeable number of Muslims believe that Islam should be formally and legally linked to politics. In this regard, several implications are in order. Most notably, it will pose "obstacles to plural politics and a pluralist polity in Islam", especially in a country where its religious and cultural contours are heterogeneous. In the context of the Indonesian experience, it contributed to the decline of constitutional democracy in the 1950s.[37]

On the other hand, there are those who argue that the Qur'an and the Sunnah do not set forth a detailed model of how a political system should be actually formulated. Yet, because of their deep conviction of the holistic nature of Islam, they believe that Islam does provide a set of ethical principles relevant to administering politics and its governing mechanism. They point out that Qur'an repeatedly mentions the normative

ideas of *syura* (consultation) *'adl* (justice), and *musawah* (egalitarianism).[38]

Because of this, they believe that the relationship between Islam and politics should be substantialist in nature. As long as a political system is based on the principles of consultation, justice, and egalitarianism, it is sufficient to consider it as congruent to Islamic teachings.[39] Given the democratic perspective presented above, it can be said that those normative ideas of Islamic political principles are compatible with the ideal of civil society. At this point, even Huntington, in spite of his negative perception with regard to the relationship between Islam and democracy, actually believes that Islamic values "are also generally congruent with the requirements of democracy."[40] It is the lack of democratic experience in many of the so-called Islamic countries which has led him to believe in the incompatibility of Islam with democracy. But therein actually lies his blunder: as if the development of democratic practices is determined by a single factor, that is religion as the cultural basis of democracy.

Virtually all Muslims believe in the normative ideas of consultation, justice, or egalitarianism. The realisation of those values, however, depends largely on how Islam is conceived. The legalistic and formalistic viewpoint of Islam, a position which, among other things, necessitates the elevation of *shari'a* (Islamic jurisprudendence) as the law of the land, tends to hinder the realisation of the principle of egalitarianism. It poses obstacles to religious as well as political pluralism, not necessarily in the context of Muslim-non-Muslim relationships, but also within the Muslim community itself. On the other hand, the substantialist mode of Islam, a standpoint which stresses the importance of substance rather than form, and values rather than symbols, would contribute greatly to the development of democratic practices.

In spite of this, however, this does not imply the idea of automaticity, in the sense that a substantialist perception of Islam alone would automatically lead to the enhancement of democratic values. In fact, like in any other areas, it has been strongly suggested that the emergence and consolidation of democratic regimes are very much dependent on wider aspects of socio-economic and cultural requisites.[41]

Concluding Remarks: Contextualising Civil Society and Creating Social Capital

From what has been discussed, it is fair to conclude that it is not an easy task to promote and develop the idea of civil society. Civil society in its democratic context has its own cultural origins, which may be alien to many Muslim countries or non-Western countries for that matter. At least, to borrow Serif Mardin's terminology, those social origins may not have been shared by the Muslim world. In other words, the universality and transferability of such an idea is not without limits. Because of that, efforts to empower civil society organisations in the Muslim world need to be complemented by the willingness to contextualise that particular idea in any given culture.

There is no easy way to contextualise civil society in any given culture. But perhaps we can capture valuable lessons from a number of Indonesian Muslims thinkers to contextualise or indigenise Islam in Indonesia. This is basically an idea to understand Islam – the societal, economic, political or cultural aspects, and not the ritual aspects of Islam – in the light of the country's traditions and culture. Being so, it is hoped that Islam is not uprooted from the cultural values of its own adherents.

Though it may sound degrading, we can actually also learn something from the success story of McDonald, Kentucky Fried

Chicken (KFC), or any globalised food-chain with respect to their ability to contextualise themselves without jeopardising their essential elements. Instead of selling only hamburger or chicken and french fries, quite cleverly McDonald and KFC also put rice, soup, and other local dishes on their Indonesian menu. Partly because of this, many believe that both McDonald and KFC got a very strong hold on the consumption habits of numerous Indonesians.

And given the fact that Muslims are rich and diverse in terms of understanding their religion, only those who respect civil liberty can undergo such a project. Otherwise, we may reiterate Fareed Zakaria's suggestion of a potential within the Muslim community – or any other world community for that matter – to take advantage of the very function of civil society for "non-civic purposes" (remember: one man, one vote, one time).

Finally, what has been suggested above is largely normative in nature. Even so, it is necessary, as what has been portrayed with regard to the incompatibility of Islam with the idea of civil society is not necessarily theologically driven; that Islamic values are not essentially incongruent with democratic or civic ideals. The fact that Muslim countries do not have a substantial basis of experience of democracy (and sharing the Western dream of civil society for that matter) bears some of the responsibility with regard to the difficulty (not to say near impossibility) to establish democratic civility in the Islamic world. However, factors which have led to such a situation could not always be directed at their religious precepts. If crafting democratic civility requires some kind of socio-cultural foundations, it is the availability of social capital (values related to trust, being sportive, and so forth) that needs to be developed.

Indonesia's recent political situation provides valuable ground to support that argument. A tireless call by both party

elites and intellectuals regarding the necessity to accept the outcome of the elections – regardless of who comes out as the winner – is an indication that democratic civility, which Indonesians have been trying to craft, faces severe socio-cultural threats. In this case, the unpreparedness of many political activists and their supporters to accept defeat and recognise others' victory reflects the existence of such cultural impediments. Without serious endeavours to reinforce those socio-cultural values, the already existing associational precursors of civil society such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama could not play their three interlocking roles – supplementing, complementing, and counterbalancing the state.

Endnotes

1   See Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.), *Democracy in Developing Countries: Asia*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989, p. xx. Italics are added.

2   Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991, p. 307.

3   On the Freedom House report, see "Freedom in the World 2001-2002".

4   Samuel P. Huntington, "Democracy's Third Wave", in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (eds.), *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, p. 3.

5   Giovanni Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, Part One: The Contemporary Debate, Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1987, p. 206.

6   John A. Hall, "In Search of Civil Society", in John A. Hall (ed.), *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996, p. 1.

7   See, for instance, Wlodzimierz Wesolowski, "The Nature of Social Ties and the Future of Postcommunist Society: Poland after Solidarity", in Hall (ed.), Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison, pp. 110-135.

8   Giuseppe Di Palma, "Why Democracy Can Work in Eastern Europe", in Diamond and Plattner (eds.), *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, p. 264.

9   Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992, p. ix.

10   Ibid., p. 31.

11   Tadashi Yamamoto (ed.), *Emerging Civil Society in the Asia Pacific Community*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1996.

12   See, for instance, Philip J. Eldridge, *Non-Government Organizations and Democratic Participation in Indonesia*, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995.

13   Ernest Gellner, "The Importance of Being Modular", in Hall (ed.), *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison*, p. 32.

14   Robert W. Hefner, "A Muslim Civil Society? Indonesian Reflections on the Conditions of its Possibility", in Robert W. Hefner (ed.), *Democratic Civility: The History and Cross-Cultural Possibility of a Modern Political Idea*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998, p. 285.

15   Serif Mardin, "Civil Society and Islam", in Hall (ed.), *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison*, p. 278. Italics are mine.

16   Ibid, p. 295.

17   Hall, "In Search of Civil Society", p. 26.

18   Huntington, *The Third Wave*, p. 298.

19   George F. Kennan, *The Cloud of Danger*, Boston: Little Brown & Company, 1977, pp. 41-43. Cited in Huntington, *The Third Wave*, pp. 298-299.

20   Huntington, *The Third Wave*, p. 299.

21   Ibid., p. 307.

22   John L. Esposito, "Secular Bias and Islamic Revivalism", *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 26, 1993, p. A44.

23   Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?", in *Agenda 1994: Critical Issues in Foreign Policy*, New York: Foreign Affairs, 1994, pp. 120-147.

24   Esposito, "Secular Bias and Islamic Revivalism."

25   This argument is advocated by Robert N. Bellah's article, "Islamic Tradition and the Problems of Modernization", in Robert N. Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditionalist World*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991, p. 146.

26   Fazlu Rahman, *Islam*, New York, Chicago, San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966, p. 241.

27   Nazib Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World*, London and New York: Routledge, 1991, pp. 63-64.

28   Mohammed Arkoun, "The Concept of Authority in Islamic Thought", in Klaus Ferdinand and Mehdi Mozaffari (eds.), *Islam: State and Society*, London: Curzon Press, 1988, pp. 72-73.

29   Qamaruddin Khan, Political Concepts in the Qur'an, Lahore: Islamic Book Foundation, 1982, pp. 75-76.

30   Fazlur Rahman, Islam, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979 (2nd ed.), p. 101.

31   A lengthy socio-historical discussion on this issue is found in, among other, Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, Volumes I-III, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

32   On the tendency to perceive Islam in a monolithic way, see Mohammed Ayoob's introductory remarks in *The Politics of Islamic Reassertion*, London: Croom Helm, 1981, pp. 1-6.

33   Ahmad Syafii Maarif, "Islam as the Basis of State: A Study of the Islamic Political Ideas as Reflected in the Constituent Assembly Debates in Indonesia", Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1983, p. 23.

34   Muhammad 'Imarah, *Al-Islam wa al-Sultah al-Diniyah*, Cairo: Dar al-Thaqafa al-Jadida, 1979, pp. 76-77. Cited in Ayubi, *Political Islam*, p. 64.

35   Quotations are from Qamaruddin Khan, *Political Concepts in the Qur'an*, p. 3.

36   Ahmad Syafii Maarif, "Islam as the Basis of State", p. 23. Upon a closer look to the earliest political document in the history of Islam, those principles are also mentioned in the Constitution of Medina (al-Mitsaq al-Madinah). It contained, among other things, the principles of equality, participation and justice. On the Constitution of Medina, see Muhammad Husayn Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, Translated by Isma'il Ragi al-Faruqi, North American Trust Publications, 1976, pp. 180-183.

37   A similar argument has been made, among others, by Djohan Effendi. See his "The Contribution of Islamic Parties to the Decline of Democracy in the 1950s". Unpublished paper, n.d.

38   See, for instance, Qur'an 3: 159,42,38, 6:115 and 42:15.

39   In the context of Indonesian politics, I have discussed this issue further in my "Islam and the State: The Transformation of Islamic Political Ideas and Practices in Indonesia", Ph.D. Dissertation, The Ohio University, 1994.

40   Huntington, *The Third Wave*, p. 307.

41 See Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy", *American Political Science Review*, 53 (1959), pp. 69-105. See also Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971, pp. 48-80.

ISLAM AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS: POSSIBILITIES, RESTRICTIONS, PERSPECTIVES

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I would like to address the issue of Islam and Women's Rights from the standpoint of a feminist Muslim woman and an activist committed to bringing about the growth of an understanding of Islam that upholds the principles of equality, justice, freedom and dignity within a democratic nation state.

The setting

The Islamic resurgence that has engulfed most Muslim countries today has thrown forth different levels of tension and competing ideologies within these societies: what Islam; whose Islam is the right Islam? Very often, it is the status and rights of women that have become the first casualty in this battleground.

The struggle for equality and justice for Muslim women must therefore be placed within the context of women living in Muslim societies where Islam is increasingly shaping and redefining our lives. Very often, it is the Muslim women who are targeted to reflect society's renewed commitment to the faith in ways that are often discriminatory and oppressive.

It is therefore not surprising that in these countries, from Egypt to Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia, women's groups

are at the forefront in challenging traditional authority and fundamentalists, such as the latter's use of religion to justify women's subordination and inferior status, and most perniciously, their use of religion to silence any dissent or defame or incite hatred against those who offer alternative views or protect and promote the rights of women in Islam.

