The many faces of political Islam

Mohammed Ayoob

2006

Mohammed Ayoob. (2006). The many faces of political Islam. (RSIS Working Paper, No. 119).
Singapore: Nanyang Technological University.

https://hdl.handle.net/10356/90575

Nanyang Technological University

No. 119

The Many Faces of Political Islam

Mohammed Ayoob

Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies

Singapore

29 December 2006

With Compliments

This Working Paper series presents papers in a preliminary form and serves to stimulate comment and discussion. The views expressed are entirely the author's own and not that of the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies

The Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS) was established in July 1996 as an autonomous research institute within the Nanyang Technological University. Its objectives are to:

- Conduct research on security, strategic and international issues.

- Provide general and graduate education in strategic studies, international relations, defence management and defence technology.

- Promote joint and exchange programmes with similar regional and international institutions; and organise seminars/conferences on topics salient to the strategic and policy communities of the Asia-Pacific.

Constituents of IDSS include the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), the Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS) and the Asian Programme for Negotiation and Conflict Management (APNCM).

Research

Through its Working Paper Series, *IDSS Commentaries* and other publications, the Institute seeks to share its research findings with the strategic studies and defence policy communities. The Institute's researchers are also encouraged to publish their writings in refereed journals. The focus of research is on issues relating to the security and stability of the Asia-Pacific region and their implications for Singapore and other countries in the region. The Institute has also established the S. Rajaratnam Professorship in Strategic Studies (named after Singapore's first Foreign Minister), to bring distinguished scholars to participate in the work of the Institute. Previous holders of the Chair include Professors Stephen Walt (Harvard University), Jack Snyder (Columbia University), Wang Jisi (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences), Alastair Iain Johnston (Harvard University) and John Mearsheimer (University of Chicago). A Visiting Research Fellow Programme also enables overseas scholars to carry out related research in the Institute.

Teaching

The Institute provides educational opportunities at an advanced level to professionals from both the private and public sectors in Singapore as well as overseas through graduate programmes, namely, the Master of Science in Strategic Studies, the Master of Science in International Relations and the Master of Science in International Political Economy. These programmes are conducted full-time and part-time by an international faculty. The Institute also has a Doctoral programme for research in these fields of study. In addition to these graduate programmes, the Institute also teaches various modules in courses conducted by the SAFTI Military Institute, SAF Warrant Officers' School, Civil Defence Academy, and the Defence and Home Affairs Ministries. The Institute also runs a one-semester course on '*The International Relations of the Asia Pacific'* for undergraduates in NTU.

Networking

The Institute convenes workshops, seminars and colloquia on aspects of international relations and security development that are of contemporary and historical significance. Highlights of the Institute's activities include a regular Colloquium on Strategic Trends in the 21st Century, the annual Asia Pacific Programme for Senior Military Officers (APPSMO) and the biennial Asia Pacific Security Conference. IDSS staff participate in Track II security dialogues and scholarly conferences in the Asia-Pacific. IDSS has contacts and collaborations with many international think tanks and research institutes throughout Asia, Europe and the United States. The Institute has also participated in research projects funded by the Ford Foundation and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation. It also serves as the Secretariat for the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), Singapore. Through these activities, the Institute aims to develop and nurture a network of researchers whose collaborative efforts will yield new insights into security issues of interest to Singapore and the region.

ABSTRACT

The paper argues that the multiple manifestations of political Islam are primarily determined by discrete contexts, that the vast majority of Islamist movements operate peacefully within constitutional constraints, and that democratization leads not only to the moderation of Islamist political formations as they are forced to build coalitions but also to their fracturing into various parties that pursue different agendas. It will also look back into history to argue that the political and religious realms have for all practical purposes remained separate in the classical age of Islam and that the contemporary manifestations of political Islam are products of the encounter between Europe and the Muslim world during the colonial period. It will argue further that the nature of regimes in the Muslim world and the general thrust of American policy augment the legitimacy and popularity of Islamist movements among the populations of predominantly Muslim countries.

