Review article

‘It takes a madrasah’?: Habermas meets Bourdieu in Indonesia

John T. Sidel


In recent years, some of the most important and interesting contributions to the study of politics in South East Asia have come not from political scientists but from anthropologists. This trend is not surprising given many anthropologists’ in-depth familiarity with these complex societies, in which economic growth and crisis have begun to produce interesting patterns of social and political change. Among the most prominent and prolific of such anthropologists is Robert Hefner, a specialist on Indonesia, whose extensive fieldwork in East Java in the 1970s and 1980s formed the basis for two well-received books on patterns of political, social, and religious change in the Tengger highlands over the first decades of the New Order.¹ In recent years, Hefner has also edited several important collections of essays on religion, society, and politics which cover other parts of South East Asia as well as countries beyond the region.² With Hefner’s new monograph, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, he is thus returning to his primary country of expertise in a book-length study very much shaped and informed by theoretical and comparative work far beyond South East Asian studies.


Hefner is especially concerned to situate Indonesia against the backdrop of the vast literature on democratization in general, as well as the narrower field of scholarship – and polemics – on the relationship between Islam and democracy in particular. Drawing inspiration and guidance from the liberal–pluralist tradition of work on civil religion, the public sphere, and social capital, Hefner thus tips his hat in the direction of Alexis de Tocqueville, Jürgen Habermas, and Robert Putnam. Aligning himself with these authors and with the broad forces of multiculturalist universalism, Hefner positions himself as the defender of Muslim democrats against arch-conservative essentialists like Samuel Huntington on the one hand, and apologists for Islamic autocracies on the other.

Overall, Hefner’s intention in *Civil Islam* is thus to emphasize the pluralistic nature of Islamic worship and practice in Indonesia, and to highlight the contributions of Muslim intellectuals and organizations to the process of democratization in the country. Indeed, the historical backdrop provided in the book stresses the diversity of traditions which have flourished in the archipelago, and the distance of Islamic institutions from state authorities in the pre-colonial, Dutch colonial, and post-colonial eras. More importantly, perhaps, the main chapters of the book consist of a potted history of Indonesian politics since independence, in which a sympathetic portrait of mainstream Muslim political figures sustains a narrative that stretches over roughly fifty years of complex political and social change. The result is undoubtedly the best available book-length account of the ebbs and flows of modern Indonesian political history from independence at the end of 1949 to the fall of Suharto in May 1998. No other author has produced such a comprehensive and coherent account of the past half-century of Indonesian political history.

That said, the limitations of *Civil Islam* are also readily apparent from the vantage point of early 2001. Hefner’s narrative essentially ends with the fall of Suharto in 1998, leaving only a few pages for a cursory treatment of the Habibie interlude (1998–99) and an awkward ‘postscript-addendum’ of two meagre paragraphs covering the election of Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati Soekarnoputri as Indonesia’s new president and vice-president, respectively, in October 1999. This framing of Indonesian democratization as culminating in the Reformasi campaign of 1998, while understandable in terms of the timing of publication, stands out as especially problematic in the context of Indonesian politics today.
In particular, Hefner is concerned to portray Muslim democrats as the protagonists in his narrative of ‘the emergence of a democratic, religiously ecumenical, and boldly reformist movement in Indonesian Islam in the 1980s and 1990s’ (p. xvii). Here he posits what he calls a reformist and ‘civil Islam’ counterposed against an ultra-conservative and ‘regimist Islam’ closely aligned with authoritarian rule in the late Suharto and early post-Suharto periods. Thus the reformation of Islam is linked to the anti-Suharto Reformasi campaign and to the struggle for democracy in Indonesia.