Such attitudes and actions committed in the name of Islam have fed the prejudices of the West and non-Muslims who believe that Islam is unjust, undemocratic, and anti-women. And of course it is these actions that attract the attention of the world press.

The challenge we must confront is: how do we as Muslims reconcile the tenets of our faith to the challenge of modernity, of plurality, of changing times and circumstances? How do we deal with the new universal morality of democracy, of human rights, of women's rights, and where is the place of Islam in this dominant ethical paradigm of the modern world?

Competing Discourses on Women's Rights

The response to this challenge has led to various forms of discourse on Islam and rights. The discourse about women's rights in Islam has taken three broad strands: first, there are those Muslims who acknowledge that Islam liberated women and granted them rights unknown to any other society. They point out the Qur'anic injunctions that recognise a woman's right to contract marriage, to divorce, to inherit and dispose of her property as she pleases. The Qur'an also outlawed female infanticide and enforced the payment of the dowry to the bride herself, not to her father or guardian. Yet, while progressive in tendency, this ethical vision of equality and justice for women in the Qur'an did not develop further or sustain any emancipatory or egalitarian thrust within the Muslim juristic heritage. Instead, the process of interpretation and codification of the laws,

dominated by male jurists and scholars, eventually led to an orthodox mainstream view that men and women in effect are not equal.

In responding to the international discourse on women's rights, such Muslims say that because men and women are not the same, there cannot be equality. Instead, they say that in Islam men and women complement each other and therefore what Islam recognises is equity, not equality. What is meant is that because men and women are different, they have separate and distinct roles to play. This then leads to befuddled and contradictory positions. They believe in the equal right of women to education and to employment, but not, for example, equal right to divorce. Women can work outside the home, but only with the permission of their husbands; women can be doctors but they must not touch male patients; women can be heads of departments in charge of men, but they cannot be in charge at home for they must remain obedient to their husbands.

The second strand reflects the obscurantist view that men and women are inherently unequal in Islam, quoting verses in the Qur'an such as 4:34 which talks about men being responsible for women and 2:228 which mentions that men are a "degree higher" than women. Such verses are interpreted literally and atomistically to legitimise men's dominance and superiority over women. Other verses in the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet (*saw*) have been interpreted to mean that women cannot be leaders, women cannot work outside the house, a woman's voice is part of her *awrah* and therefore cannot be heard in public, women cannot participate in the performing arts, etc. These Islamists believe in the total segregation of women and men, and that women are best suited to remain behind the confines of the four walls of the house to take care of the husband and children and to do the household chores. If at all women can be educated, that education is not meant for a

career outside the home, but to help women to be better wives and mothers.

Between these two positions lies a middle ground – a space within which some of the most creative and humanly inclusive socio-legal thought is now being created.[1] This emerging contemporary Muslim discourse about women's rights, human rights, democracy, and modernity is led by Muslim scholars and activists who advocate a review and critical re-examination and re-interpretation of exegetical and jurisprudential texts and traditions. It argues for gender equality on all fronts. It contends a difference between what is divine revelation and what is human understanding of the divine Text that allows for change in the face of changing time, place and circumstance.

Just as the mores and attitudes of urban Middle Eastern society during the classical period – which treated women as sexual objects, which licensed polygamy, concubinage and easy divorce for men – had informed the ideology of the day, thus determining how the Text was heard and interpreted and then codified into law, so too should today's changing realities of women's lives inform our reading of the Text and how our interpretation of the Text is then rendered into laws for a modern, democratic, and pluralistic state where women are demanding equality and justice.

The Ethical Voice in Islam

For women and women's groups like Sisters in Islam it is the ethical vision of Islam to advocate the absolute moral and spiritual equality of women and men. This is found in verses such as Surah 33:35, on common and identical spiritual and moral obligations placed on all individuals regardless of sex; Surah 3:195, which declares that men and woman are members, one of another; 2:187, which describes Muslim men and women as each other's garments; 9:71, the final verse on the

relationship between men and women which talks about them being each other's *'awliyya* – protecting friends and guardians – and the obligations for both men and women to enjoin what is just and forbid what is evil, to observe regular prayers, *zakat* (tithe) and obedience to Allah and his Messenger, and they will be equally rewarded. These verses are unequivocally egalitarian in spirit and substance and reflect the Qur'anic view on the relationship between men and women.[2]

This egalitarian vision also extends to human biology. The verses on creation of men and women, talk about the characteristic of pairs in creation (51:49, 53:45, 78:8, 50:7, 22:5, 36:36). Since everything created must be in pairs, the male and female must both be necessary, must exist by the definition of createdness. Neither one comes before the other or from the other. One is not superior to the other, or a derivative of the other. This means that in Allah's creation of human beings, no priority or superiority is accorded to either man or woman.

It is this ethical voice of the Qur'an which insistently enjoins equality of all individuals that has been largely absent in the body of political and legal thought in Islam. When women decided to read the Qur'an for themselves, they discovered this ethical message of equality and justice in Islam. They began to question why this voice was silent in the exegetical texts of the religion and the codification of the laws. They began to read about different movements and sects that existed from the earliest days of Islam, but were silenced and marginalised by the dominant andocentric (male centric) voice that validated men's superiority and control over women.[3] It is this voice that had dominated and held power in Islam. It is their interpretative and juridical legacy that defined Islam for us. They interpreted the religion as intending to institute andocentric (male centric) laws and an andocentric vision in all Muslim societies throughout

time.[4] The ethical injunctions of the Qur'an were rarely transformed into legally enforceable rules, but were recognised as binding only on the individual conscience.[5]

By the time the Islamic law schools emerged, women were already excluded from the interpretative and intellectual process involved in deducing the terms of *syariah* (shari'a) from the sacred sources. Rather than embodying the egalitarian messages of the Qur'an, Islamic jurisprudential rulings became literal expressions of the classical jurists' ideal model of family and gender relations. It is this heritage that regards women and men as inherently unequal in nature and in reality that has come into conflict with today's changing realities.

This has resulted in many Muslim women activists to believe it is futile to work within the religious framework because they believe that all religions, including Islam, are inherently patriarchal and unjust to women. To work with religion will only serve the interest of the male oppressors who use religion to control and maintain women's subjugation. To them, the choice that groups like Sisters in Islam has taken to work within the religious framework, is a losing battle because for every alternative interpretation that women can offer to justify equality and justice, the *ulama* (Muslim scholars) will offer 100 others to challenge that interpretation, they say. They have therefore chosen to struggle for women's rights within the framework of universal values and principles.

However, in the past ten years, more and more Muslim activists and progressive Muslim scholars have challenged the Islamic agenda of the traditionalist and also the fundamentalist *ulama* and activists and their intolerance and outright oppression of women. Their works recognise equality between men and women in Islam, argue for the imperative of *ijtihad* (reinterpretation), address the dynamics between what is universal for all times and what is particular to seventh century

Arabia, look at the socio-historical context of revelation, articulate the need to differentiate between what is revelation and what is human understanding of the word of God …

This body of new research and scholarship has developed to deal with the challenge of Islam and modernity. It has enabled more and more Muslims all over the world to realise the validity and possibility of working within the Islamic framework, that they can indeed find freedom and liberation within Islam. Women have begun to study the Qur'an for themselves and the traditions of the Prophet to better understand Islam and with this knowledge and new- found conviction, have begun to stand up to fight for women's right to equality, freedom, and justice within the religious framework.

Increasingly in Malaysia today, women's groups, human rights groups, NGOs, the media, and concerned individuals are beginning to speak up to engage publicly in a debate on these issues. What is the role of religion in politics? Is Islam compatible with democracy? Who has the right to interpret Islam and codify Islamic teachings into laws and public policies? How do we deal with the conflict between our constitutional provisions of fundamental liberties and equality with religious laws and policies that violate these provisions? Should the state legislate on morality? Is it the duty of the state, in order to bring about a moral society, to turn all sins into crimes against the state? Can there be one truth and one final interpretation of Islam that must govern the lives of every Muslim citizen of the country? Can the massive coercive powers of a modern nation-state be used to impose that one truth on all citizens? How do we deal with the new universal morality of democracy, of human rights, of women's rights, and where is the place of Islam in this dominant ethical paradigm of the modern world?

The search for answers to all these important questions on the role of Islam in today's modern nation society cannot

remain the exclusive preserve of the religious authorities, be they the *ulama* in government or in the opposition parties, or Islamist activists pushing for an Islamic state and *syariah* law.

Muslims and all citizens have to take responsibility for the kind of Islam that develops in their societies. The fact that Islam is increasingly shaping and redefining our lives means all of us have to engage with the religion if we do not want it to remain hijacked by those who preach hatred, intolerance, bigotry, misogyny.

Of course, Muslim societies face a particular hurdle in dealing with this. Most Muslims have traditionally been educated to believe that only the *ulama* have a right to talk about Islam. Ordinary Muslims like us who do not speak Arabic, who don't wear the *hijab*, who don't have a degree in Islam from the "right" universities (God forbid if your Islamic degree is from Temple, Leiden, St. Andrews, or McGill) do not have a right to speak publicly on Islam. What are the implications to democratic governance, to multi-racial Malaysia, if only a small group of people – the *ulama*, as traditionally believed – have the right to interpret the Qur'an, and codify the text in a manner that very often isolates the text from the socio-historical context of its revelation, isolates classical juristic opinion especially on women's issues, from the socio-historical context of the lives of the founding jurists of Islam, and isolates our textual heritage from the context of contemporary society, the world that we live in today.

For us in Sisters in Islam, when Islam is used as a political ideology to gain power or to remain in power; when Islam is used as a tool for mobilisation for political purposes; when Islam is used as a source of laws and public policies to govern the lives of Muslims; when the use of Islam in public life affects the rights of others, the non-Muslims; when Islam is stripped of its ethical, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions and reduced

and mutilated into nothing more than legal obligations whose implementation has led to so much injustice, especially against women; then everyone has a right to speak on Islam and its impact on us as citizens, no matter what our credentials are and whether we are a Muslim or not.

The Challenge

Of course by claiming our right and creating the space to speak out in public on Islam, we have made enemies. We have been attacked and condemned by conservative Islamist scholars and Islamist activists and movements – a common experience of other women's groups and progressive scholars in other Muslim countries.

The attacks and condemnations usually take three forms:

First, they undermine our right and our legitimacy to speak on Islam by questioning our credentials. They say we have no right to speak on Islam because we are not traditionally educated in religious schools, we do not have a degree in Islam from a recognised Arab university, we do not speak Arabic, and we do not cover our heads. They say we are Western- educated feminists representing an elite stratum of society who are trying to impose Western values on Islam and the *ummah*. To them, the discourse on Islam is therefore exclusive only to a certain group of Muslims, the *ulama* with the right education, status, and position. Others do not have the right to express their opinions on Islam.

      Second, they accuse us of having deviated from our faith. They equate our questioning and challenging of their obscurantist views on women and fundamental liberties and their interpretations of the Qur'an as questioning the word of God, and therefore they say we doubt the infallibility of God and the

perfection of the message. Consequently, we are accused of being against Islam. They also accuse us of using our brains, logic, and reason (*akal*) instead of referring to classical exegetical and jurisprudential texts of the early centuries of Islam. They claim that these texts by the great theologians and jurists of centuries past have perfected the understanding of Islam and the doors of *ijtihad* (reinterpretation) should therefore remain closed.

