CHAPTER FIVE

Governing in the Name of Islam

The Pitfalls of a Self-Evident Notion

Today the issue of an Islamic state is a protean notion which cannot be readily systemised, and this is true for the entire Muslim world. The plan to found a state on the principles of Islam has too often been considered both by its opponents and proponents as a blueprint whose details are self-evident. This consensus surrounding what form an Islamic state should take has for many years constituted a rallying point in much the same way that Marxism did for a long time, dividing opinion on the question into two distinct groups which remain resolutely closed to all discussion.

In the case of Masyumi, the notion of an Islamic state was by turns, and sometimes simultaneously, a slogan, a myth, a programme and a reality. The debate surrounding Negara Islam in Indonesia has long been a problematic one littered with pitfalls. This was already the case in the 1950s when Masyumi attempted to mark itself out from both the secularist ideals of the nationalists and the destructive fundamentalism of Darul Islam; it remains the case today due to the radicalisation of Islamists’ demands as well as the disparate nature of Islam in Indonesia, where religious divides often overlap with ethnic and economic divisions. It is an issue in which Western researchers can also easily become ensnared, as their cultural background can often lead them to believe that an Islamic state is the only alternative that exists to a democratic state. Finally, it should be remembered that the Indonesian term “Negara” is another possible source of confusion as it can
be understood to refer to a state, a country or, in certain cases, a nation. The meaning of this word is ambiguous in Indonesian, unlike in English where the term “Islamic state” does not mean the same as “Islamic nation” or “Islamic country”.

There are two major advantages to presenting an Islamic state as a self-evident notion. It allows one to suggest the sacred nature of such an entity and also to do away with the delicate task of providing a clear definition of such an entity. It is no doubt for this reason that Masyumi when elaborating its ideology never clearly defined in a founding document what constituted an Islamic state; this notion was gradually outlined at its party conferences and in the writings of its leaders. It also evolved over time in response to different events which often shaped the party’s leaders’ ideas. Given this mutability of Masyumi’s concept of an Islamic state, it is difficult to comprehend this ideology without looking at its source and the context in which it was articulated. A speech made by Isa Anshary during the insurrection against the Dutch colonial power and a contribution by Zainal Abidin to a debate in the Constituent Assembly could be considered just as representative of Masyumi as an address by Jusuf Wibisono during the election campaign of 1955, despite the fact that the tone of the speeches, the chosen topics and the examples used to illustrate their points were very different and, in some cases, contradictory.

It is hardly surprising, then, that researchers looking to summarise Masyumi’s policy in a few sentences should have so often come up with inconsistent conclusions which were often not mutually compatible. Some such as George McTurnan Kahin focussed on the moderate nature of Masyumi’s aspirations, while others, such as Baladas Ghosal, considered Masyumi to be radical and intransigent.¹ It would, therefore, be illusory, perhaps even disingenuous, to claim to be able to provide a precise and coherent vision of Masyumi’s ideal of an Islamic state. On the contrary, what this chapter proposes to acquaint the reader with is the chaotic and sometimes contradictory evolution of Masyumi’s political ideology, starting with the first articles by its future leaders in the 1930s, and taking us up to the failed attempt by the Constituent Assembly in the late 1950s to establish a new constitution.

The Nationalist Perspective on an Islamic State

In order to understand the debate surrounding the notion of an Islamic state, which dominated the Indonesian political landscape from the proclamation of independence in 1945 until the banning of Masyumi in 1960, it is necessary to situate it in the context of the country’s nationalist movement. The future leaders of Masyumi at this time were influenced by two different forces which shaped their political theory. They took part, alongside other representatives of the reformist movement, in a heated debate with secular nationalists concerning the foundation upon which to build an Indonesian national identity. The notion of a Negara Islam, which they presented as a natural and even necessary framework for a Muslim nation, placed them in opposition to secularists. At this stage, the debate was not concerned with which form of government to choose, nor was it about the nature of the country’s institutions; it was rather about whether Islam should be recognised as a constitutive element of Indonesian society. The question, then, was not if Islam could constitute the cornerstone of an independent state, but instead to know if the future state of Indonesia could be built upon an ideological foundation which did not include Islam.

The main arguments put forward by Islamists were of a religious nature, tending to establish an organic link between a Muslim nation and an Islamic state. Islam being “a complete way of life”, a good Muslim could only look to Islam as the source of his political inspiration. Naturally, this sense of a sacred duty left no room for compromise; it endured throughout Masyumi’s history, though the political intransigence which it gave rise to was surmounted momentarily by a more pragmatic attitude, linked no doubt to the necessity to look for democratic approval and the compromises attendant upon the exercise of power. However, it came back to the fore again at the end of the 1950s during the debates in the Constituent Assembly.

Towards the end of the 1930s, however, the future leaders of the party went beyond the strictly religious aspect of the debate about the future Indonesian state. In response to the proposals made by secular nationalists, they eventually became convinced of the danger of their own intransigence. By refusing to envisage any other alternative to the recognition of the primacy of Islam in the future state, certain Muslim leaders could see that they were excluding themselves from any involvement in the building of that state. Breaking away from the isolationism of their mentors, Mohammed Natsir and his peers, both in their roles
as political representatives and in their writings, contributed to a broad exchange of ideas aimed at defining the conditions under which a democracy would be established in Indonesia, and by doing so paved the way for the participation of Islamists in parliament.

**Independence through Islam and for Islam**

The future leaders of Masyumi arrived on the political scene at the beginning of the 1930s at a time when the leaders of the Muslim community were growing worried about their loss of influence in Indonesian society. Their initial cause was not the fight against the Dutch colonial power but rather the opposition towards those who were fighting for an independent Indonesia in which Islam would only have a secondary role. For Islamists, then, the main concern was not political independence, which was in danger of leading to a secularised state. Their desire was, first and foremost, to establish a society with the requisite conditions for the flourishing of Islam, and also to remind members of the Indonesian Muslim community of their duty towards the Almighty.

Continuing the work carried out by Sarekat Islam and Muhammadiyah for the defence of the Muslim community in the Dutch East Indies, the writings and speeches of the future Masyumi leaders had three aims which were intimately linked: to convince their fellow countrymen of the greatness of Muslim civilisation, to bring about a renewal of the teaching of Islam and to underline the unifying role of Mohammad’s religion in the establishment of the Indonesian nation.

As we have already seen, the reformist movement in general was characterised by a harkening back to a golden age of Islam. At the beginning of the 1930s, Mohammad Natsir, under various pen-names (Mu’azzin, IS., Spectator, A. Moechlis), devoted a considerable amount of his writings to this topic. In a series of articles which appeared between June 1936 and March 1937 in *Pedoman Majarakat* and *Pandji Islam*, he endeavoured to show the importance of Islam in the development of modern science. In “Islam and Culture”, he set out to describe the main features of Muslim culture, insisting on the scientific projects carried out during the high-point of the Caliphate, its role in the transmission of knowledge from the Ancient Greek and Roman worlds.

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2 See supra, Chapter 1.
to Renaissance Europe through its contributions in a variety of areas ranging from astronomy to medicine.\(^3\) A few months later, Natsir paid homage to the early 19th-century Muslim philosopher, Ibnu Makawaih, whose introspective method may have influenced Schopenhauer.\(^4\) In *Pedoman Masjarakat*, he also mentioned Abu Nasar Al-Farabi from the 10th century, who was one of the forefathers of political economics, according to Natsir. Finally, in an attempt to refute some of Islam’s critics who claimed that it had invented nothing, Natsir, in *Pandji Islam*, cited, amongst others, the 11th-century polymath Ibn al-Haytham, the inventor of the camera obscura and, by extension, the precursor of modern photography.\(^5\) These examples which Natsir used to illustrate the wealth of Islamic civilisation had another purpose, however, which was to show Muslims that there was a pressing need for them to develop the same critical frame of mind (*ruh intiqad*) which enabled illustrious Muslim scientists to question and surpass the accepted knowledge of their day.

Convincing fellow Muslims of the greatness of Muslim civilisation and making Islam the cornerstone of a new national consciousness, however, would only make sense if the population was educated in the Muslim faith. Yet despite the best efforts of the Muhammadiyah movement over the previous 20 years, there was still a long way to go before this would be the case. Islam was taught in *pesantren* in a way which prevented it from opening up to modern society. The vast majority of the future Indonesian elite attended schools which were based on the Dutch model where everything was designed to keep Islam at bay, as the development of a secularist nationalist movement later showed. Mohammed Natsir was so taken aback by the lack of religious knowledge of his secondary school classmates that he actually dedicated his first books to them. *Komt tot het gebed* (*Come and Pray*) (1930) was taken from classes he gave at Jalan Jawa School in Bandburg; *Gudens Regels uit den Qur'an* (*The Golden Rules of the Koran*) (1932) provided a selection of Koranic verses translated into Dutch; and finally, *Het Vasten* (*Fasting*) spoke of the main religious practices of Islam, in particular the practice of fasting. At the same time as he was writing these

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books, Natsir began his teaching career. He began modestly, teaching a few classes in 1930 while still at secondary school, and after completing a training programme organised by the government, he became the head of the Islamic Educational Committee (Komite Pendidikan Islam) and the Islamic Educational Institute which had been founded by Persatuan Islam. In 1934, he published a short pamphlet entitled “The Ideology of Islamic Education”, which contained a summary of his convictions concerning the teaching of Islam.

In this work advocating Muslim education, Natsir wished most of all to persuade his fellow Muslims of the necessity of a way of teaching Islam which was open to the modern world. Following a classical rhetorical formula used by Muslim reformists and frequently adopted by Masyumi, his pamphlet makes use of two types of arguments. The first takes its inspiration from secular examples by contrasting, for example, the model used by Japan, which managed to achieve quick and sustained development by providing access to education to as many people as possible, with the model used by Spain which was overtaken by most of its rivals because of its lack of investment in the educational field. The second argument made reference to a religious obligation based on verse 104 of the Al Imran surah. For Natsir, the Holy Book advocated a form of teaching which was open to the modern world in general and to the latest developments from the West in particular. A significant part of the future Masyumi leader’s work in the 1930s was devoted to this struggle for the development of education which he considered to be a necessary precondition for Islamic nationalism to exist.

His decision to become a teacher and by so doing to refuse a

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6 This institution offered classes for preschool up to secondary school. Ajip Rosidi, *M. Natsir, sebuah biografi*, vol. 1 (Jakarta: Girimuki Pasaka, 1990), pp. 169–70.

7 “And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, for those will be the successful.” *Koran* (III, 104). Natsir concluded from this verse that the Indonesia umma had to recruit a group entrusted with the education of children so that this task “would not be delegated to those who do not have the same ideas, the same education, the same faith or the same religion as us.” Mohammad Natsir, “Ideologi didikan Islam”, in *Capita Selecta*, vol. 1, pp. 53–61.

8 In “Sekolah Tinggi Islam” (“Islamic Higher School”), published in 1938 (*Capita Selecta*, vol. 1, pp. 66–79), Natsir deplored the absence of an Islamic university in Indonesia. This, he argued, encouraged the creation of an elite who were more interested in the West.
scholarship which would have enabled him to pursue his studies in the Netherlands typifies the third of the future Majumists’ aims: to enable Islam to unify the disparate elements of Indonesian nationalism.

Natsir, who was very worried about the loss of the influence of Islam amongst Indonesia’s elite, became convinced very early on that the religious neutrality encouraged by a section of the nationalist movement was merely the first step in a de-Islamification programme endorsed by the colonial government for the benefit of the Christian community. This conviction led him to become involved in the ongoing debate between progressive Muslims and nationalists since the end of the 1920s. This wide-ranging debate had begun with a confrontation between Sukarno and Haji Agus Salim, who was soon to be joined by Ahmad Hassan and his followers from Persatuan Islam (Persis), Fachroeddin, Moenawar Chalil and Mohammad Natsir.

Secular nationalists refused to accept Islam as the principle inspiration for their struggle for three main reasons. They considered first of all that their religion was unable to respond to the problems of the modern world, and as such they even deemed it to be partly responsible for the 300-year-long colonisation of Indonesia. According to them, a strong independent nation could only be constituted by using the Western model of government which had managed to confine religion to the private sphere and to the field of religious worship. This point of view was confirmed by what were, in their eyes, positive examples of dynamic countries with secular governments, such as Turkey, Persia and Egypt. The second argument put forward was a little more particular to Indonesia and was based on the idea that it would be impossible for Islam to claim to have a unifying role in the Dutch East Indies, given that the country was home to minority groups of other religious faiths, namely Christianity, Buddhism and Animism. The final argument advanced was that the history of the Indonesian people’s struggle for independence had shown that religious organisations had

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9 Several works have looked at the major stages of this debate: in 1936, Persatuan Islam published under the title Soerat-soerat Islam dari Ende letters sent by Sukarno, who was in exile at the time, to Achman Hassan; in 1968, the Association of Islamic Education in Padang (Jajasan pendidikan Islam, Padang) published a collection entitled M. Natsir versus Soekarno: The Unity of Religion and State (Persatuan agama dengan negara), containing around 10 texts written by the future president of Masyumi, most of which can be found in Capita Selecta.
failed to obtain any significant concessions from the Dutch colonial power despite their best attempts over two decades.\footnote{Dr. Muh. Ridwan Lubis, \textit{Pemikiran Sukarno tentang Islam} (Jakarta: C.V. Haji Masagung, 1992), pp. 136–48.}

The leaders of Persatuan Islam countered the arguments of secularist nationalists with their own line of reasoning, which appeared in numerous articles published mainly in \textit{Pembela Islam}, \textit{Pandji Islam} and \textit{Al-Lisan}. In 1941, the figurehead of Persatuan Islam, Ahmad Hassan, gave a brief summary of the party’s arguments in a book entitled \textit{Islam and Nationalism} (\textit{Islam dan Kebangsaan}). The premise posited by the advocates of Islamic nationalism was that independence did not constitute an end in itself, but rather that it could only be envisaged as a means towards another goal, namely the recognition of Islamic norms. The freedom of the nation could only flourish if it was exercised as part of a struggle for Islam, and so to venerate a secularist form of nationalism would be akin to polytheism (\textit{shirk}).\footnote{See the declarations made to this effect by Fachroeddin al-Kahiri, in \textit{Pembela Islam}, no. 59, March 1933, quoted by Howard Federspiel, \textit{Persatuan Islam: Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Indonesia} (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1970), p. 87.}

Mohammad Natsir, in his opposition to Sukarno, used the same type of reasoning when listing the religious entitlements one could enjoy in a “neutral” state: freedom of religion, the possibility of paying the zakat, legislation on marriage and divorce which was adapted to people’s religions. His argument was that the same guarantees would be available under any form of government, including colonial government.\footnote{\textit{Pandji Islam}, 20 February 1939. Quoted in Deliar Noer, \textit{The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900–1942} (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973 [2nd edition, 1978]), p. 278.} This argument was no doubt intended to provoke secularists, but the message was clear: the nationalists could count on the support of the Muslim community’s leaders only if they recognised Islam’s primordial role. The theorists belonging to Persis refuted the nationalists’ argument that an Islamic state was impossible because of the presence of other religions in the country, insisting that they would refuse to give in to the “law of the minority.”\footnote{Ahmad Hassan asked the question: “Is it appropriate for us to dismiss the importance of a majority of 90% because of a minority of 10%? Would such an agreement be fair?” \textit{Islam dan Kebangsaan}, p. 41. Quoted in Federspiel, \textit{Persatuan Islam}, p. 88.} The nationalists
were given to understand that they were bad Muslims and were indifferent to the danger that some of their fellow Muslims “could renounce their faith and abandon Islam for Christianity, Buddhism or Theosophy.” The political representatives who defended an Islamic state reminded those Muslims who had forgotten their religious duty—those who, according to Natsir, were guilty of “dishonesty towards Islam”—of the role played by Muslim organisations in the first steps of the struggle for national independence; Natsir referred to the “willing sacrifices” whose debt needed to be repaid. When Sukarno and his supporters pointed out that Sarekat Islam had failed in its attempt to bring together the Indonesian people, Natsir maintained that this was the fault of those who had founded rival groups. Those groups, by trying to replace a commonly held set of values, Islam, with a purportedly original culture which harkened back to the great empires that once dominated the archipelago, had succeeded in distancing the people from their leaders.