****

Mohammed Ayoob is University Distinguished Professor of International Relations, Michigan State University. He holds a joint appointment in James Madison College and the Department of Political Science. He is also the Coordinator of the Muslim Studies Program at Michigan State University. A specialist on issues of conflict and security in the post-colonial world, he has written on security issues relating to South Asia, the Middle East and Southeast Asia as well as on conceptual and theoretical issues relating to security and conflict in the international system. In addition, he has published books and articles on the intersection of religion and politics in the Muslim World. He has authored and/or edited 11 books and published around 90 research papers in leading academic journals and as book chapters. His books include The Politics of Islamic Reassertion (1981) and The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System (1995). He has just completed a book manuscript, which will be published in 2007 by the University of Michigan Press under the title *Political Islam Demystified: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World*. He was a member of the faculty at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in India and the Australian National University before joining Michigan State University in 1990. He has held visiting appointments at Columbia, Oxford, Princeton, and Brown Universities and at Bilkent University in Turkey and has received fellowships and grants from the Rockefeller, Ford, and MacArthur Foundations and from the East-West Center in Honolulu and the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore.

THE MANY FACES OF POLITICAL ISLAM

This paper is based on the forthcoming book *Political Islam Demystifies* and will attempt to summarize some of the main arguments that is made and supported in greater detail in the book. However, before such a discussion can begins the author would like to define the term "political Islam". At the most general level, adherents of political Islam believe that "Islam as a body of faith has something important to say about how politics and society should be ordered in the contemporary Muslim world and implemented in some fashion."[1] While correct as a broad sweep generalization, this is too nebulous a formulation for it to act as an analytical guide capable of explaining political activity undertaken in the name of Islam. A more precise, and analytically more useful, definition of political Islam describes it as "a form of instrumentalization of Islam by individuals, groups and organizations that pursue political objectives. It provides political responses to today's societal challenges by imagining a future, the foundations for which rest on reappropriated, reinvented concepts borrowed from the Islamic tradition."[2]

The main thrust of the book and of this paper is to challenge several assumptions commonly prevalent in much of the analysis of political Islam. These include the following: (a) There is something unique in Islam that precludes separation between religion and state, and that religion dictates political action in Muslim countries. (b) Political Islam like Islam itself is a monolithic phenomenon and, therefore, by definition a universal or transnational occurrence largely independent of particular social and political contexts in which Islamist groups

---

[1] Graham Fuller, *The Future of Political Islam*, Palgrave, New York, 2003, p. xi.
[2] Guilain Denoeux, "The Forgotten Swamp: Navigating Political Islam", *Middle East Policy*, June 2002, p. 61.

and parties operate. (c) Islamists are single-minded fanatics who are obsessed with implementing the sharia and enforcing God's sovereignty and are, therefore, incapable of making political compromises or building coalitions with other political forces/parties. (d) Islamist political formations are by definition anti-democratic because belief in God's sovereignty precludes accepting the notion of popular sovereignty; at best they are likely to use democracy in an instrumentalist fashion to come to power, but once in power they are likely to jettison the democratic system in order to perpetuate their rule thus proving true the dictum that Islamists are committed to "one person, one vote, one time". (e) Political Islam is inherently violent or, at the very least, predisposes its followers to undertake unconstitutional and extra-legal activity to achieve their "divinely sanctioned" objectives.

While these assumptions can be treated distinctly in analytical terms, they are closely related to each other and form a part of a highly negative overall perception of the phenomenon we call "political Islam". This paper will address each one of these assumptions in turn and demonstrate that while they may appear valid in a superficial sense, they are basically wide off the mark. Meanwhile, in the book, the author did so at length with illustrations from both the history of Muslim societies and the contemporary situation in various Muslim countries.

The grand assumption that underlies most others about political Islam is that there is a unique relationship between religion and politics in Islam that precludes the separation of the religious and political spheres. There is a corollary that assumes that political action in the Muslim world is usually driven by religious concerns. Any one familiar with the classical age of Islam would realize that during the period of the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates, especially the

2

latter when the five principal schools of Islamic jurisprudence crystallized, the religious and political spheres had for all practical purposes come to be considered distinct. The state intervened in matters of religion very minimally and the ulema by and large accepted the legitimacy of temporal authority as long as it could defend the land of Islam and allow Muslims to practice their religion without let or hindrance. The absence of a single locus of religious authority both reduced the threat to the state from the *ulema* and, simultaneously, made it difficult for the state to impose total control on the ulema. A compromise based on the principle of live and let live was reached that served the interests both of the state and of the religious classes.

