ISLAMIC IDEOLOGY AND UTOPIAS

This book is about political thought, particularly about Islamic political thought as demonstrated by Indonesian Muslims since independence. It deals mainly with political change and how Muslims develop their arguments in facing it. The main questions I am concerned with in this study are: Why, for example, did many Muslims in Indonesia in the 1930s reject the idea of nationalism and ten years later accept it? Why did many Muslims in the 1950s demand an Islamic state, but twenty years later refuse it? Why did they in the 1970s strongly reject the idea of secularism, but thirty years later begin to accept it?

The same questions can be asked regarding the growing acceptance by Muslims of various political concepts such as democracy, pluralism, and human rights. One of the basic hypotheses that I propose in this study is that Islamic arguments that are developed in intellectual forums, publications, and academic circles play a significant role. An Islamic argument on certain political issues would be cast away when a viable new argument appeared. Muslim acceptance or rejection of certain concepts depends highly on whether or not an argument is theologially and logically justifiable. Argument, as Neta Crawford has stated, is a real component in social and political change. Its role is as important as military force.¹

To examine the above hypothesis, this study focuses on Indonesian Muslims’ conception on the ideal model of polity. I will examine three generations of Muslim intellectuals since independence. My main aim is to
demonstrate that there has been a development of arguments among Muslim intellectuals. A model of polity is the most universal political thought that can embrace political concepts. By studying models of polity, we are not only identifying the variety of religious-political groups among Indonesian Muslims, but also discovering the dynamics of Islamic political thinking. As I will demonstrate, the history of Islamic political thought in Indonesia is the history of progress and transformation towards moderation. My reference is the history of political thought during the last three generations of Indonesian Muslims. Islamic political thought during the first generation, that is, between 1945 and 1970, was strongly dominated by the issue of the Islamic state in such a way that it was envisioned as a perfect model of polity. However, during the later periods, such a notion began to lose ground.

It is important to note that the development taking place in that history line does not apply to the Muslim community in general, but specifically within the santri Muslim communities. This distinction is important if we are to see the consistency of the arguments I develop in this study. As is widely known, Indonesian Muslims are broadly divided into two groups, defined by Clifford Geertz as santri and abangan. Santri are those Muslims who come from a religious background, while abangan are those who practise Islam nominally. During the 1950s and until the mid-1960s, most santri Muslims were affiliated to Islamic political parties and generally supported the idea of an Islamic state. It was uncommon to find a Muslim with santri background refusing the idea of an Islamic state or supporting the idea of a secular state. However, since the 1970s and particularly in the early 1980s, a critical attitude towards the Islamic state has not only come from the abangan; santri Muslims have been as critical as — and to some extent even more critical than — the abangan group in discussing the idea of an Islamic state.

The tendency to become politically moderate among Indonesian Muslims is interesting to observe, particularly if we compare this fact with other tendencies in the current global Islamic resurgence. In other Muslim countries, Islamic resurgence is often marked with the rise of puritanism and the radicalization of religious-political attitudes. As I have said, Islamic political parties in Muslim countries such as Jordan, Algeria, and Turkey have all obtained significant victories in recent general elections. In addition, Islamic sentiment in each of these countries is increasingly receiving greater public attention. This is quite different from the phenomenon of Islamic resurgence in Indonesia. If we consider the general election as a valid measurement, we can see a dramatic decline in voting for Islamic parties. In the first democratically held general election in 1955, Islamic parties
obtained quite a significant number of votes, namely 43 per cent. However, in the last two general elections all Islamic political parties combined obtained no more than 14 per cent (in 1999) and 17 per cent (in 2004). In addition, Islamic agendas such as the Jakarta Charter, which implies the implementation of shari’ah at the state level, have been soundly rejected.

There are, of course, many reasons the santri political attitude has changed. A great number of writings emphasize the role of the state, particularly during Soeharto’s New Order era. As often explained, Soeharto, during his rule, employed a repressive policy against Islam, which gradually affected the political attitudes and mentality of Indonesian Muslims. I fully agree with this explanation. But, of course, this is not the only factor explaining why there has been a radical change, particularly since Soeharto has been removed from his political power. I would argue that apart from Soeharto’s role and contribution in what I call “secularization from without”, there has also been a process of “secularization from within”. It was not only Soeharto who was responsible for secularization in the santri Muslim political mind, but also santri Muslims themselves, particularly their leaders. As stated above, the most severe criticisms of the Islamic state, a widely supported concept among santri Muslims during the 1950s, did not come from the abangan, among whom Soeharto was its chief representative, but rather from the santri group itself.

Secularization from within can be clearly seen in the changing models of polity I study in this book. Throughout the three models I examine, there is a tendency among santri leaders and intellectuals to express a moderate and inclusive attitude. What I mean by “model” is a theoretical conception of a political community in an ideal state. It may refer to a particular political experience, but it may also refer to a set of religious-political constructions made by an epistemic community. The models of polity which this study will deal with emerge from these two realities.