Mohammad Natsir was not the only future prominent Masyumi member to use such arguments. A speech given by Kasman Singodimedjo in 1925, shortly after he became a member of the leadership of the Jong Islamieten Bond used one of those arguments among its central themes. He heavily criticised the lack of communication between the members of the “intellectual group” (golonga intelektuil) and the people. He blamed this failing on linguistic problems (most of the organisations’ members communicated in Dutch), and on a difference in lifestyles (most intellectuals had adopted a European lifestyle), but also on the lack of a set of common cultural references. The references used by “some” came from a classical Javanese culture, glorifying the era of the great Hindu kingdoms like Majapahit. He went on to explain that these references made sense “for people like us who have the time to study these legends and wonderful stories” but they did not serve any purpose if you wanted to “recreate a bond with the people.” Islam, on the other hand, constituted the natural bedrock for a “sentiment of fraternity” amongst the people and should therefore become

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15 Ibid.
the cornerstone on which to build national unity. The desire of the secular nationalists to rebuild a national culture without referring directly to Islam also influenced the choice of Soekiman Wirjosandjojo, future president of the Masyumi party, to leave the nationalist movement and join the ranks of Sarekat Islam. As he explained in an article published in 1930, he had been particularly shocked by a tendency amongst some of his friends in the nationalist movement to liken the exile of nationalists in Digul (one of the main internment camps set up by the Dutch) to the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Initially, the involvement of the future members of the Masyumi party in the debate concerning the construction of the new Indonesian nation was essentially based on defending the place of Islam. Their disagreement with the leaders of the nationalist movement on the issue of Indonesia’s Muslim identity, which they considered to be under threat, succeeded in acquiring them a certain prominence in the small circle of progressive Islamist activists, however. Their involvement was not merely based on a simple reminder of the religious obligations behoving their fellow Muslims; by carrying on the work of their illustrious predecessors, H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto and Agus Salim, they also wished to create the conditions which would allow their fellow countrymen to adhere to their political ideal.

**Political Activism and the Beginnings of a Muslim Democracy**

The debate within the Muslim community about how an Islamic state should be established in Indonesia was dominated by the central question of whether it should be an obligation or a choice. For a part of the community, the debate remained an academic one insofar as they never considered an alternative to demanding an Islamic state. Ahmad Hassan, for example, adamantly maintained his posture as the voice of truth and never attempted to go beyond it in order to adopt the

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more difficult role of proposing compromise solutions. Others, however, wanted to engage in a more concrete debate on the question, and as a result, became politically active.

From its foundation in 1945, Masyumi welcomed both camps within its ranks, but there quickly appeared a distinction between party members who confined themselves to a strictly religious role within the religious council of the party (the Majelis Sjuro, literally the consultative council) on the one hand, and those who by taking on an executive role in the party found themselves having to make political decisions on a regular basis, on the other. This distribution of roles no doubt reflected the aptitudes and preferences of the various members within the party, but more importantly, it was also evidence of a fundamental difference between how each group regarded their religion. For one group, it was an inherent truth which must remain immutable, and for the other it was a set of general principles whose application could be adapted to the present day.

The beginnings of this separation between the strictly religious roles and the political roles within the party were apparent well before independence. It could be seen in the involvement of certain members (Soekiman, Natsir, Sjafruddin and Prawiranegara) in political parties (the PSII, Permi and PII) and not merely in associations like Persis. It could also be seen in their writings; unlike Ahmad Hassan, Fachroeddin or Moenawar Chalil, the future members of the Masyumi executive did not limit themselves to participating in the debate on nationalism and its religious nature. Soekiman and Natsir in particular devoted a significant part of their writings to more political and more pragmatic questions concerning how to emancipate their nation. This led them to reflect upon democracy, its manifestations and its evolution in the West, and on its compatibility with the substrata of Indonesian society, in particular with Islam. These reflections, which were not carried out exclusively with reference to religion, allowed Masyumi to sketch out what would become, a few years later, the main objective of its project, namely the construction of a Muslim democracy.

Of the four theorists within Persis involved in the debate with nationalists, Mohammad Natsir was the only one to pursue a political career. In a series of articles which appeared between December 1938

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18 See supra Chapter 1.
and December 1939, he analysed the fate of indirect rule, a policy which a section of the nationalist movement in the Volksraad had called for. This People’s Council created by the Dutch in 1917 saw both its powers and in its number of representatives increase in 1927. From then on, it was no longer simply a consultative body; a series of texts in specific areas had to obtain its express approval in order to become law. In addition, the number of representatives in the Council rose from 38 to 60. However, though Indonesians still only made up half of the assembly members and the two separate electoral colleges (Indonesian and European) which elected the assembly’s representatives totalled barely 2,000 members. This meant that the nationalists had no chance of obtaining a majority. Given this balance of power and the repressive policy carried out by the East Indies government since 1929, some parties decided to enter into a policy of cooperating with the colonial power.

The largest party to engage in this policy of cooperation with the Dutch East Indies government was Parindra (the Greater Indonesia Party). It was founded in 1935 through the merging of Budi Utomo with a few intellectual clubs and non-Javanese organisations favourable towards nationalism. In 1936, a section of the PSII, which up until then had been resolutely opposed to any cooperation, declared itself in favour of limited cooperation with the colonial power, which involved its participation in the Volksraad. In September of the same year, the “Sutardo petition” was presented by Parindra to the Volksraad, where it received a majority. The petition proposed a motion calling for the organisation of a conference to discuss the details of institutional change in the colony, which would eventually lead to an autonomous government that would remain part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Sutardo petition was rapidly opposed by the government of the Dutch East Indies, and the Dutch government formally rejected it in November 1938.

In his analysis of this event, Natsir showed a clear capacity for political observation. Natsir the realist and man of action eclipsed Natsir the theorist of Islamic nationalism; he saw that the refusal to accept the Sutardjo petition by the Netherlands tolled the death knell for the hopes of those who favoured an egalitarian partnership between the Dutch metropolis and its colony. It was at the same time, however, a salutary event as it brought to an end the crisis within the nationalist movement which had begun with the attempt by some to collaborate with the colonial power in an attempt to gain influence and advance
their aims. As Natsir said, what appeared to be a failure would turn out, on the contrary, to awaken a sense of unity in the national consciousness so long as one respected the maxim of the French sociologist Gustave Le Bon that “our opinion of things changes with the unfolding of events … [and] only a fool has unchanging opinions.”

The pragmatism Natsir showed in his choice of quotation is reflected in all his articles on the Sutardjo petition. It is evidence of his refusal to enclose himself in a struggle for an Islamic cause removed from political realities. The future president of Masyumi, much more so than his colleagues of Persatuan Islam, wished to be seen as a pragmatist. He pointed out that the absence of any prospect of evolution in the status of the Dutch East Indies put the survival of the colony in danger, as Snouck Hurgronje had predicted in the 19th century. The Dutch government’s opposition to change, the most recent example of which being their refusal to accept the Sutardjo petition, paved the way for the uniting of all nationalist currents within GAPI (Gabungan Politik Indonesia, Indonesian Political Union), the broad nationalist grouping of the late 1930s. In addition, nationalist aspirations were about to receive a boost with the outbreak of war in the West. When German troops invaded the Netherlands a little over a year after the failure of the Sutardjo petition, Natsir urged the authorities to immediately recognise the inevitability of Indonesian independence, enjoining them not to “miss the bus” so as not to lose the support of a nation of 60 million inhabitants. The question of Islam was for the moment not on the agenda; Natsir’s demands were made in the name of a higher cause of freedom and in the name of modernity, which necessarily implied democracy. His vision for the future of his country—which involved obtaining first, independence and democracy, and then pursuing the recognition of Islamic values—naturally opened up numerous possibilities for cooperation with the defenders of secular nationalism.

20 “Aliran assosiasi Exit”, Pandji Islam, January 1939, ibid., p. 244.
23 He had already affirmed this in February 1939. Pandji Islam, 6 February 1939; Noer, The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900–1942, p. 277.
At the same time, Soekiman, who started out in the nationalist movement, was also changing his ideas about Indonesian independence; contrary to Natsir, however, he was moving closer to Islam. Initially schooled in Western political culture, he also turned in the late 1930s to the founding texts of Islam as a source for his political ideas. In an article in 1939 denouncing the absence of a true parliament in Indonesia, for example, he reminded readers of the importance of this institution in the history of democracies such as England and the Netherlands, and also in the Koran. He quoted the Al-Imran Surah, drawing from it the conclusion that the “form of government recommended by Islam was to be founded on consultation” and that an Islamic government was to speak and debate with the community about all things that concerned the fate of the community.”

Well before independence then, the foundations of what was to become the political ideology of Masyumi had already been laid by a few of its future members. What set these members apart was that they strove simultaneously to achieve the ideals both of Islam and of democratic independence. During the period of Japanese occupation which followed the outbreak of the Second World War, they were obliged to keep a low profile. The new occupiers of Indonesia adopted a strategy which intended to rely on the specific religious demands made by representatives of the Muslim community in order to counter the more political demands of the secular nationalists. When Masyumi was founded by the Japanese, it showed no interest in theorising about an Islamic state. Apart from a personal initiative which came very late in the day from a member of the Office of Religious Affairs (Shumbu), Haji Suzuki, to convince the Japanese military command to establish an Islamic state in Java, the Japanese did not have the slightest idea about the place Islam could occupy in an independent Indonesian state.

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24 “So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him].” Koran (III, 159).
The influence of this period on the elaboration of the future Muslim party’s political ideology was nonetheless important. By allowing the Islamic leaders to build a solid network throughout the entire archipelago, the Japanese created the necessary conditions to allow the establishment of a broad social movement, which the party was later to consider as the conditions for the construction of a *Negara Islam*.27

**The Prospect of a Democratic Islamic State: Cautious Silence and Moderate Proposals**

The party which was founded in November 1945 was very much at the crossroads of Indonesian Islam. Its mission was to represent on the political stage the disparate ambitions of a community composed of traditionalists, modernisers and neo-fundamentalists. As one of several political organisations in a parliamentary democracy, Masyumi had to go in search of as big a democratic mandate as possible, and these constraints were to weigh heavily on the party when it came to defining its political manifesto. Although it was a central topic, the question of the sources of Islamic law was a very sensitive one due to the difficulty in getting modernisers and traditionalists to agree. In addition, it became dangerous to even mention the possibility of an Islamic state because of the fear that the non-Muslim parts of the country would break away. From its foundation in 1945 until the announcement of the results of the Legislative and Constituent Assembly elections, Masyumi was aware that power was within its reach. It elaborated its political identity, then, with the constant idea of maintaining a consensus which was thought to guarantee victory in the elections. Over the years, in order to maintain public goodwill, Masyumi developed an institutional project which was both cautious and moderate in tone. The form of government that it called for was mainly inspired by Western democracies, and no reference was made to the place to be occupied in it by Islamic norms. This ideology for the main part originated in the influence held by a small group of moderate and progressive party leaders who followed Natsir’s example and attempted to respond to the challenge posed by nationalists.

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27 See infra, Chapter 6.
Progressive Secularisation until 1956

Between 1945 and 1950, the prevailing party objective which overshadowed any other was the preservation of Indonesian unity. It was a subject which was to dominate the resolutions adopted at the foundation of the party as well as during the first three party congresses, and it always appeared before considerations about the role of Islam. In the founding statutes of 1945, the first objective to be defined was “the consolidation of the Republic of Indonesia’s sovereignty and of Islam” (*Menegakkan kedaulatan Repoeblik Indonesia dan Agama Islam*). In Solon in February 1946, emphasis was put on the principle of “100% independence” along with “the desire to remove Indonesian citizenship from any inhabitant who hindered the cause of independence.” In Yogyakarta in 1947 and in Madiun in 1948, diplomatic questions linked to the struggle for independence made up the main part of the programmes adopted. The strictly religious aspect of the party’s aspirations seemed at this time to take a backseat, and any mention of it was made with great caution.

The various documents which were adopted during the foundation of Masyumi and its successive party congresses (statutes, programmes and various motions) contained only one clear demand for an Islamic state (*Negara Islam*). This was contained in the domestic policy programme adopted at the Solo congress in February 1946. Instead of the term *Negara Islam*, however, which was used by party members themselves very often, vaguer terms were employed, thus opening up the possibility of compromise. The founding statutes in November 1946, for example, announced Masyumi’s goal as “the achievement of the ideals of Islam within the state structure”. The first party congress, held in February 1946 in Solo, adopted a formula which was often subsequently echoed: “a Republic of Indonesia founded on Islam”. The programme published at the Solo congress spelled out the party’s desire to “achieve the ideals of Islam within the state structure in order to build a state founded on popular sovereignty and a society based on the principles of justice found in the teachings of Islam.”

The next four party congresses used virtually the exact same wording.

