Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java

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CHAPTER 14

The Islamisation of the Javanese in three contexts

This book and its two predecessors (Mystic synthesis in Java and Polarising Javanese society) have chronicled a story of profound political, social, cultural and religious change in Javanese society. Chapter 1 above briefly retold the story to 1930, and in subsequent chapters of this volume we have followed it to the present. As I pointed out with regard to the period down to c. 1930,¹ so also for the period covered in this book, none of this was a predetermined outcome. Instead, we have observed the results of multiple historically contingent circumstances.

The process of deeper Islamisation is significant for the Javanese — all 100 million or so of them — and also for Indonesia as a whole, with its population nearing 250 million, the Javanese being the largest ethnic group in the nation.² A stereotype of the Javanese as being ‘really’ abangan has been shown to reflect circumstances that developed over barely more than a century (c. 1850s–1960s) within the nearly seven-century-long story of Javanese Islamisation. We noted in Chapter 4 above Geertz’s observation in the 1950s that it was, in his view, ‘very hard, given his tradition and his social structure, for a Javanese to be a “real Moslem”’.³ In the following decades, Javanese society changed so profoundly that such an observation became inconceivable.

¹ In Mystic synthesis, p. 221.
³ Geertz, Religion of Java, p. 160.
This Javanese history is also significant within a world context, as part of the universal experience of human societies over recent centuries. This concluding chapter will consider the significance of the Javanese tale in three particular contexts. The first is the general history of religions, where some common themes and differences may be seen. The second is the position of Islam in the contemporary world, where again the Javanese case can shed light on broader issues. Finally we will turn to the interaction between politics and religion, which has been central to this book. We will consider this in the context of how humans, as political animals, seek a better life, and argue that this represents essentially choosing between freedom and justice as antidotes to tyranny — each of which options carries its own risks and promises.

In the history of religion

We will leave aside the question of why most human beings in most parts of the world believe in religions at all. Here we simply accept that most do believe and look at the social, political, cultural and religious assumptions, arrangements and institutions that are involved in their beliefs. The Javanese story above has emphasised particularly the interaction between the religious and political spheres. This has not been a continuous, logically unfolding narrative. Rather, there have been twists and turns and surprises in Javanese history (as no doubt there will be in the future). The general direction of change, however, is fairly clear. The Javanese progressed from a stage of contested faiths and identities in the 14th century to a widespread acceptance of what I have dubbed the Mystic Synthesis by the late 18th and early 19th centuries. There followed roughly a century of increasingly volatile polarisation, culminating in the terrible violence of the 1960s. Thereafter, political circumstances facilitated a resumption of the Islamisation process interrupted for the previous century. The overall direction has been unmistakably towards a society that is more recognisably Islamic — marked by greater orthopraxy and orthodoxy.

Part of this Javanese story mirrors a more universal change in what religion means in personal and social life. That is, the transition from religion as principally a marker of identity, an assertion and enactment of cultural and social belonging, to religion as a matter more to do with personal faith and internalised piety. This has happened in different times in different places. Keith Thomas observes that in medieval England, religion provided ‘appropriate rites of passage …. Religion was a ritual method of living, not a set of dogmas.’4 In Java, there was plenty of dogma and mystical

4 Thomas, Religion and the decline of magic, p. 88.
speculation for the minority who were literate, but Thomas’s description would probably apply to most Javanese down to, say, c. 1850. This began to change in the mid-19th century with the appearance of the first purification movements and accelerated in the early 20th century with the arrival of Islamic Modernism. These developments brought increased attention to what people believed in their heart of hearts and were thus a cause both of deeper Islamisation and of the polarisation that marked that period, for a good many Javanese decided that they did not in fact believe the sort of ideas then being presented by the purifiers as the true Islam. If believing truly in the God of Islam necessarily meant not believing in the Goddess of the Southern Ocean or the village spirit — whose task it was to regulate the seasons and deliver the harvests — then the many who were called abangan just could not (or dared not) share that belief.

The position in Islam and in fact in most faiths (in Java as elsewhere) is actually something of a mix of ‘a set of dogmas’ and ‘a ritual method of living’. Many would agree that the strength of one’s internalised piety and true faith — while ultimately knowable only to God — is reflected in how (and how often) one recites the Shahada, performs the five daily prayers, pays the zakat alms and fasts in Ramadan, and whether one goes on the hajj if able to do so — the five pillars of Islamic orthopraxy. But there is more to it than this. Whether you state your intention to pray silently or aloud, whether you engage in tablilan and other such Traditionalist practices or not, whether you do dhikr or other Sufi practices, whether you wear trousers that show the ankle bone or not or wear a jilbab in a certain way, whether you have a bruise on your forehead to indicate the intensity with which you pray, whether you call your teacher a kyai or ustadz — all these things and more may mark not only your degree of piety, but just what style within the global Islamic ummah you adhere to.

Comparing the Javanese experience in the 20th and early 21st centuries with 16th- and 17th-century England reveals a significant difference in the midst of broad similarity. Both cases concern a process by which all sorts of local ideas about supernatural powers gave way before the more organised and institutionally solid force of a world religion. A similar development may be traced in the Catholicisation of the Philippines5 and in other cases in world history, including the long history of the progressive Christianisation

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of Europe. In Catholicism, however, there was a Pope who at least in theory commanded a world-wide hierarchy of divines. In England, there was similarly a monarch who was head of the Church and styled ‘Defender of the Faith’ (a title granted by the Pope to Henry VIII, who not long thereafter abandoned the Catholic Church that he no longer defended, but kept the title). Javanese kings, in their time, had similar pretensions to religious authority and employed titles such as Panatagama (regulator of religion) and Kalipatulah (God’s caliph). Such pretensions were often tested by dissent and rebellion and frequently had little reality behind them. Whatever the case, from the time that the power of Javanese monarchs was eclipsed by Dutch imperialism in the 19th century, there was no Javanese political power that could in fact wield religious authority, even though the Javanese monarchs (like Henry VIII) retained their pretentious religious titles.

From about 1830 to 1966, no political authority exercised control of Javanese Islam. During colonial rule, the Dutch were aware that meddling with Islam could lead to trouble for their kafir regime and thus sought to avoid direct involvement in religious affairs as much as possible. The Japanese encouraged religious leaders to support their war effort, but in the midst of the chaos of World War II their three-and-one-half-year occupation could not entail much political control of a religious agenda. The Revolutionary period extended the chaos, with no political authority in very effective control of much of anything. The first democratic experiment from 1950 to 1966 was a time of further chaotic politics — albeit with real progress on many fronts for the nascent Indonesian state — in which religion was intimately involved, but certainly not controlled by any political power.

It was only with Soeharto’s New Order after 1966 that there was again a government that made credible attempts to control religious life. This was the first serious totalitarian experiment — an attempt to control both the actions and the thoughts of the people — for a very long time, perhaps really the first ever in the history of the Javanese. Pancasila was drummed into the population, but in such a way that it was part of a larger Islamisation agenda within the regime’s social control policies. The regime’s aim was effectively to have more social control via more Islam (of a kind congenial to the government) and no Communism, and to call it all Pancasila, which the regime — which, indeed, Soeharto himself — would personify. Inefficiency, incompetence and corruption limited the government’s capacity to implement its totalitarian aspirations. We have seen how contested its religious role was from both Modernist and Traditionalist sides, but also how Soeharto achieved much of his agenda and in the later years won many Islamic leaders to his side. Considerable integration of state structures and
religious organisations was one of the fruits of the Soeharto era. At the end, Islamists in particular found the regime quite congenial. This was for the obvious reason that a government directing Islam set a promising precedent for Islam directing a government. Both Islamists and the regime’s leading elements felt threatened by globalisation, liberalisation and democratisation and by supposed global plots of capitalists, Christians, Americans and Jews, so their interests could be reconciled.

In the post-Soeharto era, Indonesia again embraced democracy. As noted throughout Part II of this book, in this era many religious organisations and movements remained linked to state institutions and had a remarkable degree of influence over state actors. We leave aside the question whether this was because the latter were pious or just timorous in the face of an obvious social trend — probably it was a mix of such motives — or in the case of lower-level functionaries whether this was also a matter of doing what superiors seemed to want done. Whatever the case, it remains remarkable that some *fatwas* of MUI should be treated by the President of the nation and the police as if they had the force of legislation or that police should sometimes act as allies of FPI.

In broad terms, the Javanese story reflects global patterns. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Javanese life was influenced by the Dutch colonial presence. This did not, however, prevent waves of religious reform originating in the Islamic Middle East bringing change to Javanese Islam, a process which continued into the 20th century and down to today. These waves of reform paralleled the so-called ‘Great Awakenings’ in the history of American Protestantism in about the same periods from the mid-18th to mid-20th centuries. Christian sensibilities were also strengthening in 19th-century Europe, which represented part of the background to the Christianising mission work that began to produce Javanese converts from the middle years of that century, thus breaking the nearly universal identification of being Javanese with being Muslim.6

In the years since the mid-20th century, Islam in Indonesia has paralleled a rising tide of religiosity seen in most faiths around the world, which confounded many observers. This was especially true of those who thought that they could predict how the ‘third world’ would evolve, who were confident that modernisation and secularisation were automatic bedfellows. These ideas were projected onto the ‘developing world’ as a matter of

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6 At this time there still remained some pockets of pre-Islamic religious belief among Javanese in more remote locations.
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certainty. One of the most-used textbooks of the time — authored by the major figures of ‘third world’ political science — asserted that ‘wherever the modernization process has had an impact, it has contributed to secularization, both social and political’.\(^7\) For the Americans among such analysts, even as they held firm to their ideas about the ‘third world’, their own society was proving them wrong by becoming itself more religious in many ways.\(^8\)

In the Indonesian case, there were specific political circumstances that facilitated this deepening Islamisation, yet its coincidence with a global revival of Islam helped the process along. The devout who believe that God directs things on earth may think it more than a coincidence that the Soeharto government’s initiatives in this area coincided with the phenomenal rise of oil prices and consequent explosion of Arab petro-dollars throughout the Islamic world. As Mohammad Roem said in 1977, ‘We have no idea how rich they are’.\(^9\) The Ayatollah’s Iranian revolution of 1979 was important, too, for it had a widespread psychological impact in the Islamic world. This growing religiosity was not, however, just something of the Islamic world, a matter of Arab money, Iranian inspiration or Indonesian regime dirgisme. In the United States — so like Indonesia in these ways, and both of them so unlike later 20th-century Europe — fundamentalist Protestant movements developed from the 1960s, spawning their own schools and right-wing social and political activism and eventually becoming powerful within the Republican Party. Presidents (not only Republicans) from the ‘born-again’ Democrat Jimmy Carter (1977–81) onwards, and other politicians, have had to make much of their Christian piety. The reasons for this remain unclear in the American case. Jacoby wonders how it can be that ‘intolerant fundamentalism’ has led to circumstances in which ‘so many Americans today are attracted to forms of religion that educated men and women were beginning to reject a century ago’.\(^10\) Yet it is so, and because it is so in places as far apart historically, culturally, socially and religiously, as well as geographically, as the United States and Indonesia, we must accept that we are dealing with a global phenomenon for which we have yet no satisfactory explanation.

