Islam, Pluralism and Democracy

Abdurrahman Wahid

Introduction and Translation by

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

It is now common in both academic and policy circles to ask the question "Where are the liberal Muslims?" They are not really that hard to find even if the only language that one speaks or reads is English. One very important liberal Muslim thinker is Abdullahi An Na'im of Emory University in Atlanta who has published extensively on Islam, human rights and democracy. Abrurrahman Wahid, or Gus Dur as he is affectionately known, is another. Wahid is the former president of Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country. He leads the world's largest Muslim organization, *Nahdlatul Ulama* (Renaissance of Muslim Scholars), which has at least forty million members. He is simultaneously a brilliant scholar in his own rite, a tireless advocate for human rights, democracy and religious pluralism. Millions believe him to be a living saint.

Personally, Wahid is extremely pious. In addition to the ritual observances required by Islamic law, he performs extra prayers at night, and frequently recites *zikr*, the verbal formulae characteristic of Sufi piety. His speech is replete with references to the *Qur'an* and Hadith (traditions concerning the Prophet Muhammad). Like other Sufis (Muslim mystics) he frequently visits the tombs of saints, particularly that of his late father.

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Most of the world's Muslims are "moderates." This does not mean that they agree with U.S. foreign policy, especially when it comes to Iraq, Israel and Palestine. In the summer of 2006 I attended a conference for Islamic scholars in Jakarta sponsored by *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU). There were delegations from eighty-six countries including, interestingly enough, both Iran and Saudi Arabia. As NU issued the invitations to individuals, not governments, it can be assumed that most of the participants were moderates. Regarding social issues including the politicization of religion, democracy, the social roles of women, and human rights more generally, most were at the liberal end of the Islamic spectrum. At the same time resolutions condemning the US occupation of Iraq and Israeli policies in the West Bank and Gaza passed unanimously, as did one endorsing Iran's right to develop a peaceful nuclear energy program. Hasyim Muzadi, the General Secretary of NU, delivered a stunning rebuke of US President Bush in which he chided him for turning "what we all know to be a war for oil into one about religion." This was greeted with enthusiastic applause, as was his statement that religion should not be politicized. For me this experience was something of an epiphany. I have known, and written about Muslim liberals for many years. Increasingly I found it necessary, when addressing audiences in the Muslim world, to preface my remarks with a statement explaining that I

am not a representative of the US government and that my purpose is not to support or justify US foreign policy. Even in liberal Muslim circles, any such talk would fall on deaf ears. What I had *not* realized is that many Muslim intellectuals view the current administration as a group of war mongering Christian Zionist *zealots*. That is an unsettling reality.

It is important to understand that liberal Muslims leaders are secularists *only* in the sense that they wish to see a legal separation of Islam and the state and in many cases explicitly reject the notion of an "Islamic state" as being "un-Islamic." With the exception of a few eccentrics like France's Mohammed Arkoun, most are, as individuals, deeply religious. Most do support official endorsement of religion, or in the case of President Wahid and other Indonesians, religions. In Indonesia the state supports religious educations at all levels – from primary school through Ph.D. granting Universities, as well as the construction of mosques. Support is also provided for Christian, Buddhist, Hindu and Confucian institutions. As is apparent in the article translated here, President Wahid's political philosophy has been profoundly shaped by the tolerant mystically tinged Islam of *Nahdlatul Ulama*. There is, in fact, no necessary connection between democracy and secularism. There is no reason to expect that when and if Islamic societies work their ways through democratic transitions that they will emerge as secular democracies or that as Islamic democracies they will share the foreign policy goals of any US government. I am not speaking of gloom and doom, or a "clash of civilizations." That can, and indeed must, be avoided. This can be achieved only through a discourse in which all parties hold themselves to be equals and in which none seeks to impose its own understanding of the proper structural relationship between the political and the religious on others.

> There is no reason to expect Islamic societies that make democratic transitions to emerge as secular democracies.

The paper translated here was written in 1990 at the zenith of the totalitarian regime of Indonesia's second President Suharto. By the standard of the day it is strongly critical of the regime. Indeed, only someone of Wahid's religious stature could have published it. His status as a living saint made him virtually immune to serious harassment by the regime. He once stated that he could put a million people on the streets of Jakarta in twenty four hours. It was not an idle boast.