The party’s priority, then, was the defence of the Republic of Indonesia, as it was defined in the Constitution of 1945. Masyumi

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28 Domestic policy programme adopted at the Solo congress, February 1946.
thus accepted not to challenge the compromise which had been hammered out on the subject of Pancasila during the debates in the Komite Nasional Indonesia Pusat (KNIP). The resolutions adopted by the party reflected the fact that it now adhered to this state ideology, even if the wording of the resolutions often had an Islamic flavour to them. The party’s statutes of 1945 identified amongst its objectives the goal of “organising the life of the people on the principles of faith, devotion, humanistic social conscience, fraternity and equality before the law, in accordance with the teachings of Islam.” This assimilation of the principles of Pancasila into the party objectives was not merely a temporary consequence of the revolutionary period, however. They were regularly adopted in successive programmes at party congresses, and they appeared again in the party statutes after their revision in 1952.29 The new statutes this time had an additional section—an “exposition” (Tafsir Azas)—which was a good indication of how far the party members had come since the Jakarta Charter of June 1945 envisaging “the obligation for Muslims to apply Islamic law”. Masyumi’s ideal was now “a state imbued with divine grace...in which Muslims would have the possibility of organising the private as well as the social aspects of their lives in accordance with the teachings and the laws of Islam.”30

The replacement of the word “obligation” with the word “possibility” reflected the evolution of Masyumi’s policy in the field of religion during the first years of the Revolution. The recognition of the role of Islam in public life could not be imposed from on high, but had to emerge as a conviction from a long and patient process of persuasion which would be carried out within a democratic state.31

After 1950, the Republic of Indonesia was no longer in danger of seeing its sovereignty hampered by its former colonial masters, but Masyumi’s doctrine remained nonetheless consensual. This was due to

29 The domestic policy programme approved by the 1946 congress proposed to “reinforce and enhance the cornerstones of the Republic of Indonesia’s Constitution, namely faith in a unique God, a fair and civilised humanity, the unity of Indonesia, and a democratic system which operates wisely through consultation and representation so as to allow the creation of an Islamic society and an Islamic state.” As we have already seen, this was the only official party document which made clear reference to an Islamic state, which appears here to be the consequence of the application of the principles of Pancasila rather than as a precondition for their acceptance.

30 Tafsir-Azas, 1952.

31 See supra Chapter 2.
another danger the party faced but which came, this time, from within. The proclamation by Kartosuwirjo in August 1949 of his “Negara Islam Indonesia” led to cautious responses by party leaders. Any demand in relation to an Islamic state formulated too heavy-handedly was in danger of leading to an association in people’s minds between Masyumi and the rebellion in West Java. In 1952, during the sixth party congress, when new party statutes were drawn up, the “goals of the party” included the “application, in accordance with the divine scheme of things, of the teachings and the law of Islam in the life of every man, of society and of the Republic of Indonesia.” However, wary of any tendentious interpretation of this aim, the party specified in the official commentary accompanying the new statutes that these goals would be pursued “in accordance with the rule of law and according to the normal procedures of a democratic country”, and reminded the public that “unrest would only lead to the wasting of material and spiritual forces, and no responsibility could be taken for it [by Masyumi].”

As the elections approached, the timidity of Masyumi’s claims was even more obvious. The party’s press made no bones about playing the Muslim card, but the party itself seemed to want to hush up its Islamic identity as well as any demands which were of a religious nature. No reference to religion was made in the various documents (general resolutions, urgency programme and election manifesto) adopted during the conference of December 1954 in Surabaya. More surprising again was the fact that the only election manifesto published by the party entitled “Voting for Masyumi means…” (“Memilih Majumi Berarti”) contained no reference to religion whatsoever. This was all the more unusual given that it was one of the most comprehensive manifestos to be published by the party: it set out 55 institutional, social and economic reforms which the party pledged itself to carry out if they were elected. There was only one single mention of the term “Islam” or allusion to the Muslim religion. On the question of the form of government, the party’s proposals stressed solely the democratic nature of the new state. It was a manifesto which could have been drawn up by a number of non-religious parties including the

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33 We could cite the cover of *Hikmah* published on 24 September 1955, which reproduced the *fatwah* issued by the Congress of Medanese Ulamas making it obligatory to vote for the Muslim party.
34 See Chapter 6.
Plate 5.1 An example of the secularisation of campaign themes: The 1955 electoral programme.
PSI and even the PNI. Neither the press at the time nor the leaders of Masyumi, nor even the observers and historians of this period, ever commented upon or even pointed out this inconsistency, despite the fact that it was evidence of the complexity of the role of Islam in Masyumi’s ideology. The party’s project was certainly underpinned by religion—most of the measures proposed had been justified by virtue of their connection with the teachings of Islam—but with elections looming, it seemed neither prudent nor necessary to draw attention to that fact. In short, Masyumi’s programme was as much a reflection of their fears as it was of the party’s underlying beliefs. Its aim was to create a socially-minded democracy inspired by the West which would be in harmony with the party members’ religious beliefs. This would allow religious convictions to flourish and as a result, they would no longer need to be represented politically.

**The Party’s Institutional Project: The Experience of Western Democracies**

From its very first party congress, Masyumi busied itself in outlining the legal framework for the new state which it wished to see appear, and from the outset, parliamentary democracy was clearly affirmed as the favoured option. The requirement of a parliament elected directly by universal suffrage was amongst the resolutions adopted at the first congress in Solo (1946), and adopted again later at subsequent congresses. The religious justification for this choice was clearly outlined in the “struggle programme” (*Program perjuangan*) adopted in 1952, which stated that “the form of government which was most compatible with the democratic principles of Islam was the Republic.”

In order to “protect the interests of the regions”, the struggle programme provided for legislative power to be held jointly by the two houses of parliament. There was to be an assembly composed of members whose number for each region depended on the size of its population, and a senate in which every region was represented by the same number of members. Concerning the executive branch, the party made an unusual proposal: it suggested that there should be “a presidential regime in which the president, as head of the executive, should be accountable before the People’s Representatives’ Assembly.”

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35 “Struggle Programme”, 1952.

36 Ibid.
This choice was a move away from the American form of government which had obviously inspired their choice of a legislative model. However, it can be explained by the vicissitudes of Indonesian politics, namely the ambiguous status of President Sukarno since the adoption of the 1950 Constitution, which needed to be clarified. The 1950 document allowed for no presidential accountability before Parliament and accorded Sukarno very limited powers in theory; yet it also permitted him to exercise considerable influence over political life. The party, then, intended to rebuild a new balance of powers by virtue of this rather unusual institutional innovation (a head of state can normally never be held accountable before the legislature except in cases of impeachment).

The type of election to be used for the head of state was never specified in the “struggle programme”, nor did it appear in any other document published by Masyumi. It seems in any case unlikely, given his accountability before Parliament, that the president was to be elected by universal suffrage. Concerning the person of the president himself, the 1946 congress adopted a resolution stipulating that he had to be of Indonesian origin, without specifying if the fact of being born Indonesian was sufficient; this had the potential to be problematic, in particular for those with Chinese ancestry. The resolution also required the head of state to be “Muslim in religion and in spirit” (*beragama dan berdjiwa islam*). This second requirement was taken from the longstanding demand made by the representatives of Islam, which was regularly formulated during the debates in 1945. As it was in contradiction with the moderating tendency present in the subsequent official programmes, however, it fell out of favour after 1946.\(^{37}\)

The second point mentioned in the proposals for the new constitution made by Masyumi concerned the guarantees to be made to the inhabitants of Indonesia. A rule of law founded on the teachings of Islam, which the party wished to see established, would allow them to ensure the “spiritual and material protection of the whole population of Indonesia, be they citizens or foreigners.”\(^{38}\) Human rights were to

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37 Moreover, the expression used seems to indicate that the mere fact of belonging to the Muslim religion (*beragama islam*) was not enough; the head of state also had to have the soul (*berdjiwa*) of a Muslim. This was a shot across the bows of the secular nationalists: the vast majority of them were Muslims but they may not have demonstrated the “spirit” implied by the resolution. However, no clarification was given about how to determine the requirements needed to be fulfilled.

38 *Program perjuangan*, 1952.
be constitutionally guaranteed, and women were to have the same political, social and economic rights as men.\textsuperscript{39} The election manifesto for the Constituent Assembly elections, which the party was later to adopt, stipulated, however, that this guarantee would apply “in conformity with the particular character, aptitudes and obligations of the sexes.”\textsuperscript{40} An essential human right for Masyumi was the freedom of religion. In November 1945, the defence of Islam had been the great unifying issue, but this preoccupation was soon extended to other religions also and in 1946, both issues—the defence of Islam and the defence of religious worship in general—were present. Masyumi gradually became a mouthpiece for the entire religious community without distinction of belief. Its 1955 manifesto stated that voting Masyumi signified “guaranteeing freedom of religion and promoting a harmonious coexistence between religions.”\textsuperscript{41}

It was imperative for Mohammad Natsir’s party to banish the spectre of religious intolerance which the party’s opponents regularly brandished. In order to lend weight to these commitments, the \textit{Tafsir Azas} of 1952 referred to verse 256 of the \textit{Al Baqarah Surah} in the hope of proving to the party’s detractors that even a literal interpretation of the Holy Book protected religions other than Islam from any mistreatment.\textsuperscript{42} The same document quoted another passage from the Koran in order to affirm the necessity to “fight for the protection of monasteries, churches and places of prayer as well as mosques, in short, wherever the name of Allah is invoked.”\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} Masyumi Electoral Programme, September 1955.
\textsuperscript{41} “Mendjamin kemerdekaan beragama serta menjuburkan keragaman hidup antara agama”.
\textsuperscript{42} “There shall be no compulsion [in acceptance] of the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing,” \textit{Koran} (II, 265).
\textsuperscript{43} “Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is competent to give them victory. [They are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right—only because they say, ‘Our Lord is Allah.’ And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned. And Allah will surely support those who support Him. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might.” \textit{Koran} (XXII, 39–40).
What few references to the Koran there were then in Masyumi’s programmes only served to remove any suspicion that the party was guilty of religious intolerance. It was the accusations of its political opponents which had forced the party to airbrush out in this way any reference to the religious foundation of its programme. However, this circumspection presented a major drawback: it left the public in the dark concerning a central question, namely the role of Islamic norms in the construction of the new country’s substantive law.

The Ambiguities of Sharia Law

During the debates leading up to the adoption of the 1945 Constitution, the demands made by the representatives of Islam concerning the application of Islamic norms seemed relatively clear. The Jakarta Charter, which seemed at the time to contain the essence of their demands, envisaged the application of Islamic law to all Indonesian citizens of the Muslim faith. As already mentioned, this demand was never clearly formulated by Masyumi before the debates in the Constituent Assembly between 1956 and 1957, and the official party line on that question never really appeared. The deliberate vagueness in party programmes surrounding which parts of Islamic law were to be included in the future laws of the land meant that it was very difficult to give a precise overview of this area. However, although it may not be possible to identify clearly what the party’s intentions in this area were, one can at least understand their general philosophy.

Various motions voted by the party in congress called for the application of certain elements of Islamic law. The majority of these sought a minimalist application of Muslim penal law. The party congress in Solo, for instance, called for the banning of betting (pendjudian), liquor (minuman keras), opium (madat) and usury (riba). These demands appeared again in the urgency programme adopted in 1949, which added prostitution (pembatasan) to the list while at the same time calling for these social evils to no longer be banned but merely contained. Curiously enough, these measures appeared in the section of the programme devoted to the working class. Could this be seen as meaning that there was a desire to limit the devastation caused by these scourges in the poorer sections of society but to tolerate them elsewhere? It is hardly likely, but the way the poorest section of society was given priority in this regard is nonetheless striking. The outlawing of those particular social evils and the measured penal sanctions which were liable to be applied posed no real problem in a democratic state.
However, the banning of adultery, mentioned in 1946, was a much more sensitive topic, as sharia law specified a very heavy penalty for women—stoning. The Masyumi programme, however, did not set out any sanction, and subsequent comments by the party leadership indicated that if a punishment was to be chosen for this wrong, it would be done in accordance with the mores of the time. In any case, the question did not subsequently arise, since the issue was soon to disappear from the party programme.

Apart from a few measures directly inspired by the Koran, references to Islamic law remained very vague. One of the measures adopted in 1946 spoke of “applying the laws of Islam as widely and as completely as possible in society and in people’s way of life.” Yet again, however, the part of the programme this demand appeared in meant that its significance was reduced: it figured in a section which concerned neither political measures nor social measures, but was devoted to religion. Is this yet again a sign of the desire to establish a de facto separation between social issues and religious issues, or does it merely reveal a certain amateurism in the party’s drafting of official documents? The lack of structural organisation in the Masyumi party would lend us to think that the second hypothesis is more likely.

Let us look finally at the question of which Islamic norms were to be referred to. There appeared to be no real debate on this question: the Koran and the Sunnah had always been presented as the unique sources of law. In accordance with the reformist tradition, no later text was ever mentioned. Masyumi remained loyal to the principles of the Muslim religion, namely that our society must constitute a group of believers devoted to God, in other words one who obeys the laws and rules laid out by Allah in the Koran, and who are guided by the way the Prophet put into practice these commandments and these divine rules, that is to say by taking into consideration the situation and one’s epoch.

45 See infra, Chapter 6.
46 The 1952, Tafsir Azas, for example, referred to “the teachings of Islam as they are defined by the Koran and the Sunnah” (“adjaran dan hukum-hukum Islam sebagai jang terjantum didalam Qur’an dan Sunnah”).
47 Tafsir Azas, 1952.
The wording used here shows both the audacity of the Masyumi leaders in defining their doctrine and their caution in drafting it. Their audacity can be seen in the fact that their approach allows for some of the “sayings of the prophet” (Hadiths) not to be considered as literal sources of law. While Mohammad’s ability to adapt to his time was emphasised and was to serve as a guiding light, one had to be careful not to automatically include in Indonesian substantive law the rules he had adopted as a head of government.\(^{48}\) Caution needed to be exercised, however, as the wording was slightly ambiguous, and the subtle distinction just mentioned was perhaps not obvious to all the participants in the 1952 conference. Indeed, within the Muslim community, this point of view was not unanimously shared. The proposals for the new constitution elaborated by the Conference of the Preachers of Islam, held in April 1953, specified that the legal framework of the state was the Koran and the Hadiths. Because the wording of the Ta\(\text{fi}r\) Azas said nothing about the possibility of selecting from or interpreting “the Prophet’s sayings”, it left the door open for the Conference to adopt a literal application of the political rules of Islam. The resolutions of this eminent assembly, which was presided over by Daud Beureu’eh, the radical leader of Aceh, appeared in the preparatory documents for the seventh Masyumi party congress (1954), though they were not retained in the final resolutions.

The party’s programme for Indonesia’s institutions, as it was formulated in their official documents, appeared then to be the result of the conflicting influences mentioned earlier. The moderation and progressiveness of those who drafted the programme emerged from the text both in the very general, consensual tone of its proposals, as well as in the obvious references to the principles of government of Western democracies. However, this aspect of the party does not give us the full picture of its identity. Although the logic of Masyumi’s proposals seemed to evince a complete overhauling of Muslim law and a system which would allow the elected parliament to exercise an almost total latitude of interpretation of Koranic principles, no document clearly set out the details of this new system. Faced with the vagueness of the party’s official documents, it is useful to turn to the comments of the

\[^{48}\text{Certain Masyumi figures, notably Jusuf Wibisono and Rusjad Nurdin, echoed this interpretation in their writings, stating that the Prophet’s state should not be considered as a model Islamic state.}\]
various Masyumi leaders in order to find some useful insights into the party’s political ideology and its developments.