\(^{7}\) Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman (eds) \textit{et al.}, \textit{The politics of the developing areas} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 537. In addition to Almond and Coleman, the authors were Lucian W. Pye, Myron Wiener, Dankwart A. Rustow and George I. Blanksten.

\(^{8}\) Cf. Micklethwait and Wooldridge, \textit{God is back}, p. 17.

\(^{9}\) Discussion with Dr Mohammad Roem, Jakarta, 3 Aug. 1977.

\(^{10}\) Jacoby, \textit{Age of American unreason}, p. 204.
Nor is this just a matter of the United States and Indonesia, or of Protestant Christianity and Islam. In other faiths, too, similar phenomena are apparent. Half a century ago, it would have been hard for scholars of Indian Hinduism to imagine the politicisation and extremism associated with its version of fundamentalism today. The growth of this general phenomenon across several religious traditions inspired the five-volume *Fundamentalism project* led by Marty and Appelby, several of the contributions to which are cited in this book. The parallels among these movements are striking. Generally speaking, they conform to Grayling’s description of them as ‘opposed to democracy, liberal pluralism, multiculturalism, religious toleration, secularism, free speech and equal rights for women. They … assert the literal and unrevisable truth of their ancient holy writings.’ All, he believes, ‘are determined to take control of the states in which they exist, and to impose their view of the world upon them’.11

Within this global phenomenon, there are of course Javanese (and Indonesian) as well as Islamic specificities. The former have been the main topic of this entire book. It is time now to look a little more closely than we have so far at the latter.

**In the contemporary Islamic world**

Olivier Roy’s book *The failure of political Islam* — first published in French in 1992 and in English translation in 1994 — still stands up well as an account to that time of Islamist political movements in the areas he covered. His fieldwork was in Afghanistan and then-Soviet Central Asia, but his book also discusses the Middle East, North Africa, Iran and South (but not Southeast) Asia. It constitutes a long interpretive and imaginative essay which has been highly influential. For Roy, the failure of political Islam was less its failure to gain and hold political power (although it is partly and importantly that) than its failure to change societies. ‘Islamism is a failure historically’, he says. This failure does not mean that Islamist parties cannot achieve power, but rather ‘that those parties will not invent a new society’. For the rich, the model is ‘Saudi Arabia (revenue plus sharia)’ while for the poor it is countries like Pakistan and Sudan (‘unemployment plus sharia’).12 He writes that Islamism marks the streets and customs but has no power relationship in the Middle East. It does not influence either state borders or interests. It

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12 Ibid., p. x.
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has not created a ‘third force’ in the world. It has not even been able to offer the Muslim masses a concrete political expression for their anticolonialism. Can it offer an economic alternative or deeply transform a society? The answer seems to be no.13

Roy’s subsequent book *Globalized Islam* (2004) could take advantage of events since the 1990s, including the al-Qaeda attacks in the United States in September 2001, terrorist atrocities elsewhere and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Here he develops further the concept (used but not clearly defined in his earlier book) of ‘neo-fundamentalism’. This is the *Weltanschauung* of those who ‘reject the idea that there can be different schools of thought and consider themselves the only true Muslims’. This ‘neo-fundamentalism’ is new, says Roy, because it is global in its imagination and rejects the idea of Islam being embedded in particular cultural environments — ‘the end of Dar-ul-Islam [*dar al-Islam*] as a geographical entity’. It deals instead ‘with a religion that is no longer embedded in a given society and thus is open to reformation’. A characteristic of such ‘radical neo-fundamentalists’ is their ‘bypassing racial and ethnic divides’.14 These are, in essence, the people whose epistemology is Revivalist in the terms used in this book. Roy records how such movements are hostile to local cultures and to Islamic Traditionalist scholarship, subject to ‘*de facto* political marginalisation’ and anti-intellectual.15 We have seen parallels in our account of such people among Revivalists, Dakwahists and Islamists operating in Javanese society.

Another powerful paradigm is conveyed by Gilles Kepel’s *Jihad: The trail of political Islam* (French original 2000, English translation 2002), which also deals with the Middle East and South Asia. This argues that terrorism was the outgrowth of political failure and its attendant frustrations, but that embracing terrorism only hastened the decline of ‘political Islam’, essentially by alienating the pious middle classes who are crucial to the success of any political movement. Kepel argues that ‘the waning of the [Islamist] movement’s capacity for political mobilisation explains why such spectacular and devastating new forms of terrorism have now been visited on the American homeland. … September 11 was an attempt to reverse a process in decline, with a paroxysm of destructive violence.’16 The Afghan

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13 Ibid., p. 131.
15 Ibid., pp. 4, 35, 155, 259.
jihad was a central episode, producing veterans who scattered globally as ‘the free electrons of jihad’, several of whom we have encountered amongst the Javanese in this book.

Our study of the history of Islamisation among the Javanese has some obvious parallels with these studies (and, of course, with others) but there are important departures that have implications for our understanding of the global influence of Islam in today’s world. Contrary to the views of these scholars, it is hard for us to speak of a failure of Islam (political or otherwise) amongst the Javanese except in two rather narrow respects. The first is the failure of explicitly Islamist political parties to gain power. Masyumi was a major political player during the first democratic experiment of the 1950s but circumstances precluded any real Islamising agenda, as we saw in Chapter 4. Masyumi was banned by Sukarno and remained banned under Soeharto. Thereafter, Islamists failed to gain power either by cuddling up to the disintegrating Soeharto regime or through the ballot box in the post-Soeharto era. The second failure is that of violent organisations such as Darul Islam or JI to take power (a highly unlikely outcome anyway) or to destabilise the country or society. But it does not seem to me possible to speak of the failure of Islam when multiple Islamising agendas, resting on varying epistemologies and socio-political agendas, have dramatically increased the influence of Islamically derived ideas and standards on Javanese society, culture and religion. And on its politics.

The relationship between the political realm on the one hand and the religious, social and cultural realms on the other has been central throughout this book and I hope that readers have agreed with me about its centrality. In this relationship lie general issues about how power works that are not specific to Java, Indonesia or Islam. An excursus on this matter may be appropriate, for there is a commonly held myth which seems to me unhelpful. That is, the idea that a separation of the religious and the political is a specifically modern and Western idea, one that is contrary to the traditions of Islam, or of the non-Western world more generally. That idea suits Islamists just as well as it suits Western commentators who wish to depict Islam (or the non-West generally) as fundamentally, culturally and in other ways, so unlike the West that a ‘clash of civilisations’ (to borrow Huntington’s dubious term) is likely, even inevitable. But it is not so. It is true that ‘church’ and ‘state’ came to be regarded as separate sources of authority

17 Ibid., p. 219.
in Europe. But in fact the idea of two distinguishable forms of elites and their authority can also be found in non-Western traditions.

Political and religious authority and elites are conceptually and socio-logically differentiated in non-Western as in Western political philosophies and practices. To avoid confusion, we need to be clear whom we are talking about. By ‘political elite’ or ‘state-controlling elite’, I mean those who control the state, its apparatus, institutions and symbols, or those who are in competition with other similar figures to do so. Examples are the kings and emperors of previous days and their colleagues, and the politicians of our day — including politicians in parties that declare themselves to be religious, whether PPP and PKS in Indonesia or the Christian Democrats in Europe. By ‘religious elite’, I mean leaders who are defined, legitimated and/or inspired by their religious standing. Examples are priests in religions that have priests, ordained theologians in others, or — particularly in Islam — the learned scholars of the faith, the respected interpreters of scriptures who are recognised as such by their community. There are no formal processes by which one achieves such recognition in Islam, no doctorates in theology or priestly investitures. We noted earlier Ali Maschan Moesa’s account of the four criteria to be recognised as a kyai: ability to read the classic works of Traditionalist Islam known as the kitab kuning, popularity as a pengajian leader, ability to lead ritual prayer, and capacity to nyuwuk (a magical blowing of the breath to cure the sick). One he did not mention is descent from or authorisation by someone who is already regarded as a kyai. For non-Traditionalist leaders, to be recognised as an ustaz can be even less formally describable and more open to disputation.

18 Bertrand Badie analysed how this distinction evolved in European history; see his Les deux États: Pouvoir et société en Occident et en terre d’Islam ([Paris:] Fayard, 1997).

19 While Badie argues (ibid., p. 192) that in the Islamic Middle East a different concept of sovereignty evolved, he also recognises the existence there in modern times of two kinds of authority represented by the ulama and the modern state — what he calls ‘deux rationalités contradictoires’. Salim considers the question ‘Is there unity of Islam and the state?’ in Challenging the secular state, pp. 16–23, and answers that the idea of such unity ‘actually existed only in the period of the Prophet Muhammad at Medina, for about ten years’. See also An-Na’im, Islam and the secular state, p. 51, on ‘the fundamental difference’ between ‘political and religious leadership’.