This article is written for Indonesian readers. While it does not assume a sophisticated understanding of Islamic theology or law, it does assume familiarity with Indonesian politics and history. This may make portions of it difficult for non-Indonesian readers. Some Muslim intellectuals have been accused of saying one thing to the New York Times and another to domestic audiences. Wahid does not do this. In whichever of the many languages he speaks, the basic message is the same: It is a call for peace,

pluralism democracy and religion. It remained constant throughout the periods of political chaos and ethno-religious violence that precipitated and followed the fall of the Suharto regime. Wahid strongly criticized the violence of militant Islamist organizations including *Lascar Jihad* and the Front for the Defense of Islam. He ordered NU's youth wing, *Ansor,* to stand guard at Churches when militants threatened to burn them.

Wahid anticipated a gradual transition to democracy and in the 1990s did not consider it likely that he would be the Indonesia's first democratically elected president. In the early 1990s he expressed the view that the first step on the path to democratization should be the establishment of the rule of law and a truly independent judiciary with the power to rule on the constitutionality of laws, and equally as important, presidential directive carrying the force of law.

No one anticipated the collapse of the Suharto regime in 1997. Democratic transitions are always difficult. That Indonesia made the transition to democratic rule in the midst of economic chaos, ethnic and religious violence is nothing short of remarkable. Wahid played an important role in the process. He worked tirelessly in an attempt to ensure that the political process did not become a vehicle for sectarian strife. When he founded the *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (National Awakening Party) to contest the 1999 elections it was as a secular party in which members of the Christian minority held senior positions. He also campaigned publicly with his rival and future vice-president Megawati Soekarnoputri. This did not prevent outbreaks of violence or the emergence of radical groups in a new Indonesia is which freedom of speech is virtually unlimited. Wahid and other spokespeople for Liberal Islam have, however, prevented radicals from dominating Indonesian political and religious discourse as they have in many other Muslim countries. Indonesians seem to be listening. Islamist political parties have garnered only a tiny fraction of the vote in a series of elections at the national and regional levels.

> Spokespeople for Liberal Islam have prevented radicals from dominating Indonesian political and religious discourse.

While there are many Muslim liberals, Wahid is unique because of his religious credentials. He is the grandson of Hasyim Ashari who was among the founders of NU and who is widely considered to be the most important Indonesian Islamic scholar and Sufi saint of the twentieth century. Wahid has inherited much of his charisma and is thought to be a saint in his own rite. NU is as theologically conservative as it is socially and politically liberal. The Sunni Muslim doctrine of *taklid* requires that Muslims: "Obey God, obey the Prophet and obey those placed in authority over you." This, together with the Sufi teaching that devotees are obligated to submit to the will of their master, draws tens of millions of NU followers into the orbit of Liberal Islam. It is indeed ironic that in Indonesia authoritarian religious teachings are among the forces

promoting democratic politics.

In translating this article I have attempted to stick as closely to the original wording as possible to capture Wahid style of argumentation. I have included numerous footnotes to guide readers through the complexities of Indonesian political and religious history and discourse.

ISLAM, PLURALISM AND DEMOCRACY

by Abrurrahman Wahid

The twenty five years of the New Order provide an interesting portrait of relationships between Islam and the political system. During this period we have seen the development of Islamic movements that question the wisdom of the government. From one perspective, Islam has been pushed from the stage of formal politics due to the government's policy of deconfessionalizing the political parties.[1] However, the informal political power of Islam has expanded in a satisfactory way.

The deconfessionalization of politics was accomplished through the requirement that government employees be members of GOLKAR, which was mandated at the time of the 1971 elections, the fusion of political parties and the requirement that all social organizations accept *Panca Sila* as their sole organizing principle.[2] This reduced the power of confessional Islamic parties which were merged to establish the United Development Party. All of this was accomplished in the relatively short time of fifteen years. It will take twenty years for Islam to realize its political potential in the informal sense. This will come about because the government will need to legitimize its development program. It has been relatively easy for other groups, including nationalists and socialists to accept the government's program because of the political maxim: "follow our political line and everything will be in order."[3] Only a few minor groups, including churches, had difficulty with this position. Despite their small size these groups have caused difficulties for the government.

The Government's attempt to gain legitimacy or recognition from the Muslim community is even more difficult. To gain the acceptance of the Islamic movements the government will have to recognize their concerns regarding social issues such as family planning, social stability, education and development of the legal system. This has become clear in the dynamic interaction of power centers operating at the national level.