**The Project for a Muslim Democracy: Commentaries and Writings by Representatives of the Party’s Progressive Wing**

The resolutions and programmes adopted by Masyumi were often commented upon and elucidated by the party leaders. This was done on behalf of the party in front of various audiences (the Legislative Assembly, the Constituent Assembly and political rallies) or in the press, but also on their own behalf in various published works. Analysing these contributions to the debates with traditionalists, on the one hand, and with secular nationalists, on the other, allows one to better comprehend the ideological and political foundations of the party’s official resolutions. It also enables one to understand how the different crises faced by the party influenced the formulation of its political programme.

**Models and Counter-Models: The Thorny Question of the Sources of Law**

The modernist branch of Islam held a considerable amount of influence within Masyumi’s party executive. This was already the case before NU’s split in 1952, and it became even more so subsequently. As we have already seen, this was never fully reflected in the institutional proposals made by the party. Even after 1952, the party’s publications avoided the thorny question of the interpretation (ijtihad) of the holy texts, apart from a few carefully worded references to this fundamental notion. As they were wary of alienating the Muslim traditionalists, who made up a majority of the Muslim community, the party never officially rejected the legacy of the medieval schools of jurisprudence. In 1954, the party’s religious council (the *Madjelis Sjuro*) even published a *fatwa* stating that the party “honoured the madhhab.”

When party leaders explained their programme, however, their opinions were bolder and often went beyond the official party line.

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Without putting it in so many words, most of them presented the institutional programme of their party with a view to distinguishing it from other programmes which were inspired by political Islam. They wished to distance themselves from two currents within Islam: on the one hand, traditionalists who conveyed an image of rural backwardness (kolot); and on the other hand, wahhabite-inspired fundamentalists who represented a refusal to accept any modernising of politics. Jusuf Wibisono, who was vice president of Masyumi on several occasions, became an expert in this type of rhetoric. He dreaded, as did the party leadership to a lesser extent, the confusion of the party’s programme with the Islamic states of the Middle Ages and their contemporary descendants, notably Saudi Arabia.

In April 1945, he published two articles in *Hikmah* devoted to Masyumi’s political ideology. These were meant to be a response to the criticisms that were so often levelled at the party. He took a particularly hard stance against the commonly held idea that “religion could not constitute the bedrock of a modern state”. He recognised, nonetheless, why many people held this point of view—European economic development had begun with the emergence of a separation between church and state. Moreover, the Muslim world had fallen behind the West economically, apart from Turkey which was the only country to have clearly separated Islam from the state. Although it was impossible to contest these facts, Wibisono maintained that the conclusions drawn from them were based on a complete misunderstanding, for it was not the Muslim religion which explained this lack of development; it was, “on the contrary, precisely because Muslims did not follow the teachings of Islam” that such stagnation existed. He explained that:

> According to the interpretation of progressive Muslims, for example, the form of government wished for by Islam is a republic and not an absolutist monarchy. If a state is established as an absolute monarchy, it runs contrary to the aspirations of Islam.\(^{51}\)

A few months later, during a Masyumi rally in Yogyakarta, Wisibono repeated the same arguments more forcefully, saying that the Muslim community, according to him, had been living for several centuries contrary to the teachings of the Koran. To further this argument, he

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50 *Hikmah*, 3 and 10 April 1954.
51 Ibid.
made reference to the writings of Schnouck Hurgronje, the illustrious Dutch Islamicist, who explained in one of his works that the umma had abandoned its principles. It was not that the Koran was not being read and recited, said Wibisono; the problem was rather that the sacred text was being referred to blindly “without any real reflection on its meaning.”

The causal connection made between the separation of religion and state on the one hand, and progressive politics and democracy, on the other, was an idea that Masyumi fought relentlessly against for several years. The first argument they used was of a religious nature, namely that Islam did not recognise such a separation, as it was a “complete way of life” (nizam). However, as they were aware that this simple observation was of limited use, they developed the idea further, saying that Islam was indispensable as the moral cornerstone of political life and of the state. Some wily nationalists suggested that as it was something pure, religion should not mingle (dicampur) with politics which, by essence, was impure. Jusuf Wisibono turned this argument back on his opponents, however, saying that politics would be purified by contact with religious principles. He went on to say that the state had to be founded on a set of morals (kesusilaan) so as not to be in danger of becoming too authoritarian, and that the principle source of morality was religion “no matter which religion, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity or other religions”. This well-meaning universalism, which was typical of Masyumi’s attitude at a time when it was presenting itself as the defender of all religions, was nonetheless tempered by a reminder that “in Islam, religion and politics make up a whole and cannot be separated from one another.” Wibisono insinuated in his article that other religions which could make this distinction would be able to flourish without impediment in a state governed according to the principles of Islam, and he was joined in this point of view by other Masyumi leaders. It was then in the name of Islam that the Masyumi leadership consistently declared that the state it envisaged

52 Abadi, 10 July 1954.

53 Masyumi leaders often repeated this argument, a notable example being in a letter written by Mohammad Natsir to Prime Minister Wilopo protesting against the circular issued by the public prosecutor banning political discussions in places of worship. Abadi, 20 July 1953.

54 Jusuf Wibisono, “Ideologi Politik Masjumi”. 
would be democratic and would respect fundamental human rights such as they were respected in the constitutions of modern states.\textsuperscript{55} Sjafruddin Prawiranegara, for instance, explained during a meeting of senior party members in 1953 that the Muslim religion constituted “the surest of guarantees for democracy and for the rights and protection of recognised minority groups in society” because justice, which was the “source of that democracy”, was “the keystone of the Muslim religion’s principles (soko-guru dari pokok2 agama islam).”\textsuperscript{56}

Masyumi’s leaders recognised that the problem facing them was that the founding texts of Islam had often been misinterpreted by certain Muslims. This had provided nationalists with arguments in their campaign against the assimilation of Islamic laws into the substantive law of the country. In this respect, the party leaders were clearer in their comments than they had been when drafting their programmes. It became clear that the Koran and the Hadiths were indeed the only sources of Muslim law, but their instructions should be interpreted in such a way as to adapt them to one’s time. Consequently, the Fiqh books, which had been subject to heavy criticism, could not constitute sources of law.\textsuperscript{57} This refusal to recognise Fiqh as well as their rejection of ijma (here understood as the consensus of the ulamas) reveals the modernists’ underlying conflict with traditionalists. Natsir highlighted the difficulty of determining with any precision what constituted ijma. Was it the consensus reached by all the members of the ulama or just by a majority? Was the ulama community to be considered as the national ulama or as the international ulama? Such uncertainty, concluded Natsir, meant that ijma could not be taken into consideration in the construction of the country’s substantive law.\textsuperscript{58} Anshary explained

\textsuperscript{55} It being understood that these “modern states” were all “Western states”, as Mohammad Natsir’s speech in the 1952 Congress pointed out.

\textsuperscript{56} Abadi, 10 March 1953.

\textsuperscript{57} HAMKA described them as being “obsolete”. Harun Nasution, “The Islamic State in Indonesia: The Rise of Ideology, the Movement for its Creation and the Theory of the Masjumi”, MA thesis, McGill University, Montreal, p. 147. Isa Anshary explained that since the Muqallidieen period, which marked the end of direct reference to sources of Islam and the emergence of fiqh, the teachings of the ulama and the kiyai amounted to a blind repetition in front of people who in turn repeated what they heard without understanding it. See Isa Anshary, Filsafah perdjuangan Islam (Medan: Saiful, 1949 [2nd edition, 1951]), pp. 70–1.

\textsuperscript{58} Islam Sebagai Ideologie, p. 14.
that in his opinion, only the consensus reached by the “companions of
the prophet” (Idjma shahabat) could be followed (jang boleh diturut).\footnote{Anshary, \textit{Falsafah perjuangan Islam}, p. 68.}
According to him, the only area which the ulama had authority over
was the field of worship (fard’ain ou ubudiyah), an area in which there
was no real room for interpretation. Muslims, for example, had to prostrate
themselves towards Mecca three times (raka’at) for evening prayer
(sembahjang maghrib) but only twice for morning prayer (sembahjang
subuh) “without having to look for a reason why (tidak boleh orang
mentjari tahu).”\footnote{Ibid., p. 78.}
The rules which dealt with the relations between
men (fard kifayah ou mu’amalah ma al-nas), however, and which con-
cerned the interpretation of divine norms (ijtihad), clearly came under
the remit of a parliament elected by the people. Zainal Abidin Ahmad
and Mohammad Natsir stressed the necessity of having parliamentary
representatives who knew and understood the laws of Islam, but who
were also versed in the modern sciences.\footnote{Zainal Abidin Ahmad,
\textit{Membentuk Negara Islam} (Jakarta: Widjaja, 1956),
p. 231; Mohammad Natsir, \textit{Islam sebagai Dasar Negara}, pp. 29 ff.}
However, as the candidates were to be elected uniquely on the basis of universal suffrage, ulamas,
including those who were progressive, would not benefit from any
entitlement to sit in parliament.
Masyumi’s most immediate political rivals were the Islamic tradi-
tionalists, but this did not mean there were no divisions within the
party’s reformist majority over which religious norms to refer to. These
divisions were evidence of the ambivalent nature of Muslim reformism
in Indonesia. Isa Anshary, for example, the virulent party head in West
Java, was emblematic of the most intransigent tendency within the
party. He was a product of the Persatuan Islam tradition and was a
precursor of those tempted by neo-fundamentalism, who were later to
grow into the organisation called Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia.\footnote{For further reading on this matter, see Rémy Madinier and Andrée Feillard,
\textit{The End of Innocence? Indonesian Islam and the Temptations of Radicalism} (Singa-
pore: NUS Press, 2011).}
With his inflamed rhetoric, he was well-versed in vilifying the impious
(kafirs) and the unfaithful (munaﬁks) who, he said, claimed to love
Islam but in fact acted contrary to its laws. In his eyes, the world and
the human race would not be safe “as long as the laws of the Koran and the Hadiths are not applied throughout the world.”\(^{63}\) This political struggle to establish Islamic law was, for him, more about remaining strictly faithful to the holy text and less about interpreting the Koran through contemporary eyes. Jusuf Wisibono on the other hand, clearly followed the latter path, and he was fond of reminding his readers that

> The Masyumi group is composed of Muslim leaders who think that each generation is entitled to propose an exegesis of the Koran which is in tune with the situation of the day. If this were not the case, then Islam could not really serve as the bedrock of a developed country.\(^ {64}\)

Loyalty to the past was not an end in itself, and it was better, according to him, not to feel “bound too much by the lessons of the ulama who lived in a time far removed from our nuclear age”, but on the contrary to “pursue *ijtihad* in order to look for explanations and teachings which, in my opinion, are purer.”\(^ {65}\)

One of the stumbling blocks which constituted a barrier to agreement between the different sensibilities within the party was Islamic penal law (*hudud*). Some of its measures seemed to come from another age, and nationalists often brandished the spectre of those measures to win over voters. Given the progressive tendency of a majority of the party leaders, it could legitimately be expected that they did not intend to apply the sentences provided by such laws, but it was not always as simple as that. Certain sanctions written in the Koran and the Hadiths held a sacred value for a large part of the Muslim community, in particular those who were close to Persatuan Islam. This little radical organisation from Bandung, unlike Muhammadiyah, had always refused to envisage the possibility of adapting somewhat the sentences set out in the Koran and the Hadiths. Concerning the amputating of thieves’ hands, for example, Ahmad Hassan explained that the severity of the sanction was intended to frighten those who might be tempted by such

\(^{63}\) Abadi, 30 December 1953.

\(^{64}\) “Ideologi politik Masjumi”, *Hikmah*.

\(^{65}\) The allusion to purity was, of course, not accidental. This issue was a real obsession for the most intransigent adherents of reformism, who wished to give it a new, modern interpretation.
a misdemeanour, and that if it were applied in Indonesia, it would have the effect of dissuading thieves and thus promote the prosperity of society, as it had already done in the Islamic states where it existed.\textsuperscript{66} For the most moderate members of Masyumi, there was a lot of unease surrounding this topic. Yet again, one of the few members to mention it openly was Jusf Wibisono. In his analysis of the political ideology of Masyumi, he reminded his readers that this area of Muslim law was one of the factors which discredited its application during colonial times:

Within every state court sat a mosque official who acted as a ‘religious counsellor’. The presiding judge was obliged to consult his opinion and ask ‘what does your law provide for a thief?’ The counsellor’s reply was invariably ‘the cutting off of his hand’. His hand had to be cut off, whatever he had stolen. Naturally, this consultation was merely a formality and the amputation was never carried out by the Dutch East Indies government. The presiding judge was [nonetheless] obliged to ask the question to the mosque representative acting as ‘religious counsellor’.

Wisibono hoped that there was no danger of a similar situation arising in an independent Indonesia, and he shot across the bows of traditionalists by writing that: “according to the current interpretation of progressives, the sentence of ‘cutting off hands’ must not be applied to a convicted thief.”\textsuperscript{67}

There remained, however, amongst most Masyumi leaders, a certain amount of self-censorship which was distinctly visible in the party’s official documents. They clearly wanted to found a modern state free from any reference to past Islamic states. Their inspiration for this came incontestably from Western democracies, and, unlike successive Islamic states in the Muslim world, it pushed them to reinterpret thoroughly the sacred texts of Islam. In many cases, even the example of the Prophet could not be followed. However, the presence within the reformist leadership of a small but vocal minority who held up the Prophet’s era as an absolute model prevented any clear and cogent formulation of a radical new ideological departure.

\textsuperscript{66} Federspiel, \textit{Persatuan Islam}, pp. 145–6. Federspiel points out, however, that while Persatuan Islam maintained that the rules of Islamic criminal law were divine commandments, it never really called for their application in Indonesia.

\textsuperscript{67} Wibisono, “Ideologi politik Masjumi”.
What to Do with Pancasila? The Pitfalls of Masyumi’s Debate with the Nationalists

From the foundation of Masyumi in 1945 until the first session of the Constituent Assembly in 1956, its programmes regularly made reference to the principles of *Pancasila*, and the party’s official positions on this doctrine were regularly commented upon by the party leadership. The question of the adoption of *Pancasila* as the definitive foundation upon which to build the Republic of Indonesia gave rise to a debate which opened up a new ideological front in the battle between Masyumi and the nationalists. The contributions to this debate by Masyumi leaders had a threefold aim. Firstly, they wished to persuade the Muslim community that retaining *Pancasila* in the Constitution was not contrary to the party’s goals. Secondly, they wanted to convince the Indonesian people in general, and the non-Muslim section of the population in particular, of the sincerity of their stance by demonstrating that Masyumi’s projects were not in contradiction with *Pancasila*. Finally, they endeavoured not to allow nationalists to have an exclusive claim over the national ideology but rather to use it as a propaganda weapon for the benefit of Islam.