FROM TYPOLOGY TO MODELS OF POLITY

Most of the important works on the relationship between Islam and politics or Islam and the state use a typological approach to explain the different attitudes of Indonesian Muslims in dealing with religious-political issues. This is mainly due to the fact that Indonesian Islam is a complex mix of diverse groups and cannot be described in one generalization. Clifford Geertz’s famous study discovered three distinct variants of Javanese Muslims. This trichotomy, known as santri, priyayi, and abangan, not only reflects the religious-cultural structure, but also explains the political and
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economic composition. *Santri* is a group of people who strictly maintain religious teachings. According to Geertz, *santri* culture is anti-bureaucratic, independent, and egalitarian. They live mostly in urban areas, where they conduct their economic activities as traders. Geertz found congruence between *santri* economic values and the Weberian Protestant ethic. In politics, *santri* Muslims tend to vote for religious parties such as Masyumi and Nahdlatul Ulama. *Abangan* is a group of people who are not concerned with the formal practice of religion. As opposed to *santris*, *abangan* Muslims mostly live in rural areas where they live as peasants and villagers. In politics, they tend to support the “secular” or non-religious parties such as the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI, Partai Nasionalis Indonesia), the Indonesian Socialist Party (PSI, Partai Sosialis Indonesia), and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI, Partai Komunis Indonesia). Meanwhile, *priyayi* is a group of syncretic people who believe more in Hindu-Javanese values than in Islamic ones. *Priyayi* are the elite Javanese who live around the Javanese *kraton* (palaces). In politics, like *abangan*, *priyayi* mostly support the secular-nationalist parties.

Many scholars have criticized Geertz’s classification, not only because he used an unparallel categorization, but also because his description of each categorization is untenable. Harsja W. Bachtiar, for example, criticizes Geertz for considering *abangan* as peasants who are not very religious (in an Islamic sense). Many *abangan* peasants, Bachtiar argues, build at least one prayer house in every village, attend Friday prayers, and perform the *hajj*. He writes that, “there are many peasants who endeavour through all possible means to obtain enough funds to be able to make the pilgrimage to Mecca”. Likewise, to associate *santri* with the merchant class is not entirely accurate, since they “are found in every major social category, nobility and commoners, traders and peasants, young and old, the traditional and the modern, the educated and the uneducated”. Bachtiar also faults Geertz for associating *priyayi* with Hindu-Javanese values. Instead, Bachtiar argues that “prominent *priyayi*, including ruling princes, had been *santri*, to mention only Sultan Agung and Prince Diponegoro”. Nevertheless, as far as political affiliation is concerned, Geertz’s association of each classification with various political parties is historically accurate. During the time he conducted his research, most *abangans* and *priyayis* were affiliated to non-religious parties, while *santris* supported religious parties. However, as I will demonstrate in this study, these associations have changed significantly.

Geertz’s classification is based entirely on the local tradition of an Indonesian community, that is the Javanese village called Mojokuto. This classification unlikely becomes the standard for the Indonesian
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religious-political setting in general, since Indonesia’s Muslims cannot be characterized simply by this single Javanese community. Thus, Deliar Noer, in his work *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia*, makes a broader classification.\(^{10}\) Inspired by the global religious-political typology, Noer classifies religious-political attitudes of Indonesian Muslims into “modernist” and “traditionalist”. The modernists are those Muslims who argue that modernity can be adopted as a new instrument for Islamic prosperity. Meanwhile, the traditionalists are those Muslims who believe that the traditional values are still feasible for contemporary life. Both modernists and traditionalists believe in the fundamental values of Islamic political doctrine, such as the need for the state to have a religious basis, the application of Islamic laws (*shari’ah*), and a commitment to core Islamic principles. Thus, in politics, both modernists and traditionalists founded a single Islamic party — Masyumi. However, due to their different points of view and pragmatic political interests, the party split up in 1952. The traditionalists established their own party, the Nahdlatul Ulama Party.

The modernist-traditionalist division is mainly based on the *santri* categorization — if we are to use Geertz’s term. It does not include the wider scope of Indonesian Muslims. Nationally, regardless of their religious backgrounds, Noer classifies the political attitudes of Indonesian Muslims into what he calls “the religiously neutral nationalists” and “the Muslim nationalists”.\(^{11}\) In dealing with issues such as nationalism, the state, and government, the religiously neutral nationalists reject the Islamic basis that is supported by the Muslim nationalists. Noer’s classification is widely accepted. Endang Saifuddin Anshary, for instance, uses the typology and modified it into “Islamic nationalist” and “secular nationalist”.\(^{12}\)

Another well-known classification is used by Allan Samson, an American political scientist, in his dissertation and some of his articles.\(^{13}\) He seems to agree with Noer’s classifications of modernism and traditionalism as well as Islamic nationalism and secular nationalism. However, with regard to *santri*’s political attitude towards Indonesian politics in general, Samson found three major groups. The first is what he calls “the fundamentalist”, that is, a group of Muslims who want to implement Islamic doctrines strictly in both private and public spheres. They have often rejected cooperation with secular groups. Among the leaders of this group were Isa Anshary and E.Z. Muttaqien of Masyumi.\(^{14}\) The second is “the accommodationist”, who “contend that politics must be autonomous from strict religious supervision, that Ummat Islam must acknowledge the legitimate interests of secular groups and be willing to cooperate with them on a sustained basis”.\(^{15}\) The third is “the reformist”, who seeks the middle ground between...
the two existing groups, and is willing to cooperate critically with secular groups. In his dissertation on Indonesian Islam, Muhammad Kamal Hassan, a Malaysian scholar, adopted Samson’s classification and modified the term “fundamentalist” to “idealist”.16