We can now see the results of this ambivalent relationship. The erosion of the formal political power of Islam has been balanced by the growth of Islamic influence in an informal sense. Islamic movements can be found within the system and, at the same time, operate as corrective forces outside of it. This would not have been imaginable in the past. Now, the informal power of Islam is in balance with the formal power of the military.

It is interesting to reflect on the way that Islamic movements have come to be in this position, because it has implications for the ways in which Islam

will participate in the political process in the future. It is also important to examine the strategies used by very different groups, even those strongly opposed to Islamic movements. It is also important to distinguish between groups that act on the basis of clearly defined strategies and those that do not and to keep in mind the fact that the actions of the various Islamic movements are influenced by their historical backgrounds. For example, the contentious issue of "Christianization" is rooted in an ideology, held by some Islamic movements, according to which the relationship between the potential for the "flowering" of Islam and of other social groups is defined in "win/loose" terms.[4] Others maintain that this relationship does not have to be defined as an ideological struggle, but rather as [complimentary] cultural development. Nuances like these must be taken into consideration if the development of Islamic influence is to occur in a profound and systematic fashion.

POLARIZATION OF THE POLITICAL POWER OF ISLAM

Over the past two decades the political power of Islam has grown and flowered. There are, however, complex internal dynamics in Islamic politics. There has never been a single, unified strategy for the development of the Islamic community. There have often been sharp divisions. Among these, power and often-opposed factions there are two basic perspectives. The first is that Islam should not present itself in exclusivist way. From this perspective, one does not speak of "Islamicization," but rather of integrating the goals of the Muslim community with those of the broader society. The questions and problems addressed by those who hold this view and the same as those of society at large. The paradigm is, "to come from religion to solve the problems of society." The second perspective is based on a specifically "Islamic agenda" for the life of the nation and society. This paradigm is, "to come with religion to solve the problems of society."[5]

The 1971 elections, which resulted in the flowering of GOLKAR, provide clear examples of both perspectives. At that time the fusion of the existing political parties into the PDI Indonesian Democratic Party) and PPP (United Development Party) was a major issue. In response to this development, some Islamic leaders who were not firmly committed to the Islamic parties of the day joined GOLKAR. Leaders of both Muhammadiyah and NU were among them and were given "non-strategic" positions in the party apparatus. The important strategic positions went to the military and technocrats associated with it. However, this did bring strong and creative Muslim leaders into the organization. Those who held government positions generally chose to affiliate themselves with non-political Islamic movements such as the alumnae

association of the HMI (Islamic Students Organization), Islamic NGOs, or with social or cultural foundations. Most of the leaders of the old Islamic political parties joined the PPP. There were, however, others who joined or established other, non-political organizations.

A number of issues including the proposed marriage act of 1973 (that would have allowed secular marriages), the P4 program, *Panca Sila* as the *asas tungall* (sole organizational principle) for all social organizations, educational reform, and debates about religious law untied activists from a wide variety of Islamic movements in their attempts to negotiate with the government and to arrive at a consensus that would not prove detrimental to Islam.[6] Some times and in some cases, including family planning efforts, Islamic movements accepted government proposals and worked to ensure their success.[7] Only in a few relatively minor cases such as gambling were there serious difficulties.[8]

In cases such as this there was basic, though not complete, agreement among Islamic movements. The differences that existed resulted from differing desires and objectives held by government and non-government groups and by non-Islamic, non-governmental organizations. Muslims affiliated with NGOs' struggle for various social causes, not for the advancement of Islam per se.[9] Religion is, nonetheless, their "mother tongue."[10] "Formal" Islamic movements chose an opposite strategy. For them the "Islamic Agenda" was the ultimate goal. However, the nature of the "Islamic Agenda" varied and was determined by the orientation of individual movements. Local movements, such *Perguruan Islam as-Shafiyah* (The al-Shafi Association of Islamic Teachers) in Jakarta found it much easier to seize the "color of Islam" than did national level organizations like NU.[11] Local Islamic movements that focus on local issues have the capacity to put an Islamic agenda in place in a local community. A national Islamic movement must be prepared to seek compromise concerning issues of more general national and social significance.