Third, they contend that that it is dangerous to offer alternative opinions and interpretations of the religion as this could confuse the *ummah* and lead to disunity. There can only be one interpretation to be decided upon by the *ulama* and all citizens must abide by this interpretation. Alternative views that differ from the mainstream views are an insult to the Qur'an, inculcate hatred against *syariah*, and degrade women, they assert.

It is ironic that many of those who often challenge and question the credentials of women's groups to speak on Islam, themselves do not speak Arabic and have not been traditionally educated in Islam. Many of those at the vanguard of the Islamic movement calling for the establishment of an Islamic state and imposition of *syariah* rule today are professionals, engineers, doctors, professors, administrators, without any formal religious training. Actually, many of them are third-rate engineering graduates from third-rate American universities (someone's got to study this correlation). Their right to speak out, however, is not questioned. The issue therefore is not so much about who has a right to speak on Islam, but what is being said about Islam. Thus, those who echo the mainstream view on men's rights and women's inferior status in Islam, those who believe in the leadership of the mullahs, and those who advocate the establishment of an Islamic state and imposition of Islamic laws have the right to speak on Islam, but those who challenge

these views are denied the right and legitimacy to speak out, no matter what their credentials.

The claim made by such Islamist forces that only their perspective and interpretation of Islam, of its values and its view of human rights and women's rights are the "universal" and legitimate view for all Muslims at all times, must be challenged. In the face of general ignorance, fear, or indifference by the public at large, the obscurantist view of the traditional *ulama* and Islamist activists on issues such as women's rights, *syariah* law, and fundamental liberties have dominated the Islamic agenda in much of the Muslim world.

It must be understood that while all Muslims accept the Qur'an as one, the human effort in interpreting the Qur'an has always led to diverse and differing opinions. It is precisely because of this wealth of diversity that Islam has survived and flourished to this day in different cultures and societies – all could accommodate the universal message of Islam. And yet in many Muslim societies today, there are many who condemn those who offer alternative views as infidels and apostates and choose to deny or negate the complexity and diversity of our rich heritage.

There is also a denial of the historical context within which the *syariah* itself was constructed, and of the consequently historical character of the *syariah* as it was developed and applied within early and classical Islamic civilisation. For example, in classical Islamic jurisprudential texts, gender inequality is taken for granted, a priori, as a principle.[6] Women are depicted as "sexual beings" not as "social beings" and their rights are discussed largely in the context of family law. The classical jurists' construction of women's rights reflected the world in which they lived, where inequality between women and men was the natural order of things and women had little role to play in public life.

But the conservative *ulama* that dominate the religious authorities and Islamist activists of today seem unable or unwilling to see Islamic law from a historical perspective, as rules that were socially constructed to deal with the socio-economic and political context of the time, and that given a different context, these laws have to change to ensure that the eternal principles of justice are served. Even though the source of the law is divine, human understanding of God's message and human effort at codifying God's message into positive law are not infallible and divine efforts. The knowledge produced, the legal construct, are the product of human engagement with the Divine Text. They can therefore be changed, criticised, refined, and redefined. Unfortunately, in the traditional Islamic education most of our *ulama* have gone through, the belief in *taqlid* (blind imitation) and that the doors of *ijtihad* are closed is so strong. This rationale is based on the belief that the great scholars of the classical period, who lived closer to the time of the Prophet, were unsurpassed in their knowledge and interpretative skills.

But to adopt such an attitude is totally untenable in today's world when we face new and different challenges: the issue of human rights, of democracy, of women's rights, the challenge of modernity, the challenge of change. How do we find solutions from within our faith if we do not exert in *ijtihad* and produce new knowledge and new understandings of Islam in the face of new problems?

Many Muslims have come up to me to say how much they admire the work of Sisters in Islam and the courage we have displayed in dealing with our virulent critics, but when I ask them to please speak up and support us and write letters to the editor to express their support and their concern, they always say, but I don't know enough about Islam. I am too scared to speak out. I say to them, claim your right as a citizen

of a democratic country to speak out. If you have a right to talk about politics, economics, society, etc, why is it when it comes to religion we must all suddenly shut up and leave it to the preserve of an exclusive group of people who claim infallibility as they are supposedly speaking in God's name? Nobody demands from Malaysians a degree in economics, political science or sociology before they can comment on these aspects of Malaysia's development. But when it comes to Islam, we need to speak Arabic and have an Islamic degree from nothing less than al-Azhar before we can even open our mouth. But of course, if your public voice on Islam is to demand an Islamic state, *hudud* law, the death penalty for apostasy, segregating men and women, a ban on music and the performing arts, then of course even if you are a third-rate engineering graduate from a third-rate American university, you have the freedom to speak on Islam. As a woman, I have another added credential to prove: I need to wear the *hijab*, otherwise I really cannot claim myself to be a true Muslim and therefore I really do not have a right to speak on Islam.

I am tired of being told that religion is a sensitive subject, that I should tiptoe tiptoe and whisper whisper in the right ears and not speak loudly and publicly of the injustices women suffer in the *syariah* system, that there's so much prejudice against Islam by the West and the infidels that we should not provide them further ammunition to prove how uncivilised we are, that we must preserve a show of unity among the *ummah* and not display the battles within the community of believers. All these ideas have led us to where we are today: an Islam dominated by the discourse of the obscurantist, intolerant, bigoted, militant, fanatical misogynists. Where is the voice of moderation, of justice, of progress, of compassion, and mercy in Islam?

I think it is high time we wake up and reclaim the Islam that liberated women 1400 years ago, the Islam of justice,

compassion, and mercy, the Islam that upholds human freedom and dignity. That was our rich heritage lost. We need to reclaim that heritage and all must participate in this project.

Endnotes

1   See Norani Othman, 'Shari'a and the Citizenship Rights of Women in a Modern Nation-State: Grounding Human Rights Arguments in Non-Western Cultural Terms', Bangi: Institut Kajian Malaysia dan Antarabangsa (IKMAS, Institute for Malaysian and International Studies) Working Paper Series No. 10, National University of Malaysia, 1997, and her more accessible 'Grounding Human Rights Arguments in Non-Western Culture: *Shari'a* and the Citizenship Rights of Women in a Modern Islamic State', in Joanne R. Bauer and Daniel A. Bell (eds), *The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

2   For an expansion of Sisters work on equality, see Sisters in Islam, *Are Men and Women Equal Before Allah?* (Kuala Lumpur, 1991).

3   For example, the Qarmatians, who challenged Abbasid rule militarily, also departed fundamentally from the norms and values of the existing social order. Qarmatian women were not veiled, polygamy was outlawed, and men and women socialised together. See Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 99.

4   Ahmed 1992: 67.

5   Ahmed 1992: 92.

6   Ziba Mir-Hosseini, 'The Construction of Gender in Islamic Legal Thought and Strategies for Reform', Paper presented at the Sisters in Islam Regional Workshop on Islamic Family Law and Justice for Muslim Women, Kuala Lumpur, 8-10 June 2001.

with
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Sixth Asian-European Editors' Forum, Jakarta, 30 August 2005

ISLAMIC AND HUMAN RIGHTS / INTERPRETATIONS

The first questioner asked whether it was Zainah Anwar's strategy to just pick the interpretations that suited her and Sisters in Islam – was this the right strategy to pursue in her country?

Zainah Anwar replied that Sisters in Islam (SIS) uses arguments at four different levels to push for the rights of Muslim women. At the Islamic doctrinal level, at the constitutional, national laws and policies level, at the international human rights principles level and at the social context level.

At the doctrinal level, SIS believes that Islam is a just religion that recognises equality between men and women: if God is just, then how can Islam be used to justify discrimination against women? At the constitutional level, discrimination on the basis of gender is prohibited. National policies on women also recognise the principle of non-discrimination. Malaysia has also ratified the Convention against All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which recognises equality and non-discrimination and obligates governments to take action to end discrimination against women. At the social context level, the reality in Malaysia is that there are more female than male university-going students, that women are in positions of power

in government, business, and as the heads of multinational companies.

Anwar further explained that the approach of Sisters in Islam is not merely textual. But it is important as well to locate arguments for change within the religious framework. Religion matters. And when religion is used to justify the oppression of women, be it in cases of domestic violence, divorce, polygamy, denial of maintenance, etc, then it is important that the demand of human rights and justice for women must also be located within religious arguments.

She emphasised that the use of religion to discriminate against women is unjust. This was something women, and men, were not exposed to in their traditional education on Islam. Yet the question whether God is just is crucial. In the view of Sisters in Islam, this battle for justice could only be done in a democratic framework. Without freedom of expression, this work simply could not be done. Consequently, Sisters in Islam had gone beyond women's issues to dealing with fundamental liberties issues.

MALAYSIA AFTER MAHATHIR … AND AFTER 9/11

The impact of the 31 October 2003 hand-over of power from Prime Minister Mahathir to Abdullah Badawi on Islam in Malaysia was the subject of the next question. What had got better since then, in particular as Mahathir had managed to combine Islam and modernity? Was it possible to reconcile Sisters in Islam's wish for debate and real discussion with the Malaysian government's view that open debate might lead to ethnic dissension?

Zainah Anwar responded that she thought the worst situation with regard to radical Islam was over now. The

radicalisation of some Malaysian Muslims had been going on since the 1970s, but the world press had only paid attention following 9/11 and drawn a lot of attention to Muslim injustices. As a result, none of the more extreme groups still put forward the radical views they had proclaimed over the last 15 to 20 years.

What had radically changed and grown in Malaysia, however, was the public space for debate. As a result, today's attempts to silence people were far less successful than before, when those without the right credentials to speak on Islam were not allowed to do so.

One good example of this change was the moral laws and the policing campaign against Muslims. There was widespread support against the use of punitive laws and vigilante groups to police the morals of Muslims. When the Youth wing of the Islamic party organised a demonstration against SIS for the position it took against moral policy, it was clear that there was no full support for this any more. In fact, the party's youth wing was criticised by the women's wing of the same party that dialogue was the way to deal with differences, not demonstrations and demands for another group to be banned by the government.

Islamists quickly realised they needed to change following their huge losses during the last elections. They saw that they had to change their message to stay relevant. As a result, more progressive voices were speaking out now.

The Executive Director of Sisters in Islam highlighted further signs of positive developments, such as the recent move by established lawyers to take cases to court on fundamental liberties issues. Parliament today was also more active. Parliamentary select committees were activated to listen to public opinion on law reform. Cross-party caucuses on human rights and the situation in Burma had been formed. MPs and Senators were more active and critical in their debates.

Even the fact that Islamist groups organised public talks about the dangers of liberal Islam meant more space for public debate and open discussion. Non-Muslims, who made up 40 per cent of Malaysia's multi-ethnic population in Malaysia, had now also become more vocal and begun to engage in the debate by arguing that even though Islamic laws directly govern Muslims only, in many ways their implementation affects the rights of non-Muslims as well. Overall, Zainah Anwar therefore thought that things were developing for the good and that the voice of reason was going to prevail.

POLYGAMY

The discussion then moved on to the issue of polygamy and whether, despite historical reasons for it, this did not discriminate against women.