In terms of descriptive accuracy, the problems with this formulation are threefold. First, as even Hefner’s very sympathetic account makes clear, many Muslim leaders and groups of decidedly reformist and ‘civil’ Islamic orientation collaborated closely with the Suharto regime (and at times with so-called ultra-conservative ‘regimist’ Muslims) and did little to promote the cause of democratization over the long years of the New Order. Even Nurcholish Madjid, whom Hefner commends as a ‘great democrat’ in the first pages of the book, is identified as forming an Islamic association in 1986 which ‘counted no fewer then eight cabinet members on its advisory board’ (p. 125), and which reportedly enjoyed the financial support of members of the Suharto family. Nurcholish Madjid’s role in furthering democratization, we learn, consisted largely of promoting a vision of multi-faith tolerance among influential Muslim members of the political élite, most notably as a member of the Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Se-Indonesia (ICMI or All-Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals), and of serving as a minor behind-the-scenes broker in the final days of the Suharto era.

Second, it was precisely this pattern of ‘reformist’ Muslim collaboration with and penetration of the New Order state which facilitated the removal of Suharto in May 1998 and culminated in the ascendancy of the short-lived Habibie administration. Crucial in this regard was the network of urban middle-class modernist Muslims inside and outside the regime, whose call for Reformasi combined student protests championed by Muhammadiyah leader and prominent ICMI member Amien Rais on the one hand, with a series of defections by ICMI-affiliated civilian and military figures on the other, thus paving the way for vice-president B.J. Habibie, the head of ICMI, to assume the presidency. Nahdlatul Ulama leader Abdurrahman Wahid, another of Hefner’s ‘great democrats’, played virtually no role in this process, being sidelined not only by health problems but by the irrelevance of his organization – the result of a long-standing exclusion from ruling circles in Jakarta and an
alliance of convenience with Suharto’s daughter Siti Hardiyanti Rukmana (‘Tutut’) since 1997.

Third, and finally, the commitment of many of these reformist, ‘civil’ Muslim intellectuals and organizations to democratization in Indonesia can be called into question in light of their alliances and activities in the early post-Suharto era. Amien Rais, for example, the leader of the most important modernist Islamic association in Indonesia and the unrivalled champion of Reformasi in the spring of 1998, played a crucial role in the demobilization of protests that followed the resignation of Suharto and the assumption of the presidency by Habibie. Hedging his bets in the months that followed, Rais followed a course of ‘critical engagement’ with the incumbent administration that revealed his hopes for an alliance of urban middle-class Muslim forces that would combine the ruling Golkar machine with new parties such as his own, in a configuration perhaps vaguely modelled on UMNO’s enduring hegemony in Malaysia. Thus in 1998 and 1999 he focused his anti-government rhetoric on Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief and Defense Minister General Wiranto, whom Habibie and his advisors viewed as a major obstacle to their efforts to establish control over the military establishment.

In the People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR) session held in October 1999, moreover, Rais was most concerned to thwart the presidential candidacy of Megawati Soekarnoputri, whose Partai Demokrasi Indonesia had captured a plurality of votes in the June elections, but whose ascendency would spell a precipitous decline in the influence of the urban middle-class Muslim networks which had linked Rais to key power circles in the late Suharto period and the brief Habibie interlude. Finally, since Abdurrahman Wahid assumed the presidency in late October 1999, Rais has engaged in all manner of opportunistic manoeuvring in support of both civilian and military challenges to Wahid’s authority. Small wonder that Hefner is careful not to cite Rais among his ‘great democrats’ but rather to differentiate Rais’s notorious proclivity for sectarian rhetoric from the more ecumenical, tolerant vision of a diverse, multi-faith Indonesia promoted so assiduously over the years by Madjid and Wahid.

Yet the problems with Hefner’s formulation and narrative are best understood not as reflecting an excessive admiration for certain key individuals, or as misplaced faith in the capacity of Indonesian Muslims to be ‘great democrats’ but rather as indicative of the underlying assumptions on which he has based his study. Here, despite his stated concern to combine social anthropology with historical sociology, it is
the sociological underpinnings of Hefner’s analysis of Islam, Reformasi, and democratization that lie at the heart of the problem.