Throughout the revolutionary period and up until the beginning of the 1950s, party officials busied themselves with justifying to their members the sacrifice which they had consented to when independence was declared, namely that the state would be founded on the five principles of *Pancasila* and not explicitly on Islam. One of the most prominent arguments put forward in favour of this decision was the necessity of achieving national unity in order to defend what were considered to be two intimately linked interests: independence and Islam. A number of arguments were also advanced concerning the nature of the Indonesian state founded in 1945. All the party’s theorists agreed that the country’s institutions were compatible with the principles of Islam. Some even pointed out that the Republic of Indonesia fulfilled one of the requirements laid out in the first programmes established by Masyumi, namely the obligation for the president to be Muslim. Since his exile on Sumatra at the beginning of the 1930s, Sukarno had often been considered close to the Muhammadiyah movement. He became a member of the movement at that time, and his third wife, Fatmawati, was the daughter of the local head of the reformist movement.\(^{68}\) During

\(^{68}\) For an account of this exile in Bengkulu and its influence on Sukarno’s conception of religion, see Lubis, *Pemikiran Sukarno tentang Islam*, pp. 75–7.
the debates in 1945, the future president took the opportunity to draw attention to his Muslim identity, and also pointed to his desire to see Muslim ideals prosper in society. In addition, Mohammad Hatta, who was vice president and could thus be called upon to replace the head of state, was known for his piety and was close to most of the Masyumi leadership. Another source of satisfaction for the Masyumists was soon to appear with the creation in January 1946 of a Ministry of Religions. All religious questions, which had up until then come under the remit of various governmental departments, were now transferred to this ministry. It was the case, for example, of the appointment of penghulus, who had the responsibility of celebrating weddings, organising divorces and calculating the division of inheritances. The appointment of imams, which had previously been carried out by the regents, was also transferred to the new ministry, as were the supervision of religious education (for the public as well as for private schools) and the overseeing of religious courts.69

On a more general level, the enshrinement in the Preamble to the Constitution of Pancasila, whose principles included belief in a single God, the pursuit of solidarity and humanism as well as the democratic functioning of the state, was considered by Masyumi as a victory for the Islamic community. As Mohammad Natsir explained in 1954, “with Pancasila, the current foundations of the Republic of Indonesia are like extracts from thousands of sila which are to be found in Islam.”70 Certain Masyumi leaders pushed this idea of associating the existing institutions and their party’s ideals very far. Z.A. Ahmad and Mohammad Natsir, in particular, went so far as to state that the Indonesian state already fulfilled all the conditions needed to be called an Islamic state. In one of his books, Zainal Abidin Ahmad set out eight requirements necessary for a state to be considered an Islamic state. It had to be sovereign; it had to have a constitution and a parliament; be a republic and be founded on Islam, law and consultation with the people; and finally, it had to pursue a policy of peace. He explained that Indonesia, unlike the majority of states who claimed to be Islamic,

fulfilled almost all these conditions, the reference to Islam being the only one missing.\footnote{Ahmad, \textit{Membentuk Negara Islam}, pp. 114–5.} During a lecture given in Karachi in 1952, Mohammad Natsir declared that like Pakistan, Indonesia was “also an Islamic state…for Islam is obviously recognised as the Indonesian nation’s religion and spiritual conviction, although it is not stated explicitly in the Constitution that it is the state religion.”\footnote{To justify his argument, Natsir emphasised the fact that the belief in a unique God had moved from fifth to first place in the order of \textit{Pancasila}’s principles. “Sumbangan Islam bagi perdamaian Dunia”, \textit{Capita selecta}, vol. 2, p. 61.}

This insistence on the Islamic aspects of \textit{Pancasila} had a dual purpose. It was intended both to persuade the most ardent supporters of a political role for Islam that they could be proud of their representatives’ achievements, and to reassure the other wing of Masyumi concerning the party’s plans. This latter objective came more and more to the forefront as the elections approached. Party officials were convinced that their victory would depend on their ability to attract not only confirmed Islamist activists, but also both Muslims and non-Muslims who seemed uneasy about the political role of Islam. The party’s programmes and resolutions were thus cleansed of all egregious proposals which might wound the sensibilities of potential electors. Likewise, there was a reassuring character to the public statements made by party leaders, who had been forced by their opponents’ brandishing of the spectre of an Islamic state to adopt a prudent tone. In August 1950, for example, the bi-monthly periodical, \textit{Suara Partai Masjumi (The Voice of Masyumi)} tried to speak out against the systematic lumping together by nationalists of the notion of “Darul Islam” (“Abode of Islam”) and the fundamentalist movement led by Kartosuwirjo.\footnote{“The expression ‘Darul Islam’ should not become a sort of were-wolf (momok) in the eyes of non-Muslims, but rather should constitute a call to unity under the protection of a single, generous and just God.” \textit{Suara Partai Masjumi}, August 1950.} This was already a lost cause, however, and the party officials had to abandon this expression, which had until then been used quite extensively in their speeches. The separatist insurrection which had been carried out under this name had definitively tarnished the vast majority of the population’s understanding of it. The term “Darul Islam” belonged thereafter to Kartosuwirjo and his followers, and it now embodied the absolute
antithesis of a _Pancasila_ state, as Masyumi’s political opponents endeavoured to show.\(^{74}\)

Nationalist attacks against Masyumi’s policies achieved a higher profile following a speech pronounced by the head of state in Amuntai (Kalimantan) on 27 January 1953. In this speech, Sukarno advocated a national state (_Negara nasional_) as opposed to a state founded on Islam (_Negara yang berdasar Islam_) which, according to him, would lead inevitably to the breakaway of the non-Muslim regions of the archipelago, and would irremediably compromise the reintegration of West Irian into the national territory. This was a direct and frontal attack on Masyumi, as the expression used by the president made explicit reference to the party's programme.

Several senior party members reacted strongly to this speech. Mohammed Saleh Suaidi, the mayor of Yogyakarta, upbraided the president for having inconsiderately “thrown himself into the cauldron of ideological struggle” (menjeburkan dirinya dalam kantjah pertarungan ideology). For him, the two concepts could not be juxtaposed, as only a “national state founded on Islam and its laws” (_Negara nasional jang berdasar dan berhukum Islam_) was acceptable. The use of the word “breaking away” by the head of state was a sign of prejudice against the Muslim community because nowhere in Indonesia did exclusively non-Muslim zones exist.\(^{75}\) It was of course Isa Anshary, the radical troublemaker of the party who was to react the most virulently. In the weeks after Sukarno’s speech, he penned a series of articles and speeches which denounced the head of state’s understanding of Indonesian society, lamenting an attitude which was “far from the wisdom which one might expect from a head of state”.\(^{76}\)

\(^{74}\) A good example of this is the speech given by Sukarno in March 1952 to the civil servants working in the Ministry of Information. The president explained that “the vocation of the five _sila_ which make up the state ideology is to defend the unity of the different sections of the Indonesian people in order to turn it into a strong nation… The first _sila_ is formulated as faith in a unique God, and not in Islam as Darul Islam would prefer.” Quoted in Marcel Bonneff et al., _Pantsjasila, trente années de débats politiques en Indonésie_ (Paris: Editions de la Maison des sciences de l’homme, 1980), p. 87.

\(^{75}\) Mohammed Saleh Suaidi cited as an example the regional capital of the Maluku Islands, Ambon, where “according to an official report Muslims comprise 60% of the population, the remaining 40% being Catholics or Protestants.” _Abadi_, 12 February 1953.

\(^{76}\) _Abadi_, 11 February 1953.
It soon appeared to the senior members of the party, however, that the controversy was becoming a source of embarrassment for them. The outraged reactions to Sukarno’s provocative speech and the series of demonstrations which it caused were in grave danger of tarnishing the reassuring image that the party had worked so hard to construct. As a result, the president and vice president of the party, Mohammad Natsir and Soekiman Wirjosandjojo, both attempted to calm passions. Speaking in early March in Medan, the day after a demonstration attended by 60 Muslim organisations protesting against the Amuntai speech, Natsir urged the public to solve this problem between Muslims in the spirit of Islam, so that “those outside Masyumi cannot take advantage of this unrest in order to turn Islamic organisations against the head of state, who is himself a Muslim.”

Soekiman for his part carefully avoided any direct reference to the controversy. In the public statements he made following Sukarno’s speech, he limited himself to adopting the official position of Masyumi on this question, which was to constantly remind the public of the guarantees made to other religions by Islam. Beforehand, Soekiman and Natsir had succeeded in getting the party’s executive to adopt the same stance. On 16 February, the Masyumi spokesman published a communiqué stating that the party was convinced that the president’s speech did contain some wisdom, “whether we appreciate it or not.” For the party officials, rather than giving way to the cries of alarm which came from a community’s sense of indignation, which would mean falling straight into the trap Sukarno had laid, Masyumi had to seize the opportunity to pursue and intensify the pedagogical approach which it had initiated several years previously.

This complex battle concerning the place of Islam in Indonesia’s institutions continued over the following months. Sukarno, through

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77 Abadi, 5 March 1953.
78 See, for example, his press conference in Solo. Abadi, 7 March 1953.
79 Abadi, 17 February 1953. This declaration, which amounted to a stinging disavowal of Isa Anshary’s comments, caused a certain amount of turmoil within the party. Two weeks later, the executive committee published a new document “in response to the accusations by certain newspapers which had declared that the Masyumi leadership considered that the Amuntai speech was a minor issue.” This document explained that while the question it raised was certainly an essential one, it was necessary first of all “to eliminate the public’s misunderstanding of Islam as an ideology for society and for a state, in particular concerning the freedom of religion.” Berita Masjumi, 2 March 1953.
a series of speeches astutely designed to undermine Masyumi’s fragile unity, endeavoured to appear both as the faithful disciple of a properly understood Islam as well as a defender of the non-Muslim population’s interests, and hence of the cohesion of the Indonesian nation. On 13 April 1953, during the celebration of the *mi’raj* ceremony at the presidential palace, he explained that he had made his speech in Amuntai “as a Muslim”, and that the question of whether his Islam was faultless or not, whether it was a “100% Islam” or not—an expression regularly employed by Masyumi members—“would be determined by God”. As a member of the Islamic community, he invited his fellow Muslims to “steer clear of any exclusivist or isolationist attitudes” as they would be “in contradiction with the spirit of Islam”. He made shrewd use of a speech given by Mohammad Natsir the previous year to illustrate his comments. The speech, said Sukarno, “contained a message which every Muslim should reflect upon”, namely that a “genuine” Islam could not be reduced to the celebration of the birth of the Prophet (*mulud*) but also had to be faithful to the spirit and teachings of Islam. Three weeks later, the head of state once again demonstrated his ability to incorporate his opponents’ arguments. In a public lecture given at the University of Indonesia, he developed one of Mohammad Natsir’s favourite themes: that “Islam is not only a religion, but also constitutes a way of life” (*Islam bukan hanja satu agama tapi juga satu way of life*). In his address, Sukarno explained that people often held the mistaken belief that religion should not get involved in a country’s political affairs. This was an error because Islam was not only a “personal affair” (*suatu privaatzaak*), as it established no distinction between church and state. He adopted one of Masyumi’s classic arguments to explain that “contrary to what certain nationalists claim”, if Muslims held power in the country, the state would not become a theocracy because such a form of government did not exist in Islam. The president considered that nationalists were spreading a number of misconceptions about the Muslim religion. He maintained, however, that Muslims, likewise, frequently misinterpreted what lay behind nationalists’ aspirations. According to Sukarno, two different Islamic groups had, over the previous 30 years, held two opposing assessments of nationalism. The first,

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80 Abadi, 14 April 1953.
81 Like many of Masyumi’s thinkers, Sukarno made no distinction here between church and religion.
represented mainly by Permi (Persatuan Muslim Indonesia), considered that Islam recognised the legitimacy of nationalism as long as it was not interpreted narrowly. Persis (Persatuan Islam), on the other hand, refused any recognition of nationalism by Islam. Concluding his long speech, the president reminded his audience that in 1945, the unity of the nation had been threatened by the desire, albeit a legitimate desire, of each group to see their ideas prevail. It was only through the adoption of *Pancasila*, whose precepts, “as Mohammad Natsir himself agreed, did not contradict the principles of Islam”, that this unity was preserved.\(^\text{82}\)

President Sukarno in his speech demonstrated once again his political nous. By co-opting almost word for word the arguments of Masyumi’s president, he made it impossible for the party to rebut his arguments without running the risk of amplifying the divisions to which he discreetly drew his audience’s attention. Masyumi was the main protagonist in this confrontation between political Islam and the head of state, and this clash exposed the party’s internal contradictions, just as the debates over the 1945 Constitution had exposed the tensions within political Islam. In the eyes of a large section of the population, however, *Pancasila* remained an essential factor for the cohesion of the nation, and Sukarno was its protector, its incarnation almost, which did not seem to be inconsistent with his Muslim identity.

In May 1954, another presidential declaration put Masyumi’s leaders in an awkward position. It took place during the inauguration of a church in the Maluku Islands, where the heated debate over the state’s future form of government had led to an escalation in tensions between the Catholic and Muslim communities. Sukarno apologised to the audience for the acts committed by irresponsible Muslims, and exhorted young people to defend *Pancasila* as the constitutional cornerstone of Indonesia. This declaration was lambasted by one of the figures of the Indonesian Islamic Youth Front of the Maluku Islands (Front Pemuda Islam Indonesia Maluku), who criticised the head of state for his intervention in an ideological debate at a time when elections were about to be organised, and also asked him which Muslim community had instructed him to apologise to Christians. As the controversy grew, Masyumi intervened to take the defence of the president, with the

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\(^82\) Abadi, 8 May 1953.
local party leader, Mohammad Basir, indicating that he regretted the declarations of the Islamic Youth Front member.  

By this time, the party’s leaders had accepted, albeit half-heartedly, the strategy of appeasement recommended by Natsir and Soekiman towards Sukarno. Isa Anshary continued to take the president to task, but he took care to point out that he was doing so in a personal capacity and not on behalf of the party. On several occasions, he even tried to calm the debate. On 30 March 1953, he declared that the Muslim community “did not wish to create a new state”. This expression, which entailed a de facto recognition of Pancasila as the foundation for the country’s institutions, was subsequently employed by other Masyumi figures. With the elections looming, Masyumi came to the conclusion that the official ideology of the Republic of Indonesia appeared untouchable and that it would be wiser to swear loyalty to it; after all, its capacity to unite could allow the party to usurp some of its benefits.

This acceptance of Pancasila as a cornerstone for the foundation of the Indonesian state did not signify, however, that the party was aligning itself with the nationalist interpretation of this ideology. On the question of how to interpret Pancasila, President Sukarno had shown himself to be skilled at turning his opponents’ own arguments against themselves, but the party leaders did not intend to be outdone by this. They adopted two types of attitude towards the question of Pancasila, the first of which consisted in posing as the guardians of the true Pancasila in order to better resist any attempt by their rivals to usurp the five principles.