Not surprisingly, Zainah Anwar explained that Sisters in Islam were against polygamy based on an interpretation of the Qur'an, but acknowledged that it was not possible, as for instance in Tunisia or Turkey, to outlaw it. As campaigning for a ban was not realistic, their strategy was to place restrictions on polygamy in order to make it more difficult. In fact, restrictions already exist in the law. However, many judges often ignored these restrictions and thus gave permission for polygamy. In 1994, moreover, the law had been amended to allow illegal polygamous marriages to be registered upon payment of a fine. Ironically, this had led to a proliferation of polygamous marriages without the court's permission because the minimal fine imposed for breaking the law failed to serve as a deterrent.

As a consequence, right now, Sisters in Islam were doing research on the socio-economic impact of polygamy on the family institution by interviewing husbands, first wives and

subsequent wives, and children of the different marriages. Interestingly, many of the interviewed men disclosed they would refrain from taking a second wife if they could choose again.

ISLAM IN EUROPE, AND BEYOND

When questioned about Islam in Europe, Zainah Anwar observed that European Muslims could often be more conservative than their brothers and sisters in Muslim countries. This was frequently due to the need, as a minority, to maintain group identity within a more dominant population of other faith and culture. At the same time, the diversity of Muslim communities in the West was not always acknowledged. Western governments hence preferred to deal with the demands and interests of the Muslim minorities only with the 'official' group that claims to represent the entire community.

Very often, this group was led by men, old men, clerics and conservatives and their definition of what the interests of the community are and which Islamic practices the government should respect. In contrast, women's interests and rights were often ignored, as were the progressive voices within the community.

Therefore the question of who speaks for Islam and the Muslims living in the West has become an issue. To address this, Anwar concluded, Western governments needed to recognise the diversity of voices within their own Muslim communities.

ISLAMIC WOMEN IN THE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE

The effect of the exclusion of women from the labour market, and how this would be affected by deregulation, was the next set of questions addressed to Zainah Anwar.

She responded that market reform and globalisation had helped put women in the work place. One should not forget that many of these women entered the workplace at the bottom level, working as factory hands. No country could develop and realise its full potential if 50 per cent of its population was excluded from the labour force. The demand on the market place was positive in helping women to be financially independent. As developing countries modernise, more job opportunities open up and there might not be enough skilled and educated human resources to fill up these posts. Therefore, very often you would see women from developing countries breaking into male dominated grounds, more even than in the West. For example, when she was a journalist in the early 1980s, Zainah Anwar found that most women journalists covering Prime Ministers were coming from Asia rather than Europe. This did not mean that glass ceiling discrimination against women does not exist. This remains a battle still to be won.

TENSIONS BETWEEN MODERNITY, WOMEN'S RIGHTS, ISLAMIC RULE?

The next question centred on the assumption that if religion was a form of social control, how would countries such as Malaysia really be able to adapt Western values? Would Sisters in Islam be ready to adopt this evolution?

Zainah Anwar highlighted that the government was in a conundrum given that it wanted to embrace modernity and women's rights and at the same time needed to deal with opposition from conservative Islamist forces in and outside the government which were against the modernising agenda.

In the case of Malaysia, former Prime Minister Mahathir had adopted an Islamisation policy that was geared to deal with

the demands coming from the forces of Islamic revivalism. Unfortunately, he did not have the human resources to deliver his more progressive vision of Islam. Instead, the policy was then defined and hijacked by the conservative religious apparatchiks in government. This had led to laws and policies in the name of Islam that further restricted fundamental liberties and the rights of Muslim women.

In promoting the Islam Hadhari concept, Prime Minister Badawi, a progressive Muslim who believes in women's rights and the need for reinterpretation of Islam to deal with changing times, had encountered challenges that are similar to those faced by Mahathir. Many in his bureaucracy and his party do not share his progressive understanding of Islam. But change was inevitable, according to Zainah Anwar, because realities on the ground had shifted like never before. Malaysia's citizens – Muslims and non-Muslims – today realised that if Islam is used as a source of law and public policy, then everyone had a right to speak on Islam and how it affects their lives. The political and religious authorities could no longer silence this and needed to deal with such challenges if they wanted Islam to remain relevant in the 21st century and within the context of Malaysia's multi-religious society.

TRANSNATIONAL ISLAMIC WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS?

How are women movements in South Asia and Malaysia linked? In South Asia, for instance, there had been religious tension for a very long time. Even after the partition of India, the civil laws had remained secular. In fact, Bangladeshi and Indian civil laws were very similar. This contrasted with Pakistan and other countries where the military used religion to boost their legitimacy

after having taken over political power. The political use of religion by military regimes had been going on since the 1960s. This was supported by the United States as a counterweight to communism. Now that the Americans and the Russians have left, we are left with the remains.

Zainah Anwar responded that Sisters in Islam had had many meetings with South Asian women's groups. Her observation was that many of the secular feminists now also wanted to engage in the public space. This was motivated by the fear that if the progressive Muslim voices were not heard in the public discourse on Islam, then the fundamentalists and obscurantists would monopolise the public space and define what Islam is – and what it is not – and demand that the whole community live by their values.

Sisters in Islam had been involved in a number of meetings and trainings of Muslim women leaders from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and India on issues relating to Islam and women's and human rights. The objective was to enable women leaders to engage publicly in the debate on Islam and influence laws and policies that use Islam as a basis to ensure that women's rights and fundamental liberties are upheld.

SUICIDE BOMBERS

When asked about the possible motivation of suicide bombers, Zainah Anwar replied that she regarded most of them as having been brainwashed, in particular the young men involved. But why were they susceptible to this brainwashing? One should not under-estimate the sense of injustice, impotence, humiliation and anger that Muslims throughout the world felt about many issues – and that they blamed the West, in particular the US,

for all these humiliations. The suffering of the Palestinians topped this list of injustice. Western, or US, hegemony and its support of dictatorial Muslim regimes was another source of discontent. It was easy to brainwash young men who had no hope and nothing to live for. This was not to support suicide bombing. But there was an urgent need to deal with the sources of this kind of violence that drive young men to destroy innocent lives.

TERRORISM IN INDONESIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA: HOW WILL IT DEVELOP?

by
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Sixth Asian-European Editors' Forum, Jakarta, 30 August 2005

Let me start with a summary of how things look today:

- On Indonesia, there are some positive developments but the threat is far from over. Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) as an institution may no longer constitute the largest threat. It is alive, intact, consolidating, actively recruiting, but most of its leadership, we think, is not interested in bombing Western targets.

- There are some indications that the renegade JI members who ARE committed to such bombings, Nurdin Moh Top and Azhari,[1] may have formed a new group, or at least attracted a dedicated set of followers, but information is extremely sketchy. They are almost certainly still in Indonesia, but they are being forced to look outside JI for partners, and they are relying on personal networks to do so. That means we are still going to see attacks in Indonesia, but probably less professional and even less well-executed than in the past. The skilled bombers are all trying to get to Mindanao, which is bad news for the

Philippines, but they are having increasing difficulty getting there.

- There is positive movement on the ideological front but it is not coming as a result of exhortations from moderate Muslims or strengthening moderate Muslim organisations. It is coming from splits within *salafi jihadi* ranks resulting from self-inflicted wounds.

- Within the region, Singapore and Malaysia were out ahead in the fight against terrorism early on, but Indonesia has also had major accomplishments to its name since the Bali bombings of 12 October 2002. There are over 200 people behind bars after fair and open trials, even if sometimes with incompetent prosecutors or weak judges. The international community is too obsessed with Ba'asyir and his sentences and his sentence reductions – he is not the real story, and every broadside against him sends his popularity one notch up. But the police have systematically gone after JI and DI (Darul Islam), and many are getting stiff sentences. Two of the men involved in the Australian embassy bombing just got life in prison.

- The Philippines and Thailand are the black holes in different ways. In the Philippines, some of the most experienced Indonesian bomb-makers have moved away from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and joined forces with the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and a group of Christian converts to Islam to move northward and engaged in more proficient and well-coordinated attacks, of which the Valentine's Day bombing was one example.

- And while there is as yet no hard evidence of JI or foreign jihadist involvement in Thailand's insurgency – which looks a lot more like Aceh circa 1990 than it does like a regional jihad – the policies of Prime Minister Thaksin may yet send it in that direction.

Before I go through some of these points in more detail, I would like to address one question at the outset which is: what difference, if any, has the war in Iraq made to the threat from terrorism in this part of the world? It certainly has not done any good, and it has kept the flames of jihadism alive, but it is not clear that it has increased the recruiting pool for terrorists in this region. Australian involvement in the war WAS one of the reasons cited by a few of the bombers for why the Australian embassy in Jakarta was targeted in September 2004, but it was not the only reason they gave, and almost all the individuals involved were drawn into the jihadist net long before the war began. There is also no evidence that I am aware of – yet – that any Southeast Asians have been training in Iraq. The one area where there may be an impact is in increased availability of funding from individual donors in the Gulf to jihadists in Indonesia, including for military training of Indonesians in Mindanao – and even there, we only have very skimpy anecdotal evidence to go on.

Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)

Let me go back, then, to the marginally good news about Jemaah Islamiyah. First, it is seriously damaged. Second, you can not call it the al-Qaeda affiliate so easily – this may have been true in 2000-2002 but I do not think it is accurate now. Why? Because most of the men committed to the al-Qaeda line of global jihad against the US seem to be increasingly marginalised within the organisation.

Here we need to step back a bit.

From the moment that Indonesian JI members started returning home from Malaysia after the fall of Indonesia's President Soeharto in May 1998, there was a division in JI between those who bought the al-Qaeda line of global jihad, and those who wanted to focus on a long-term strategy of building an Islamic state of Indonesia.

The division very roughly followed geographical lines. You will recall that from 1999-2001, Hambali, the JI operative now in US custody, was head of the JI division that included Malaysia and Singapore, known as Mantiqi I, based in Johor, Malaysia. All the non-Indonesian members of JI were in his jurisdiction, meaning that for them, the strategy of building an Islamic state in Indonesia probably had less appeal and the idea of global jihad somewhat more, but Hambali himself worked closely with al-Qaeda.

For many of the Indonesian JI members, bombing Western targets on Indonesian soil had no appeal. The focus should be on building up a secure base, in which an Islamic community could flourish, and then gradually expand outward; a bombing campaign would disrupt that goal.

Second, waging war on the US was an improper application of the concept of jihad: you only wage war on those who are directly attacking you, so while it was fine to go after the US in Afghanistan, it was not appropriate to do so on Indonesian soil. There was no dispute, by the way, over the identification of the US as the number one enemy of Islam, among the people who were making this argument – it was more over where the appropriate theatre of war should be.

If you look at the bombings on Indonesian soil from May 2000 onwards, they are all projects of Hambali or his protégés, and they generated considerable dissension within JI. Here in Indonesia, the abbreviation for civil servant is PNS. For the JI

faction opposed to Hambali, the letters stood for *personil non-struktural*, and it is a pejorative term for people operating outside institutional guidelines, ignoring the administrative hierarchy, and heedless of the consequences for the organisation.

Opposition to the bombings grew after the 2002 Bali bombings, in part because of the devastating impact it had on the organisation, and even more after the Marriott bombing (August 2003) and the embassy bombings (September 2004), because mostly Muslims were killed.

This has led to some serious rethinking within parts of the JI leadership about damage control and how to get JI back on track. One of the problems the anti-bombing faction identified was lack of effective leadership. Ba'asyir has been a disaster. One man said, "He's too nice, he doesn't try to impose any discipline. Anything that anyone proposed, he said '*terserah*' (it is up to you)."