At first glance, Hefner’s focus on key Muslim intellectuals appears to rest simply on the notion that prominent individuals can play critical roles in the process of transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. Thus the measure of a ‘great democrat’ in the Indonesian context seems to lie both in participation in associational activities of a civic-spirited nature during the Suharto era and in decisions and positions taken during the crucial months of 1998 and 1999. Yet beyond the questions about Madjid, Wahid, and Rais raised in the paragraphs above, the essential premise may also be called into doubt. After all, it is highly problematic to identify these individuals as ‘democrats’ throughout the thirty years of authoritarian rule under Suharto without reference to the specific short-term goals and interests that they were pursuing, or the larger social and institutional contexts within which they were acting. It is by no means clear that Hefner’s ‘Muslim democrats’ were particularly insistent or effective in the promotion of civil liberties, human rights, and open electoral competition over the long years of the Suharto era. Scores of political activists – and countless ordinary Indonesians – sacrificed much more than the individuals whose contributions Hefner highlights and perhaps exaggerates. As for the achievement of democracy, or the broad process of democratization, the stress on ‘exemplary individuals’ runs the risk of obscuring the importance of broader forces and dynamics, and the social and institutional constraints and pressures, which a more structural analysis would illuminate. Democrats alone do not a democracy make.

On closer inspection, however, Hefner’s focus on certain key individuals, such as Nurcolish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid, can be seen to be anchored in a certain kind of sociological analysis along fashionably liberal-communitarian lines. Muslim democrats, Hefner notes approvingly, assert that a democratic ‘public culture’ depends on ‘mediating institutions in which citizens develop habits of free speech, participation, and toleration. In all this, [Muslim democrats] say, there is nothing undemocratic about Muslim voluntary associations (as well as those of other religions) playing a role in the public life of civil society as well as in personal ethics’ (p. 13). Hefner himself, moreover, argues that ‘[v]ertical structures may not only coexist with civic organizations, but, by preserving the peace or building bridges over troubled waters, they may actually strengthen a public culture of civility and participation’ (p. 25). Citing the famous and especially relevant case of
‘consociational democracy’ in the Netherlands, he claims that ‘vertical coordination’ may help ‘to maintain horizontal peace’ (p. 25). Quoting the Dutch sociologist Anton Zijderveld, Hefner concludes that even if they are ‘authoritarian and elitist’, these arrangements facilitate a ‘remarkable social and political pacification’, such as the one which paved the way for Dutch democracy (p. 25).

In short, Muslim intellectuals like Madjid and Wahid are ‘great democrats’ not only because they spent the long years of the Suharto dictatorship engaged in Habermasian discussions and debates on the seminar circuits and newspaper editorial pages of Jakarta, but also because their associations helped to restrain and domesticate the uncivil forms of political participation favoured by many other Indonesians. Like the Nehru whose Indian National Congress provided a secular socialist rubric for incorporating disparate and divisive particularisms in Sunil Khilnani’s account of India’s first half-century of independence, the élite Muslim intellectuals in Hefner’s portrayal of Indonesian history are identified with universal values – liberal democracy, civistpiredness, tolerance – against a backdrop of dangerously illiberal, uncivil, and sectarian mass politics.

This formulation has a certain plausibility and appeal. Yet in its identification of Muslim reformation with both Reformasi and democratization, Hefner’s analysis stands at odds with key sociological patterns and trends shaping Indonesian politics, most notably the centrality of educational institutions in mediating and reproducing social and political relations of inequality and domination. In a society whose business class has been largely excluded from direct exercise of political power due to its problematic ‘Chinese’ ancestry and ‘pariah’ status, it could hardly be otherwise. Since at least the time of the Revolusi, educational institutions, including Islamic schools, have served as the bases for the formation of (horizontal) solidarities as well as (vertical) networks for élite recruitment in Indonesia. Thus today, the President of Indonesia is the head of an association of Islamic schools, the Speaker of the MPR, Amien Rais, is a former university professor and head of another Islamic educational association, and a third major political figure, Partai Bulan Bintang leader, Yusril Izha Mahendra, is a former law lecturer from Universitas Indonesia. In recent memory nowhere else in South East Asia have intellectuals and educators played such prominent roles in national politics.