Typology is used to help us understand complex and highly diverse religious phenomena. However, typology is not a permanently fixed reality. Its utility depends very much on its socio-historical context. A study by Fachry Ali and Bahtiar Effendy addresses this issue. Both authors criticize the existing religious-political typologies, particularly the modernist-traditionalist typology, arguing instead that the current religious-political attitude of Indonesian Muslims can no longer be seen from a dichotomous perspective.17 Since the beginning of the New Order era, the religious-political map of Indonesian Muslims has radically changed. Indonesian Islam, Ali and Effendy argue, can be categorized into at least four groups. First, the neo-modernists, that is, a group of Muslims who want to mix tradition and modernity. For this group, modernity is not something that Muslims should reject, but its existence does not mean the negation of traditional values. Neo-modernists are intellectuals who wish “to keep the good of the old, and to take the best of the new” (al-muhafazah 'ala al-qadim al-salih wa al-akhdh bi al-jadid al-aslah).18 Second, the social-democrats, that is, a group of Muslims who view Islam as an inspiration for social and economic justice. Third, the internationalists or Islamic universalists who believe Islam to be a universal religion, and as such, Islam must become a leader in every aspect of human life. Fourth, the modernists, who are equivalent to the old typology’s Islamic modernists. Concluding their study, Ali and Effendy write:

The categorization into four distinct patterns of thought as discussed above — with which other people may disagree — resulted in a new map of Indonesian Islamic thought. This categorization is inferred from the dynamics of recent development and is an attempt at reconciling the dichotomy of traditionalist and modernist thought.19

The typological approach has been quite dominant among students of Indonesian studies. There is also a trend for typology to become increasingly complicated. This at least can be seen in Mark R. Woodward’s article, where he classifies Indonesian Islam into five distinct groups. First, “indigenized Muslims”, which is embraced exclusively by — using Geertz’s term — abangan Muslims. Politically, this group supports Megawati Sukarnoputri and her party, the Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle (PDIP, Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan). Second, “traditional Muslims”, which mainly include members of the Nahdlatul Ulama. Politically, they
support the National Awakening Party (PKB, Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa), a reincarnation of the old NU Party. Third, “the Islamic modernists”, who are politically affiliated with the Crescent and Star Party (PBB, Partai Bulan Bintang), the Justice Party (PK, Partai Keadilan), and the National Mandate Party (PAN, Partai Amanat Nasional). The last two groups that Woodward classifies are intellectual movements that do not have a specific affiliation to any political party. These are “the Islamists”, often called fundamentalists; and “the neo-modernists”, a group that supports a liberal, inclusive, and tolerant interpretation of Islam.

The most recent typological approach has been made by Robert W. Hefner, an American political anthropologist, in his book *Civil Islam*. Focusing on how Islam interacts with the state and how Muslims behave towards modern issues such as democracy and civil society, Hefner classifies current Indonesian Muslims into two main political blocs. The first embraces what he calls “civil Islam” and the other, “regimist Islam”. While followers of civil Islam are Muslims who favour the modern values of democracy, freedom, pluralism, and civil rights, followers of regimist Islam are the group of Muslims “created” by the Soeharto regime. As Soeharto was anti-democratic, repressive and authoritarian, so is regimist Islam.

Hefner’s classification has been criticized by many scholars. Greg Fealy strongly criticizes him for his “partisanship with the civil Islam cause” and for historical inaccuracies and errors. Saiful Mujani, on the other hand, points out Hefner’s confusion in advocating civil Islam's role, particularly with regards to its role in Muslim democratization. “It is not clear,” Mujani writes, “whether it is ‘civil Islam’ or the characteristics of the authoritarian New Order government that ruled the country for more than three decades that best explains Indonesian democratization”.

As stated above, typology is an attempt to understand the phenomena in our surroundings, whether related to religion, economy, or politics. Typologies are often so complicated that we cannot easily live with them, although, as Shepard argues, we also cannot live without them. Typologies are often problematic, for they convey an implicit bias or judgment. This is why some people avoid using them. However, we cannot actually avoid them, particularly if we face a complex phenomenon of political society such as that of Indonesia’s Muslims. The question, therefore, is not whether we should use typologies, but how we should use them. And, one of the correct ways is to put them into the socio-historical contexts in which they are used.

My objection to the typologies made by the above mentioned scholars is not because they are too general (as we can see from Geertz, Samson,
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Noer, and Hefner). Neither is it because they are too specific (as we can see from Fachry Ali, Effendy, and Woodward), which makes them inflexible; but rather because they are too concentrated on ideological tendencies, and thus fail to give us a clear picture of how Muslims, particularly santri Muslims, have idealized their political model. I believe that political ideas or political ideologies, as Karl Mannheim says, cannot be properly understood without an appreciation of the fundamental role of utopia. Understanding utopia in this context is understanding the models of polity. It is quite disappointing that many studies on political thought in Indonesia put too much emphasis on political ideology, but without due consideration of the Muslims’ vision of utopia.

MODEL OF POLITY DEFINED

I will now explain what I mean by “model” and how it is employed in this study. Model has been used by social scientists to explain the development of political thinking in the West. The first scholar to classify the models of democracy systematically was, perhaps, C.B. Macpherson, an eminent Canadian political scientist. In his well-acclaimed book The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy, Macpherson distinguishes four models of liberal democracy: Protective, Developmental, Equilibrium, and Participatory democracy. Protective democracy is characterized by the will to make democracy a means to remove state oppression. Developmental democracy is characterized by the will to make democracy “a means of individual self-development”. Equilibrium democracy is characterized by the will to give a wider space for elites to participate in the democratic process. Finally, participatory democracy is characterized by the will to give more opportunity to people rather than just the elites.

By dividing the development of liberal democracy into models, Macpherson makes a new argument on the history of liberal democracy. He contends that liberal democracy in theory and practice only began in the early nineteenth century. This view is contrary to the widely held assumption that liberal democracy began in the eighteenth century or even earlier, when political philosophers such as Jean Jacques Rousseau (eighteenth century) and John Locke (seventeenth century) wrote their works. His argument is that it is only in the nineteenth century that political theorists “found reasons for believing that “one man, one vote” would not be dangerous to property, or to the continuance of class-divided societies.” Prior to the nineteenth century, the liberals believed that freedom would threaten the capitalists’ interests. The first thinkers to change this set of mind, according
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to Macpherson, were Jeremy Bentham and James Mill. Hence, liberal democracy only began with Bentham and Mill.