The result is an effort by some to move JI back to its original agenda of building an Indonesian state rather than going after the West. As we understand it, it is being led by a group that wants to "sterilise" JI by effectively purging not only the bombers but anyone who has been on a police wanted list. They are trying to ensure that the vacancies on the central command created by arrests are gradually filled with like-minded but low-profile individuals, many of them *ustadz* (religious teachers) in the tiny number of JI schools – less than 20 – in Indonesia. The focus will be on *dakwah*, proselytisation, and the creation of a mass base, as well as the building up of military capacity; when they are ready, they will take on the Indonesian state unless they can secure the application of Islamic law by other means.

Where Does That Leave The Bombers?

Where does that leave the bombers, who are they and how dangerous are they? They're seriously dangerous. We think in terms of the two Malaysians, Nurdin and Azhari, who were involved in the Bali bombs and masterminded the Marriott bomb of August 2003 and the embassy bombing of September 2004. They are the nemesis of the Indonesian police, and if it is embarrassing that the Pakistanis and the US have not caught bin Laden, it is just as embarrassing for the Indonesian police to have missed these guys, even though they've been within a hair's breadth of catching them about six times.

But they are not the only ones, although we'll all breathe easier when they are arrested. It is a larger pool, and they have a network that extends from Java to Mindanao to inside Cipinang prison in Jakarta.

Since Bali, the bombers have made use of ad hoc personal networks, often drawing on JI members but not going through the administrative hierarchy to do it. These networks fall into four main categories: family, school ties, joint military training, and shared combat experience.

1. For the Marriott bombings, there were three networks: alumni of one JI pesantren in Malaysia called Luqman al-Hakiem that effectively served as the headquarters for JI-Malaysia; the group of Indonesian Afghan veterans living in Sumatra; and Sumatra-based members of the class of 95 from Ngruki, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir's pesantren (Islamic boarding school).

The Ngruki network remains one of the most interesting because of its active alumni association, and the tradition of devotion to one's teachers that the pesantren system inculcates.

2. The Austrialian embassy bombing of September 2004 was more complicated, but also involved three networks: JI members in East Java who had both school and business ties; joint training in Poso between JI and a number of smaller groups;

and a Darul Islam group in West Java that again was tied together through family and business connections. The West Java people were brought in when Nurdin Moh Top at one point said to one of his young followers, we need more operatives, where can we find people whose commitment to jihad is unquestioned? The young man said, "I know a person in Bandung...."

3. The most interesting example of these networks comes from an attack that did not get very much attention outside Indonesia because no foreigners were killed. It took place on an island off the coast of Ambon on 16 May 2005 and involved the targeted assassination of 5 paramilitary policemen and their cook in a remote post that bordered on a Christian community. One of the policemen managed to shoot back and kill one of the attackers who turned out to be a member of Darul Islam from Riau, Sumatra, just across the Straits of Malacca from Singapore.

That was odd enough, but the other attackers included three men from Poso; a man from West Java; and an Ambonese who happens to be the brother-in-law of a man in US custody, Omar al-Faruq. How did they all come together?

The genesis was a JI training camp set up in June or July 1999 on the island of Buru. The training was organised by JI and funded by the Islamic charity KOMPAK; the trainers included Ali Imron (later one of the Bali bombers, and Zulkarnaen, JI's head of military operations). Many of the people who went through the training, however, were not JI: they were from Darul Islam, or KOMPAK, or unaffiliated, but after three months of religious indoctrination by JI, they were ideologically on the same wavelength. The men involved in the attack on the police in May 2005 were either direct participants in the 1999 training, or were the protégés – *anak buah* – of some of those involved.

Maluku and Poso have several characteristics that make them worth close attention. First, they are saturated with left-over *mujahidin* – men, many from Java, who stayed on after the conflicts wound down, married local women, and now probably will not leave. It is these men who can be guaranteed to put up visitors or hide fugitives as the case may be. And where you have left-over *mujahidin*, you usually have left over arms and ammunition, or the wherewithal to get them.

Both areas, despite a heavy security presence (or perhaps because of it) have been a haven for fugitives on the run. Poso is often a halfway stop to either North Sulawesi or East Kalimantan for those who want to try and get to the Philippines. Both areas, or parts of both areas, are seen as having the potential to become a *qoidah aminah*, the base from which the Islamic community expands outward. Poso is considered a particularly likely candidate; in the Moluccas, parts of North Maluku rather than the Ambon area are seen as choice locations.

Finally, two places are still considered conflict areas by even the non-bombing wing of JI. They are considered places where Muslims are in perpetual danger, and will be until Islamic law is fully in place or all the Christians responsible for massacring fellow *mukmin*, the faithful, have been brought to justice. Even as late as 2004, one of the young men sent to study with Azhari said he really wanted to go to Poso – but his father said it was too dangerous now (so he sent him to study bomb-making with Azhari!).

All this means that you can not lose sight of these places – all jihadist roads in Indonesia lead through them, if not to them, and it is the personal networks forged in these two areas that will continue to plague the region for some time to come.

What does all this mean for policy?

There are at least three kinds of policy initiatives that come up when speaking of counter-terror initiatives. The first is aimed at improving intelligence analysis and law enforcement, the second at stopping recruitment into terrorist organisations, and the third, changing the environment that enables the terrorists to operate – the much vaunted battle of ideas.

The first is in some ways the easiest. Aid to police is relatively straightforward, the needs are clear, and you can measure the results. In Indonesia, there is no question that this kind of assistance is paying off. With the exception of the notable failure to get the top two men on the wanted list, the Indonesians are doing a very good job. It has also been interesting to read testimony in the Australian embassy bombing from witnesses who were asked to take part and refused because they feared the consequences.

The second, stopping recruitment, is harder. It is not that we don't know how recruitment works. In many cases, we do. We've got 18 known JI schools, and while the teachers at some of them have turned against bombing, there are still some of the hardcore who send their children to these schools or who are recent graduates and likely to get taken on as teachers. We know these schools, we know their addresses, we know the curriculum, and we know how recruitment and induction into the organisation works. But you can not just close them down, a) because there is no criminal activity going on inside them; b) because it is politically impossible in Indonesia; and c) because it is not the physical location that is important – they would just pop up elsewhere.

In addition there are two other recruiting pools: religious study sessions at certain mosques and universities in particular areas of the country. We could draw up a list of 20 mosques named in interrogation depositions as being centres of

recruitment and be pretty sure that some of the same study sessions under the same preachers are going on. But what are the grounds on which you stop this without creating an uproar over violations of freedom of speech or freedom of religion? One of the reasons the Indonesian police have been able to be as successful as they have is precisely because they have avoided arbitrary arrest, and virtually every single person kept in detention on terrorism grounds for more than a few days has been on the basis of solid evidence – and that is important to create the political space to work against terrorism.

If you are going to turn to religion to address the recruitment issue, and it IS probably possible to turn some of these potential recruits away from using violence, it can probably only be done through individuals who have legitimacy within the *salafi jihadi* network. No amount of exhortations from moderate Muslim leaders or politicians is going to make a difference. People change, but it is through their own awareness, usually, and not external intervention. (This happened within Egyptian radical organisations after the 1997 attack on tourists in Luxor).

We tend to assume that the difference between "moderates" and "extremists" is just a question of ideology or religious belief, that two young Indonesians are basically the same, only one has been exposed to one kind of teaching and the other to its opposite. But it does not work that way. In West Java, the young people who go into jihadist organisations are disproportionately from families with ties back to the earlier rebellions or one particular local puritanical Islamic association. It is as much a cultural and historical legacy as an issue of belief. In central Sulawesi, the most radical jihadists are former thugs who lost family members in the violence. There is no point in trying to propagate a kinder, gentler version of Islam here; it is not going to work.

In terms of changing the enabling environment, international factors matter here. While Iraq is not much of a factor in terms of who joins terrorist organisations, it is an important environmental factor: it is going to make Indonesians less willing to condemn terrorist acts, it reinforces the misguided notion of terrorism as the weapon of the weak, and it is going to raise hackles from politicians against any act that is seen as capitulating to Western pressure.

I am not convinced that atmospherics do much good. I am particularly sceptical of interfaith dialogues, since they tend to be exercises in preaching to the converted. I think the damage that the Indonesian bombers have done to themselves in killing so many Muslims has had far more impact on curbing support for violence than anything bilateral aid agencies could think up.

In sum, I do not think the danger is over, and I do not think terrorism can ever be fully eradicated, but I think in this region but we are in much, much better shape than we were three years ago.

Endnote

1   Azhari was killed by Indonesian police in November 2005.

with
Ms. Sidney Jones
Southeast Asia Project Director, International Crisis Group

Sixth Asian-European Editors' Forum, Jakarta, 30 August 2005

POLICING JEMAAH ISLAMIYAH (JI)

What were the factors that had made Indonesian intelligence and police work in the struggle against terrorism such a success?

Sidney Jones explained that the police had been given a lot of additional assistance after the 12 October 2002 Bali bombings. Furthermore, interregional cooperation and sharing of information were far better today. But still, even in Indonesia, there was not enough capacity to analyse incoming information. Additionally, there were concerns in the Philippines regarding family networks between Islamists and policemen or military family members in Mindanao, while corruption remained a huge problem. Her sense, however, was that cooperation was improving and that the lessons learnt in Indonesia may be transferred elsewhere.

ACEH AND MINDANAO

Asked to compare Aceh and Mindanao, Sidney Jones emphasised that Aceh was quite immune from Islamic radicalism. There was no connection between the GAM (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* – Free Aceh Movement) and the JI. In fact, the Jemaah Islamiyah

believes that GAM has strayed from the path of jihad, with these divisions going back as far as the Darul Islam movement.

It is possible, however, that some in JI might see international organisations in Aceh as potential targets following the 26 December 2004 tsunami.

On the Philippine side, in contrast, about a dozen of the Bali bombers had been sheltered in Mindanao by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), though the environment was getting less hospitable for them.

A good example of this trend was that the two most notorious Bali bombers had initially been sheltered by the MILF but had moved closer to the Abu Sayyaf Group more recently. It is clear that their presence is now an embarrassment to the MILF leadership in the southern Philippines.

JI IN SOUTHERN THAILAND?

In response to the question whether the situation in Thailand's predominantly Muslim southern provinces might attract foreign involvement, Sidney Jones argued that there was no evidence for this to date. It could become so, however, if Muslims in the region decided to come to the aid of fellow Muslims in Thailand. In fact, there was a network of well-established contacts between the JI and Thai Muslims with whom they had trained in Afghanistan: about 16 who took part in the three-year training programme in the late 1980s and early 90s, and another 20 who had taken short-term training.

To date, however, there was no indication of actual involvement with the JI. Consequently, the similarities might be more between southern Thailand and Aceh rather than to JI. At this stage, Sidney Jones did not see any immediate prospect of JI involvement.

JI AND THE DARUL ISLAM

Asked about the links between Darul Islam and JI, Sidney Jones elaborated that JI had split from Darul Islam in 1993 and formed 1 out of 10 or 11 factions. There were some more splinter groups like the one in Banten (West Java), which did not belong to JI but which was also involved in the 2002 Bali Bombings and the 2004 Australian Embassy bombings. These groups had their own leadership and organisational structures. More Darul Islam splinter groups were in other parts of the country, such as Sulawesi. Her assumption was that these splinter groups would not die out anytime soon, but neither would they unite to form one large organisation.

IDEOLOGY, VIOLENCE, AND SCHOOLS

The Q&A session then moved on to the question of whether the fight against terrorism could be bolstered by outlawing extremist ideologies. Sidney Jones suggested that there was no necessary link between violence and radicalism. Some groups like Hizbut Tahrir have radical political visions but do not use violence.