In the Soekarno era, the broad patterns of political party cohesion and conflict corresponded to major aliran – streams or currents – in Indonesian society which were rooted not, as some commentators have hastily supposed, in primordial attachments and cleavages but in different sets of educational institutions and experiences. Thus the two political parties identified as representing the interests and aspirations of most devout Muslims were both designated as santri – a term which not only connoted Islamic piety in general but referred to students in ‘traditional’ Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in particular. The cleavage between the two parties – and between them and the other major parties as well – corresponded to their respective networks of religious schools, pesantren in the case of Nahdlatul Ulama and modernist madrasah in the case of Masjumi.

The leadership of the Partai Nasionalis Indonesia (PNI), by contrast, owed its cohesion to networks and solidarities forged through the secular schools organized by the Dutch colonial regime to educate civil servants and native aristocrats (priyayi), even while the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) counted among its cadres many graduates of the experimental nationalist Taman Siswa schools and depended on an abangan constituency of largely unschooled and unlettered peasants and workers. Of course, the leaders of these Big Four parties also relied heavily on opportunistic alliances and political machine mobilization as in other democracies. But the abiding inter-party cleavages in society at large and the fluctuating coalitions within and between party leaderships were markedly shaped by educational affiliations. As Joel Rocamora noted in a highly nuanced analysis of the competing clusters within the PNI leadership, ‘more than anything else, it was education that formed the basis of the élite status of Indonesia’s nationalist politicians as a whole’.

While the political parties thus worked to mediate – and to facilitate – the recruitment of a political class through the penetration and ‘capture’ of the porous early post-colonial state in the Soekarno era, educational institutions served as more direct transmission belts for the socialization and reproduction of the élite in Suharto’s New Order. Given the reinforcement of barriers and discriminatory measures against ‘the Chinese’, the effective elimination of political party competition for the spoils of

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state power (*deparpolisasi*) and the commitment of the regime to modernization, industrialization, and the reincorporation of Indonesia into the world capitalist economy, such a pattern was virtually inevitable. Most obviously, the entrenchment in power of the Indonesian armed forces in general, and the army in particular, gave rise to a steady stream of officers – serving not only in military command posts but in cabinet posts, regional administration, parliamentary seats, and Golkar – who had graduated from the Akademi Militer Nasional at Magelang.

Alongside the processes of *mutasi* and *regenerasi* of this academy-trained military élite over the years, the Suharto era likewise saw patterns of recruitment and circulation of networks of civilian élites, who were inducted and incorporated into the New Order regime through Indonesian universities. First and foremost in this regard were the *jaringan* (networks) of Indonesian Protestants and Catholics. Indeed, the first decades of the New Order saw the rise to unprecedented social and political prominence of members of Indonesia’s small Christian minority, whose privileged position among the country’s educated élite, civil servants, military officers, and professionals had long been facilitated by early access to Dutch (and other Western) missionary schools in the archipelago. From parish schools scattered throughout the archipelago to seminaries, to the Protestant and Catholic students’ organizations at the most prestigious universities in the country, Indonesian Christians enjoyed a clear head start in the multi-tiered hierarchy of education that fed into the New Order bureaucratic élite. Through their positions at Indonesia’s top universities, in the ranks of the military academy-trained officer corps, and in the notorious Catholic ‘think tank’ CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies), these Christians landed themselves and their protégés in the seats of civilian and military power, in the cabinet, Golkar (the regime’s political machine), its pseudo-parliamentary bodies, and key media outlets and other business ventures.

Besides these influential Indonesian Christians, a somewhat broader pool of Westernized and often Dutch-educated intellectuals loosely affiliated with the defunct Partai Sosialis Indonesia (PSI) exerted similar forms of influence within the regime, and likewise used their patronage and protection to advance the careers and businesses of their former students and other protégés. These two rival networks reached something of a stand-off and modus vivendi in Golkar, the DPR, and the

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cabinet, on élite university campuses, and in the media, where the Catho-
lic-run Kompas evolved into Jakarta’s newspaper of record and the PSI-ish magazine Tempo became the nation’s most respected weekly. Feeding
the growing circulation of such publications, the steady flow of stu-
dents through the nation’s top universities over the years reproduced
the social bases and sources of recruitment for these two rival networks
as they orbited within the upper echelons of civilian power in the
regime. Yet these cosmopolitan intellectuals, technocrats, and political
operators represented a tiny privileged élite in a country where only a
small fraction of the population reached the level of tertiary education.