It was in this context that leading Islamic theologians such as al-Gahazali, al-Mawardi, and Ibn Taymiyya, trying to provide definitive answers to both the religious and the political predicaments facing the umma, bent over backward to accept and justify temporal rule that modern day Islamists would consider both 'impious' and 'unjust'. They did so in order to prevent dissension and minimize divisions within the umma that could lead to anarchy and political breakdown. They were supreme realists when it came to understanding the power relationship within their societies and extremely protective of the social fabric that could be torn asunder if the ulema engaged in direct opposition to political authority based on abstract ideals that they might have cherished privately.

Consequently, Sunni theologians of Islam's classical period turned the defense of the political status quo into a fine art. When the Abbasid caliph became a mere handmaiden of Turkic warrior-rulers from the 9th to the 13th centuries, leading *ulema* devised ways to bestow legitimacy on him even though he no longer exercised power in any real sense of the term. For example, the famous

11th—12th century theologian Al-Ghazali, in a novel interpretation of the caliph's role, advocated a division of labor between the sultan and the caliph, with the former exercising power on the latter's behalf while the latter continued to symbolize the religious unity of the *umma*. He went to the extent of justifying usurpation of power by Turkic dynasts, who constantly overthrew and replaced each other in different parts of the nominal caliph's domain, by post-facto investiture by the caliph of their right to rule over territories they had acquired by force.

Writing two hundred years later, the Hanbali theologian Ibn Taymiyya, commonly considered to be the forbearer of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and his puritanical interpretation of Islam, argued, according to the eminent historian Albert Hourani, that "The essence of government…was the power of coercion, which was necessary if men were to live in society and their solidarity was not to be destroyed by natural human egoism. Since it was a natural necessity, it arose by a natural process of seizure, legitimized by contract of association. The ruler as such could demand obedience from his subjects, for even an unjust ruler was better than strife and the dissolution of society."[3] Thomas Hobbes must have read Ibn Taymiyya before his formulated his social contract theory. It was very clear that Ibn Taymiyya privileged political order over the integrity of the religious ideal.

This defense of the political order was based on an unwritten compact between the state and the ulema where the political quietism of the latter acted as a quid pro quo for minimal interference in the religious sphere by the former. However, where the two spheres intersected, it was the temporal that was more

---

[3] Albert Hourani, *Arabic thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1983, p. 19.

often in the driver's seat using the religious establishment for its own ends. The state's domination of the religious sphere in Sunni Islam was institutionalized from the 17th century onward in the Ottoman Empire when religious functionaries became part of the imperial bureaucracy and the Sheikh-ul-Islam served at the pleasure of the Sultan. State control of the ulema has now become the norm in many Sunni countries, especially in the successor states to the Ottoman Empire with Turkey as the prime example. It is clear, however, that in these cases it is not religion that drives politics—often, it is the other way around.

Moreover the politicization of religion and the induction of religion into politics are not unique to Islam. They are the norm in much of the Hebrew Bible and in fact one can argue that Zionism today is politicized Judaism. The intertwining of religion and state/politics has been much greater in Christianity from the 4th century down through the medieval period than was the case in Islam's classical age. The Pope's role as temporal ruler has no parallel in the history of Islam. While there may be controversy whether in colonial times trade followed the flag or vice versa, there is ample evidence to prove that the Cross accompanied both and often became an arm of the project of European domination of non-European lands. The role of the Buddhist Sangha, the order of monks, in Sri Lankan politics and in defining the national identity of Sri Lanka remains unrivalled in most Muslim countries outside of Shia Iran. Even Hinduism, which embraces great diversity and eschews a unified dogma, has demonstrated such great potential as a marker of political identity that it would not be wrong to consider Hindu nationalism in India politicized Hinduism. There is, therefore, nothing unique in the history of Islam that sets it apart from other religious traditions in terms of the relationship between religion and politics or as a marker

of political identity. To conclude this point: despite what contemporary Islamists as well as their detractors may say, the religious and political spheres in Muslim lands remained distinct and continue to do so. Moreover, where they intersected more often than not it was the political actors that used religion for their purposes and not vice-versa.