Macpherson defines model as “a theoretical construction intended to exhibit and explain the real relations, underlying the appearances, between or within the phenomena under study”. He admits that the model in the social sciences is different from that in the natural sciences in that the latter is more consistent and sustainable than the former. This is mostly due to the nature of social sciences, whose phenomena depend largely on constantly changing variables, namely, humans and society. In the natural sciences, the case is different. One might speak of scientific models in a paradigmatic way, such as Ptoleian, Copernican, Newtonian, or Einsteinian paradigms.

The uniqueness of model in social sciences, according to Macpherson, has to be seen as a pattern that distinguishes itself from other models in a certain period of time. Therefore, to become a model, there are two requirements which need to be fulfilled. First, it must “be concerned to explain not only the underlying reality of the prevailing or past relations between willful [sic] and historically influenced human beings, but also the probability or possibility of future changes in those relations”. Second, it has to be explanatory as well as justificatory. “Explanatory” means something that can explain a political system or society and how it functions; “justificatory” means that such a model can judge how good a political system is and why this is so. With these two requirements, Macpherson does not consider a model only as a standard of reference based merely on the political experience, but also the imagination of political theorists and politicians about an ideal political system. He concludes:

So, in looking at models of democracy — past, present, and prospective — we should keep a sharp look-out for two things: their assumptions about the whole society in which the democratic political system is to operate, and their assumptions about the essential nature of the people who are to make the system work… To examine models of liberal democracy is to examine what the people who want it, or want more of it, or want some variant of the present form of it, believe it is, and also what they believe it might be or should be.

Macpherson’s framework of models of democracy is fully used by David Held, a British-born political scientist, whose book Models of Democracy has now become a classic. He adds another five models of democracy: Classical, Marxist, Elitist, Pluralist, and Legal Democracy. Held does not confine democracy to the liberal sense as it is understood by Macpherson, but also considers other models that have prevailed throughout the ages. Hence, he also includes Marxism as a variant of the democratic model. The
Marxist model of democracy, he argues, was born as an immediate response to Western liberal democracy. In fact this model was established as a refutation of the foundation of liberal democracy, viz., capitalism. The Marxist model of democracy believes that “democratic government was essentially unviable in a capitalist society; the democratic regulation of life could not be realized under the constraints imposed by the capitalist relations of production”. For Marx, real democracy is a democracy built upon the abolition of class and the rejection of capitalism.

Held’s consideration of Marxism as a successive variant of democratic models is based on what he means by “model”. Inspired by Macpherson, he defines model as “a theoretical construction designed to reveal and explain the chief elements of a democratic form and its underlying structure or relations”. Any theoretical construction that can explain the main elements of democratic forms and relational structures can be considered a model of democracy. What one should be concerned with in creating any model — whether in the past, the present, or the future — is the “key features, recommendations, assumptions about the nature of the society in which democracy is or might be embedded, their fundamental conceptions of the political capabilities of human beings, and how they justify their views and preferences.”

The model approach to studying democracy is also adopted by Wayne Gabardi, an American political scientist. Analysing current democratic discourse, Gabardi found three other models not mentioned by either Macpherson or Held, namely: Communitarian, Deliberative, and Agonistic democracy. These models have just emerged in the last two decades as a result of interdisciplinary connections, particularly between political science, sociology, and postmodern philosophy.

The communitarian model of democracy is a theoretical abstraction of a political system that emphasizes the participation of communities as the core of democratic principles. Communitarians such as Robert Bellah criticize the liberals for their overestimation of individuality and for being ignorant of community. Justice will not be fulfilled by neglecting communitarian participation. The deliberative model suggests that “collective public deliberation is the definitive democratic experience”. What concerns the deliberative theorists is not just a community, but also the socio-political discourses within communities. Juergen Habermas, one of the eminent theorists of this model, locates the heart of democracy in the “public sphere”, which consists of social organizations, civic associations, interest groups, and social movements. Meanwhile, the agonistic model claims that democracy will not be attained unless it can embrace many different, pluralist societies. Agonistic theorists such as Michael Foucault “call for a radically pluralistic
public sphere of contestive identities, moralities, and discourses”. Reviewing the three predominant models, Gabardi concludes:

The heart of the democratic experience for communitarians is ‘the community’ understood as a group of people who share the same framework of values. For deliberative democrats it is ‘the public sphere’ understood as a public space of rational collective deliberation. For agonistic democrats it is ‘identity/difference’ understood as the egalitarian reconstitution of cultural life within a radically pluralized, postmodern political culture.

While, in the Western political tradition, model has been applied to analyse various political concepts, in Islamic political tradition, it is rarely used. Among the few scholars who use this approach is Ishtiaq Ahmed, a Pakistani scholar. In his analysis of Pakistani politics, he located four models of polity imagined by Pakistani Muslims:

First, what he calls “the sacred state excluding human will”. This model is based on an assumption that “God has not left the matter of worldly life to the discretion of human beings, but has prescribed a clearly defined path, with detailed instructions about how to tread along it”. The supporters of this model believe that everything has been regulated by Islam, and “no area of human life has been left vacant by God’s commands”. Ahmed considers people such as Abul A’la Mawdudi (1903–79) as staunch exponents of this model.

Second, “the sacred state admitting human will”. The exponents of this model such as Muhammad Asad (formerly Leopold Weiss), Ghulam Ahmad Perwez (1903–85), Khalifa Abdul Hakim (d. 1959), and Javid Iqbal (the son of the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal), assume that Islamic political government is neither wholly theocratic nor secular, but a balance between the two. This model, however, has many variants, stretching from the autocratic, such as Perwez, to the liberal, such as Iqbal.