Even within JI schools, there were different points of view. Some JI members were more interested in the long-term development of an Islamic state and others were more in tune with Al Qaeda's line that a global jihad against the US and its allies was needed now.

The number of students in a JI-affiliated school who end up becoming JI members may be quite low. In one school in Lombok, for example, out of 40 students, 3 or 4 got actually inducted into the JI. It was hence very difficult to take action against such schools. What could be done, however, would be to get more government involvement on academic grounds, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs or the Ministry of Education.

FINANCING AND RECRUITMENT

Questioned about the financial structure of JI schools, Sidney Jones replied she was not sure how tuition was financed. Apart from family contributions, she could envisage financial assistance through local charities or other outside assistance. In that context, one should also remember that schools such as Pondok Ngruki had turned out thousands of upstanding citizens in addition to the hardcore terrorists.

In terms of recruitment, many JI members seem to have gone through the teacher training programme at these schools. The likely candidates are sent off for practice teaching for one year to another school or like-minded institution. Only after they had finished that year would a small minority of them be approached to become JI members. As a result, the actual numbers inducted into the JI were very small. Most of these JI-affiliated schools are located in Java, but there are a few in Lampung (southern Sumatra), and one or two more in other parts of Indonesia.

NATIONAL SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Asked about the strong temptation to reduce human rights and civil liberties in favour of ensuring national security in wake of 9/11, Sidney Jones argued that citizens should tell their governments that many such measures were unacceptable.

One of the strengths of Indonesia compared to the US was how comparatively benign the anti-terrorism legislation has been, compared to the Internal Security Act used in Singapore and Malaysia. While human rights activists in Indonesia raised concerns about the Indonesian law, they succeeded in preventing some draconian provisions from being adopted.

In both Indonesia and the Philippines, the legal system was very weak and unless one could have absolute faith that it would perform up to standard, it was dangerous to give additional legal powers of arrest and detention to agencies other than the police or to allow long-term preventive detention. Jones said there was a real trade-off and that she now took a slightly different position than during her time as a human rights activist. There were some provisions of anti-terrorism legislation that she had no problems with, but by and large, it was the right and obligation of every citizen to question every aspect of these laws

JI AND THE INDONESIAN MILITARY

In the context of national security, the next question was whether the Indonesian army was still involved with giving weapons to *lasykar*. Sidney Jones replied that there was no evidence of military involvement or support for these organisations after 2001.

JI THREAT TO SINGAPORE REDUCED?

The discussion then turned toward Singapore. While it was a relief that the Singapore-Malay branch of the JI was less dangerous now, there were constant alerts about potential terrorists. So where were these terrorists from, if JI is no longer operational?

The most difficult thing to prevent, according to Sidney Jones, is suicide bombing. She considered Singapore to be the most vigilant country in the region. It was extremely difficult to plan an attack there, but nothing was impossible in the case of suicide attacks.

For a major attack on Singapore, the only scenario she could conceive of would involve people from outside the region as she could not think of any group in the region capable of such an act.

INTER-FAITH DIALOGUES: PREACHING TO THE CONVERTED?

Queried whether she thought that inter-faith dialogue was the way forward, Jones replied that she believed in inter-faith dialogues and admired the people who participated in them. However, these people were already interested in building ties among religions, and it was difficult to see how anyone committed to violence would attend or be influenced by the discussions. She was sceptical of their value as an effort to change the climate in which terrorists operate.

A CHANGE IN JI'S ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE?

The next questioner wanted to know whether the JI's organisational structure was now better understood than three years ago.

According to Sidney Jones, a lot of evidence on the organisational structure had been found following the many arrests. A lot of this documentation had been published in Indonesian papers or other publications. Books published a year ago contained a lot of this information. It was difficult to know the extent to which JI actually operated according to these formal guidelines, for instance with regard to the decision-making structure. However, what happened in Indonesia after the 2002 Bali bombings was that the original hierarchical

structure of *mantiqi* (divisions) and smaller subdivisions down to the cell level seem to have changed. As some subdivisions were disrupted or smashed altogether by arrests, JI leaders discussed dividing all members into three main thematic areas: education, religious outreach, and military training. These groups would be directly managed by leaders at the mantiqi level.

THE MIDDLE EAST, SAUDI ARABIA AND INDONESIA: LINKS?

The links between the Middle East and Indonesian Islam was another topic of interest, in particular the extent of actual Middle Eastern support.

According to Jones, the really interesting phenomenon in Indonesia is that the Saudi- or Gulf States-funded mosques or pesantrens (Islamic boarding schools) did not produce the bombers. There were serious ideological difference between the Wahhabis and the schools that had produced the active bombers. The Saudi and Yemeni mentors of the Wahhabis were loyal to the Saudi government and did not support Osama Bin Laden, and even regard him as a heretic. In fact, the really strict Wahhabis believe that it is forbidden to revolt against a Muslim government, even a bad one.

Strict Wahhabis hence believed that one had to practice Islam as the Prophet and his companions did in the 7th century. They saw the organisational structures of terrorist groups as being innovations that violated that principle. To get involved in such political activity was a diversion from the true mission, which should be to purify the faith. As a result, there was a real and deep ideological split between the JI-type organisations and the Wahhabi-funded ones even though both sent militants to fight in Ambon.

Following recent arrests of terrorism suspects in central Java, some people acknowledged having received money from a Saudi to get to Mindanao, apparently for training related to the war in Iraq.

PRO-BOMBING AGAINST STATE-BUILDING FACTIONS

Sidney Jones then responded to the question which of the two main JI factions had gained the upper hand. According to her, the faction that pursued the long-term goal of an Islamic state was far bigger than the pro-bombing faction. She did not believe that most JI members had ever focused on creating a Southeast Asian Islamic state, although the idea appears in some speeches of the JI members who had been based in Malaysia.

JEMAAH TABLIQ

The final question touched upon the links between Jemaah Tabliq and South Asia, notably Bangladesh. Sidney Jones suggested that the key issue with Jemaah Tabliq was that it was a benign organisation committed to making Muslims better Muslims. They might have several thousand members in Indonesia, and there were several hundred Indonesians going to Bangladesh or South Asia each year for the annual gathering of *tablighis*. It was therefore conceivable that some JI members had used Jemaah Tabliq as a cover but this should not be used to discredit the organisation.

MEDIA AND ISLAM: A STRAINED RELATIONSHIP

by
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We have reached the fourth anniversary of the terrible attacks of September 11, 2001. I am sorry to say that, in my view, the U.S. and Western media have completely failed to meet the challenge of reporting on Islam, in the four succeeding years since then, or in reaction to the atrocities that followed, including the extremist violence in Iraq, which I would not dignify with the titles "insurgency" or "resistance", the Madrid metro and London underground bombings, and the terror assaults in Indonesia, Morocco, Turkey, and elsewhere.

On September 12, 2001, it was as if two civilisations, the Judeo-Christian and the Islamic, which had shared the planet and had contacts with one another for 14 centuries, sometimes violently, sometimes peacefully, but nearly always fruitfully, were completely unknown the one to the other. Indeed, it seemed that Muslims knew a great deal more about the West than the West knew about Muslims. To borrow a simile from the film industry: in this "war of the worlds" the Muslims may as well be "invaders from another planet", whose beliefs, customs and habits are completely unknown and incomprehensible to Westerners.

For example, in the current debate over the Iraqi constitution, it has repeatedly been stated with horror and

condemnation in the West that the new national charter embodies the principle that Islam is a source of law, and that lawmaking shall not contradict the principles of Islam. This has been taken by U.S. and foreign commentators, both those who oppose the Iraq intervention and some alleged supporters of President Bush, as evidence that a Shia theocracy is being implanted in Iraq, or at least in its southern areas. Few seem to have fully understood the political alliance of the Kurds, who are Sunnis, Sufis, and, in many cases ultrasecular, with the Shias – presumably, the Kurds would not support a theocracy. But this aspect of the question is too complex and deep for most Western media.

In reality, the concept that lawmaking should not conflict with Islam in a Muslim country is an entirely uncontroversial principle established in many moderate Muslim states: Saudi Arabia and Turkey are the only countries that consistently deviate from it significantly, with the Saudi kingdom requiring that all law be derived exclusively from a Wahhabi definition of *shari'a* and Turkey long banning *shari'a* altogether. An experiment in the imposition of monopolistic *shari'a*, in its most radical and exclusivist form, in Sudan, has essentially failed. Nearly all other Muslim countries, including even Iran, have legal systems based on the coexistence of *shari'a* with Western or Soviet law, either inherited from the colonial past or borrowed (as in the case of the non-Islamic legal components in the Iranian model). I have the habit of referring to this state of affairs as the "Israeli" standard, and not merely to provoke discussion: Israel maintains Jewish religious law in personal and family matters (*halakhah*, which is structurally modeled on *shari'a*), alongside *shari'a* for Israeli Arabs and Palestinian Muslims, and criminal law inherited from the British. Indeed, the regulation of holy sites in Israel, including Christian monuments, remains based on Ottoman law.

The parity of *shari'a* and non-Muslim law in Islamic polities is nothing new; it has existed since the fall of Baghdad in 1258 CE to the Mongols, who became Muslim but would not abandon their customary law. Indeed, when it is said that law must not conflict with Islam, it is rather difficult to imagine what laws would do so. Aside from the former Soviet Union, only a few Communist regimes foster state atheism and none makes it official as former-Communist Albania did – that would obviously conflict with Islam. No country in the world mandates alcoholism or sexual depravity, which would conflict with Islam. No country in the world bans Muslims per se. One may argue that the French law forbidding head coverings contradicted Islam, but a notable and peaceful civil debate over this law has taken place, in which Muslims are supported by Jews as well as Sikhs.

When the Serbs destroyed mosques and murdered ordinary Muslims as well as clerics in the Balkans, one could argue that their regime was in legal conflict with Islam; but Muslims living in southern Serbia and elsewhere did not declare that the Serb state was actually in conflict with Islam according to *shari'a*. When the Russians destroy mosques and massacre people in the Caucasus, they do so lawlessly, but even when such atrocities are carried out by the state, only fanatics who have infiltrated the Caucasus claim that Russia acts in violation of the rights of Islam.

Islamic *shari'a* is quite clear on what constitutes a state policy that contradicts Islam: it is one that silences the call to prayer (*adhan*), and prevents the teaching and preaching of the religion. Serbia, Croatia (in Bosnia-Hercegovina), Macedonia, and Russia may be said to have done so in recent times, although indigenous and legitimate clerics did not judge it to be so. Thus, regardless of conflicts over land, Israel does not interfere with the peaceful activity of Muslim teachers and the faithful. Neither does the United States. So one could just as

quickly describe the U.S. constitution as a document that does not conflict with Islam, as to so label the Iraqi constitution. Is there reason to be concerned about the U.S. constitution as an Islamic theocratic document? I think not.

The failure to grasp the nature of the new Iraqi constitution extends to the document itself. Much noise has been made about Article Two, in which it is stated that "Islam is the official religion of the state and is a basic source of legislation", and some praise has been issued for Article 14, which proclaims equality of gender, ethnic groups, religion, opinion, social and economic status, etc. But little has been said about one of the most remarkable and significant elements of the new Iraqi charter: the ban in Article Seven on "Entities or trends that justify or propagate racism, terrorism, '*takfir*', sectarian expulsions", as well as the Saddamist Ba'ath party.