Once the Masyumi leadership had committed itself to making an effort at presenting its political theories within the framework of Pancasila, despite the tension and debate this created within the party,

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83 Abadi, 14 May 1954.
84 Abadi, 15 March 1953.
85 Abadi, 31 March 1953.
86 Mohamad Roem declared in April 1954, for example, that “the ideal of an Islamic state does not signify a break with our Republic. We do not want to build a new state. The notion of an Islamic state has been the victim of misrepresentations, owing in particular to the poor example shown by Kartosuwirjo, who strayed from the path when he decided to found a new state.” Abadi, 21 April 1954.
they could no longer allow the nationalist camp to be the only ones to appropriate the state ideology. In an editorial that appeared in *Hikmah* on 29 September 1954, the magazine’s chairman, Mohammad Natsir, and its editor, A.R. Baswedan, applauded the discernment shown by their political opponent. This was in reaction to a declaration made a short time before by Sukarno in which he stated that the national ideology could not belong to one party, and that the PNI could not present itself as founded upon *Pancasila*, as it would mean that “the others would not want any part in it.”  

Even Isa Anshary, who was reluctant to follow the party line set out by Natsir, was wont to criticise his opponents for their lack of respect for *Pancasila*. In a stinging diatribe against the Ali government, for example, he explained to Masyumi party activists that an analysis of *Pancasila*, article by article, led one to the conclusion that the members of the government “were not faithful to it, but, rather, were unprincipled *(tidak berpantjasila tapi nyataan bertanpasila)*.”

Emphasising the importance of *Pancasila* in Indonesia’s heritage was not the only aspect of how Masyumi exploited the national ideology. The other attitude that the party’s leaders adopted was aimed at offering a Muslim interpretation of *Pancasila* designed to explain to the electorate how it could serve as the cornerstone of a state which conformed to the teachings of Islam. For them, the ideology defined in 1945 was merely the outline of a theoretical framework which had to be interpreted in accordance with the teachings of Islam. The premise behind this conclusion was the fact that Sukarno, in a speech given on 1 June 1945, had moved the *sila* which exalted the faith in a unique God from fifth place to first place in the Preamble to the Constitution adopted on 18 August. This, they explained, was not done for practical reasons, but reflected instead a hierarchy of values. For Masyumi, the Constituent Assembly, by doing this, wished to crown the first *sila* as the “foundation for the four others.”

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87 *Hikmah*, 25 September 1954.
88 *Abadi*, 30 December 1953.
89 Bonnef et al., *Pantsjasila, trente années de débats politiques en Indonésie*, pp. 22, 28.
90 An expression often employed by Masyumi’s leaders. See, for example, A.R. Daswedan’s article entitled “Who Has Really Become the Enemy of Pancasila?”. *Abadi*, 1 June 1956.
theorists used this idea as a starting point to develop a message presenting Pancasila as a “receptacle” (wadah) to be filled. This interpretation of the national ideology adopted one of President Sukarno’s arguments that every political movement should take part in the definition of Pancasila. It allowed Mohammad Natsir, in May 1954, to assert his party’s attachment to the five principles, but at the same time to suggest the limits of this attachment:

In the eyes of a Muslim, the wording of Pancasila is not perceived in principle as a ‘foreign thing’ to which he must be opposed. He recognises in it the reflection of part of what he already sees around him. That does not mean, by the same token, that this Pancasila is the same thing as a hymn or that it embraces all the teachings of Islam. So long as Pancasila contains the goals of the Muslim religion, we, Muslims, in order to accomplish these virtues, will not, in all sincerity, want to see it abandoned. In a land steeped in Islam, Pancasila will flourish. Let us hope that this Pancasila, which was launched around nine years ago as a formulation of five aspirations but whose substance has yet to be fleshed out, will not materialise over time into something which is opposed to the Koranic principles.91

Islamic Democracy at an Impasse: The Debates at the Constituent Assembly (1957–59)

After the elections of 1955, the party’s resolutions touched less often on the question of the country’s institutions, which was now in the hands of the Constituent Assembly. The congress of 1956, however, reflected the hardening of Masyumi’s position on this issue. After the Constituent Assembly elections, the party’s message became noticeably more radical. While the party declared that it was now up to the Assembly to determine the foundations of the state, Masyumi’s eighth congress, held in Bandung in 1956, also recalled the party’s demands, namely that “Islam be decreed the absolute foundation of the Republic of Indonesia” and that “the Muslim religion be confirmed as a general source of law for the Republic of Indonesia.”

As for the last party congress held in Yogyakarta in April 1959, all that was left for it to do was note the Constituent Assembly’s failure and to regret that the government had not given it the time to accomplish its task. The resolutions with respect to institutional questions were all devoted to the issue of the day: the return to the 1945 Constitution. The party’s representatives were mainly concerned with showing that the Dwitunggal was indispensable in order for the new regime to function properly. The party put forward no other demand related to Islam and contented itself with pointing out that the Muslim community should play a stabilising role in the country.\(^{92}\)

An “Island Lost in the Middle of Choppy Waters”: The Political Conditions which Led to the Party’s Intransigence

As a result of the party’s decision to adopt more moderate positions, which ultimately led to it being punished at the polls, its leadership, as we have already seen, came under pressure from the party’s rank and file. The balance of power thrown up by the election left Masyumi with little hope in the short term. The party’s Islamic identity, which had rarely been highlighted during the campaign, became the rallying point for its new strategy. This new approach consisted in establishing itself as the clear leader of the Muslim parties in the Constituent Assembly and trying to obtain the recognition in the new constitution which it had failed to secure in the elections. This strategy of confronting the supporters of a state founded on Pancasila soon revealed itself to be fruitless; it did, however, allow the party’s deputies to clarify their demands concerning the country’s future institutions.

The Constituent Assembly was elected in December 1955 and inaugurated on 10 November 1956. During the two and a half years of its lifetime, it held seven plenary sessions, each lasting two to three weeks. It was convened for the last time on 2 June 1959, and on 7 July, the Assembly was officially dissolved by presidential decree. During its proceedings, the Constituent Assembly succeeded in adopting a certain number of resolutions concerning the nature of the state, its symbols and its protection of human rights. Apart from these provisions, which for the most part incorporated decisions already adopted in 1945 and reaffirmed by the country’s two subsequent constitutions,

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\(^{92}\) See infra, Chapter 4.
the Assembly made no significant progress on the question of the country’s institutions. It hit a stumbling block early on during the two sessions which took place in 1957 and which were devoted to the definition of the foundations—or philosophy—of the state (Dasar Negara).

The 514 members of the Constituent Assembly very rapidly split into three factions of varying size. The largest group was composed of supporters of Pancasila; it comprised the representatives of the PNI (116 deputies), its nationalist allies (the IPKI with 8 deputies and GPPS with 5), the Christian parties (16 deputies from Parkindo and 10 from the Catholic Party), the Communist Party (60 deputies) and its affiliated movements (such as Republik Proklamsi with 20 deputies), the PSI (10 deputies) and the Chinese party, Baperki (2 deputies) as well as a certain number of regional movements, making up a total of 274 seats. Islam’s supporters were made up of the 112 Masyumi representatives, NU’s 91 representatives, the 16 deputies belonging to the PSII and Perti’s seven seats, as well as four regional movements such as the Gerakan Pilihan Sunda (Sudanese Election Movement) which held one seat each, giving a total of 230 seats. The 10 remaining members in the Assembly were from three small parties: Partai Buruh, Partai Murba and Acoma. They made up a small group claiming to be the guardians of the spirit of 17 August 1945 and they campaigned, in the name of a proletarian doctrine, for an “economic and social foundation” to the state. Its small number of supporters meant that this original ideology did not carry much weight in the Assembly debates; moreover, the other two factions each claimed that its essential principles were already contained in their programmes. They took on a more important role from 1958 onwards, however, as the official representatives of Sukarno. They defended the “presidential conception”, campaigned for the adoption of “Guided Democracy”, and were among the few deputies to support the government’s proposals.93

The three groups did not change their positions one iota during the debates, and indeed the antagonism between them gradually worsened. At the close of the third session on 6 December 1957, the deputies merely adopted a preliminary report drawn up by an ad hoc

preparatory committee, chaired by Masyumi’s Kasman Singodimedjo, and invited the committee to pursue its work. From then on, no further significant progress was noted. The majority of the debates centred on the definition of the philosophy of the state (Dasar Negara), which the Assembly devoted three sessions to. The one matter that the various groups agreed on was that this question would effectively determine the entire institutional apparatus of the state. For want of being able to settle this essential question, however, the Assembly fell back on more consensual issues. In 1958, it defined the form of government, which was to be republican approved the provisions concerning the nation’s symbols, such as the flag and the national anthem and confirmed that the country’s language was to be Indonesian and its capital Jakarta. It also adopted 19 articles protecting human rights. The satisfaction expressed on behalf of the Assembly by its speaker, Jusuf Wibisono, masked an almost total failure, however. From the beginning of 1959, the Constituent Assembly lost any control it had over its own order of business, as it merely reacted to the various government initiatives motivated by Sukarno’s desire to revive the 1945 Constitution. A large majority of deputies were opposed to this proposal, and the government responded by making a few concessions, notably the agreement to take into account the provisions already voted. However, the Assembly’s opposition was confirmed in three consecutive votes, on 30 May, 1 and 2 June 1959, which effectively led to its dissolution.

Due to the balance of power which existed in the Assembly, the determining factor in its debates was whether the Muslim bloc and the Pancasila group could come to an agreement. The political configuration in the Assembly meant that the two groups were condemned to cooperate with each other, as in order to be adopted a proposal needed to receive a two-thirds majority. However, from the outset, the two sides were completely unable to come to an understanding, with both sides advancing similar arguments to justify their refusal to compromise. On the nationalist side, Pancasila was portrayed as a combination

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94 The report recommended that the state’s philosophy should be established in accordance with the particularities of the Indonesian state; be inspired by the 1945 Revolution; guarantee the system of consultations (muwasharah) as the basis for resolving state affairs; guarantee the freedom of religion and worship; and guarantee the principles of humanity, of an open form of nationalism and of social justice. *Tentang dasar Negara Republik Indonesia dalam Konstituante, 1958*, vol. 1, p. 166.
of all of Indonesia’s existing schools of thought, and it was argued that this original quality made it the only ideology liable to guarantee the unity of the nation. Given that they had won the most number of seats in the Assembly, the nationalists intended on maintaining the status quo adopted in 1945, which, they reminded their fellow deputies, had been rubberstamped by the Muslim representatives. The supporters of Islam, on the other hand, had quite another view of things. From an early stage, Masyumi’s representatives, who were able to influence the debates considerably, demonstrated a rather peculiar state of mind. Breaking with the moderate line and the conciliatory tone which their party had adopted during the election campaign, they showed themselves from the outset to be hostile to any compromise.

There are several reasons which explain this new state of mind. The first of these is the euphoria created by the solidarity which the Muslim parties had rediscovered after years of in-fighting. This unity, which was often in stark contrast to the political manoeuvrings going on at that time, remained solid throughout the Assembly’s lifetime. The Islamic parties constituted a genuine political bloc, and the Masyumi press took every opportunity to remind its readers of this. The second reason was linked to Masyumi’s electoral misfortunes, which had been put down to the conciliatory strategy which Natsir had succeeded in imposing up until election day. The Masyumi president’s policy was now being contested within the party, and he gave Isa Anshary and Kasman Singodimedjo, two advocates of a more radical approach, complete freedom to enter the fray against the nationalist camp. The desire to be seen to give no ground to the nationalist camp came from the need to give the party a new impetus. The Constituent Assembly was a setting tailor-made for this: its location in Bandung, four hours by train from the hectic atmosphere of the capital, gave it the feeling of being somewhat outside of time. It was, according to Natsir, “like an island lost in the middle of the choppy waters of politics…traniquis in undus” a place conducive to endless debates which, it was hoped, would bring a comprehensive solution to the political problems which the inconclusive result of the elections had left unresolved.95

This intransigence was not exclusive to Masyumi, nor indeed to the leaders of political Islam in general. In fact, it was one of the common points shared by the entire Assembly. Amongst Masyumi’s

95 Ibid., p. 111.
representatives, however, this attitude was clearly a strategic choice. For the party, the Constituent Assembly’s role was to make a clean sweep of the agreements which had been made since 1945; all of the country’s institutional questions which had been settled were now to be put back on the table. The painfully wrought compromise reached in 1945 and which nationalists wished to use as a starting point for the Assembly’s debates could no longer, in the eyes of Masyumi, be used as an undisputed model.

New Attitudes towards Pancasila

Contrary to the conciliatory tone adopted in previous years towards Pancasila, Masyumi’s deputies, in their declarations, now engaged in a radical reassessment of the conditions under which they would be prepared to accept its inclusion in the Preamble. In their eyes, the Muslim community had conceded an immense sacrifice for the sake of national unity in 1945. Now that the country’s independence was no longer in the balance, discussions should be reopened, and it was the nationalists’ turn this time round to be prepared to make concessions. Although this attitude was new for the party, the underlying resentment had already been present. Some Islamists had never accepted the climb-down they had made on 18 August 1945. The intransigence of their position was due to their impression of having been duped by the nationalists, from whom they had received guarantees that the solution adopted—the withdrawal of the famous seven words from the Jakarta Charter—was a provisional one.

In their speeches in the Assembly dealing with that point in time, the Islamic representatives’ appraisal of the 1945 compromise was clearly dominated by this sentiment of having been hoodwinked. Kasman Singodimedjo recalled that the urgency of the time, and the need to confront the Japanese and the Allies had been the reasons behind the Muslim representatives’ decision to temporarily abandon their demands. Their three main requests had been the obligation for Muslims to put Islamic law into practice, the proclamation of Islam as a state religion, and finally, the requirement for the president to be a Muslim. He explained that these demands had been sacrificed in return for the nationalists’ promise to start work on a new constitution within six months.96 Isa Anshary took this idea much further and a part of

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96 A speech given by Kasman Singodimedjo, ibid., p. 187.
his marathon speech to the Assembly—the transcription is 70 pages long, without the appendices—was given over to a radical reassessment of the 1945 Constitution which was “the work of a few leaders and the choice not of a majority of the people, but of Jakarta.” Recalling the sacrifices conceded by Muslims for independence, he declared that the seven words of the Jakarta Charter:

…offered the Muslim community the opportunity and the freedom to put into practice the laws of Islam within the state which was about to be created. The way clearly seemed free, the Muslim community had the hope and the guarantee of seeing Sharia and the Muslim credo blossom in this world of freedom.  