Third, “the secular state admitting divine will”. This model is actually a deviant model, since the secular state has always been regarded as contradictory to the raison d’être for the establishment of Pakistan. However, Ahmed argues that the model of the secular state did exist in the Pakistani Muslim community. This model is based on the conviction that “Islam has not sanctioned any particular concept of the state”. The proponents of this model — such as S.M. Zafar and Muhammad Usman — believe that democracy, and not a classical Islamic political system, can provide a better political life for Muslims.

Fourth, “the secular state excluding divine will”. What distinguishes this model from the previous is that it is based on the assumption that Pakistan could be a purely secular state. Religion, that is, Islam, thus, has
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to be detached from any political or governmental discourse. This model has had few supporters. Among them was Muhammad Munir (d. 1981), a former Chief Justice of the Pakistan Supreme Court.  

Most studies on political thought apply models in the Western political context. Only a small number have been employed in the context of Muslim society. Ahmed’s study of models of polity in Pakistan is perhaps the only comprehensive study as far as the Islamic context is concerned. There is no single account that deals with the Indonesian context. My study is an attempt to fill this gap. It aims to make use of the framework of model to explain the development of Islamic political thought in Indonesia, and how Indonesian Muslims imagine their ideal state and government.

THREE MUSLIM MODELS OF POLITY

Broadly speaking, there are three models of polity imagined and endorsed by three generations of Indonesian Muslims: the first is the Islamic Democratic State (IDS), that is a model that aims at making Islam the basis of the state and advocating Muslims to have their central role in Indonesian social and political life. The second is the Religious Democratic State (RDS), that is a model that emphasizes the significance of religious pluralist life in Indonesia and aims at making the state the guardian of all religions. The third is the Liberal Democratic State (LDS), which can also be called the Secular Democratic State. This model aims at freeing religions from the domination of the state (as is proposed in the second model) and advocating secularization as the basis of the state.

As can be seen, the three models of polity I discuss in this study use the word “democracy” or more specifically “democratic state”. My first assumption is that Muslim intellectuals and leaders who have been involved in the modern political discourse consider democracy the best available political system, in spite of the fact that their conceptions of democracy are not the same. Some of them accept democracy as long as it is Islamized, others accept it as long as it is not conflicting with religious values, while yet some others accept it as it is, since they believe that democracy contains in itself fundamental values in line with the basic principles of Islam. The three models of polity that I study here are based broadly on these various attitudes towards democracy.

Democracy is indeed a new concept in Islamic political discourse. Muslims have only been acquainted with democracy since early last century. In the beginning, many of them rejected it, mainly because of their suspicion of anything coming from the West. However, since the concept
has become increasingly popular, it seems that there are not many choices for Muslims other than to accept it. Thus, since the second half of the last century, democracy has been widely accepted. Muslims from both liberal and conservative camps acknowledge its value and consider it an ideal system that can be implemented in Muslim political life. Only a few Islamic groups reject the concept, and they are usually the radical minorities, which basically not only reject democracy, but also refuse constitutional methods.

Like many Muslims in other countries, Indonesian Muslims accept democracy with qualifications or, to borrow David Collier’s and Steven Levitsky’s words, “with adjectives”. Hence, there emerges the concepts “Islamic democracy”, “theo-democracy”, “religious democracy”, and so on. In practice, the use of these adjectives is not a mere attributive identity. Rather it contains certain missions implied in the adjectives. Thus, a model of Islamic democracy, for instance, has a unique character that differs from other models of democracy. Interestingly, those adjectives play a greater role in determining the nature of democracy than the “democracy” itself. No wonder many scholars point out that democracy with adjectives is actually not democracy.

Discourse on democracy in Islam is essentially a religious-political construct and not merely a political issue. Thus the categories of “Islam”, “religious”, and “liberal” sharply reflect such a discourse. In any case, democratic discourse in Islam has a different point of departure, which subsequently leads to a different conceptualization. In the Western political tradition, democracy is an answer to the question whether political authority has to be given to one person, a few, or many, which subsequently creates types of political government such as autocracy (government by one person), oligarchy (government by a few people), and polyarchy (government by many people). It is purely a political question. Meanwhile in modern Islamic political discourse, democracy is a theological problem. It is an answer to the question of whether political authority should be given to God or to man, which then leads to the creation of models fundamentally different from that of the Western discourse.

Model 1: Islamic Democratic State (IDS)

The term “Islamic Democratic State” was initially coined by Mohammad Natsir (1908–93), in the following phrase: “the state based on Islam is not a theocracy. It is a democratic state. Neither is it a secular state. It is an Islamic Democratic State”. He contrasts this model of state with theocracy, the government of God, and the secular state, a godless government. Model 1
Islam and the Secular State in Indonesia is a middle path between two extreme models. As is obvious from the above quote, Natsir considers democratic state essentially good, but not good enough to be compared with Islamic political system. What he means by “Islamic political system” is a system which comprises all aspects of Muslim life. Islam as regarded by most of its followers is comprehensive (kamil), all-inclusive (shamil), and suitable for all times and conditions (salih li kulli zaman wa makan). In short, it is a complete system of life. With this superior character, Islam cannot be subordinated by any other systems. All ideologies and concepts coming from outside Islam must, therefore, be refuted, or else be modified so that they can comply with it.