20 The arguments that follow are set out at greater length in my paper ‘Religious elites and the state’.

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Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist classical traditions (all of them of relevance in the history of Southeast Asia) all distinguished between religious and political elites. The religious elites who were frequently the authors of the treatises may have flattered themselves that they were the superior of the two groups and devised ritual matters so as to make themselves indispensable, but there was no serious doubt about who was actually in charge. In Islamic thought we find a difference between the ‘alim (pl. ‘ulama’: the scholars, the doctors of religious sciences) and the za’im (pl. zu’ama’: the chiefs, leaders, military commanders and politicians) or the amir (pl. umara’: the commanders, governors and princes). Hinduism also observed such a differentiation. Ignoring multiple complexities, we may observe that (at least in theory) the caste system distinguished the Brahmins — the religious elite, priests — from the Kṣatriyas — the warrior elite, i.e., the politicians. In principle, kingship in ancient India was consecrated by the priesthood. But the religious elite was distinct from the ruling elite; the Brahmins were distinct from the Kṣatriyas, rather as the ‘ulama’ were different from the zu’ama’ or umara’ in Islam. It was clear that, even though the Kṣatriyas should have ritual validation by Brahmins to be regarded as legitimate and supernaturally endorsed monarchs, it was the Kṣatriyas who in the end were in control.

The distinction between elites and their authority was even clearer in Buddhism. Here the central religious institution was (and remains) the monastic order (sangha) which, in principle, should be entirely non-political. In principle, Buddhism was meant to be so devoid of a political role that it was difficult to offer legitimating rituals to kings. Hence, state rituals tended to remain largely Brahminical in South and Southeast Asia, Confucian in China and Korea and Shinto in Japan, regardless of how Buddhist the state and society were in other respects. Buddhist monarchs sought to demonstrate their piety and to gather merit, but it was clear that it was the state-controlling elite that set the tone of the relationship between sangha and power-holders.

This distinction between different kinds of elites and different kinds of authority has been clear to many Muslim leaders in Indonesia. We noted earlier in this book Wahid Hasyim’s 1951 distinction between the ‘clever’, Western-educated Modernists on one hand and the religious experts ‘who

really master Islamic religious knowledge’ on the other.\textsuperscript{23} He was drawing a distinction between the \textit{zaama} who led the Masyumi party and the \textit{ulama} (\textit{kyais}) of NU. Nowadays this distinction is reflected in the tensions and animosities sometimes seen between NU’s \textit{kyais} and the politicians of PKS or other parties that declare themselves to be Islamic in inspiration. It has also been evident within NU between the \textit{kyais} in the countryside and the Jakarta-based politicians leading NU when it was a political party or within PKB more recently. Within NU, which is no longer a political party in its own right, similar tensions can still arise between the advisory board (\textit{Syuriyah}) and the executive board (\textit{Tanfidziyah}).

Historically there are multiple examples of religious elites — and not just Islamic ones — attempting but failing to take power in a state. The most prominent example of a successful takeover is Ayatollah Khomeini’s 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran. We need to remember, however, that a decisive event was the decision by the army — a key state institution — to go over to Khomeini’s side, thus making the Ayatollah’s victory possible. Moreover, it has been argued that what then transpired in fact constituted a state takeover of the revolution. Khomeini’s personal dictatorship displaced anything more conventionally Islamic and the authority of the jurists was set aside. In 1988 it was even declared that Khomeini’s commandments were comparable to God’s commandments and that obeying the government was thus a religious obligation. Thus, argues Said Amir Arjomand, the consequence was ‘the strengthening of the actual authority of the bureaucratic state rather than the hypothetical authority of the jurist’.\textsuperscript{24} This view can be disputed, however, for the state and Islam (as Khomeini interpreted it) — that is to say, the political elite and the religious elite — subsequently became so entwined in Iran’s power structures that the distinction itself became difficult to defend.\textsuperscript{25}

Accepting the analytical complexity posed by the Iranian case, it remains generally true that it is the power-holders, the political elite, who set the tone of the relationship with religious elites and who decide how far the influence of those religious elites extends in political affairs. This is not some departure from Islamic (or other) traditions but a continuation of them as well as a recognition that this is how power actually works. As Peter Beyer

\textsuperscript{23} Quoted in Choiratun Chisaan, \textit{Lesbumi}, p. 99.
\textsuperscript{24} See Arjomand, ‘Shi’ite jurisprudence and constitution making in the Islamic Republic of Iran’; quote from p. 105.
\textsuperscript{25} See also Arskal Salim’s distinction between Saudi Arabia, where the \textit{umara’} (the ruling dynasty) has ‘effective authority’, and Iran, where the Ayatollah gained the ‘right to rule on behalf of God’; Salim, \textit{Challenging the secular state}, pp. 27–30.
notes, ‘religious authorities do not have at their disposal effective religious mechanisms to enforce their orthodoxies / orthopraxies. Instead, they tend to rely on the capacities of other systems, notably but not exclusively the political, legal or educational where such resort proves possible; and on the family socialisation of the young.’

We have seen how power-holders set the tone for this relationship in Indonesia. In Chapters 5–6 of this book we observed Soeharto seeking to create a totalitarian state in part by facilitating deeper religious influence in society. The Javanese were a particular target of this enterprise, being seen as the abangan foundations of PKI power. So wiping out PKI influence meant more thoroughly Islamising the abangan, a task in which success was achieved to a considerable degree. By the end of the Soeharto regime, the state’s earlier competition with older religious organisations was largely replaced by cooperation. There was even something of a honeymoon created between an increasingly ‘green’ New Order elite and Revivalist and Islamist groups — two forms of aspirant totalitarianism recognising their shared interests in opposing (as we noted above) the common threats of globalisation, liberalisation and democratisation along with those widely believed plots of capitalists, Christians, Americans and Jews.

This honeymoon continued under Habibie’s brief presidency (1998–9). Since 1990 Habibie had been the most prominent figure in ICMI and was thus one of the architects of the alliance of the pious middle class, prominent military figures and the regime. By the time he became President, it already seemed natural for the state and religious interests to coincide. The alliance could make little headway, however, in those tumultuous first months of post-Soeharto Indonesia. As President, Habibie did more to liberalise and democratise Indonesia than had been expected. Yet his term ended in the midst of financial scandal and denunciations for various of his policies, notably the excision of East Timor via a UN referendum and the subsequent scorched-earth revenge there by the military.

Abdurrahman Wahid brought to the Presidency (1999–2001) a Liberal commitment to secular politics, openness, pluralism and nationalism, which severed the connection between Islamists and the Presidency, but this was only a brief interlude in the story of that alliance. That is, however, an important interlude for our analysis, for it is consistent with the argument that it is the state-controlling elite who set the tone of the relationship.

Abdurrahman was President less because he was a senior kyai than because he was a successful politician. But he was also very ill, inexperienced, incautious and over-confident of his own knowledge and abilities. He was toppled by the parliament from power and replaced by his Vice-President Megawati Sukarnoputri (2001–4). She achieved little in any direction, but presided over a time when (as we noted in Chapter 7) there were dramatic developments that led to some quite extreme religious movements rising to public prominence. Her Vice-President Hamzah Haz of the Islamist PPP took opportunities to show his respect for figures such as Abu Bakar Ba’asyir and Ja’far Umar Thalib, thus suggesting that a restoration of the regime-Islamist alliance was possible.

During Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s two terms as President (2004–14), the national state effectively opened its doors to conservative and even violent forms of Islam. While the government acted strongly and effectively against terrorist groups such as JI, it said to MUI — as the President himself put it in 2005 — ‘We open our hearts and minds to receiving the thoughts, recommendations and fatwas from the MUI and ulamas at any time … so that it becomes clear what [are] the areas where the government or state should heed the fatwas from the MUI and ulamas’. This was so that the state could carry out ‘the task entrusted by the ulamas to the government … to wipe out evil [and] to fight all forms of evil and immorality’. Thus some MUI fatwas have been treated as if they have the force of legislation.

Whether in Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s case this arises out of political calculation or personal piety is uncertain, but it is possible that the latter explains his conduct as President. His biography published in March 2004, just days before the parliamentary elections and undoubtedly with the upcoming presidential election in mind, emphasises his commitment to Islam. There are three poems by him at the front, one entitled ‘Light of Islam’, which opens, ‘I bring news to you, O all humankind / of Islam, the spreader of mercy to all the world’. The book emphasises that he leads a devout Islamic life and is inspired by the Qur’anic injunction to command the right and forbid the wrong (amar ma’ruf nahi mungkar). ‘To SBY, all is very clear within the boundaries of religious doctrine concerning amar ma’ruf nahi mungkar’, wrote the authors. ‘All that is good (makruf) must be upheld, and that which is mungkar (which destroys) must be crushed.’ After going on the hajj in 2000, says the book, the future President invited a kyai to his own home to give pengajian. ‘SBY’s intensity in delving into Islam made

Illustration 44 A volume produced for the 2004 election campaign emphasising the Islamic piety of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, entitled *The Islamic-Nationalist face of SBY*
his discourse concerning Islam ever broader, until he himself gave speeches to santris [here in the sense of religious students] and ulama’. He was so proficient in quoting the Qur’an, claims the work, that it was as if he were a pesantren graduate himself*28 (which he is not). Whatever the truth of this matter — for we would be naïve to take politicians’ campaign biographies at face value — we may safely assume that the many thousands of politicians and bureaucrats across Java understand such messages. They therefore need find no conflict between acting in ways which they regard as pious and doing what they believe their superiors will approve of.