The transformative potential Islamic movement varies. Muhammadiyah, for example, emphasizes [modern, secular] education. NU emphasizes strengthening the role of the *pesantren* in social life.[12] For the past fifteen years, this orientation has led NU to emphasize the social and economic transformations of the rural communities in which *pesantren* are located. Difference in the orientations and agendas of Islamic movements are based largely on differing goals and objectives, but are also influenced by the ways in which they interact with the existing power structure. Some maintain that they can achieve there goals only by establishing close relations with and even by become part of the system. Others are

ambivalent, and still others maintain the close relationships or participation in government must be avoided.

In conclusion it can be said that a variety of factors have influenced interaction between Islamic movements and their relationships with outside forces. Among these are: the backgrounds and historical perspectives of the individual movements and the nature of their ideologies; their goals and objectives and their views of the existing system of authority. It is also clear that these factors can not be understood in a simplistic way. In the case of ICMI (*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia,* the Association of Muslim Intellectuals), for example, the formal leaders come from within the government. There is clearly variation/contradiction in the ICMI leadership. Its ideas and energy are drawn from activists, campus mosques and Islamic NGOs.[13] The idea of the "danger of Christianization" that is common in ICMI is the result of the victory of the campus mosque faction in the struggle for control of the organization and the Islamic agenda it promotes.[14]

These diverse "Islamic Agendas" can be categorized on the basis of two criteria: their relationships with other Islamic movements, and with the government. Some maintain that it is extremely important to become part of the power structure, either by holding power directly, or by acting as "king makers" [English in the original]. Consequently they seek harmonious relationships with the government by subordinating their own goals, including the struggle for a more democratic political system and the establishment of a more just social order. These organizations have a tendency to surrender to the political will of the government. This causes friction with human rights and other socially oriented organizations. ICMI is an example. There is also a perspective that emphasizes the development of transformative capacity outside the system of power. These organizations hold that as long as a good relationship with the government can be maintained, the organization can focus its attention on transforming the lives of its own members. This is the type of approach NU has pursued in order to participate the struggle for democracy through participation in "alternative organizations" such as the Forum for Democracy.[15]

At this point it can be said that, on the basis of the two perspectives discussed above, it is possible to discern three definitions of "closeness" [with the government]. The first is social and political. It emphasizes participation in the political system. It is based on an "Islamic Ideology." It is exclusivist, distancing Islam from other religions, philosophies and ideologies. "The self interest of Islam" is the creed and "Islamic Solidarity" is the rope to which its followers cling.[16] Sectarianism can

develop very easily in such groups as the flowering of anti-Christian and anti-Chinese sentiments in contemporary Islamic movements show. The absolute goal is the success of the "Islamicization process," even if the aspirations of society as a whole are threatened. This is the truth, even if proponents of this position say that it is not.[17]

The second definition is "cultural closeness." This is based on an attempt to establish an Islamic framework for and consciousness in daily life, but with out strong links to any particular institution. To the extent that there are formal institutions, there goals are limited to the propagation of Islamic values. *Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina*, founded as a "house" for Islamic teaching is an example.[18] The emphasis is on understanding Islamic values as the basis of a global culture, rather than a system of power. However, there can be a mutation of this perspective. Some who promote it shift to the first definition and decide that they want to enter the system.[19] This cultural relationship is inclusive, but it can give rise to the view that other religious and culture groups are responsible for the condition of the Muslim community. In this respect it resembles the social/political position because it considers the Islamic agenda to be more important than the national agenda.

The third definition is social/cultural. It emphasizes the cultural orientation, supplementing it with attempts to construct a system of social institutions based on Islamic cultural values. The goal is to build a system of social institutions which, in the long run, will change the nature of society. Consequently, the question of entering the system of power does not arise. This is the approach of mass organizations including Muhammadiyah, NU, the *pesantren* system and Islamic NGOs.[20] The have the ability to combine the Islamic and national agendas because of the nature of their relationships with the government.[21]

Examination of the various views of "closeness" taken by Islamic movements in Indonesia over the last two decades reveals that relationships between Islam, as represented by Islamic movements and the state represented by the New Order Government are complex. This complexity is a wise course and the Muslim community has become increasingly powerful because of it. In the past the Muslim community was distracted by immediate concerns including criticism of development models, ritual questions, formal politics and joining the bureaucracy simply for the purpose of being close to people in important official positions. The result has been truly unusual. The Muslim community emerged as a powerful force that could function in both critical and legitimizing ways. With the passage of time the community devised a variety of strategies, so that the exercise of influence is no longer

restricted to mechanistic statements.