Many supporters of Model 1 consider democracy first of all as an alien product. Some of them argue that democracy, whose meaning is the government of the people (“people” is commonly understood as the opposition to “God”), is against the very doctrine of Islam in that government (hukumah) belongs solely to God.\(^5\) In one of his early writings, Natsir very cautiously accepts democracy. He argues that there are several things in Islam considered to be final, thus giving no room for people to discuss them. For him, issues such as the banning of gambling and pornography cannot be discussed or be voted on in the parliament. Parliament has no right to discuss any of these things.\(^6\)

Model 1 proponents’ understanding of democracy plays a crucial role in shaping their attitudes towards religious-political issues. By understanding democracy as a concept limited to the divine order, they actually give more space to religious authority. This can be seen, for example, in how they sacrifice some principles of democracy (such as political equality) for the sake of a religious doctrine which, they argue, “cannot be discussed in the parliament”. For example, the problem of citizenship. Classical Islamic political doctrine acknowledges the division of the political community into Muslims and dhimmi (protected non-Muslims). This distinction is not merely of political identity, but has consequences for political rights and obligations. Hence, the dhimmis are obliged to pay tax (known as jizyah) more than the Muslims do (known as zakah). In addition to this, they also do not have equal political rights, since they are prevented from holding strategic political positions, such as the head of state. The exponents of Model 1 such as Natsir and Zainal Abidin Ahmad (1911–83) believe in the validity of such a division, particularly in the case of non-Muslim political rights. For them, such a doctrine is final and, therefore, cannot be democratically debated in the parliament.

Another example can be seen in their attitude towards the issue of freedom of thought or freedom of expression. Certainly, the exponents of
Model 1 acknowledge freedom as an essential part of democracy. But again such freedom must be subjected to religious doctrines. Freedom which violates a religious doctrine, must therefore, be rejected. This happened in 1973 when a famous Egyptian film director, Moustapha Akkad, announced that he would make a film on Prophet Muhammad. Many Muslim clerics (ulama) all over the world objected to his plan. In Indonesia, the Muslim response was covered by the mass media, including Tempo and Panji Masyarakat. Their objection was primarily based on the classical Islamic teaching that Prophet Muhammad cannot be visualized, either in pictures or in motion pictures. In an interview with Tempo magazine, Natsir said, “I will organize a mob if the film would actually be made.” In the same magazine, Hamka (1908–81), another ideologue of Model 1, stated that “I will certainly attack it.”

Another interesting case related to freedom of expression involves the reactions of some of the exponents of Model 1 against a short story (cerpen) written by Ki Panjikusmin titled Langit Makin Mendung (The Darkening Sky). This short story was published by Sastra magazine in August 1968, and it triggered a long and heated controversy among Indonesian Muslims. Several Muslim leaders considered the short story to be blasphemous and an insult to God, Islam, and Prophet Muhammad. Ki Panjikusmin is actually the pseudonym of a man who originally came from Malang, East Java. The publication of the story and the concealment of the author’s identity was due entirely to Hans Begue Jassin, the editor-in-chief of the magazine. Jassin was not only responsible for the publication of the story, but he also defended its author on the ground of freedom of expression. Hamka, who was himself a novelist, took a moderate stance, although he regretted that Jassin had let it be published. He considered the story to have “failed miserably as a work of art, because it consists of nothing but insults, cynicism and wickedness to God, Muhammad, Gabriel, the ulama, and the kiyais.” Langit Makin Mendung became a symbol of the dissonant relationship between Islam and the problem of freedom of expression.

However, not all the religious-political views of the exponents of Model 1 are in favour of classical Islamic doctrines (which are against the principles of democracy). In some other cases, they follow “liberal” views. Regarding the issue of female leadership, for example, most of them agree that women can become political leaders in any position, including head of state. This view is clearly against the classical Islamic doctrine followed by many Muslim clerics. Hamka issued a fatwa in his article that a woman can become a political leader, either as prime minister, president or monarch.
His argument is, however, historical rather than theological, stating that there were many female leaders (queens) in the past who successfully ruled Islamic kingdoms. To conclude, Model 1 attempts to adopt modern political values without ignoring classical Islamic doctrines. This compromise is not always easy. As can be seen from the above examples, the endeavor to harmonize Islam with modernity is sometimes inconsistent, and most often it contravenes the principles of liberal democracy.

**Model 2: Religious Democratic State (RDS)**

The model of the Religious Democratic State is a response to the religious-political attitudes of the exponents of Model 1. It is basically built on the foundation that Indonesia is (and always will be) a pluralistic country. Any understanding regarding the religious-political issues, consequently, must be maintained on that basis. Model 2 emerged at the dawn of the Soeharto era when the political ideologies were gradually losing their role in the national political context. Its emergence was strongly determined by the political climate towards the end of the 1960s and the first two decades of Soeharto’s leadership. The failure of Islamic ideology to dominate the state led the new generation of Muslims to rethink their political strategy.

Soeharto played a pivotal role in spurring the emergence of Model 2. His strict policy to remove all political ideologies and to adopt the pluralistic principle of Pancasila as the only ideological basis pushed Muslims to find the appropriate way to deal with the new situation. The exponents of Model 2 attempt to provide a theological justification for the Pancasila state. First of all, they hold the view that the five principles of Pancasila are not contradictory to the basic principles of Islam. In fact, if properly understood, they are accommodating of Islam. If Pancasila is not contradictory to Islam, there is thus no reason for Muslims not to accept it. For Amien Rais (b. 1944), one of the exponents of Model 2, Pancasila is like a “ticket” by which the Muslims could get onto the “bus” of Indonesia. Without the ticket, Muslims could not ride the bus and would go nowhere. The justification of Pancasila by the exponents of Model 2 was not entirely a forced acceptance of the political repression of the New Order regime. To some extent, such an acceptance was a result of deep consideration of the fundamental doctrines of Islam. The exponents of Model 2 believe that Islam does not specifically order Muslims to establish a certain type of political institution. What is accentuated by Islam is to establish a society entirely committed to basic religious principles such as justice, equality, and
freedom. All these principles could be contained in a political system that does not specifically and formally make Islam its basis.