These are favourable circumstances for Islamic interests to advance their influence in politics as in social and cultural affairs, but it must be emphasised that this does not mean the advance of a single, coherent ideology called ‘Islam’. For, as we have often noted, the meaning and content of the faith are contested today, as they have been for the last 1,400 years (and as they have been since ancient times in other religions). How one knows what the Islamic revelation actually means is contested amongst Traditionalist, Historicalist, Modernist and Revivalist epistemologies. What social and political agendas that understanding leads to has produced contending Dakwahist, Islamist and Liberal projects. Traditionalist Sufis and ‘modern’ Sufis and opponents of mysticism find it hard to share common ground. Such contestations have significant social, political and cultural consequences today, as they have in the past. Roy observes how deeper Islamisation ‘is accompanied everywhere by an increase in sectarian and religious feuds within the Muslim community. Competition for religious legitimacy means also competition for the right to say who is a good Muslim and conversely who is not.’29 Cultural attitudes are caught up in this, as we have often seen. Roy again:

US evangelical Protestantism and Islamic fundamentalism share, mutatis mutandis, many common patterns. Faith is the fault-line between the good people and the wicked. … Culture (novels, films, music) may bring about dereliction of mores. Religious norms and creeds can apply to anybody anywhere: hence there is no need for ‘cultural sensitivity’. The divide is between believers and non-believers within so-called cultures and not between different cultures.30

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30 Ibid., p. 329.
James Piscatori regards fragmentation and contestation about who holds religious authority and, in effect, can thereby claim to be successor to the Prophet, as ‘the most notable aspect of modern political Islam’.\textsuperscript{31} Daniel Brown adds that ‘even secularists implicitly recognise Prophetic authority when they appeal to the Prophetic example to justify their secularism’.\textsuperscript{32} This is no less true in Indonesia, as we have repeatedly seen. The distinguished Islamic scholar and leader Prof. Azyumardi Azra argues that extremist forms of Islam cannot come to dominate Indonesia precisely because of this plurality of authority in Islam.\textsuperscript{33} Unlike the Catholic Church, but like ever-schismatic Protestantism, there is just too much room for differences of opinion in Sunni Islam.

In this competition for religious authority and in the search for followers, however, today’s Revivalists hold advantages over other epistemologies: the advantages of simplicity and certainty. Traditionalist epistemology rests upon the scholarly traditions of the four Sunni schools of law with their complex legal arguments and disputes, plus the insights and practices (themselves full of variety) of Sufism — no simple matters. Historicalism is a highly intellectual approach to the faith, a fashion that arose in the political context of the New Order and whose day may be over. Modernism is rooted in modern rational approaches along with a return to the Qur’an and Hadith as guides to understanding God’s revelation, and also makes serious intellectual demands. You are unlikely to become a leader in Modernist circles nowadays if you lack a PhD. Implicit in these approaches is a recognition that understandings of Islam have changed over time and may change in the future. This can be a ‘hard sell’ amongst the pious masses. The Revivalists need none of this.

We need only turn to Abu Bakar Ba’asyir to illustrate Revivalist views. To understand Islam, he believes, it is necessary to return to the learned guides of the time of the Prophet, who were ‘more expert than we’ (lebih pintar dari kita). He believes that human thought cannot reform Islam, for the faith rests upon the perfect word of God. How does he know that his interpretation is correct, given 1,400 years of contestation? He knows because

\textsuperscript{33} Conversation with Prof. Azyumardi Azra, Jakarta, 22 Oct. 2010.
God directs him, he says. Those who rely on the intellect such as JIL are enemies because they ‘deify reasoning’ (mempertubankan akal) and think that they are smarter than God, whereas the human mind is only for technology, Ba’asyir believes. When he gives such messages, many listeners find their simplicity and certainty attractive. We observed above that when he appeared at a small mosque near Kediri in 2006 and 2007, thousands reportedly came to hear him. A young Muhamadiyah leader who was inspired by him described his ideas as ‘simple, timely, practical and functional’. His ideas are none of these things except for being simple. By ejecting intellectualism and rationality from religious discourse, Ba’asyir and other Revivalists can appeal through their simplicity and certainty to the almost-universally literate but certainly not well-educated general populace of Indonesia, as well as to what Olivier Roy calls the ‘lumpenintelligentsia’, those who have ‘spent enough time in school to consider themselves “educated” … but … haven’t pursued higher education’. We already noted Micklethwait and Wooldridge’s comment that ‘certainty has proved much easier to market’. In a time of constant transformation,’ Salman Rushdie writes, ‘beatitude is the joy that comes with belief, with certainty’.

So it is that the more categorical forms of religious belief and practice, the ones that offer certainty and simplicity, may have an advantage over more subtle and complex forms of faith. If so, this is an important element that is undervalued in the ‘failure-of-political-Islam’ literature. We noted at the start of Chapter 10 Masdar Hilmy’s comment that Islamist ideas can be ‘contiguous with “moderate” ones’ and that they can ‘gain broad resonance’ in organisations like NU and Muhammadiyah which are normally labeled ‘moderate’. Once one accepts the basic premises of any religion (since such premises rest upon supernatural explanations and are thus beyond intellectual

35 Discussion with Ashari, Ngadiluwih, 28 Nov. 2007; Ba’asyir’s speech at Ngadiluwih is also reported in MmK, 7 Nov. 2007.
36 Roy, Failure of political Islam, p. 51.
37 Micklethwait and Wooldridge, God is back, p. 17. Jacoby, Age of American unreason, p. 201, similarly notes in the context of American religiosity that ‘Unlike religious moderates who, like most human beings, want to have things both ways — God and science, belief in eternal life and the medical pursuit of every means to prolong earthly life — fundamentalists have no doubts.’
testing or measurement), there need be no logical break between ‘moderate’ and ‘extreme’ versions.

Atheist writers have made the same point as a part of their critique of all faiths.40 Without needing to accept such an atheist analysis, we must agree that religion is a potent force in many societies, including the Javanese, that it is crucial to most humans’ search for a better life and that its manifestations are not always or necessarily of a moderate kind. There may be only two circumstances in which ‘moderation’ is a natural position for believers to adopt. The first is when doubt arises — doubt about some aspect of the faith, about one’s own understanding of it, about its contemporary manifestations or about the best strategy for implementing its imperatives in this world. The second is when one’s social and political agenda is Liberalism, with its search for greater individual freedom in religious and other matters, for this leads inevitably to the view that religious belief is a private, individual matter — that individuals have a right to freedom of thought.

As the story has unfolded, in the end there is little that we can regard as a ‘failure’ of Islam in this Javanese history (except, as noted above, in the two narrow respects of [a] the failure of explicitly Islamist political parties to win power through elections and [b] the inability of religiously inspired terrorist organisations to destabilise the country or society or to take over the state). There is much evidence that confirms its growing potency. We should accept that believers believe what they say they believe. Of course there are frauds, self-promoting careerists and fools in religion, as in any walk of life, but for the purposes of our analysis we must accept that people’s commitments to their faiths are genuine. Certainly in my experience there have been only very few whom I suspect to be hypocrites. So let us take the faith of our subjects as genuine and their search for a better, more perfect life as real. In the next section, I will suggest that this search for a better life fundamentally revolves around a choice between two differing antidotes to the threat of tyranny: freedom or justice, each of which brings its own promises and carries its own risks.

In the search for the better life: Freedom vs justice

Here we approach contending philosophies and ideologies which transcend Islamic, Javanese, Indonesian, or East-West particularities, and which may

help us (even in the brief discussion here) to understand issues arising in this book. Socio-political thought in all places and traditions has been remarkably consistent in identifying tyranny as the principal barrier to a better life — an identification that can be richly supported from history. Given that there is no shortage of tyranny in any age, there has been no end to the search for ways to restrain it.

Before we begin our own study of freedom and justice, we must address a monument in the English-language literature that gets in our way and is of only little help. I refer to John Rawls’ *A theory of justice*,41 to which many writers refer (and defer). This is written within Western parameters. Its argument only suits an idealised Western-style parliamentary democracy and may be said even to fit the real world of parliamentary democracy poorly. Justice is defined as ‘fairness’, something which itself is defined by a contract arrived at among the governed in a hypothetical ‘original position’. So Rawls’ ‘justice’ is not something that can be externally validated or that corresponds to some abstract or absolute standards: it is the outcome of a contract. Neither ‘justice’ nor ‘fairness’ has any definition beyond what people in their ‘original position’ agree them to be. In the end, Rawls’ principles of justice turn out to be something to do with individual rights, freedoms and liberties,42 that is to say, less about justice as we will discuss it here and more about freedom instead. Rawls’ work does help us in one important respect: it is consistent with the belief there is no abstract standard of justice which people of all societies and all times might recognise, hence his ‘justice’ must be negotiated by people who can agree on it in their hypothetical ‘original position’. This helps us to understand why, down through the ages, people have thought that only some deity can define true justice. This is not the idea of justice found in phrases such as ‘bring X to justice’ or ‘make X face justice’, where ‘justice’ equals ‘judgment’, ‘punishment’ or ‘retribution’. Rather, this is above all justice as something that inheres in a righteous, morally perfect utopia.

Let us turn to the conceptualisation of justice that is relevant to our enquiries, which in due course will be seen to have roots in Platonic, Islamic

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42 See ibid., pp. 266–7. We may add that Rawls’ argument is not just Western but distinctively Protestant: ‘Each person must insist upon an equal right to decide what his religious obligations are. He cannot give up this right to another person or institutional authority’ (p. 191). There is no room for Catholicism or *shari’a* law here.
and Javanese traditions. This is justice as something absolute that arises from divine imperatives. This idea rests, in principle, upon a pessimistic view of human society. It understands that human ‘justice’ is not true justice; that what might seem just to you would seem unjust to someone else. This also reflects a pessimistic view of individuals, seeing human beings as more given to evil than to good. Freedom is therefore to be distrusted: if humans were entirely free, society would become a chaos of licentiousness, violence, anarchy and — of course — injustice. This conceptualisation, however, takes an optimistic view of the possibilities of government, believing that government can be just, that a just ruler can be found. Below we will see Plato’s importance in the evolution of this school of thought (and remember that Plato’s writings greatly influenced Islamic philosophy), so we may note here the comment by H.D.P. Lee, Plato’s translator, that ‘The argument against Plato’s system, in fact, is not that it trusts the common man too little but that it trusts his rulers too much.’