ISLAM AND DEMOCRATIZATION

The Islamic community, in all its internal complexity, must also respond to the complexities of the larger society. The process of deconfessionalization brought about changes in society as a whole. The socialists, the Murba party for example, had a materialist political philosophy and did not use religion as the basis of political activity.[22] For them, religion is a personal matter. Many Muslims are content with the *pesantren* system, but do not identify with political Islam because they see politics as a worldly matter. The late Soejatmoko, for example, was not "allergic" to religion, but only to religious organizations.[23] He held these views because of the problems religious organizations had caused in the past.[24] These problems were generally the result of religious organizations choosing the formal/legal orientation and to see people in black and white terms and to see themselves as "saints descending to humanity."

This problem must be understood in the context of the jungle that is society. The problem we must confront is that of how to establish a national life that gives a place to religion, but does not, by doing so lead to the destruction of other perspectives. The answer to this question is almost vulgar. In the last ten years we have arrived at a good solution -- the process of democratization. Democracy empowers the people. This can change the orientation of social groups, leading them to work together in mature ways, contributing to the integrity and development of society. Democracy can provide support for those who reject the idea of a religious state, and at the same time give religion a place [in the state]. If society is democratic, Islam will be strong. This should appeal to those who are fanatic in their quest for an Islamic identity.[25] Democracy also provides protection for those who think of Islam with terror.[26]

So the problem returns to the Islamic community itself. Democracy holds out the promise of the perfection of society. Are Muslims ready for democracy? At the present Muslim groups are all too often only concerned with their own interests. This is a weakness. Another weakness is that Muslim groups are often not willing to "take and give" [English in the original] in a serious way. Democracy is based on the concept of "give and take" [English in the original]. It is not possible to force others to accept a particular religious position. At the same time, democracy means that it is possible to accept those who take non-religious positions. This is democracy. This does not mean that, as a whole, the Islamic community is not ready for democracy. This depends on the community. But with the current leadership it may not be. But if the community (*umat*) is defined as society as I whole, I do not believe that this will be a problem. For the

Indonesian Islamic community the time is ripe. They have demanded it for a long time, since the struggle for independence. The leaders, however, can not see these signs. They only consider narrow issues and not the broader concerns of the Muslim community. Because of this they understand the development of Islam as the growth of a sectarian community one that values itself while denigrating others. Debates about indigenous vs. non-indigenous groups and "Christianization" grow out of this sectarian spirit.[27] We live in a pluralistic society. Pluralism flourishes in the context of democracy. We are all empowered and enriched by the spirit of pluralism.

The development of pluralism depends of two major social sectors: the Islamic community and the armed forces. They will determine the extent of democracy. I can see signs of progress, but there is still danger that we will turn away from democracy. It is possible to take ten steps forward and twenty steps backwards. This is the danger. The danger can come from Islamic movements that are too rigid and exclusivist.

TOWARDS A DOUBLE STRATEGY

Democracy can guarantee that secular groups and religious minorities that fear the power of the majority Muslim community will be protected. This process needs to be conducted as quickly as possible to restrain the tendency of Muslims to understand other groups as threats to Islam.[28] If this tendency is allowed to develop, it can only lead to the deterioration of the strength of the Muslim community.

The idea of democracy can be found not only in the Muslim community but also among the youth of the Catholic and Protestant communities who are also concerned about the attempts of their leaders to Christianize national life. Among Catholic youth there are two views of the relationship between Islam and the state. The first is that it necessary to choose between two options, neither of which is particularly attractive: the green of the military and the green of Islam. So they choose the green of the military. This view is counterproductive and is in decline. The second view is exactly the opposite. It maintains that Indonesian national life should not be defined as conflict between the army and Islam because when two elephants collide, it is the mouse deer who suffers. They believe that Islam is not dangerous unless it is threatened. Consequently they look for the best option, which is to become friends.

In the political constellation of the New Order there is polarization with in the military. This is the result of extremely complicated factors. The social and economic policies of the government have produced great expectations in the material aspect of life. There has also been criticism of

the economic expectations. There are subjective tensions between the value accorded to the material products of development and the desire for greater freedom of thought, association and the democratization of all aspects of life. Because of this the process of democratization can no longer be delayed. The pressure for democracy puts the military in a difficult situation. If they suppress the desire for democracy they will become unpopular. If they do not it will lead to internal tensions between those concerned with acquiring wealth, power and authority and those who remain "pure." This tension has often been apparent.