The basic foundation of Model 2 is that a political society must be religious. Religion is a vital element of communal life. Without religion, a state will be destroyed in anger by God. The exponents of Model 2 accepted Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution on the ground that it must both explicitly support the existence of a religious community and oppose irreligiosity (or atheism). Committed strongly to the value of religions, Model 2 rules out the kind of political community that is based on moral relativities reflected in the Western model of secularization.

The exponents of Model 2 define secularization as the strict separation of religion and the state. The state has no responsibility for religious matters, and religion on the other hand has no right to engage in the state's affairs. The exponents of Model 2 reject secularization and instead endorse the concept of the state establishment of religion. They specifically support the existence of religious institutions such as the Department of Religion and the Indonesian Council of Religious Scholars (MUI, Majelis Ulama Indonesia). Similarly, they endorse the existence of a religious judiciary, religious institutionalization of marriage, and religious teaching at schools. Ahmad Syafii Maarif (b. 1935), another exponent of Model 2, for instance, argues that religious teaching at schools is the responsibility of the state, since it is part of the constitution. Therefore, “if the government does not involve itself in education, it deserves to be blamed”. Maarif considers the controversial Bill of National Education (RUU Sisdiknas, promulgated in 2003), which deals with religious teaching at schools, a positive draft, since it has fulfilled the obligation of the state.

Model 3: Liberal Democratic State (LDS)

The model of the Liberal Democratic State suggests that political matters should be discussed and performed outside the realm of religion. The argument is that Islam is first of all a religion of morality. The raison d'être for Muhammad's prophecy was for the sake of moral betterment. The exponents of Model 3 consider the Prophetic saying “antum a'lamu bi umuri dunyakum” (you know better than me in worldly matters) as a very fundamental source for an Islamic project of secularization. They believe that the hadith explicitly advises Muslims to distinguish — and hence to separate — the worldly from the unworldly matters.

It should be noted here that the proponents of Model 3 are generally the religious leaders who firmly believe in religion being the source of
transcendental ethical values for human life. They are somehow not secular men such as Soekarno, the first President of the republic, or Soepomo, the cofounder of the republic. The secular attitude here refers mainly to religious-political issues. It should not be understood that religiosity and secularity are completely separate entities. Instead, the two elements — which seem to be contradictory — can be combined in the life of a religious man. As stated by Roberto Cipriani, “between religiosity and secularization there seems to reign almost a tacit compromise. They are reinforced and weaken virtually in unison”. In an era in which a minister of religion prefers to have a “secular city” rather than a “city of God”, endorsing a secular political system for a religious community is not so much a real problem.

The exponents of Model 3, such as Nurcholish Madjid (1939–2005) and Abdurrahman Wahid (b. 1940), are religious leaders whose commitment both to religion and to democracy is unquestionably strong. Since the 1970s, Madjid had advocated the significance of secularization for Muslim political life in Indonesia. He argued that political secularization does not threaten Islam, but rather saves the religion from temporal and mundane political interests. Like Madjid, Wahid, a former president and former leader of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), has been a long-standing advocate of a liberal democratic state in the country. He believes that the government should be managed rationally and secularly. The main function of religion, according to him, is “to enlighten people’s lives by providing social ethics”. He appeals to Muslims to adopt the Western experience of democracy, since by adopting and learning from the West, “Indonesia can build a more solid governance system that lets the country’s political process take its course”.

To some extent, several political standpoints of Model 3 are similar to those of Model 2. Both, for instance, reject the idea of the Islamic state and the application of shari‘ah. However, they differ in how far religion should be involved in matters of politics and state governance. While the exponents of Model 2 still recognize the significance of state establishment of religion, the proponents of Model 3 consider it insignificant. Similarly, both have different views on the issue of religious freedom. While the former consider religiosity to be the chief prerequisite for the embodiment of a virtuous community and, therefore, that the state can intervene in religious matters, the latter consider it entirely a private matter, in which the state has no right to intervene. The concrete example of this is, again, the Bill of National Education, where the state is obliged to manage religious teaching at schools. While the exponents of Model 2 generally support the bill, the proponents of Model 3 reject it and call for its refinement.
In short, Model 3 considers that the best application of democracy is when the state and society are given total freedom to perform their respective roles independently. While the function of the state is to manage public matters, the function of religion should be limited solely to the private realm.

**METHODODOLOGY AND SELECTION OF TEXTS**

I have used various sources to explore the models of polity I employ in this study. To analyse the first model (IDS), I consulted the primary works of Muslim intellectuals, which were mostly published in the 1960s and 1970s. Many of these works are articles in Indonesian journals, and some other are books and transcripts of speeches. To analyse the second model (RDS) and the third (LDS), I have used the works of the exponents of these two models, mostly written during the 1980s and 1990s. Most of their books and articles are readily available in public libraries and online sources.

Apart from this, I have also used interviews and conversations with some of them. I have been fortunate to have met and talked with most of the leaders I discuss in this book. My conversations with them and other leaders who are not directly discussed in this book have enriched my analysis. Finally, I have also consulted several brochures, pamphlets and clippings, in addition to several transcripts of interviews conducted by Merle C. Ricklefs in 1977. Media reports, particularly the major newspapers in Indonesia, are also used and frequently quoted throughout the book.