Proponents of justice as the answer to the human predicament must hold a utopian view that perfect justice is possible, even if it has only been known at some golden age in the past and might only be found again in an afterlife. Here on earth it may be necessary to restrain government which is in the hands of imperfect human beings, but that is done in the interest of allowing maximum justice to reign, without abandoning the hope that a just ruler can be found. This implies that perfect justice is knowable, even if it is not discoverable by humankind unaided. So it must be what God says it is, as God has revealed it to humans. There is a corollary to this: if there is such a thing as perfect justice, known to God and revealed to humans, then while our experience of it may be imperfect, there can be no question of deciding to limit justice. We must always strive instead to remove limitations upon it. You can’t have too much justice.

When we turn to the concept of freedom as the antidote to tyranny, we find something that does not have strong roots in Islamic or Javanese traditions, but rather is more associated with modern Western thought. There is a related concept in Javanese and Indonesian, captured in the term bebas, meaning free of restraints, unimpeded. Thus, one can be made bebas from imprisonment, for example, or bebas from an obligation. This has never become a major political concept. Another local term that did acquire political relevance is Javanese mardika, which derives ultimately from

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the Old Javanese word (itself from Sanskrit) *maharddhika*, found in pre-Islamic literature. This conveys meanings of exceptional qualities, eminence, perfection and of the wise sage or holy man.\textsuperscript{44} This sense can still be found in the Modern Javanese usage *sang mardika* for a sage. Presumably because sages should be free of the impositions of rulers, the more common Modern Javanese usage of *mardika* has come to mean freedom from the authority of an overlord and thus free of taxes or other demands from a superior. In the Indonesian language this appears as *merdeka*, which means freedom from control and particularly political independence, in which sense it was a rallying cry for Indonesian nationalists. None of this actually leads to the concept of individual freedoms that Liberals seek.

Generally speaking, Liberals’ concept of freedom as the defence against tyranny rests upon an optimistic view of human society. It recognises that individual humans are imperfect but believes that they can work together in their own self-interest to create a better society. It accepts that there can be no perfection in human societies, but believes that improvement is possible through human action. It has a generally optimistic view of individual humans, thinking them more inclined to do good than to do harm; if individuals are allowed personal freedoms, then they will accept personal responsibility for their actions and show respect for others. Given human imperfection, however, and given the real possibility that one person’s freedoms might have the effect of inhibiting the freedoms of another, there must be restraints upon freedom (to which we will return shortly).

Advocates of freedom in principle have a pessimistic view of government. They think a ‘just ruler’ to be a chimera, since unrestrained governments will always incline to tyranny. They agree with Lord Acton’s famous dictum that ‘Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely’. Government must therefore be restrained through constitutionally mandated and actually practiced limitations on its power. For advocates of freedom, democracy with all its imperfections is still the best form of government.

This school of thought rejects utopian ideas of perfection. Society must seek a balance of freedoms, for any sort of absolute freedom would be unsustainable and a source of conflicting claims. Hence freedoms must in practice be limited. The classic example is the oft-quoted case where freedom of speech cannot include a right to shout ‘fire!’ in a crowded cinema. Freedom

\textsuperscript{44} For authoritative definitions and source citations, see P.J. Zoetmulder with the collaboration of S.O. Robson, *Old Javanese-English dictionary* (2 vols; ’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), vol. 1, p. 1086.
can only function as an antidote to tyranny if the freedom of each individual is limited and balanced against the freedoms of others. Note the important difference here with the idea of justice. Freedom, in its essence, must include the concept of limitations upon freedom. Justice admits of no limitation. It is not possible to have too much justice, but it is possible to have too much freedom. Indeed, that is just what advocates of justice fear will happen: too much freedom. But advocates of freedom must equally recognise this risk, so that limitations on freedom are an essential part of the case.

Isaiah Berlin sets the political implications of these contending views of humanity in a broader context in Western philosophy:

Philosophers with an optimistic view of human nature and a belief in the possibility of harmonising human interests, such as Locke or Adam Smith or, in some moods, Mill, believed that social harmony and progress were compatible with reserving a large area for private life over which neither the State nor any other authority must be allowed to trespass. Hobbes, and those who agreed with him, especially conservative or reactionary thinkers, argued that if men were to be prevented from destroying one another and making social life a jungle or a wilderness, greater safeguards must be instituted to keep them in their places; he wished correspondingly to increase the area of centralised control and decrease that of the individual.45

Freedom as a political principle is not essentially religious in origin, although it is sometimes depicted in that way and may be justified on religious grounds. It is frequently and often emotionally invoked in American politics where, given the rise of religious influence in American life in recent decades, freedom may be described by religious believers as something that is ‘God-given’.

We must address the question of the role played by the idea of justice in totalitarian ideologies. Plato's Republic is a foundational text. This proposes an ideal state to be governed by ‘the superior minority’ in which ‘justice is the principle we laid down at the beginning and have consistently followed in founding our state’. In this state, the various classes would know their places and keep to them, for interference in each other’s roles would do ‘the greatest harm to our state’ which ‘gives us a definition of injustice’. Plato’s Republic rested also on a fear of too much freedom: ‘an excessive desire for liberty’ which would ‘lead to the demand for tyranny’, since ‘a democratic society in its thirst for liberty may fall under the influence of bad leaders’ and lead

45 Berlin, Proper study of mankind, p. 198.
people to ‘disregard all laws’.\(^{46}\) Karl Popper’s monumental *Open society and its enemies*, first published in 1945, begins with ‘the spell of Plato’ (the title of the first volume) and proceeds to Hegel and Marx in the second volume, Popper’s purpose being to show how Platonic ideas can be traced in the great European tyrannies of the mid-20th century.

A few quotations from Popper will suffice to show how, in his view, a Platonic concept of justice can be used to support tyranny and how this idea of justice is the enemy of freedom:

> It will be seen that Plato’s concept of justice is fundamentally different from our ordinary view . . . Plato considers justice not as a relationship between individuals, but as a property of the whole state, based upon a relationship between its classes.\(^{47}\) . . .

The humanitarian theory of justice makes three main demands or proposals, namely (a) the equalitarian principle proper, i.e., the proposal to eliminate ‘natural’ privileges, (b) the general principle of individualism, and (c) the principle that it should be the task and the purpose of the state to protect the freedom of its citizens. To each of these political demands or proposals there corresponds a directly opposite principle of Platonism, namely (a’ the principle of natural privilege, (b’) the general principle of holism or collectivism, and (c’) the principle that it should be the task and the purpose of the individual to maintain, and to strengthen, the stability of the state.\(^{48}\) . . .

Plato recognises only one ultimate standard, the interest of the state. Everything that furthers it is good and virtuous and just; everything that threatens it is bad and wicked and unjust. . . . This is the collectivist, the tribal, the totalitarian theory of morality: ‘Good is what is in the interest of my group; or my tribe; or my state’.\(^{49}\)

Thus Popper’s assault on Plato. It would take only a few changes to attach similar charges to Islamist political thought, to which we will return below, for it, too, rests upon the principle that the foremost objective of political action is justice. Hannah Arendt makes similar judgments.

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\(^{48}\) Ibid., vol. I, p. 100. We may note that Popper’s ‘humanitarian theory of justice’ involves the ‘freedom of . . . citizens’, thus bringing together (as does Rawls) two ideas that I am distinguishing from one another in this discussion.

\(^{49}\) Ibid., vol. I, p. 113.
In her writing about Soviet and Nazi totalitarianism, she comments on totalitarianism’s typical defiance of positive laws: ‘Totalitarian lawfulness pretends to have found a way to establish the rule of justice on earth — something which the legality of positive law admittedly could never attain. The discrepancy between legality and justice could never be bridged.’

Others have made recent contributions to the issues we are considering here. In the course of a powerful critique of ‘Rational Choice Theory’ (the idea that maximising one’s narrowly defined self-interest constitutes the most rational thing to do), Amartya Sen benefits from his knowledge of non-Western (principally Indian) philosophy and history. He does not refer to Popper’s *Open society and its enemies*, although his views are similar. Sen’s book is to a considerable degree a more recent version of Popper’s arguments in favour of the application of reason, individual freedom and piecemeal improvements rather than sweeping utopian solutions such as the search for an abstract reign of justice. As for Berlin and others, for Sen the essence of freedom is the freedom to make choices, which ‘gives us the opportunity to pursue our objectives — those things that we value’. He emphasises the importance of an open public realm as a site of discussion, debate and compromise among contending views that can make it possible for democracy to function. He does not (I think) give sufficient weight to the risk that the public space can be monopolised by a dominant ideology to such an extent that it can inhibit discussion, debate and questioning — that this realm can become, not a space for reason, but one for dogma and repression.

Grayling argues from a humanist (non-believer) position, denying the truth claimed by religions. This leads him to support the concept of freedom as the key to a better life. Grayling writes,

> In everything that has been said in this book about the humanist conception of the good life, the concepts of freedom and autonomy have been central. From classical antiquity to modern philosophy the fundamental idea has been that people possess reason, and that by using

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52 Late in the book, however, he contemplates the possibility that ‘a ruthless majority that has no compunction in eliminating minority rights would tend to make the society face a hard choice between honouring majority rule and guaranteeing minority rights. The formation of tolerant values is thus quite central to the smooth functioning of a democratic system’ (ibid., p. 352).
it they can choose lives worth living for themselves and respectful of their fellows. … Given that the metaphysics of religion is man-made, and that human psychology is the source of belief in the power of transcendent authority to reward obedience or punish its opposite … it follows that the chief motivation for religious ethics is the need felt by potentates of many kinds to exert control over individuals, to limit their freedom, to make them conform, obey, submit, follow where led, accept what is meted out to them, and resign themselves to their lot.53

Even if we do not accept the 'given' in that last sentence, the description that follows it is clearly consistent with multiple historical examples. From this discussion of justice and freedom,54 we may come to the view that neither of these concepts as ultimate political objectives is free of risks. Each has defensible criticisms of the other. But only one of them — that is, the search for justice — is prone to support totalitarianism, to facilitate the very tyranny which, in principle, it seeks to resist.