By comparison, Indonesia’s historically strong and autonomous net-
works of Islamic education were most weakly integrated into the power
circuitries of the New Order state. Unlike the British in Malaya, the
Dutch colonial regime had allowed Islamic schools to remain outside
the control of the indigenous aristocracy and the emerging bureaucratic
state, and a variety of independent Islamic educational associations had
emerged in the early twentieth century, most notably Muhammadiyah,
founded in 1912, and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), founded in 1926. Inspired
by the ideas and aspirations of Islamic reformism and modernism circu-
lating since the late nineteenth century in centres of Muslim learning in
the Middle East, Muhammadiyah established a network of modern
schools, known as madrasah, which were intended to combine new forms
of religious instruction with the kind of Western-style schooling that
had given Christians such advantages in the Netherlands East Indies.

By contrast – and in reaction – to Muhammadiyah, the formation of
Nahdlatul Ulama signified the defence of the long established system
of rural Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) on Java and elsewhere in
the archipelago. The religious scholars (ulama or kyai) who founded
and maintained these schools served not only as tutors and interpreters
of sacred texts, but also in a multiplicity of other, informal roles – as
landlords, patrons and politicians, and, at times, as healers and mystical
teachers. Even though the style and substance of instruction in the
pesantren changed in no small measure over the course of the twentieth
century in response to the forces and exigencies of modernization, these
schools retained more of a distance from the state school system than
the madrasah.

Needless to say, it was the graduates of Muhammadiyah’s madrasah
rather than their santri counterparts in the pesantren belt who were most
successful in accumulating the forms of symbolic, cultural, and social
capital which mattered most in New Order Indonesia. For the Suharto era
witnessed not only a dramatic expansion of higher education in Indonesia and a proliferation of all kinds of universities in the country but also the implementation of numerous policies which furthered the objectification and functionalization of religion. The anti-communist hysteria of the early Suharto years, for example, drove millions of Indonesians to seek refuge in religious identity, institutions, and faith in the late 1960s. New government regulations requiring all citizens to declare their faith, expanding religious classes in state schools, and impediments to inter-faith marriages strengthened the public markers and boundaries of religious identities. Against this backdrop, Indonesian Muslims increasingly came to understand their religion as ‘a coherent system of practices and beliefs, rather than merely an unexamined and unexamimable way of life’, to think of ‘knowing Islam’ as ‘a defined set of beliefs such as those set down in textbook presentations’, and to put Islam ‘consciously to work for various types of social and political projects’.6

In terms of upward social mobility, the expansion of madrasah throughout the archipelago produced not only expanding student bodies at various Universitas Muhammadiyah and IAIN (Institut Agama Islam Negara, or State Islamic Institute) but also rising numbers of students affiliated with the modernist Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (Islamic Student Association) at major universities throughout Indonesia. By the 1980s, moreover, HMI student leaders from élite schools such as Yogyakarta’s Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM), Bandung’s Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB), and Jakarta’s Universitas Indonesia (UI) were recruited in record numbers into the bureaucracy, the business world, and Golkar, as suggested by the rise to prominence of men such as Mar’ie Muhammad, Ridwan Saidi, Adi Sasono, and Akbar Tanjung (as well as Nurcholish Madjid) during this period. It was to recognize and further this trend that the Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Se-Indonesia was founded under the leadership of Minister of Research and Technology and close Suharto associate B. J. Habibie in the early 1990s. Through ICMI and the enormous military–industrial empire of Habibie, modernist Muslims began to use their privileged access within the state to accumulate cultural, social, and political capital – in the media, on university campuses, in Golkar, parliamentary bodies, and the cabinet – and to advance the fortunes of a self-styled pribumi (‘indigenous’) business class through privileged access to state loans, contracts, and regulatory breaks.

