

***Political Islam and Violence in Indonesia.* By Zachary Abuza. New York: Routledge, 2007. Hardcover, 162pp.**

Zachary Abuza's latest book is arguably his best work so far. Whereas his ground-breaking *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2003) was edgy and uneven, *Political Islam and Violence in Indonesia* is a much more finely-balanced and considered work. Abuza has spent the past several years crisscrossing Southeast Asia and interviewing scores of informants and activists and it shows in this book, not so much from direct quotations and endnotes as from the book's more nuanced analysis and thoughtful tone. Specialists of Islam in Indonesia and archipelagic Southeast Asia will still find a certain awkwardness and lack of precision in places but the broad brush strokes on Abuza's large canvass convey a faithful representation of his complex subject.

To his great credit, and certainly adding to the unique appeal to this book, Abuza has attempted to address the full spectrum of Islamist activism from democratization, through party-political Islamism to vigilante *mujahidin* activism and jihadi terrorism. No other writer has tackled so broad a sweep of movements and issues in a single volume and for this reason alone Abuza's book deserves a place on the shelf of anyone with an interest in modern Indonesia or Islam in Asia.

Introductory and concluding chapters aside the body of the book consists of four chapters dealing, in turn, with democratization and the rise of political Islam, Jemaah Islamiyah and Islamist terrorism, radical Muslim groups and Islamist militias, and, finally, common motives, divergent methods the future of Islamism in Indonesia. Simply having these four subjects addressed by a single author in a single volume is useful in itself but the real strength of this book is the way in which each chapter relates to the others and to the common context of post-Soeharto Indonesia.

The chapter on political Islam presents a good survey of broad trends that can be read from the 1999 and 2004 elections. Experts might quibble with some of the points made. Comparing the strength of Islamist support shown in the 1955 elections with that evidenced in 1999 and 2004, for example, is not quite so simple as Abuza suggests, as Masyumi was not a modern Islamist party in 1955 and NU was even less so. And the surge of support for the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) which polled 7.3 per cent in 2004 compared with the 1.3 per cent (not 1 per cent as incorrectly listed by Abuza) achieved by its direct predecessor, the Justice Party (PK) is not so wholly remarkable

as Abuza suggests. It needs to be noted that for the 2004 elections PK joined with fifteen smaller Islamist parties — that had contested the 1999 polls (which saw 48 parties vying for voter interest) but failed to clear the 2 per cent threshold for entry in 2004 — to form PKS. When this is taken into account it appears that PKS picked up around 3 per cent more votes in 2004 than its precursors did collectively in 1999. Nevertheless, Abuza's more important observations about the radical Islamist nature of PKS are sound and well made: "What they say to a public audience is very different than the internal message to their members. Rather than focusing on *sharia* immediately, they continue to focus on the moral qualities of Islam and the gradual Islamization of society. That they have downplayed *sharia* is tactical." (p. 28).

Abuza has written extensively on Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and researched its operation across Southeast Asia. It is not surprising then, that his chapter on JI represents a thoughtful and insightful summary of our current state of knowledge of this resilient and adaptive terrorist network. Abuza's prognosis is as disturbing as it is credible: "JI will likely attempt to re-ignite sectarian conflicts in Indonesia's outlying provinces, engage in a campaign of religious purification against what it perceives as improper practices, and solidify transnational ties with terrorist and other sympathetic organizations in an attempt to reinvigorate itself." (p. 52).

Abuza is no less convincing in the way in which he deals with the third major subject of his book: radical Muslim groups and Islamist militias. There too, the picture is a disturbing one: "Although most are quite small in membership, they have a disproportionate voice in Indonesian politics and society. Their ends and means are for the most part decried by the moderate majority, but too often they only react to the Islamists' provocations. Vociferous and thoroughly committed to their causes, they tend to have good recruitment networks on university campuses and cadre-based parties such as PKS." (p. 81).

If the appeal of Abuza's book is the way that he studies each of these three important subjects in their own right and then attempts to explore the strange synergies and interconnections that link them, then the most interesting chapter is Chapter 5 which brings it all together in an attempt to make sense of "the future of Islamism in Indonesia". Inevitably a chapter such as this is never going to be entirely satisfying — by its nature this is very much a work in progress. It remains, however, a provocative and insightful piece of writing. Not all of the details in this chapter are correct but the larger points that it puts forth very much make it worth reading — which really is the story of this whole book.

At 162 pages in length this book is clearly not in a position to explore the issues it covers in the depth that some readers will need, but as an introduction to the subject the book's brevity works in its favour. More is the pity then that this small hardcover volume carries Routledge's typical made-for-the-library-market pricing at around US\$120. It is certainly the sort of work that no respectable academic library will want to be without but we can only hope that it quickly moves into paperback binding with pricing that will allow it to find the broader readership that it deserves. Anyone wanting to make a serious exploration of Islam and political activism in Indonesia will ultimately need to read beyond this helpful introductory work but this is an excellent place to start.