We must turn from these more general considerations to the specific traditions of Islam, in which justice has been a central aim since the earliest times. World history offers no examples of an ideal system of justice in operation, but Revivalists believe it to have existed in the seventh century, in the time of the Prophet and the four ‘rightly guided caliphs’ (three of whom, we may note, were assassinated in that most perfect of times).55 The Arabic term for justice is 'adl, which we find in Javanese and Indonesian as adil and various derived forms. As one of the fundamental dogmas of Islam, this refers to the perfect justice of God.56 The term for freedom is huriyya, which originates as a ‘legal term denoting the opposite of “unfree, slave”’; for

54 We might have discussed a full trinity (a hat-trick?) of Harvard writers by adding Michael Sandel to Sen and Rawls. But Sandel’s Justice: What’s the right thing to do? (London, etc.: Penguin Books, 2009) is less helpful to our discussion, although readers may find it of interest. Sandel struggles with the issues until arriving at what seems to me a position akin to what Amartya Sen calls the ‘transcendental institutionalism’ mode of thought (that is, seeking some universally applicable way of finding justice through ideal institutions), rather than Sen’s ‘realisation-focused’ approach, which (like Popper’s) consists of seeking incremental means of ridding the world of its worst injustices without imagining that perfection is achievable.
55 Abu Bakr died in his mid-60s in 634, ‘Umar was assassinated in 644, ‘Uthman was assassinated in 656 and ‘Ali was assassinated in 661.
the latter there is the term ‘*abd*, which appears in Indonesian languages as *abdi*. *Huriyya* did not make it into Javanese, but its meaning is conveyed in the word *bebas*, discussed earlier. Rosenthal comments that *huriyya*, ‘although much discussed, did not achieve the status of a fundamental political concept that could have served as a rallying cry for great causes’. Rather, ‘The individual Muslim was expected to consider subordination of his own freedom to the beliefs, morality and customs of the group as the only proper course of behaviour. … Politically, the individual was not expected to exercise any free choice as to how he wished to be governed’.57 The reign of justice that has been lost since the time of the Prophet and the four rightly guided caliphs will be restored by the future Mahdi, who will reign before the end of the world and again be a ‘rightly guided one’ whose task will be to fill the world with justice. This messianic idea gained greater strength among Shi’ites than among Sunnis, but it played some role in Sufism, which has been so important among the Javanese.58 We will discuss the analogous Javanese ‘just king’ (*Ratu Adil*) below.

These ideas were elaborated and debated as Islamic philosophy developed, with the writings of Plato being an important part of the Islamic intellectual tradition. Scholars argued what the qualities of the ideal ruler must be, how that person could rule with virtue and impose justice with divine guidance. Muslim philosophers (particularly luminaries of the ninth to twelfth centuries such as Al-Farabi, Abu Bakr al-Razi, Abu Hatim al-Razi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd) considered how there might be constructed a regime that could rely on the moral superiority of the ruler to administer God’s laws, which constitute what justice is. The core question was how to restore the just governance of the time of the Prophet and the first four caliphs, not how to achieve freedom for individuals.59

The search for justice (not freedom) as the principal cure for this world’s ills was also central to Javanese thought. Various texts call for a


58 See W. Madelung, ‘*al-Mahdī*’, in P. Bearman et al. (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed.), vol. 5, p. 1230.

purifying time of destruction, after which justice will reign. The leader of this
time of justice is usually called the *Ratu Adil*, the ‘just king’. *Adil* of course
comes from the Arabic ‘*adl*, but it is reasonable to presume that Javanese
messianic ideas had older, pre-Islamic roots. Such ideas are found in the so-called
‘prophecies of Jayabaya’, which are ascribed (very possibly apocryphally)
to king Jayabhaya of 12th-century Kediri. The *Ratu Adil* was usually said to
take *Erucakra* as one of his titles — a term of uncertain origin, but suggested
by Pigeaud to derive from the name of the Vairocana Buddha and thus, if so,
of pre-Islamic derivation. Whatever the case, the hope for the *Ratu Adil*
was deeply rooted in Javanese tradition and was consistent with the Islamic
search for justice.

People claiming to be the *Ratu Adil*, bearing the title *Erucakra*, arose
from time to time and rallied the support of both ordinary and elite Javanese.
In 1718 a son of the reigning king called Png. Dipanagara rebelled and took
the *Erucakra* title. He surrendered in 1723 and spent his remaining days
in exile in Sri Lanka. In 1825, the most famous of the princes to carry the
name Dipanagara rebelled and took the name *Erucakra* along with others of
religious and messianic import such as Lord of the Faith (*Sayidin*), Regula-
tor of Religion (*Panatagama*), Caliph of the Messenger of God (*Kalifat
Rasulullah*), First among Believers (*Kabirumukminina*) and Commander
in Holy War (*Senapati Ingalaga Sabilullah*). We noted in Chapter 1 what a
pivotal figure Dipanagara was in Javanese history. He initiated the disastrous
Java War of 1825–30 and his defeat ushered in the truly colonial period of
Javanese history. Other aspiring *Ratu Adil* figures arose after him in Central
Java. A rather weak-minded Yogyakarta prince named Suryengalaga, while
still a child, was nominated by some conspirators in 1864 as the future *Ratu
Adil* and his mother plotted a rebellion in his name in 1883. The Dutch
colonial regime was well established by then and this *Ratu Adil*’s reign lasted
less than a week. In 1890 another aspiring rebel who claimed supernatural
powers prophesied the coming of the *Ratu Adil*, but he was quickly exiled

60 Th. G. Th Pigeaud, ‘Erucakra-Vairocana’, in *India antiqua: A volume of oriental
studies, presented by his friends and pupils to Jean Philippe Vogel on the occasion of the
50th anniversary of his doctorate* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1947), pp. 270–3. For a fuller
discussion of these messianic traditions, see J.A.B. Wiselius, ‘Djåjå Båjå, zijn, zijn
Leven en Profitieën’, *BKI*, 3rd series, vol. 7 (1872), pp. 172–217. A briefer discussion
with reference to several further sources is in M.C. Ricklefs, ‘Dipanagara’s early
before any justice could appear. In 1918 another Ratu Adil came to grief. As late as 1967 there was an Erucakra who claimed to be a reincarnation of Png. Suryengalaga.\footnote{These post-Java War cases are described in A.L. Kumar, ‘The Suryengalagan affair of 1883 and its successors: Born leaders in changed times’, \textit{BKI} vol. 138 (1982), nos. 2–3, pp. 251–84.} It has been reported that the spirit of the aspiring Ratu Adil Suryengalaga even appeared twice to the present Sultan Hamengkubuwana X of Yogyakarta while he was still crown prince and demanded for himself the right to succeed as the next Sultan.\footnote{From an anonymous, but I believe absolutely reliable, source. Readers may notice that the present Sultan’s position seems consistent with what I have called the Mystic Synthesis style of Javanese Islam.} Early in the 20th century, the charismatic leader of the ostensibly modern organisation Sarekat Islam was Tjokroaminoto (the scholarly spelling of whose name would be Cakraaminata), who was taken by some to be a fulfillment of the prophesies of the Ratu Adil, not least because of the appearance of cakra both in his name and in Erucakra. In the account of the 1930s in this book, we have seen both Png. Surjodiningrat and the Surakarta politician Singgih regarded by their followers as the Ratu Adil. Embah Wali proclaimed Yogyakarta’s Sultan Hamengkubuwana IX to be the Ratu Adil, and said that there was no longer such a Just King after the latter died in 1988.

The search for justice remains a strong theme in recent and contemporary Islamic discourse in Indonesia. We noted above how the Traditionalist activists who set up LKiS in 1992 described their mission as being to ‘bring into being a transformative form of Islam on the side of justice and plurality with an Indonesian foundation’.\footnote{http://www.lkis.or.id/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=89&Itemid=88.} The prominent NU figure Ky. H. Mas’udi said in 2008 that ‘Clearly, in Islam there is a primary mandate of “justice” to which the state must be fully dedicated’. Further, ‘Because religion, being the soul of the state, gives justice to all. … it is our job to discover how to infuse the secular institutions of the state (its political, legal and legislative systems) with the spirit of justice and mercy as their sacramal and transcendental duty.’\footnote{Masdar F. Ma’sudi, ‘Islam and the state: The social justice perspective’, in Ota Atsushi, Okamoto Masaki and Ahmad Suayedy (eds), \textit{Islam in contention: Rethinking Islam and state in Indonesia} (Jakarta: The Wahid Institute; Kyoto: Center for Southeast Asian Studies Kyoto University; Taipei: Center for Asia-Pacific Area Studies RCHSS Academia Sinica, 2010), pp. 17, 25.} It is no surprise that the 1990s campus
cadre-formation movement modeled on the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood should have given rise to a political party that called itself the Justice Party (Partai Keadilan), now transformed into PKS (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera), the Prosperous Justice Party.

Bernhard Platzdasch explored the Partai Keadilan (PK, later PKS) understanding of justice and shows its roots in the medieval Islamic thought we have discussed here. His analysis is based in particular on interviews with Hidayat Nur Wahid and Irwan Prayitno in 2001–2:

To understand PK's interplay of rhetoric and political action it is crucial to point out that, in the classical Islamic perception, justice only exists where shari'a rule has been established and religious obedience accomplished. Because understanding of the term 'justice' was embedded in the Qur'an, by definition, justice only existed in the Islamic context. The Qur'anic imperative (verse 5:8), PK President Dr Hidayat Nur Wahid explained, was to 'act justly because this is what is closest to piety'.

... Mankind, the party declared, had to be liberated from all forms of tyranny. Yet to understand the true meaning of 'justice', Hidayat Nur Wahid emphasised, it was necessary to understand the Qur'anic use of the term. 'Actual justice', he argued, 'was of divine origin [ilahi], something that is religious, evolving from religious and moral values'. It had to do with 'fundamental principles', which will prevent 'anything that is tyrannic', as Islam prohibited any activity that 'kills the soul'.

As such, PK epitomised the archetypal Islamist credo that the only way to bring about justice ultimately was through shari'a rule and complete submission to Islam. Irwan Prayitno argued: 'As for the concepts, they are already standard, for example “justice”. What remains is the medium. Stealing — hand will be cut off. Whoever kills — is killed. If in ancient times with a sword, today there is the electric chair. These things can still be discussed but the concept is justice.'