The ban on *takfir*, which means excommunication or expulsion of one's opponents from Islam, is exceptionally important, but I can say with considerable certainty that most Western journalists do not have the slightest idea about it. I have found no Western media commentaries on the issue of *takfir* as treated in the Iraqi constitution, but many that seek to associate tribal customs in the treatment of women, which have no basis whatever in Islamic tradition or law, with the future Iraqi legal system.

A major Saudi cleric, Sheikh Abd Al-Muhsin Al-Abikan, has called for banning the practice of *takfir*. The significance of this is potentially immense. Wahhabis have, for centuries, declared that those who do not share their fanatical doctrines are apostates from Islam. This has been their excuse for murder and pillage against Shias and non-Wahhabi Sunnis. And it is important for another reason.

By labelling all non-radicals as apostates from the religion, and blessing as the only faithful Muslims the adherents of their

own violent ideology, the practitioners of *takfir* (let me add, including Sunni radicals from America to Indonesia) bind their followers together as an elite, but also as a pliable human mass, convinced their brutal urges are sacred and worthy. Many if not most Muslim terrorist recruits are weak in their religious belief and knowledge, and the power they assume by expelling a billion people from the religion fills the intellectual and spiritual void within them...

A movement against *takfir* has taken hold elsewhere in Sunni Islam, in which many clerics now appear deeply repelled by the horrific events in Iraq. In July 2005, an international Islamic conference in Jordan produced a statement opposing the Sunni use of *takfir* against Shias, a practice enunciated time and again in the bloodthirsty manifestos of Abu Musab al Zarqawi, as well as condemning *takfir* against Sufis. The Amman declaration called for the restoration of pluralistic debate in Islam, banned under Saudi rule in Mecca and Medina, and for the affirmation of liberty as a principle.

Takfir is, therefore, an urgent issue for discussion in Western media that seek to "cover Islam". But it is not the sole example of a concept lacking in sensible understanding and even context when dealt with by journalists. Here are some other aspects of Islam apparently unknown to Western media:

The Ottoman caliphate abolished death sentences for apostasy from Islam, but Western media still widely report that all Muslims believe the penalty for apostasy must be death. One Islamophobe in the U.S. even warned me that if I were to leave Islam I would be subject to a death sentence, which is absurd.

Almost no Western journalists have any idea what a *fatwa* actually is. A fatwa is not a death sentence. It is a religious opinion comparable to a *responsum* or *teshuvah* in Judaism. *Fatawa* (the correct plural) are not binding on Sunnis. They are

binding on Shias if issued by a *marja* or Shia legal authority. *Fatawa* cannot be composed by individuals without training and credentials. For example, Osama bin Laden cannot and has not written authentic *fatawa*, either in their content or style.

Almost no Western journalists seem to be aware that *shari'a* exists in every country in the world where Muslims live. I well remember the shock and horror of a certain esteemed academic "expert" when I informed him that *shari'a* courts exist in New York, London, and Paris. He said they should be immediately suppressed. He was unaware that *shari'a* courts exist to issue *halal* meat butchers' licenses as well as to pronounce on the appropriateness of financial contracts – since Islam bars profit by interest – and to settle family and property disputes. Participation in them is generally entirely voluntary, except in extreme *shari'a* milieus created by Saudi-funded radicals.

I don't know of very many Western journalists who understand the theological differences between Sunnis and Shias. It is for this reason that one reads continually the absurd claim that Sunni and Shia "insurgents" are cooperating against the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq. Nor do many Western journalists know much about Sufism; many seem to think it is a separate phenomenon from the Sunni and Shia traditions. It is not. But Sufism also has very different characteristics according to the country in which it is found. For example, Albanian Sufism, which is a powerful, organised force, is completely different from Sufi-influenced Islam in Bosnia-Hercegovina. In general, the substantial diversity of Islam is lost in Western media.

The category of just plain myths about Islam in Western media is pretty long. A great deal of anguish has been expressed in the European media about the spectre of Islamic reconquest of areas once under Muslim rule, such as Spain, or al-Andalus. I find it characteristic that nobody ever suggests that Muslims

would want to reconquer Greece, Romania, southern Ukraine, or Hungary – in the latter case where they ruled for 150 years. Rhetoric about the reconquest of lands once under Muslim rule is verbiage and nothing more, with no basis in Islamic law.

A similar and absurd belief involves the alleged Islamic division of the globe into two worlds, the *dar ul-Islam* or "land of Islam and peace", where Muslims rule, and the *dar ul-harb*, or "land of war", where non-Muslims rule. The presumption is that all Muslims are required to observe a state of permanent military jihad against any country not ruled by Muslims, and therefore intend world conquest through violence. While it would be ludicrous to deny that most Muslims, like most Christians, believe theirs is the best faith and is ultimately destined to win over the planet, or that *takfiris* indeed subscribe to the "theory of two worlds", it is worse for Westerners to simplify their view of Islamic law and political conceptions in a way that reinforces prejudice. The *dar ul-harb* has a specific and restricted meaning, referring to places where Muslims are victims of violence because of their religion.

It is worth observing, once again, that even during the ex-Yugoslav and first Chechen wars, the local *ulema* of these communities did not define their enemies as representing the *dar ul-harb*. In reality, Islamic law has long recognised a third category: the *dar ul-sulh* or "land of contract", where Muslims do not rule but live as peaceful subjects permitted to practice their religion. *Takfiris* have preached that Muslims living in non-Muslim lands cannot and should not obey non-Muslim authorities or participate in non-Muslim politics. But the Iraqi Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the Shia *marja* of the time, holds to the exactly opposite view, which is that of mainstream Sunnism as well: Muslims migrating to non-Muslim countries, if they have signed a document like an immigration form, have given an Islamic oath to obey local laws that do not directly contravene Islam (as described

above) and to live at peace with their neighbours. Muslims who cannot execute such an oath in good faith should not migrate to a non-Muslim country, according to Sistani and others.

I am especially somewhat exercised about the frequency with which it is stated that Osama bin Laden has called for or seeks the overthrow of the Saudi monarchy. Bin Laden and al-Qaeda have never called for the overthrow of the monarchy, and I challenge anybody to find serious evidence otherwise. Bin Laden is a scion of a family owing its position to the House of Saud; he seeks a reinforcement of Wahhabi ideology in the monarchy, not its overthrow. That is why his statements have always called on the Saudi rulers to "return to the straight path". In addition, Bin Laden and al-Qaeda are products of Saudi society and Saudi politics, which is why the Saudi rulers have typically called on him to "return to the straight path". Neither side has employed the idiom usually found in a revolutionary movement or its opponents. And although thousands of Saudi aristocrats travel around the world, and thousands of Saudi enterprises are located across the globe, and thousands of Saudi government offices operate in the kingdom, none of them (with the exception of a single latter example involving a local licensing office) have been attacked by al-Qaeda. In Saudi Arabia, al-Qaeda targets foreigners, not the rulers. In Saudi Arabia, al-Qaeda terrorists, curiously enough, always appear to have access to government vehicles and government uniforms, and some terrorists are obviously government employees. Western media seldom draw the obvious conclusion from this, which is that al-Qaeda is protected or supported by a faction within the state; I excuse Western media from further comprehension of this problem because the Saudi kingdom continues to bar independent, foreign media from working on site.

Yet in what I fear is the worst such instance, Western media, especially in the U.S., continually criticise Muslim clerics (*ulema*) around the world for failing to oppose terrorism. In reality, great numbers of prominent *ulema* have condemned aggression in the name of Islam. I can cite the example of an aggressive and insulting American "academic" who demanded "five names" of leading clerics who denounced terrorism. I first pointed out to him that the five names would mean nothing to him – that he would likely never have heard of them, not because they are obscure, which they are not, but because these names are not known in the non-Muslim world, regardless of their prestige among Muslims. I finally asked him if he thought Ayatollah Sistani, in Iraq, had failed to issue binding *fatawa* as well as condemnatory statements against the desecration of holy places and murder of his co-believers. It was as if I were talking to myself. My interlocutor was simply imprisoned in clichés.

I could continue with a list of the lacunae about Islam found in Western media, but the experience would be depressing.

What are the reasons for this problem?

First, Western media are not engaged in "covering Islam". Rather, they are engaged in reporting on events that happen to involve Islam. There is an obvious difference.

Second, reporters are "first responders", rather like police and fire personnel. They are expected to get the basic facts about a story, not to offer serious analysis or background. There is nothing wrong with that, except that the fire caused by Islamic radicalism is of such magnitude that greater expertise is necessary. There is some unavoidable fault in that journalistic enterprises and their reporters are expected to compete, with much detail lost in the search for original stories and headlines. But that probably cannot be helped.

Third, when they need expertise and analysis, Western media often turn to academics and governmental experts whose knowledge of Islam is distorted or limited, or to representatives of Islamic trends that have become well-established in the West but which do not represent any consonance between Islam and Western values. In turning to such academics and groups, Western media may find their prejudices and mistakes reinforced rather than corrected. Western academic experts often express contempt for what they call "Orientalism", while practicing a form of it themselves. That is, academics of both the left and right shove Islam into categories determined by Middle Eastern politics, even though the very simplicity of Islam as a faith should obviate this temptation.

Fourth, Western education for the past hundred and fifty years has concentrated on the gap between the two worlds rather than study of the real elements they have in common.

For example, an honourable, recently deceased Indonesian Muslim philosopher, Nurcholis Madjid, in a comment soon after September 11, 2001, noted the paradox of contemporary Muslim hatred of the West, when one of the most famous chapters of Qur'an, surah 30, titled "The Greeks", praises the Byzantine empire, representing Rome and the West, in their conflict with the Persians, embodying the cultures of the East. Brother Madjid noted, "the Muslims sided with [the West], and not with [the East]." The reason was simple: the Byzantines were Christians, and therefore monotheists, while the Persians did not believe in an almighty God, creator of the universe. Brother Madjid further pointed out that the arrival of the "news to the followers of the prophet Muhammad aleyhisalaam about the defeat of [the Byzantines] by the Persians made the people of Mecca, the enemies of the Prophet, happy."

It will come as a surprise, I am sure, to most Western European editors and reporters to learn that there is a significant

and respectable body of scholarship showing the influence of Islamic thought on Dante Alighieri, the greatest Christian author outside the church. This concept is not some new claim advanced by Muslims for the gratuitous aggrandisement of the faith. It was developed in the 1920s by Miguel Asín Palacios, a Spanish Catholic intellectual of the highest calibre, who, because of his own background, had no reason whatever to exaggerate or falsify. Most Western editors and reporters are equally shocked to be told of the real similarities between Judaism and Islam, and of the authentic influence of Islamic religious practice on Judaism.

What, then, is to be done?

In my view most of the blame rests outside the journalistic profession. Solutions to the knowledge gap about Islam will not be easy in the wider sphere, but may be so in newsrooms. If a reporter is going to "cover Islam", he or she should handle it as a separate and full-time "beat", and should study the basic and authoritative published works about it. When "covering Islam", reporters should do more to identify the opponents of extremism and to learn what questions to ask them. I can name many authentic representatives of moderate Islam who speak perfect English and whom I have never once seen interviewed in American media. A Western writer who does not know what is *takfir* or its significance will not get very far in covering Islam.