For Isa Anshary, the Muslim community’s participation in the struggle against the country’s former colonial masters was inseparable from its hope of seeing its ideology triumph. The disappearance of the famous seven words had, therefore, “been perceived by the Muslim community as a ‘disappearing trick’ still covered in a mysterious pall…like an act of political fraud.” Naturally, the nationalists were, for him, the driving force behind this manoeuvre, but for the first time, he also criticised the Muslim leaders who had accepted this compromise:

The policy of tolerance, which was interpreted in a dogmatic fashion by Muslim parties and their politicians at that time, was felt by the Muslim community to have betrayed the hope and the future possibilities of Islam’s struggle. This policy of tolerance only led to liquidation and capitulation, which meant giving in and submitting yet again, without attempting to fight and to resist. It is an account which illustrates and demonstrates the weakness of the ideological struggle led by the Muslim parties and their politicians.  

This was going beyond a condemnation of the nationalist camp’s betrayal, and denouncing Masyumi’s entire policy of conciliation which had been initiated by Soekiman in 1945 and continued by Natsir. A Pandora’s box had now been opened and party members could openly express their refusal of Pancasila. Other party representatives plunged

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98 Ibid., p. 185.
99 Ibid.
into the breach, and in denial of the obvious, rejected the choices made by Masyumi over the previous ten years. Zainal Abdin Ahmad, for example, declared that Pancasila had in fact never been recognised by the previous constitutions as they had only enunciated five general principles common to numerous cultures. For these Masyumi members, the real debate was about to start, and this time Islam’s supporters would not back down. Once the Masyumi deputies’ objective was decided upon, they could only envisage one outcome, namely the unconditional surrender of the supporters of Pancasila. Was this a negotiating ploy on the part of Masyumi in particular—and the supporters of Islam in general—in order to put itself in a stronger negotiating position? The party’s obstinacy in maintaining this position in the face of clear numerical evidence (not a single nationalist representative had rallied to their cause) and the changing political context (the Constituent Assembly’s position was weakening daily as a result of Sukarno’s programme) tend to lead one to the conclusion that this was not the case. It is possible, then, in light of these declarations, to conclude that Masyumi’s entire political programme underwent significant change at this time. Although the discussions never dealt with the legitimacy of particular institutional provisions, the arguments used by the party figures to demand the inclusion of Islamic principles in the Preamble to the Constitution implicitly revealed a certain conception of democracy.

A Theist Democracy

Political Islam, which Masyumi represented, was in a minority in the Constituent Assembly. However, due to the requirement of a qualified majority—two-thirds of the votes—in order to adopt a new constitution, they enjoyed a blocking minority which they used liberally. In explaining their refusal of any compromise, the party’s deputies could have merely invoked the logic underlying the Assembly’s rules, which were the same as those used in most democracies, namely that as soon as the question of modifying the constitution arose, a qualified majority

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100 A speech given by Z.A. Ahmad, *Tentang dasar negara Republik Indonesia dalam Konstituante*, vol. 1, pp. 357–8.
101 One such example of this intransigence can be found in a speech given by Kasman Singodimedjo, in which he replaces the expression “a unique God” (Tuan yang Maha Esa) with the word “Allah”. Ibid., p. 168.
was required. It would not have been unreasonable for Masyumi’s representative to oblige the nation’s representatives to arrive at a consensus which would be sufficiently broad so as to give any constitutional reform indisputable political legitimacy. They only rarely ever availed of this argument though, preferring instead to use theoretical considerations to justify their refusal to compromise. By doing so, they allowed two important aspects concerning their programme for an Islamic state to be clarified.

The basic premise of their arguments was the need to establish a democracy within the framework of an immanent norm. Popular sovereignty was accepted, and even solicited, as long as it did not transgress the limits of divine law. It was in the name of this principle that the party’s representatives objected to the nationalists’ contention that the ideals of Islam were contained in *Pancasila*, a notion which all those who spoke on behalf of Masyumi argued vehemently against. The idea that there might exist a norm above their religion was unbearable to them because, as Kasman Singodimedjo explained, it was “impossible to consider *Pancasila* as a ‘superfaith’ (*supergeloof*)” and to see the “creation of Allah” subordinated to “the work of men”.

The question, then, was how to reconcile this superior Islamic norm and the laws which were passed by Parliament. Certain Masyumi deputies, such as Isa Anshary, did not bother to clarify this delicate issue further than by saying that “Islam as a principle and as law” held a solution “for all of humanity’s problems, for all nations and in all eras.” Others, however, such as Mohammad Natsir, adopted a classic reformist distinction, pointing out that with relation to all matters concerning worship, namely “the relation between men and God”, “everything which is not ordained is forbidden”. On the other hand, matters concerning “the world of men” were governed by the principle

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102 Ibid., p. 183.
103 *Tentang dasar negara Republik Indonesia dalam Konstituante*, vol. 2, p. 201.
104 According to Harun Nasution, Ibn Tamiyya was the first to establish this distinction between what concerned worship (*ibadat*) and what concerned the relations between men (*mu’amalat*). Mohammad ‘Abduh adopted this distinction and introduced the idea that while the Koran and the Sunnah provided specific rules about *ibadat*, when it came to *mu’amalat* they only gave general principles which man would have to apply to the circumstances of his life. Nasution, “The Islamic State in Indonesia”, pp. 127–8.
that “everything that is not forbidden is authorised”. For the president of Masyumi, “beside these rules which have been fixed and those limits which must be taken into account for the safeguard of humanity”, there existed “a vast area where man had to take initiatives, use his reason and his capacity for interpretation in all areas of life, in accordance with progress and the demands of one's time and place.”\textsuperscript{105} Natsir gave no details concerning the “limits” which were to circumscribe man’s freedom to reason and interpret. Kasman Singodimedjo followed a similar line of reasoning. He presented the practice of free interpretation (\textit{ijtihad}) not as a right but as an obligation written in the Koran (verse 27 of the Az-Zumar Surah),\textsuperscript{106} which was to be carried out, however, under the guidance of “the leaders of the people, the state and the government…before the people and before God.”\textsuperscript{107}

For these Masyumi leaders, then, Islam contained a series of norms, some of which should become the object of interpretation with a view to adapting them to the circumstances of the day, but others which could not undergo any adjustment. At first sight, the existence of immutable rules in the area of worship did not seem to raise any insurmountable problems. In Indonesia, however, the question of which text to refer to was the source of much debate. This was attested to by the confrontation between traditionalists and modernists in their shared mosques during prayer time, when certain aspects of the ritual were considered by some to be obligatory and by others outlawed.\textsuperscript{108}

Concerning political questions, the problem seemed an even thornier one. The contributions made by Masyumi’s deputies left two essential questions unanswered. Firstly, which were the norms considered to be absolute and to which the principle of democracy had to give way? Secondly, what body or authority could be charged with identifying these norms and ensuring they were respected, and where would it get its legitimacy from? Natsir refused to use the term “theocracy” to speak about a “state founded on Islam” (\textit{Negara jang berdasarkan Islam}) due

\textsuperscript{105} Tentang dasar negara Republik Indonesia dalam Konstituante, vol. 1, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{106} “And we have certainly presented for the people in this Koran from every kind of example—that they might remember.” Koran (XXXIX, 27).
\textsuperscript{107} Tentang dasar negara Republik Indonesia dalam Konstituante, vol. 1, p. 174.
\textsuperscript{108} One of the most important disputes over worship rituals is dealt with by N.J.G. Kaptein, “The Berdiri Mawlid Issue among Indonesian Muslims in the Period from circa 1875 to 1930”, \textit{BKI} 149, 1 (1993): 124–53.
to the absence in the Muslim faith of a hierarchical clergy who could act as God’s representatives on Earth. This was a classic argument, and it led him to define the kind of state which he aspired to as a “democratic-Muslim state” *(Negara demokrasi Islam)* or, to “give it a generic name”, a “theistic democracy”.  

In the absence of an undisputed religious authority, the second of the two questions referred to above seemed to be left hanging in the air. In reality, although they never openly admitted it, the Masyumi members’ attitude in the Constituent Assembly showed that they claimed for themselves a preponderant role in defining what constituted legal norms, thus sometimes violating the democratic principle which they otherwise defended. Given that the nationalist secularists held more than half the seats in the Assembly, a refusal to envisage the adoption of *Pancasila* as the foundation of the state obliged the theorists of an Islamic state to perform some verbal gymnastics on the link between democratic principles and majority rule. Kasman Singodimedjo declared himself to be in full agreement with Sukarno when the president denounced what he called *majokrasi*, the tyranny of the majority, a concept which, he claimed, Islam did not recognise. He added, however, that God did not authorise *minokrasi* either, “that is to say the pressure and threats of a small group on the majority!”

In the minds of Masyumi deputies, the majority held in the Assembly by the supporters of *Pancasila* did not reflect reality, namely the existence of an overwhelming majority of Muslims in Indonesia, which justified their demand for a state founded on Islam. Natsir denounced the paradox which consisted in the supporters of *Pancasila* wanting, in the name of democracy, to force the Indonesian people to accept an argument which flouted democratic values. Given that a democracy had to guarantee minorities the right to exist within society, there was opposition to Islam becoming the official philosophy of the state on the basis that non-Muslim groups also existed in the country. The president of Masyumi went on to ask “on what basis do we have to accept *Pancasila* as the philosophy of the state, when *Pancasila* also belongs only to one side which does not represent the other groups existing in Indonesia?”

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109 Tentang dasar negara Republik Indonesia dalam Konstituante, vol. 1, p. 130.
110 Ibid., p. 183.
111 Ibid., p. 113.
By ceaselessly basing their legitimacy on the existence of a Muslim majority in Indonesia—and not on the number of votes received by the candidates who were campaigning for a state founded upon Islam—Masyumi effectively denied their fellow Muslims the right to complete political autonomy. Natsir was astute enough to base his criticism of a secularist vision of society, which he described as being “without religion” (ladienyah), on examples chosen from Western history. He explained, for example, that one could “clearly notice the consequences” in the constitutional domain, “through the emergence and the development of the Nazi ideology”, which could be ascribed, according to him, not only “to a certain Adolph Hitler and the situation in Germany”, but “also to the existence of several factors in Western culture”. Natsir, as was his wont, quoted a European expert to support his argument—in this case it was Herman Rauschning—and pointed out that the most important of these factors had been “the carefree and irreverent attitude towards the rules of civilisation… and the setting aside of religion’s teachings.”

The decision to refer to a totalitarian ideology which had come to power through democratic elections was, naturally, not a fortuitous one. Natsir did not want to develop this point further, however, and it was once again Isa Anshary who voiced most clearly the problem posed by those Muslims with secularist aspirations.

Striking a much more religious note than Natsir, Isa Anshary expressed his surprise at having to “confront the Muslim community itself, that is to say the men who admit to being Muslim but who refuse Islamic law”:

Why, at a time when we are reading and remembering the divine revelation which commands us to…found our state and our society on the principles of Islamic law, why do a part of our brothers in the faith turn away from this call and from their conscience?

This turbulent figure from West Java then went on to quote the Koran to denounce the true nature of those unworthy Muslims.

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112 Ibid., p. 122.
114 “But the hypocrites say, ’We have believed in Allah and in the Messenger, and we obey’; then a party of them turns away after that. And those are not believers. And when they are called to [the words of] Allah and His Messenger to judge between them, at once a party of them turns aside [in refusal].” Koran (III, 47–48.)
before, a little later in his speech, warning them that God’s wrath was imminent. As for the consequences for Indonesia if the nation’s deputies—the majority of whom were Muslim—refused definitively to fulfil their religious duties, Isa Anshary remained ambivalent. However, his espousal of *djihad fi sabililla*, which in this instance was clearly intended to mean an armed struggle, and the ambiguity of his declaration that “for the safeguard of the mother country, the only way to guarantee the security of the state and the nation’s vigilance would be for the Republic of Indonesia to adopt Islam as its ideological foundation”, seemed loaded with menace. There was only one short step from the glorification of the defence of an Islamic state to the exaltation of an armed struggle to establish such a state. Although Isa Anshary refrained from taking this step, he nonetheless finished his address by stating “honestly and sincerely…that the seemingly endless problem of Darul Islam promoted by Kartosuwirjo, Daud Beureu’eh and Kahar Muzakkar could only be solved if the Constituent Assembly adopted Islam as the foundation stone of the state.” These comments allow one to appreciate the distance travelled by Masyumi since the party’s firm condemnations of Darul Islam during the run-up to the election; Kartosuwirjo’s movement, which had long been a millstone around the party’s neck, now constituted an argument in favour of an Islamic state.

Another representative of the most intransigent wing of Masyumi who had now been given carte blanche to speak out on behalf of the entire party was Kasman Singodimedjo. He also referred to the Koran to deny Muslims any latitude in their choice of institutions.

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115 “Indeed, those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers and wish to discriminate between Allah and His messengers and say, “We believe in some and disbelieve in others”, and wish to adopt a way in between—Those are the disbelievers, truly. And we have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment.” Koran (III, 150–151).

116 *Tentang dasar negara Republik Indonesia dalam Konstituante*, vol. 2, p. 205.

117 Ibid.

118 Not all of the rules laid down by Masyumi’s leaders were inspired by the Holy Book. Some of them, although they were not based on any particular source, seemed to brook no discussion. This was the case with the rule decreed by Isa Anshary to disqualify any secular interpretation of nationalism: “Islam would not recognise a nationalist movement or a nationalist doctrine if it was to be used to fight against Allah’s laws on the pretext of protecting the unity of the nation.” Ibid., p. 211.
O you who have believed, obey Allah [the Koran] and obey the Messenger [Hadiths] and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best way and best result.\(^\text{119}\)

For Kasman, the meaning of the verse was clear. The parallel drawn between the terms “believers” and “those amongst you” indicated “with certainty the obligation for believers to hold governmental power in order to guarantee the realisation of the word of God (Koran) and of the Prophet (Hadiths).”\(^\text{120}\) Man’s freedom to choose remained nonetheless at a much earlier stage. Man could “choose his religion, he does so freely for it was what God wanted but if he becomes a Muslim, then he must carry out what his faith commands.” The Muslim community therefore, had to “put Islam into practice 100% in Indonesia”. It was an “order from God” whom “we fear even more than our fellow man, whether he hold power or not, in Indonesia and/or throughout the world.”\(^\text{121}\)

\textbf{The Shura against Democracy}

Given that no earthly authority, even one whose legitimacy had been conferred by universal suffrage, could go against an obligation defined by divine will, the Constituent Assembly’s remit seemed markedly restricted. One question remained, however: what gave Masyumi representatives the legitimacy to be able to declare themselves the sole interpreters of the divine will? Most of them did not provide any clarification on this point; they presented their interpretation of Koranic rules as self-evident without feeling the need to justify their authority to decree what constituted an immutable principle and what corresponded to an adaptable norm.