Such statements illustrated that the party's conception of shari'a went beyond that of 'universal values'. In particular, it highlighted the inseparability between PK's understanding of 'justice' and explicit Islamic hudud rulings. It also showed that, despite the frequent advocacies of independent reasoning, PK leaders preserved various medieval traditions in the elucidation of Islam.

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65 In Abdel Haleem’s translation: ‘You who believe, be steadfast in your devotion to God and bear witness impartially: do not let hatred of others lead you away from justice, but adhere to justice, for that is closer to awareness of God. Be mindful of God: God is well aware of all that you do.’ Qur’an: A new translation by Abdel Haleem, pp. 68–9.

66 Platzdasch, Islamism in Indonesia, pp. 232–3. Hudud punishments are those that are regarded in Islamic law as crimes against religion and for which there are fixed...
In the minds of many Islamic thinkers of all inclinations, the search for justice is paired with opposition to, even fear of, the idea of freedom. The HTI figure Farid Wadjdi expressed this as follows:

Liberalism is … dangerous. On behalf of free thinking, for instance, they feel free to question the authenticity of soundly indicated religious texts, such as the Qur’an as Allah’s revelation. On behalf of freedom of speech, no kind of thinking can be prohibited even if it is in contradiction to Islamic belief and shari’a. Then on behalf of freedom of expression, adultery, homosexuality, and lesbianism must be tolerated; prostitution is supported and considered as a profession; pornography and pornographic actions are accordingly defended. This is really dangerous because it can lead humankind to destruction, putting humans at the level of animals, even lower than that.67

The concept of individual freedoms is defended in today’s Indonesia by the Liberals whom we have discussed earlier in this book. Current circumstances, however, limit the possibility of mounting a robust case for individual freedoms (rather than justice) as a paramount political objective. In particular, the prevailing religiosity of public discourse makes it difficult to question whether religion should dominate both private and public affairs at all. Furthermore, given that in Islamic, Javanese and wider Indonesian thought, justice is so strongly embedded as the principle solution to life’s woes, the prospects of winning a public debate for the cause of greater individual freedoms are reduced.

Can the search for greater freedom and the search for greater justice not be reconciled? An elegant Liberal case for a way to do this in Muslim societies is made in Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im’s Islam and the secular state, the Indonesian-language version of which was published in 2007 by the Islamic publishing house Mizan68 (the year before the English-language version from Harvard). An-Na’im distinguishes between the state as an institutional structure and politics as day-to-day social reality, and seeks to mediate the distinction between the separation of the state from religion (for which he argues) and a legitimate involvement of religion in politics and harsh punishments such as death by stoning, amputation of limbs and flogging. These offences include unlawful sexual intercourse, false accusations of such sexual activity, drinking alcohol, highway robbery and theft.

67 In a 2005 article in al-Wa’ie, quoted in Hilmy, Islamism and democracy, p. 166.
through what he calls ‘civic reason’.69 This consists of the reasonable exercise of freedom (such as ‘freedoms of opinion, belief and association’) with respect for others by participants in the public realm, so that the meaning and application of *shari’a* can be freely discussed. This rests on the view that ‘rights are ultimately the tools for realizing the objectives of social justice, political stability, and economic development…’.70 In this way, the exercise of freedom is the necessary means to a collective effort to engage the diversity of human understandings of God’s perfect justice through free discussion, consistent with the Qur’anic principle (2:256) that ‘there is no compulsion in religion’.

The problem in practice is not the Liberal view of how things should be, but the Revivalist and Islamist view of how things must be. Revivalists will reject the epistemology upon which this Liberal agenda rests: that is, that the understanding of sacred texts inevitably involves the application of reason, of ‘human interpretation’.71 They would see this as — to quote Abu Bakar Ba’asyir’s rejection of JIL — a case of *mempertubankan akal* (deifying human reasoning) by people who think that they are smarter than God, whereas the human mind is only for technology.72 Revivalists and Islamists are likely to be unreasonable in two senses of the word: they cannot be reasoned with and they are likely not to behave fairly in the circumstances of a free public space.73 They believe that there is a clear divinely defined thing called justice that is encapsulated in *shari’a* (which is to say, of course, their

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70 Ibid., p. 103.
71 Ibid., p. 30.
72 Discussion with Abu Bakar Ba’asyir, Ngruki, 26 March 2007.
73 Yet again, this is not an issue unique to Islamic societies. Cf. Popper, *Open society*, vol. 2, pp. 267–8, arguing that debate between the rational and the irrational (our Revivalists) is unlikely to lead to agreement: ‘since it is impossible to discuss such profundities with a rationalist, the most likely reaction will be a high-handed withdrawal, combined with the assertion that there is no language common to those whose souls have not yet “regained their mystical faculties”, and those whose souls possess such faculties’. This may involve ‘the Hegelianising intellectualist who persuades himself and his followers that their thoughts are endowed, because of special grace, with “mystical and religious faculties” not possessed by others, and who thus claim that they “think by God’s grace”’. And how times have changed: Popper believed (in 1945) that ‘this division is present in every religion, but it is comparatively harmless in Mohammedanism, Christianity, or the rationalist faith’.
understanding of it) and the Islamist project requires this to be enforced by the state in the name of amar ma'ruf nabi mungkar (commanding the right and forbidding the wrong). There is no room for free citizens to debate what this shari'a is — although there are, in practice, plenty of arguments about it among Revivalists and Islamists themselves. Thus, unlike the Liberal political agenda supported by the intellectual substantiality of An-Na'im’s arguments, the Revivalist and Islamist position seeks not to open but to close the public space, to reject intellectuality and to call that justice. A reconciliation of the competing priorities of freedom and justice thus faces a formidable obstacle from those who reject Liberalism.

It is the Islamic, Javanese and Indonesian traditions that most concern us, but the issues here are not unique to these traditions. As the references to European and American writers and to the history of other parts of the world have shown, the search for a better life through either greater freedom or greater justice is not unique to Islam, Java or Indonesia. Both of these ideas in principle carry risks. Freedom carries the risk of anarchy. Justice carries the risk of totalitarianism. The latter, as Popper has shown, can be traced back to Plato. Because advocates of greater freedom recognise the need for it to be limited in the interest of the community as a whole, it is hard to find a case where a commitment to freedom as the main objective has actually led to anarchy, although we can certainly think of examples where it has led to confused and inefficient government (the United States in the early 21st century offers an example). As the global financial and economic crisis developed from 2008, Islamists in Indonesia (and not only they) were inclined to say that this demonstrated the anarchy arising from excessive freedom within the realms of finance and business, and hoped that this presaged the very collapse of global capitalism. Because it is not possible to conceive of limiting justice, however, there is less difficulty in finding cases where the idea has been used to support totalitarian states. We need only think of the horrific European totalitarianisms of the 20th century or of Khomeini’s Iran.

In principle, Islamism seeks to restrain the potential tyranny of a state or ruler by requiring it or him to heed the advice of the ulama, who are qualified — unlike everyone else — to interpret God’s revelation in such a way that it becomes divine law imposed on earth. Thus, Islamism is (like Plato’s ideal state) a class-based government — the ulama class being the law-givers on behalf of God. While the goal is an ideal, pious ruler in the form of a caliph, even a caliph must listen to the ulama. The egalitarianism of Islam in principle thus becomes in practice an inegalitarian political system led by the ulama, whose political purposes are two: to restrain the potential...
tyranny of the ruler and to restrain the freedom of individuals, for free individuals are likely to disobey God’s commandments unless restrained by law and the punishments attached to it. Both Plato and Islamism thus can give rise to totalitarianism, which in both cases claims to represent justice. Class roles and privileges, proper modes of thought, limitations on individual rights are all to be imposed by the state and it is the duty of individuals to adhere to these rules.

We may say also that both Plato and Islamist ideas rest upon what Popper calls an ‘irrational attitude which springs from an intoxication with dreams of a beautiful world. … [which] seek[s] its heavenly city in the past … [and whose] appeal is always to our emotions rather than to reason.’

Popper denounces such thought in unequivocal terms. ‘The more we try to return to the heroic age of tribalism,’ he says — or of the Prophet, we might add — ‘the more surely do we arrive at the Inquisition, at the Secret Police, and at a romanticised gangsterism.’

But the appeal of these ideas is a powerful one. Like the secular creeds of fascism and Communism that Popper analyses, the Islamist ‘modern totalitarianism is only an episode within the perennial revolt against freedom and reason. From older episodes it is distinguished not so much by its ideology, as by the fact that its leaders succeeded in realising one of the boldest dreams of their predecessors; they made the revolt against freedom a popular movement.’

Thus, it seems appropriate to consider recent and contemporary Islamist ideas and organisations in Indonesia (and elsewhere, of course) as being linked to the very long history of totalitarianism, at least as much as — and arguably more than — an aspect of comparative religion. Like other totalitarian ideas, they have spun off terrorism, although that remains a marginal phenomenon within the wider range of Islamist groups and movements. This means that comparisons of Jemaah Islamiyah or al-Qaeda with European anarchists of a century ago, the Baader-Meinhof group, the Japanese Red Army Faction, the Red Army Brigades in Italy and Action Directe are appropriate — probably more appropriate than, say, comparing then with the Branch Davidians, Jonestown or Aum Shinrikyo, which one might do if they were to be thought of as primarily some perverted or extreme version of religion. These are terrorists like those predecessors, but

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75 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 214.
76 Ibid., vol. 2, p. 65.
their ideology is Islamist rather than Marxist or anarchist.\textsuperscript{77} In both cases, significant general sympathy was initially won by the terrorists, but they lost much support when their violence became a clear threat to the interests of the middle class.

We leave this section thus with a comparative context for the issues facing a more deeply Islamised Javanese society, and Indonesia as a whole. This comparative context confirms that this is not an exotic, parochial history that we are considering, but something which goes to the heart of the way in which many contemporary societies are evolving.