I have divided this book into seven chapters. The first chapter consists of the introduction, literature review, theoretical framework, and methodology. The second chapter is set to discuss the global and local context of Muslim responses to political change. The main aim of this chapter is to find the historical and sociological backdrop of Islamic political thought in Indonesia.

The third, fourth, and fifth chapters are dedicated respectively to discussing the models of polity I have suggested. In these chapters I discuss the characteristics, trends, and main political issues that the santri Muslims have been dealing with. The classification of the models is based primarily in chronological order, in such a way that the first model refers to a certain historical setting earlier than the second and the third. Consequently, this study will draw on the historical approach to highlight the discussion of every model.

The sixth chapter is designed to discuss the continuity and discontinuity of the models I have discussed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. This chapter deals primarily with Islamic political thinking in the post-Soeharto era. The study is summarized in the final chapter, the conclusion.
Notes


2. I am fully aware that the terms *santri* and *abangan* are contentious. As I will discuss below, there are many criticisms and objections to the terms. However, in this book, I use them as general religio-political terms, which have been strongly related to the socio-political context of Indonesian Muslims in the early periods of independence and beyond. The usage of these two terms is mainly aimed at qualifying a broad spectrum of Indonesian Islam.


5. Ibid., p. 231.

6. He mixes the religious categories, *santri* and *abangan*, with the social category of *priyayi*.


8. Ibid., p. 281.


11. Ibid., p. 138.


15. Ibid., p. 119.

18. Ibid., p. 170.
20. This party has now become the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS, Partai Keadilan Sejahtera).
23. Ibid., p. 19.
25. Ibid., p. 367.
28. Ibid.
29. As for the *abangan* group, there is no need for the question, since all *abangan* will support the model of the secular state or, at least, Pancasila state. Likewise, they will also reject the idea of the Islamic state or state based on a religious platform.
32. Ibid., p. 10.
33. Ibid., p. 3.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., pp. 5–6.
38. Ibid., pp. 113–14.
39. Ibid., p. 6.
40. Ibid., p. 7.
42. Ibid., p. 549.
43. Ibid., p. 550.
44. Ibid., p. 552.
45. Ibid., p. 554.
47. Ibid., p. 31.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid., pp. 34–35.
50. Ibid., p. 36.
51. Ibid., p. 37.
52. I prefer to use the word “liberal” as it is less controversial than the word “secular”.
53. In the Indonesian context, a group that rejected the concept of democracy was Darul Islam (DI), which during 1947–48 raised a rebellion against the republic. Recently, several radical groups such as the Defenders of Islam Front (FPI, Front Pembela Islam) and the Indonesian Council of Mujahidin (MMI, Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia) show great disdain for the concept.
55. Ibid., p. 437.
56. Obviously, Western models of democracy have developed into a complex set of theories. As we have seen, the Western discourse of democracy has gone far beyond the classical Athenian model of democracy.
57. Mohammad Natsir is an important figure both in the intellectual discourse of Islam as well as in the political history of Indonesia in general. He has contributed to the debates on Islamic issues since pre-independence times, when he and Soekarno debated the issue of Islam and nationalism. After independence, he became Minister and subsequently Prime Minister. I will discuss Natsir’s thoughts in Chapter 3.
59. The political doctrine that says government belongs only to God is actually a Kharijite stance. However, revivalist Muslims use the same jargon to defend their political standpoint that religion and politics should be unified. The basic standpoint of Model 1 is actually similar to the Kharijite and revivalist Muslim stance. However, in their further formulation, they slightly “rationalize” this political standpoint by modifying both their basic standpoint and the new concepts they encounter. Hamid Enayat has eloquently discussed the ideological relation between the Kharijites and the Islamic revivalist movements. See his book, Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), pp. 6–7.
61. In a debate with Soekarno in the early 1940s, Natsir condemned Soekarno's liberal tendency in interpreting Islamic classical texts. For him, freedom of thought cannot be applied in reading classical Islamic texts. There are, according to Natsir, limits, in which our rationality cannot be used as a measure. See his article, “Sikap Islam terhadap Kemerdekaan Berpikir: Kemerdekaan Berpikir, Tradisi, dan Disiplin”, in Mohammad Natsir, *Capita Selecta* (Bandung: W. van Hoeve), 1954.

62. “Nabi Muhammad: Imajinasi dan Visualisasi”, *Tempo*, 25 August 1973, p. 46. Despite many criticisms by Muslim leaders around the world, the film was finally made and released. Akkad had successfully obtained al-Azhar's assurance that his film would not infringe any Islamic doctrines. The film, entitled “The Message” (English version), or “al-Risalah” (Arabic version), featured Hollywood stars such as Anthony Quinn and Irene Papas.


64. The argument for this view is mainly based on a popular *hadith* (Prophet's saying) narrated by Bukhari: “Never will a nation succeed that makes a woman their ruler.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari* 9, no. 220).


68. The most quoted *hadith* is *innama bu’ithtu li utammima makarim al-akhlaq* (I was only sent for perfecting morality), narrated by Ahmad, Baihaqi and Hakim.


70. I am referring to Harvey Cox, the author of the best-selling book, *The Secular City*. Cox was an American Baptist minister, a Protestant chaplain at Temple University, and a director of religious activities at Oberlin College.

71. Further discussion on the thinking of Madjid and Wahid is given in Chapter 5.


74. Abdurrahman Wahid has opposed the Bill many times. His party, PKB, although finally accepting it, suggested to the MPR that the crucial chapter of the Bill (Chapter 13) should be postponed. See “PKB Minta Pasal 13 RUU Sisdiknas Dicabut”, *Sinar Harapan*, 29 May 2003.