This analysis indicates that many may join together in the life of society and the nation if we work towards the democratization of all aspects of life. My view is that we need a dual strategy. One the one hand there must be those who continue the process of formalizing the role of religion in national life, through the Department of Religion, ICMI and the National Council of Ulama. On the other hand some religious organizations must address more general issues. There must be an understanding of this dual strategy but there need not be formal collaboration.

If this strategy is pursued, Islam will be a major force, no matter who becomes president or what form of government there is. The optimal possibility would be for Muslims to hold power in government institutions.[29] This will probably have to wait. The minimal possibility is for Islam to assume the role of a *rahmat lil-alamin* (a blessing for all of creation). This is not difficult. We must guard against over Islamicizing the government because if that were to happen, Islam could easily be transformed and manipulated in ways that would threaten its ability to develop and as independent creative force.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

[1] From 1971 until 1997 political parties were not allowed to include religion in their platforms or to use religious symbols. Wahid uses the term "deconfessionalization" because the United Development Party remained an Islamic party in the sense that all of its members are observant Muslims. They refrained from the use of Islamic rhetoric and symbols only because of government coercion.

[2] GOLKAR a coalition of functional groups include civil servants and the armed forces functioned as a government party, even though it was not officially called one throughout the New Order period (1966-1998). *Panca Sila* (Five Principles) is the national ideology. Its principles are: belief in one supreme God; humanitarianism; nationalism expressed in the unity of Indonesia; consultative democracy; and social justice.

[3] For most of the time that it was in power there was no serious political opposition to the New Order, owing to a combination of potentially repressive and powerful security forces and the success of economic development policies. This period of relative calm ended abruptly in 1997 when the economy collapsed in the wake of the Asian currency crisis.

[4] Some Indonesian Islamists have an almost paranoid fear of what they refer to as "Christianization"

[5] "Coming from Religion" is Wahid's strategy. It has caused some Indonesian Islamists to question his commitment to Islam. He has been able to make a strong public case for this position because of his place in the sacred lineage of NU, the nation's and the world's largest Muslim organization. While some NU leaders consider many of his statements and political positions "strange," millions of rural Muslims believe him to be a saint, following his command with out question.

[6] The P4 program was an educational/indoctrination program which promoted the national ideology of *Panca Sila*. It was initially very strongly opposed by Muslim leaders, some of whom went so far as to claim that the Government intended to abolish religion and replace it with *Panca Sila*. The Social Organization act required that all recognized organizations accept *Panca Sila* as their "sole organizing principle." This was very strongly opposed by modernist Muslims. Wahid found a way around the problem by declaring that the first principle "faith in the one true God" could be equated with the Islamic concept of *takwa* or complete devotion to and trust in God. In a rare legislative defeat for the regime Muslims successfully opposed a proposed law that would have allowed for civil marriages.

[7] Some local *ulama* (Muslim scholars) were very strongly opposed to family planning efforts. I one case I encountered in the mid 1980s one of the leaders of a Yogyakarta mosque stated that family planning was "not Islamic" and that the use of condoms endangered women's health and could cause uterine cancer.

[8] This statement is typical of Wahid's thought. Gambling is clearly *haram* (forbidden by Islamic law). And yet he considers social issues such as the elimination of poverty, the development of modern education and family planning to be issues of great concern. He has often expressed dismay that too many *ulama* remain focused on the details of *fiqh* rather than using Islam to find solutions for more pressing social problems.

[9] Wahid is known for his support of human rights and development oriented NGOs. He was one of the founders of the League for Democracy, and interfaith group concerned

with freer and fairer elections and a more open political system.

[10] Wahid's point is that Islam can inspire people to work for the resolution of social problems even when the solutions proposed are not explicitly Islamic. An example is that the Islamic notion of justice can inspire people to struggle for a wide variety of causes.

[11] Wahid's point is that small groups can be vocally Islamic because they are of relatively little importance on the national scene, but that because of their size and importance the major Islamic movements must be more cautious to avoid aggravating communal and religious tensions.

[12] *Pesantren* are traditional Islamic schools. They resemble South Asian *madrassas.* They provide basic education for millions of rural Indonesians as well as more advanced theological training for aspiring *ulama*. Wahid and others in NU have worked to establish *pesantren* capable of providing modern education equivalent to that which can be obtained in government and Muhammadiyah schools.