**Concluding observations**

We have seen Javanese society travel a long way in this book. Under colonial rule in the 1930s it was polarised along lines of identity between santri and abangan, a polarisation that had become politicised and was about to become more so. The abangan majority were not irreligious, for they had a rich spiritual life, but it was only partly touched by what reformers regarded as the true Islam. Abangan art forms encapsulated understandings of the supernatural that permeated Javanese life in the countryside and were in some cases linked to those of the royal and princely courts — themselves tamed clients of the colonial state. Islamic Modernism and Traditionalism were active, the former in particular pioneering a modernisation of educational and welfare activities that strengthened the santri side of Javanese society, while the colonial state sought to stay out of religious affairs as much as possible.\textsuperscript{78} Modernists played roles in nationalist political movements, but none of the latter could make much headway under a repressive colonial regime and during the hard years of the Great Depression. Traditionalist kyais, conveying sanctity and possessed of superhuman capacities, were often held in high regard by rural society, even by many abangan it seems, but they had no effective political presence.

\textsuperscript{77} A comparison of al-Qaeda with anarchist terrorists in Europe and the USA in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is in Mat Carr, ‘Cloaks, daggers and dynamite’, *History Today* vol. 57, no. 2 (Dec. 2007), pp. 29–31. Carr makes the point that the most powerful parallel between the two lies ‘in their strategic conception of violence’.

\textsuperscript{78} The strengthening of Muslim civil society under colonial rule is explored in the specific context of Islamic philanthropy in Fauzia’s important work ‘Faith and the state’.
The Japanese occupation and subsequent Indonesian Revolution of 1945–9 saw the first opportunities for Traditionalist leaders to join their Modernist fellows in active political involvement and leadership. As they did so, however, the combination of their religiosity with politics led to questioning of their sanctity. During this time, santri-abangan polarisation and politicisation generated the first serious episodes of violence, particularly in connection with the Madiun uprising of 1948 which left thousands dead. With this spilling of blood the santri-abangan chasm deepened and reinforced the bitter political contest between PKI and its abangan followers on one side and santri on the other, represented above all by NU (at that time still within Masyumi). PNI had a more priyayi leadership but also recruited followers of abangan religio-cultural identity.

During Indonesia’s first attempt to create a democracy in the years after the Revolution, santri-abangan conflict deepened still further. The politics of this period followed the aliran style, that is to say, polarisation followed socio-religious-cultural identities more than lines of class. In this context, it was the PKI and PNI that represented the principal barriers to deeper Islamisation among the Javanese. Was this independent Indonesia’s one and only ‘secular moment’? Probably not. PNI was a rather elitist, priyayi-led party without any real secularist agenda, just seeking power and hoping for no social revolution. PKI’s version of Communism was adapted to aliran realities. The Party had literacy and educational campaigns to raise the level of understanding of its cadres and followers, but I am not aware of a Party policy to get rid of the superstitions that underlay much of abangan life. The Party used kethoprak, ludruk, reyog, jaranan, tayuban and so on for propaganda without, so far as I am aware, trying to persuade audiences that the supernatural ideas encapsulated in many such performances had to be abandoned. Many kebatinan followers felt close to PKI (principally because it was the main opposition to the dominance of Islam, no doubt) but the party did not try to undercut kebatinan spiritualism. At national level, a debate dragged on about whether Pancasila or Islam should be the foundational philosophy of the state, coming to no conclusion down to the time when the Constituent Assembly that was supposed to resolve this was log-jammed and then dissolved by Sukarno in 1959. By the mid-1960s aliran-defined political violence reached serious levels, culminating in the slaughter of hundreds of thousands — perhaps millions — in 1965–6.

Soeharto’s years from 1966 to 1998 constituted the first period after independence when there was a political power in charge with genuinely totalitarian aspirations and prospects of achieving them. These decades were truly transformative in many ways. The regime was determined to control
everything possible, to wipe out all traces of Communism, to shape both what people thought and how they acted. Its aspirant totalitarianism was limited by the scale of the society it was dealing with and its own administrative shortcomings, incompetence and corruption. It was not, however, short of brutality, so the threat of the government no doubt often achieved more than its capacities could otherwise have delivered. The Soeharto regime established (or, perhaps we should say, reestablished) a tradition of the integration of the state with religion. The experience of Islamic organisations and leaders was mixed — some found cooperation with the state easy, many found it problematic but unavoidable, others were discomfited by being sidelined as competitors to the state at grass-roots level, and yet others objected loudly about the regime to little effect. Some went about their business of deepening the Islamisation of Javanese society as best they could in the circumstances. Islamic organisations often found in the end that the state's anti-Communist and Islamisation agendas in pursuit of social control suited their own agendas well enough. Institutions — above all the political parties — that were previously supported by abangan, and in turn supported abangan identities, were destroyed. Abangan arts declined, as did kebatinan, both of them being under pressure for links with Communism and for being not properly Islamic. Towards the end of the New Order, old-fashioned Javanese forms of entertainment (and their spiritual suppositions) were also under threat from modern entertainments and globalisation. Education and literacy advanced dramatically, and with them regime-approved and more orthodox forms of religious instruction.

The santri side lost its political parties under Soeharto, too, but still had a vast range of other institutional structures available, including MUI, NU, Muhammadiyah, mosques, pesantrens, madrasahs, Muhammadiyah's educational and social welfare activities and much more. The government funded the IAIN and STAIN network, producing a new Islamic intelligentsia mostly inclined towards Liberal interpretations. While facilitating grass-roots Islamisation as a way of imposing a conservative discipline on society, the government also enabled DDII to function and, because of DDII's intimate connections with Saudi Arabia, a flow of petrodollars followed. Saudi-funded LIPIA was important, too, in promoting the spread of a more Wahhabi-style interpretation of Islam.

By the early 1990s, the production of an Islamist intelligentsia began to produce real impacts at grass-roots level. DDII and LIPIA-sponsored Revivalists, including Afghan jihadi veterans, and others were beginning to influence the abangan masses through Salafi educational institutions, which mushroomed. Indonesia was influenced — like just about everywhere else
except Western Europe — by the rising global tide of religiosity which involved most world religions. Religion seemed more and more to be a part of modernity to many Javanese. The military elite saw a potential ally — and encouraged — Revivalist and other generally conservative views of Islam as a way of countering globalisation with its human rights and democratisation agendas.

By the end of the Soeharto years, there was a growing alliance among ‘green’ military leaders, other leaders of the regime and emerging Islamist movements. At grass-roots level, Javanese society was visibly more Islamic in its beliefs, rituals, entertainments, social life, discourse, presumptions and expectations. Christianity also became a more prominent part of Javanese life in the Soeharto period. Although it remained a small minority overall, its presence in urban areas grew significantly and helped to fuel what seems to have been a dialectical relationship between conversions to Christianity and more extreme forms of Islam. This continues in some places to the present, notably in Surakarta.79

The New Order collapsed in 1998, allowing another period of democracy to blossom. This also enabled a still-small Islamist movement to flourish, supported also by external developments, notably the growing strength of international extremist networks and the American-led ‘global war on terror’, which was interpreted in many parts of the Islamic world as a Western Christian crusade against Islam. Prior Islamisation meant that the social and political polarisation that now emerged was no longer between abangan and santri,80 for there was no longer any serious opposition to deeper Islamisation. Rather, one can observe a profound competition about how to know what the Islamic revelation means and who can claim authority to interpret that revelation. So we see an ongoing contest among differing epistemologies — mainly Traditionalist, Modernist (which two look increasingly like each other) and Revivalist — and competing social, cultural and political agendas. The national governments of post-Soeharto Indonesia have taken sometimes differing approaches to religious affairs,

79 This also seems true in West Java; see the forthcoming work by Chaider Bamualim provisionally entitled Islamisation and resistance in West Java: A study of religion, politics and social change since c. 1965.
80 Even the meaning of those terms was changing, as we noted in Chapter 7. Abangan are now more likely to describe themselves as kejawen (Javanese, or Javanist, implying a truly authentic Javanese identity), while the term santri seems now to be used more commonly in its original meaning of a student at an Islamic school (a pesantren, the place of the santri).
and since the introduction of regional autonomy beginning in 2001 so have local governments. But generally speaking, governments at all levels have accepted the tradition bequeathed by the Soeharto years and thus regard the integration of the state and religion as normal, but unlike Soeharto they have been willing to concede initiative over many matters to religious institutions. The arts remain a field of contestation, particularly for Modernism, Revivalism and Dakwahism. Traditional and folk arts are targeted because they convey contending world views and dissenting spiritualities: the process of their Islamisation is well advanced. Modern arts are often suspect because they challenge conservative norms.

Thus, the history of the Islamisation of the Javanese and opposition to it may have approached a decisive stage, in the sense that it is difficult to imagine that the deepening influence of Islam among Javanese can be stopped or reversed by any remaining opponent. No historian should of course dare to suggest what the future may hold. No one in 1830 in Java is likely to have predicted the reform movements, social changes and polarisation that were soon to follow. No one in 1930 or 1950 would have predicted such a great decline of the abangan and predominance of Islam in Javanese life. No one in 1965 expected that Wahhabi-style Islam could become important in Javanese society. But these and other surprises happened and no doubt there will be more to come. As far as we can see at the present, however, the history of the Islamisation of the Javanese has reached a significant stage.

If we are right to think that the deepening Islamisation of the Javanese is incapable of being reversed and that conflict over who holds authority to interpret Islam's message will be incapable of final resolution, then the central contemporary dynamics and most salient analytical issues may be two:

- the extent to which political elites (at all levels of government) allow religious elites, organisations and issues to dominate the public realm, policy making and state conduct; and
- which political philosophy — the search for justice or the search for freedom — has greater influence within a more deeply Islamised society and state.

Terrorism is a significant but peripheral issue in this context. The main Islamist agenda now is about influencing, infiltrating and taking over state, semi-state and civil society organisations, in which they are having considerable success. Meanwhile, Dakwahism continues powerfully at grassroots level, supporting deeper Islamisation in all its forms.