Further, moderate Muslim parents in the West should encourage their talented children to enter the journalistic profession if their offspring show a desire to do so. I have heard, too many times, the stories of Muslim parents who tell their children only computers and engineering, management studies, or medicine are worthy professions. Western media enterprises, especially in the U.S. and UK, are presently concerned with encouraging diversity in employment and remain very open to hiring Muslims. I have elsewhere proposed the

establishment of an Islamic institute for journalism, with campuses around the world, to form new cadres for the profession. Muslim as well as non-Muslim governments and media enterprises should contribute to the creation of such institutions.

In addition, moderate Muslim authors should do more to patiently, intelligently, carefully, and competently write so that they may become trustworthy and authoritative sources for Western media. They must master the Western idiom to better convey the realities of Islam to non-Muslims. These works should be motivated by the need for clarification and accuracy rather than *da'wa* or missionary works to convert non-Muslims.

Finally, Muslim *ulema*, other institutions, and governments should investigate the need to replace or supplement existing donations or programmes at Western universities, so as to refine and improve the quality of Western scholarship and media coverage of Islam.

with
Mr. Stephen A. Schwartz
Executive Director, Center for Islamic Pluralism,
Washington, DC, USA

Sixth Asian-European Editors' Forum, Jakarta, 30 August 2005

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE CHECHEN CONFLICT

The first question invited Stephen Schwartz to comment on the conflict in Chechnya and the next generation of Chechens who were not educated properly and had nothing material to lose. What could Russia and the international community do to solve this conflict?

Schwartz replied that he would suggest the following measures: 1) get Russian soldiers out of Chechnya; 2) cut Saudi aid and infiltration into Chechnya and criminalise Saudi infiltration; 3) recognise that a Chechnya independent from the Russian federation is not the only solution, as the Chechens identified with Russia in many telling ways. They accept Russian passports, served in the Soviet army, and support Russian football teams. Chechnya probably could not survive on its own – autonomy would be sufficient. Once the Wahhabis were removed from Chechnya, the prospects for peace would be far better, not least because most Chechens desire peace. Relief and reconstruction programmes would then be possible. Schwartz also supported the reinforcement of indigenous Sufi Muslim traditions in Chechnya.

AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF CHECHNYA

Schwartz was also queried whether the American public still saw Chechnya as part of the global war against terror? He reported that Americans were not very well aware of who the Chechens are. As a result, interview questions by media were consequently not well informed and sometimes came across as stupid. He had hence been asked whether Chechens would blow up apartment buildings in the US, and been queried repeatedly about a Chechen presence in Afghanistan. The one and only way the American media was viewing the Chechen conflict was through the lens of Islamic extremism, and this was regrettably the way the media in the United States worked.

SAUDI MONEY AND AL QAEDA

The next question referred to Sidney Jones' earlier presentation and her explanation that Saudi money flowing into Indonesian schools had not led to extremist schools. Taken that Indonesian schools had nevertheless produced terrorists, what was Schwartz's perception of the relation between direct Saudi overseas involvement and terrorism?

According to the presenter, there were about five Saudi agencies linked to the state, such as the World Assembly of Muslim Youth. He had information from Saudi newspapers that indicated very clearly that the Saudi agencies were involved in terrorist activities, including the funding of Al Qaeda. Already immediately after 9/11, the evidence pointed to this connection. This was further supported by the fact that no Saudi aristocrat or official had ever been the target of terrorists, which to him indicated state-funded Saudi terrorism. If Saudi aristocrats ever had been targets, then at least one of them would have been kidnapped or attacked by Al Qaeda rather than the foreigners in Saudi Arabia or elsewhere.

All of this did not mean that the Saudi government supported Al Qaeda, but that there is some kind of support or protection coming from some faction within the royal family. Schwartz therefore did not believe that Saudi Arabia was under attack from Al Qaeda.

WHAT TO REPORT...

The next question dealt with what journalists could do to pre-empt prejudice and bias. For instance, why would one write of 'a suspected <u>Muslim</u> terrorist or rapist' but not about 'a suspected <u>Christian</u> terrorist or rapist'. Would it be better not to report on ethnicity?

Stephen Schwartz's opinion was that the Western media might be too soft, as terrorists in Iraq were often called 'insurgents' or 'militants' rather than 'terrorists'. In Northern Ireland, the United States, or Israel, when Christian or other extremists did something, they were called thus because it was important for the understanding of the story. He considered it important to report the reality, if ethnicity or religious affiliation were part of a story and hence needed to be in it.

Such distinctions had been white-washed so much in the American media that when a racial crime took place in the United States, the ethnicities were not reported and the story as a result got confused. If Muslims committed bad acts, they had to account for it. It would be a big mistake to leave out the complete story.

... AND WHAT NOT TO REPORT

The following question linked up with the legitimacy of mentioning ethnic or religious identities in news stories. Would

it not matter only if the person emphasised that he or she had committed an act for religious reasons? Moreover, as this might be inflammatory, would it not be safer to err on the side of caution?

Stephen Schwartz replied that he does not inflammatory articles and that it might be better to err on the side of caution. It would be wrong to start an article by writing 'A Muslim guy did this and that to a Christian guy'. In his earlier comment, the emphasis had been on completeness of facts to make sense of outright extremist crimes.

REPORTING ISLAM IN ISLAMIC COUNTRIES

Moving on from how Islam was portrayed in the Western media, the next questioner enquired how Islam was depicted in Islamic countries.

According to Stephen Schwartz, the population in Middle Eastern countries knew about the diversity of Islam because, in each city, there might be different kinds of mosques that would follow different legal schools such as four Sunni schools and the Shia traditions. Even the Saudi media reported on the differences of traditions.

The diversity of Islam was extremely important, but Western media did not recognise this. For this, he blamed the journalists who were responsible for educating the public, and who tried to be politically correct. He therefore called for more action as this was one of the biggest problems of the day. The future depended on this, on not being lazy, on going out and learning as much as possible. For this reason, he would further recommend that more Muslims make it into newsrooms and reporting because they would have a better understanding.

One example of how ignorance could distort reporting was a story about Ramadan he had written. It was edited to the extent that Ramadan became associated with Christmas and the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, and said to fall at the same time every year, when in fact it does not. For this reason it would be good to have more Muslim journalists. It was time for Muslim parents to encourage their children to get involved with liberal professions so that they could make a positive impact in Western newsrooms. He also suggested the creation of a state supported institution for Islamic journalists.

ELECTRONIC AND PRINT MEDIA

Having covered the print media, Schwartz was asked whether he could compare them with the electronic media. The presenter replied that his knowledge of electronic media was insufficient. With regard to Iraq, however, Schwartz observed that the reporting was not the problem, but rather the lack of knowledge. This would have been necessary to make distinctions rather than confuse them.

ISLAM ACCORDING TO PROF. BERNARD LEWIS

Asked about what he thought about Professor Bernard Lewis, the renowned British-born Islam specialist and Professor Emeritus at Princeton University, Stephen Schwartz replied that he admired him as a scholar who mastered the relevant languages such as Arabic or Turkish and as someone who was quite sensitive to Islam, and for his books. In his opinion, Muslims should read Lewis' books too. However, Lewis, who was born in 1916, had got older and his ideas were a bit too simplistic, and he admitted on national TV that he might have

overlooked Wahhabism. Yet, he was still very important intellectually, not least including as an adviser to Donald Rumsfeld.

ON INDIA AND PAKISTAN

The final question turned to the South Asian subcontinent, notably extremism in India, and extremist *madrasahs* in Pakistan. With regard to extremism in India, Stephen Schwartz regarded the Indian media far less at fault than extremist politicians, as the media tried not to fan conflict. In contrast, extremist *madrasahs* in Pakistan should be shut down and the teachers of hatred and violence be put into jail as they had a lot of blood on their hands. The rule should be that if a school was teaching people to kill, then it should be shut down and people convicted.

6th Asian-European Editors' Forum

In cooperation with **The Jakarta Post**
The Dharmawangsa, Jakarta
August 28th – 31st, 2005

Programme

Sunday, 28/08/2005

During the day | Arrival of Delegates

19:00 – 19:30 | Pre-Dinner Cocktail
19:30 – 21:00 | Welcome Dinner
Venue:
Terrace of Nusantara Room (open air)
The Dharmawangsa

Monday, 29/08/2005

Venue:
Nusantara Room

08:30 | Registration and Coffee

09:00 | Arrival of the Guest of Honour, HE Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of Indonesia

09:05	Welcome Address by Werner vom Busch, Regional Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation, Singapore
09:10	**"The President's Report Card: The First Ten Months"** **HE Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono**, President of Indonesia
09:25	Q & A Session with HE Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, moderated by Mr. Jusuf Wanandi, Co-founder and Member, Board of Trustees, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)
10:20	Farewell to HE Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono
10:30	Coffee Break
11:00	Introduction of HE Dr. Sri Mulyani Indrawati, State Minister of National Development Planning
11:05	**"A Strengthened Indonesia in the Framework of South East Asia's Economy"** **HE Dr. Sri Mulyani Indrawati**, State Minister of National Development Planning
11:25	Q & A Session with HE Dr. Sri Mulyani Indrawati
12:30	Lunch **Venue:** **Club Bimasena, Lobby Lounge**

14:00	Introduction of Dr. Kuntoro Mangkusubroto
14:05	**"Indonesia after the Tsunami: Eight Months after the Disaster"** **Dr. Kuntoro Mangkusubroto**, Head, The Aceh and Nias Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Executive Agency
14:45	Q & A Session with Dr. Kuntoro Mangkusubroto
15:30	Coffee Break
15:45	Introduction of Mr. Jusuf Wanandi
15:50	**"Looking Forward: Emerging Challenges for the East Asian Region"** **Mr. Jusuf Wanandi**, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Jakarta
16:30	Discussion
17:15	End of Sessions Day One
19:00	Dinner **Venue:** **Payon Restaurant (open air)** **Meeting Place: Hotel Lobby**

Tuesday, 30/08/2005

	Venue: **Nusantara Room**
08:45	Registration and Coffee
09:00	Introduction of Dr. Bahtiar Effendy
09:05	**"The Concept of an Islam-Civic Society: Indonesia"** **Dr. Bahtiar Effendy**, State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta
09:45	Discussion
10:30	Coffee Break
10:50	Introduction of Ms. Zainah Anwar
10:55	**"Women in Modern Islamic Societies: Possibilities, Restrictions, Perspectives"** **Ms. Zainah Anwar**, Executive Director, Sisters in Islam, Malaysia
11:35	Discussion
12:30	Lunch **Venue:** **Club Bimasena, Lobby Lounge**

14:00	Introduction of Ms. Sidney Jones

14:05 **"Terrorism in Indonesia and South East Asia –
how will it develop?"**
Ms. Sidney Jones, Southeast Asia Project
Director, International Crisis Group, Jakarta

14:45 Discussion

15:30 Coffee Break

15:50 Introduction of Mr. Stephen A. Schwartz

15:55 **"Media and Islam, a Strained Relationship"**
Mr. Stephen A. Schwartz, Executive Director,
Center for Islamic Pluralism (CIP), USA

16:35 Discussion

17:20 Farewell Address by Werner vom Busch,
Regional Representative of the Konrad-
Adenauer-Foundation, Singapore, and by a
Representative of The Jakarta Post

17:30 End of Forum

19:00 Dinner hosted by The Jakarta Post
Venue:
Mr. Jusuf Wanandi's residence (open air)
Meeting Place: Hotel Lobby

Wednesday, 31/08/2005

Departure of all International Delegates

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28 - 31 August 2005

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