[13] Wahid was very strongly opposed to the formation of ICMI and refused to join. He is concerned that it represents a "back door' strategy for the establishment of an Islamic state to which he unalterably and fundamentally opposed.

[14] Some factions within ICMI have called attention to the "dangers of Christianization" to promote strong affirmative action programs that would limit the percentage of Christian civil servants to their proportion in the general population. Any talk of the dangers of Christianity also has ethnic overtones because the majority of Chinese, who dominate the economy and several other significant ethnic groups, are predominantly Christian. Wahid has worked for a "civil society" that is religiously neutral and well as for interfaith dialog and cooperation. He has taught part time in a Roman Catholic seminary for many years. Campus mosques are among the most common recruiting grounds for Indonesian Islamist organizations. Today many are associated with explicitly Islamic political parties that have returned to the scene with the establishment of democracies.

[15] Wahid and a number of other prominent public intellectuals found this organization as an alternative to the government dominated ICMI.

[16] This is a reference to a verse from the Qur'an that urges Muslims to "hold fast to the rope of God."

[17] Amien Rais, then General Chairman of the Islamic modernist organization Muhammadiyah is sometimes linked to this position. There are a number of small groups and publications, many of them linked to the old Masyumi Party, that articulate these views very strongly. They are clearly stated in Islamist publications including *Media Dakwah* that describe purported IMF/CIA/Zionist/Chinese Christian conspiracies to destroy the Indonesian economy and the strength of the Muslim community.

[18] This educational and religious foundation was established by the late Nurcholish Madjid. It supports a press and a university. Madjid, who was educated at the University of Chicago was regarded by many Indonesian Muslims as the greatest theologian of his generation.

[19] Madjid was very ambivalent about his relationship with the government. He played a central role in the founding of ICMI and continued as a member. He also expressed concern about the organization being to close to the government. In support of this view he mentions a Hadith according to which the best Sultan is one who constantly consults the *ulama* and the best *ulama* are those who avoid the Sultan.

[20] Here it is necessary to distinguish between Muhammadiyah as an organization and the positions taken by Amien Rais. Rais is often inclined towards an "Islamic Agenda" position. Muhammadiyah as an organization has, since its founding in 1912, sought to establish an institution system, including schools, universities clinics and hospitals independent of first the colonial state, and later the Indonesian government. Many Muhammadiyah leaders, at both local and national levels, are almost completely a-political.

[21] Both Muhammadiyah and NU schools accept government subsidies.

[22] The Murba Party was a non-communist leftist party. Indonesia's third Vice President Adam Malik was affiliated with this part.

[23] Soejatmoko was a Cornell trained sociologist any for many years a close friend and advisor of Sultan Hamengkubuwana IX who played a critical role in the foundation of the New Order and subsequently served as Vice President. Pious Muslims often describe technocrats and other secularly oriented people as the "allergic" to religion or the Qur'an.

[24] This is probably a reference to the Dar al-Islam movement in west Java that sought to establish an Islamic state and other rebellions inspired in part by leaders of Masyumi during the Soekarno era.

[25] This statement is illustrative of Wahid's deep conviction that Islam plays a central role in the lives of the great majority of the Indonesian population.

[26] The idea here is that non-Muslims have nothing to fear from Islam in the context of a democratic society.

[27] This is a reference to the fear of Christians and Chinese by some Muslim leaders. There is a very long history of Chinese/Indonesian tension and violence in Java and elsewhere in Indonesia. This tension originated in the colonial period, when the Chinese receive preferential treatment form colonial authorities. It resulted in a massive wave of looting destruction and rape in Jakarta and Surakarta in May of 1998. Wahid is known for his ability to work closely with both Chinese and Christians.

[28] Indonesian Christians are inclined to identify Islam as a "threat" some have joined in virulently anti-Islamic campaigns mounted by American Christian Fundamentalists in support of the "Freedom From Religious Persecution Act,"' which would have require the US to impose economic sanctions on nations where a cabinet level official determined that Christians were subject to persecution. "Radical Islamic states" and China were explicitly mentioned in the act. Wahid's concern is that the statements of such groups could lead to the deterioration of Muslim/Christian relations.

[29] By "Muslim"' Wahid means pious observant Muslims or *santri* as they are known in Indonesia and in the literature about Indonesian Islam.