Compared with these upwardly mobile, middle-class modernist Muslim professionals and political operators who traced their roots back to the madrasah, the social and political advancement of those hailing from the pesantren belt was decidedly more modest. A few steps behind – or below – their madrasah-schooled counterparts on the ladder of educational and social hierarchy, such students flocked in record numbers to the expanded network of IAIN and provincial universities: but at elite university campuses, the NU-affiliated Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia (PMII or Indonesian Islamic Student Movement) was much more modest in its activities and alumni roster than HMI. With high rates of unemployment for university-educated youth persisting through the boom years of the mid-1990s, it is clear that even those pesantren kids who made it as far as college faced an uphill struggle into the ranks of the new Muslim middle class.7

In their somewhat belated assertion of a claim to ‘Islam’, moreover, Nahdlatul Ulama, associated organizations like PMII, and the ‘traditionalist’ constituency of the pesantren belt fell far behind the ‘modernists’ in recognizing – and availing themselves of – the opportunities for representing Islam. Sophisticated, modernist middle-class Muslims sometimes quipped that Muslim villagers still under the sway of the kyai on the island of Madura were so ignorant of Islam that, when asked to identify their religion, they responded simply ‘NU’ or ‘Nahdlatul Ulama’. In contrast to the rationalized, modernized Islam that in the 1990s was becoming synonymous with new forms of bourgeois propriety and sophistication in the cities, the ‘traditional’ Islam identified with NU and the pesantren belt was stigmatized as marred by feudal relations between kyai and santri followers and by the porousness of boundaries between properly Islamic practices and those drawn from other beliefs and faiths. These were Muslims, after all, who had not – ‘yet’ – experienced the Islamic equivalent of the Reformation and who, like their oft-scorned ‘backward’ Catholic counterparts in the eyes of Protestants, practised forms of worship in which saints, preachers of dubious authority, and various folk traditions – ‘still’ – intervened.

Recast in the light of this sociological backdrop, Hefner’s conflation of the reformation of Islam, the Reformasi campaign against Suharto, and the broader struggle for democracy in Indonesia, appears far less sustainable and, it must be acknowledged, far less appealing. In the Indonesia of the 1990s, after all, the struggle of ‘reformist’ Muslims

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was a struggle fought largely through, within, and for the New Order state, as HMI alumni and other affiliates of ICMI asserted their claims to increasing shares of parliamentary seats, Golkar posts, cabinet ministries, and other positions and perks of power. In this struggle, the enemy was not so much Suharto himself but rather the ageing dictator’s children, whose advantages in the contest over power, wealth, and the impending presidential succession were increasingly experienced – and resented – as a glass ceiling confining urban Muslim middle-class interests and aspirations. In the end, the call for Reformasi was indeed a call by modernist Muslims for the removal of Suharto, precisely when members of his family were poised to seize control of the armed forces, Golkar, and the cabinet, and, not coincidentally, when ICMI chief Habibie was installed as vice-president. Small wonder that Nahdlatul Ulama leader Abdurrahman Wahid, long suspicious of the ambitions and aspirations of the modernists clustered within ICMI, and wary of the implications of ICMI-isasi for his own constituency, was not on board.

The call for Reformasi should thus not be mistaken for a struggle for democracy or support for the broader process of democratization. Many urban middle-class modernist Muslims, including some of the ‘Muslim democrats’ lionized by Hefner, saw this as an opportunity to create a new regime of more Islamic but still authoritarian foundations. Over the course of Habibie’s first twelve months in office, these forces worked assiduously to assert greater control over the armed forces – by promoting ICMI-affiliated generals and eroding the authority of Wiranto – and to build a broad coalition of parties that would combine a HMI-dominated Golkar with Amien Rais’s National Mandate Party (Partai Amanat Nasional or PAN), the old Masyumi-style Crescent Moon and Stars Party (Partai Bulan Bintang or PBB), and other allied forces. Such a coalition of parties, it was hoped, would provide a loose rubric not only for the retention of power by Habibie and Golkar but for the establishment of a Malaysian-style regime of restricted parliamentarism and rule by a dominant party machine of Islamic stripes. Hence the retention in modified form of the Suharto-era electoral system, with an elaborate system for the convening of a supra-parliamentary People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR) rather than direct, popular presidential elections.