The only ones to venture an attempt at such a justification were the more hard-line supporters within the party. Isa Anshary and

\(^{119}\) Koran (IV, 59). The references to the Koran and the Hadiths in square brackets do not appear in the original verse, but correspond to Kasman’s interpretations.  
\(^{120}\) Tentang dasar negara Republik Indonesia dalam Konstituante, vol. 1, p. 175.  
\(^{121}\) Ibid., p. 176. Kasman reminded his audience, shortly before, that if God had wanted to convert all of humanity to Islam, he would have had no difficulty in doing so, but that he had chosen to leave man free to convert or not.
Kasman Singomdimedjo both invoked the authority of organisations presented as being representative of the Indonesian Muslim community, although by doing so they unwittingly brought their conception of democracy closer to that held by their worst enemy. In order to justify the ban which, according to him, existed against Muslims joining organisations claiming to be communist, Isa Anshary referred to a long list of documents which he published along with his speech as an appendix. Kasman Singodimedjo chose to refer in his speech to the programme published by the Joint Movement Against Communism (Gerakan Bersama Anti-komunisme) in Bukittinggi in October 1957. The fact that the two men used a variety of sources to illustrate their points was without doubt not a coincidence. It illustrated their desire to refer not to one single authority, such as an assembly of ulamas who were qualified to identify and interpret the divine norm, but to a consensus agreed upon by several bodies supposed to represent the Muslim community. This procedure, which was designed to circumvent a strict application of the democratic principle, was indicative of a shift in the interpretation of the meaning of the term shura (religious consensus). Previously, Masyumi’s theorists’ reading of this notion was consistent with the classic reformist approach, which used shura to prove the existence of a democratic ideal in Islam by likening it to universal suffrage, the foundation stone of popular sovereignty. The various declarations which we have just studied show that this notion now appeared to have been markedly diluted to a much narrower meaning. The right to participate in the emergence of this consensus was now

122 A fatwa issued by the ulamas of Makasar in Sulawesi on 8 June 1954; a resolution voted by the Front Pembela Islam in Makasar which united all the Muslim parties and organisations in the region; two texts published in 1932 by the Al-Azhar University on “the cruelty of Russia towards the Muslim community” and on communism in general; testimony provided by a representative of the Turkestan people at the Asia-Afrika Conference in Bandung illustrating the “murderous terror of communism”; a declaration by Masyumi’s West Java branch announcing the creation of its Anti-Communist Front in October 1954; a fatwa issued by Persatuan Islam’s ulamas in 1954 on the role of Muslims in the establishment of an Islamic state; a fatwa issued by Masyumi’s religious council on communism issued at the Sixth Congress in Surabaya in December 1954; and the resolution voted by the Indonesian Congress of Ulamas held in Palembang in September 1957 demanding the outlawing of the PKI. 


confined to those Muslims who were aware of their obligations towards God. Those faithful who had neglected the teachings of their religion—namely the supporters of *Pancasila*—had no choice but to comply with this, and the enemies of God—the communists—had to disappear. After more than two years of heated debate in the Assembly in Bandung, the proposition defining an Islamic state could be summed up in the form of a syllogism: the only Muslims who were capable of identifying the Islamic principles to be applied were those who respected those same principles.

The Constituent Assembly announced for Masyumi, then, the end of a period which had begun in 1945. In November of that year, the representatives of political Islam had accepted, in response to the challenge laid down by Sukarno the previous June, to form a party ready to take part in elections. The arguments which they developed in Bandung were for the most part the same as those used by their predecessors in the KNIP. When it had become clear that it would now be impossible to draw up a new constitution, the final debates in the Assembly began to sound like the echo of the discussions held 12 years previously. Masyumi’s deputies, as well as the rest of Islam’s representatives, declared themselves ready to accept a return to the 1945 Constitution, on condition that the Jakarta Charter would be included in the preamble, as was initially intended. The term “Islamic democracy” once again took on the meaning it had in the first months of 1945, namely a regime in which the exercise of political freedom had to be oriented towards the accomplishment of an Islamic ideal.

**A Collective Failure: Limited Democracy versus Guided Democracy**

To only examine Masyumi’s demands concerning the new constitution would run the risk of shouldering it with all the blame for the failings of the Constituent Assembly, when in fact the party does not bear full responsibility. In reality, the failure of the Assembly to reach a consensus and the resultant involuntary sabotaging of Indonesian democracy was caused collectively. As we have already seen, the head of state’s denunciation of a Western-style parliamentary democracy, and the elaboration of his programme for Guided Democracy were not

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the consequence of the Constituent Assembly’s inability to draw up a constitution. Sukarno’s proposals were made officially on 21 February 1957, but they were merely the logical conclusion of what had already been alluded to in his speeches given on 28 and 30 October 1956, two weeks before proceedings in the Assembly began. From the outset, then, the Assembly’s deputies were aware of the president’s intentions.

What is fascinating about Sukarno’s political programme was the parallels which could be drawn between it and Masyumi’s. Just as their respective arguments in the run-up to the election on the necessity to give substance to Pancasila had far more points in common than either of them wished to admit, the doctrine behind the programmes they proposed from 1957 onwards was based on the same observations and the same logic. For both the president and Masyumi’s theorists, the Indonesian people had shown, during the previous elections, their inability to adopt the modus operandi of a full-fledged democracy. The Indonesian nation, which was divided by movements with divergent aspirations and which was in danger of breaking up, had become incapable of providing itself with a coherent ideology and a collective structure capable of implementing it. What the president and Masyumi both proposed—each in their own different way—was to take on the difficult mission of imposing a narrow framework within which the ideals of the nation’s various constituent groups could be voiced. In both cases, this was to be done in the name of values which were considered superior to democracy—Islam for Masyumi, national cohesion for Sukarno. What was most striking, however, in the final showdown between Masyumi and Sukarno was not the similarity between their proposals, but rather the incoherence of the Muslim party’s overall strategy. Masyumi figures—foremost amongst them Natsir—were capable of simultaneously developing two contradictory lines of argument in order to rebut Sukarno’s proposals. While within the Constituent Assembly they claimed to be ready to go along with Sukarno’s programme to bury democracy, outside it on the other hand, and in particular in the Legislative Assembly where all of Masyumi’s leading figures had a seat, they posed as the fiercest defenders of the very same concept. This Janus of Indonesian politics appeared, once again, as the conjunction of two conflicting traditions.

125 See supra, Chapter 4.
The desire on the part of the Muslim parties to present a united front in Bandung was no doubt conducive to Masyumi’s intransigence. The alliance of those supporting a state founded on the principles of Islam was established around a hard-line position, built upon a certain amount of one-upmanship between Muslim leaders, and consolidated by the opposition’s cohesion. The attitude of Nahdlatul Ulama played an important role in this regard. The traditionalist party, thanks to its ideological flexibility but also the ties which it had established with nationalist leaders, seemed to be in the best position to attempt to bring the two movements together. Moreover, one of its slogans during the election campaign was: “support for the ideals of a collaboration between Islam and Nationalism” (Pendukung Cita-Cita kerjasama Islam-Nasional).

The political ideology of Nahdlatul Ulama was based upon the Islamic jurisprudence which had been developed over the space of five centuries by the great jurists of the Sunni school. One of the essential elements of this doctrine was the very strong link established between order and piety. Only a stable regime, even if it was an unfair one, could guarantee the proper application of Islamic laws. This was summed up in the maxim, “a year of tyranny is better than a week of anarchy”. This principle inspired the two ideas around which NU organised its participation in Indonesian political life. The first of these, known as maslahat, meaning useful or beneficial, was to guide ulamas in their political choices: any decision had to be the result of weighing up the benefit (manfaat) which one could calculate it to give and the wrong (mafsadah) which one feared it to bring. The second principle, called Amar ma’ruf nabi mungkar—meaning “the preservation of good and the hunting down of evil”—was taken from verse 104 of the Al-Imran Surah. Following the tradition of their illustrious predecessors

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128 Principally, al-Baqillani (950–1013), al Baghdadi (d. 1037), al-Mawardi (974–1058), al-Ghazali (1058–1111), Ibn Taimiya (d. 1328); Ibn Jama’a (d. 1333) and Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406).
129 “And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful.” *Koran* (III, 104).
during the Abbasid Caliphate, the NU leaders drew from these precepts a form of political quietism which allowed them on several occasions to collaborate with nationalists.

According to Greg Fealy, NU had two objectives during its participation in the debates over the country’s institutions. Firstly, to allow the broadest possible application of Islamic law in the country’s substantive law—for matters such as marriages, inheritance and the payment and use of the zakat—and secondly, to guarantee Muslims the best possible conditions for the exercise of their religious obligations—employment law needed to be adapted to allow prayer and fasting during Ramadan, for example. The constitutional recognition of the Islamic character of the state, on the other hand, appeared secondary to NU, and unlike Masyumi, it would have been ready to find a compromise on that issue with the nationalists. However, the declarations of NU’s representatives in the Assembly did not indicate any concessionary attitude. Rowing back from their previously conciliatory attitude towards Pancasila, the traditionalists refused its adoption as the foundation stone of the new Constitution. They feared in particular that the vague nature of the first principle—the belief in one supreme God—would turn out to be a thin edge of the wedge which the Javanese mystical movements (kebatinan) would drive home to demand their own official recognition.\footnote{Feillard, *Islam et armée dans l’Indonésie contemporaine*, pp. 51–2.}

In some respects, the traditionalist party’s institutional programme seemed far more comprehensive than its reformist rival’s. As one of NU’s representatives Ahmad Zaini pointed out in his speech, their legal corpus was significantly broader, integrating as well as the Koran and the Hadiths which were to serve as the foundations to the constitution and to the country’s organic laws, all the Sunni jurisprudence (ilmu fiqh) containing most of what would constitute the country’s substantive laws as well as their principles of application.\footnote{Nasution, *The Aspiration for Constitutional Government in Indonesia*, pp. 85–6.} More importantly, Nahdlatul Ulama, unlike Masyumi, had solved without difficulty the thorny problem of arbitrating between the divine norm and the democratic norm. Its programme clearly envisaged the presence of ulamas within an upper chamber charged with verifying the laws voted by the lower chamber to ensure their conformity with what Islamic
During the debate on Dasar Negara, one of the Nahdlatul Ulama deputies, Ahjak Sostrosugondo, pointed out the contradiction between divine sovereignty and popular sovereignty. For him, the belief in God which was written into Pancasila should lead to the recognition by all Indonesian citizens of divine sovereignty. He went on to explain that in actual fact, however, an atheistic ideology—communism—had developed in Indonesia by hiding behind the principle of popular sovereignty—a principle according to which anyone was entitled to express their opinion, and could freely deny the existence of God. From this, then, Ahjak Sostrosugondo drew the logical conclusion that popular sovereignty was incompatible with faith in God.\(^{133}\) Far from playing the moderating role that one might have expected, the representatives of Nahdlatul Ulama exacerbated the intransigence of the “blok Islam” in the Constituent Assembly. While the limitation of democracy envisaged by Masyumi could be appreciated more in their attitude during the debates than in their speeches to the Assembly, Nadhlatul Ulama's members' view on this question was unambiguously clear.

If we look now at the positions adopted by the various Islamic organisations, Masyumi’s stance appears to be a relatively moderate one. The sole representative of the Sudanese Election Movement (Gerakan Pilihan Sunda, Gerpis), a Muslim groupuscule from West Java, demanded in his speech the recognition of “mosques as centres of state power”.\(^{134}\) The Masyumi leadership was clearly also prone to such one-upmanship, especially seeing as it was sometimes carried out by organisations which were affiliated to it. One of the party hardliners, Isa Anshary, for example, who was a Masyumi deputy as well as a representative of Persatuan Islam within Masyumi, used this dual status adroitly. Quoting a manifesto which had been adopted shortly before by Persatuan Islam, he reminded his friends that “the representatives of the Muslim community in the Constituent Assembly...would not accept their responsibility before God and before the court of history”

\(^{132}\) Fealy, “Ulama and Politics in Indonesia”. It intended to establish a senate composed of regional representatives, although the exact nature of how they would uphold the Constitution was not specified.


\(^{134}\) Ibid.
if they accepted “whether voluntarily or under duress” a constitution “which is not founded upon Islam (i.e. the Koran and the Sunnah).”\textsuperscript{135} It should be pointed out, however, that not all of those who spoke on behalf of Masyumi succumbed to the temptations of such an unyielding position. Mohammad Sardjan, for example, reiterated the stance taken by the party throughout the election campaign, and refused to enter into a debate aimed at defining an Islamic democracy which was opposed to the nationalists’ model or the Western version of popular sovereignty. For him, “democracy, like chemistry, knows no frontiers”; its principles were universal and foremost amongst these were the respect for the individual’s fundamental freedoms and multi-partyism.\textsuperscript{136}

On the whole, the Bandung Assembly was anything but the “island lost in the middle of choppy waters” which Mohammad Natsir had described. Here, as elsewhere, the formulation of Masyumi doctrine was subject to both the contingencies of the day and the rules imposed by an intractable two-sided confrontation. The speeches made by the party’s leaders sometimes sketch the outline of the theistic democracy which embodied their cause, but more often than not, they leave us with more questions than answers. Masyumi’s theorists never reached an agreement, for example, on the definition of an Islamic state; it was a question on which there were two often divergent points of view which converged only from time to time. The first theory was the most formalistic one; it followed the tradition of Masyumi’s revolutionary heritage and one could define it using the words of H.M. Saleh Suaidy who, at the 1949 congress, described it as “a state in which the state itself implements the laws of Islam for all affairs and all problems.”\textsuperscript{137}

This vision of an Islamic state was defended within the party’s leadership by a minority group whose main spokesman was Isa Anshary. It offered Masyumi activists a clearly identified objective, which would be achieved “when [within the state] the guarantee of a religious way of life and the application of Islamic law [was] affirmed.”\textsuperscript{138} The second conception of an Islamic state was inspired by Mohammad Natsir, for whom this notion referred more to a process than a result. For him, a country like Indonesia, which already recognised the belief in a single


\textsuperscript{136} Nasution, The Aspiration for Constitutional Government in Indonesia, p. 114.

\textsuperscript{137} Kongres Muslimin Indonesia, 20–25 Desember 1949 di Jogjakarta.

\textsuperscript{138} Anshary, Falsafah Perjuangan Islam, pp. 207–8.
God, could automatically be considered as an Islamic state. Nonetheless, the Muslim community could not be satisfied with this label and had to strive, both in political life and in society, to put the teachings of Islam into practice.

Given these divergent definitions, it is easy to understand the unifying role of the notion of a “state founded on Islam” (Negara yang berdasar Islam) which was retained in the various official party documents. It avoided the party having to agree on a precise definition of their aspirations, and this ambivalence allowed it to be adaptable to the changes in the party’s demands. A broad interpretation of this notion allowed it to serve as the basis of a very open electoral programme capable of appealing to the “statistical Muslims”; a narrow interpretation could justify the party’s intransigence at the Constituent Assembly when it called vociferously for the formal recognition of Islam by the state. This second, more radical, attitude owed a lot to the political circumstances of the day. It turned out to be in contradiction with the Masyumi network’s painstaking work, undertaken for more than ten years with the intention of bringing into existence the ideal of an Islamic society in Indonesia.