That this hope for an Indonesian UMNO was not realized owes very little to the machinations of Hefner’s ‘great democrats’, it should be noted. Perhaps, like their multifarious Protestant counterparts in the Christian world, these modernist Muslim leaders suffered from the fisiparous tendencies of post-Reformation religions the world over, and
thus their diversity of pieties and purposes was reflected in debilitating political fragmentation and factional strife. Insofar as this was in fact the case, then perhaps Hefner is right to cite the Habermasian coffee shop-style seminar scene in Jakarta for nurturing a culture of public debate and disagreement between intellectuals, yet here the generous support not only of the Asia Foundation and the Ford Foundation but also of Habibie and Suharto should be acknowledged.

But beyond the divisions within the Habibie administration and the broad coalition of modernist Muslim forces more generally, credit for the democratic form and outcome of the June 1999 elections should be awarded to millions of ordinary Indonesians, most of them of Muslim faith. In villages and urban kampung throughout the country, voters in record numbers rejected the monetary inducements, coercive pressures, and other familiar tactics of Golkar, and through their vigilance and visible capacity for mass protest prevented the incumbent regime’s political machine from winning the day. Instead they rallied behind the most prominent and popular political figure unquestionably in opposition to the incumbent administration – Megawati Soekarnoputri – and, it is worth noting, the party most broadly inclusive – indeed, most inattentive – with regard to the varying religious faiths and educational achievements of its mostly poor and relatively unlettered constituents. It was thus largely thanks to these millions of mostly Muslim democrats, and their renewed threat of popular mobilization in October 1999, that the exclusion of Indonesia’s most popular politician could not be fully achieved in the MPR session following the elections – although she was forced to accept the vice-presidency under a president whose party had won little more than one-third of that garnered by her PDI-P.

Then, as today, many urban middle-class Muslim Indonesians expressed alarm at the prospects of a democratic regime led by figures lacking the kinds of educational pedigree and defined identity which they associated with Reformasi. Like their counterparts in Bangkok and Manila, they have voiced not only resentment against the evident corruption and incompetence of their national leaders but also despair at the ignorant, unschooled, and impressionable masses who fell prey to these politicians’ variously populist and patronage-based appeals and voted them into office. In this regard, these urban middle-class Indonesians are neither distinctively Muslim nor especially democratic.

Thus we must confront the reality of class in Indonesia – class difference, class power, and class fear – if not in the strict sense of relations to the means of economic production, then certainly in terms of differential
access to the means of accumulating symbolic, cultural, social, and political capital. This is something that Hefner has been especially concerned to dispel in his earlier work on Indonesia,⁸ even as he has shown himself to be unusually attentive to questions of class in *ad hominem* – and *ad hoc* – criticisms of other scholars.⁹ It is certainly not the case that he is unaware of the broad sociological trends in Indonesia emphasized in the preceding pages, which are well known to all serious observers of Indonesian society. Indeed, *Civil Islam* includes well documented references to these very same trends,¹⁰ and some of his earlier work on East Java in particular was pioneering in this regard.¹¹ Rather it is a question of identification, class identification perhaps, political identification certainly, with Indonesian intellectuals, who, if truth be told, enjoyed their salad days in the Suharto and early post-Suharto periods. In the years to come, if democratization is to proceed and deepen in Indonesia, then Indonesian intellectuals must fade from political prominence and relinquish power to politicians whose will to power is channelled not through the inherently hierarchical and class-divided institutions of education in the country but through the always imperfect, eminently corruptible, but ultimately less élitist mechanism of popular elections.

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⁹ See, for example, Robert W. Hefner, ‘Three styles in the study of nations’, *Current Anthropology*, 41, 5, 2000, pp. 886–888.

¹⁰ Hefner is one of the few American scholars working on Indonesian politics who recognizes the importance of André Feillard’s fine French-language study, *Islam et armée dans L’Indonésie contemporaine*. Paris: Editions L’Harmattan, 1995.