The second assumption is that political Islam is a monolithic phenomenon unrelated to context. This assertion is most emphatically contradicted if we look at the two leading self-proclaimed Islamic states, Saudi Arabia and Iran. No two states could be more different from each other in the way political life is organized. Saudi Arabia is a hereditary monarchy legitimized in Islamic terms by the Wahhabi religious establishment on the basis of a compact reached by Muhammad ibn Saud and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in 1744 that divided control over the political and the religious affairs between their two families, the al-Saud and the al-Sheikh. This bifurcation of roles holds good until this day. Iran is a republic whose revolutionary leaders came to power by overthrowing a hereditary monarchy and declared the institution to be un-Islamic. It has a hybrid system based upon the simultaneous operation of representative institutions based on universal adult franchise and a set of clergy dominated institutions that exercise supervisory roles over the elected government. The Saudi and Iranian systems are products of particular historical contexts in which they originated—the compact of 1744 and its periodic renewal in the case of the former, the constitutionalist revolution of 1905-06 as modified by Khomeini's theory of the *vilayet-i-faqih* in the case of the latter. Despite the claim by both that they epitomize the Islamic political system, their experience makes clear that there is no consensus over what constitutes such a system.

This point is driven home further when one examines the modern Islamist movements that have become leading advocates of Islamic governance. Despite some common themes that they share and the similarities in the vocabulary that they use, there is an infinite variety of organizational and ideological differences among them that are reflective of their particular contexts. The Muslim Brotherhood is as much a product of the Egyptian context as the *Jamaat-i-Islami* is a product of the Indian and after 1947 the Pakistani context. Even the various branches of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab world – in Jordan, Syria, Palestine, and Kuwait – adopt different strategies that are determined by the contexts in which they operate. Additionally, the parent body, the Egyptian Brotherhood has undergone major transformation over time. This becomes clear when one compares its political stance during its radical Qutbist days in the 50s and 60s and the Brotherhood as it has operated from the 1970s until now. One could argue that Sayyid Qutb's ideas were as much the product of the brutality he experienced in Nasser's jails, as it was a result of his reading of the Quran. The Brotherhood leadership repudiated these ideas informally in 1969 and formally in the early 1980s. Differences in time and space account for the variety of Islamist experiences in the contemporary era and stand as definitive proof that Islamism is neither monolithic nor essentialist in the way it is often portrayed in the West.

Moreover, even within the same country there are multiple expressions of political Islam. The traditional salafi groups shun the adherents of the Muslim Brotherhood ideology in both the Middle East and Southeast Asia. The lay *Jamaat-i-Islami* in Pakistan has been fighting a running ideological battle with the *ulema* based parties, such as the *Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Islam* and the *Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Pakistan*. The modernist *Muhammadiya* and its offshoots have major

7

political and philosophical differences with the traditionalist *Nahdlatul Ulema* in Indonesia. Political Islam is far from being monolithic even in individual countries where several groups are at odds with each other. To argue, that there is a monolithic political Islam across the globe, therefore, makes no sense at all.

Third, it is often assumed that Islamist groupings are unwilling to make compromises or enter into coalitions and that they are unduly rigid over ideological matters. In fact, the opposite is true. This becomes clear if one analyses the trajectories of Islamist parties in Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey and Indonesia. The *Jamaat-i-Islami* in Pakistan and the Refah Party in Turkey have entered into coalitions with secular parties either to form governments (as in the case of Turkey) or oppose existing governments and demand greater democracy (as in the case of Pakistan). The Muslim Brotherhood, denied legal status, has fielded candidates under the banner of different parties in Egypt and as independents and cooperated with opposition parties for specific ends. The *Jamaat-i-Islami* in Pakistan has in fact cooperated with military regimes, from Zia to Musharraf, where its interests have converged with those of the military. The *Nahdlatul Ulema* and other Muslim political formations in Indonesia have been routinely in and out of government and in coalition with secular parties of different hues. Rhetoric to the contrary, Islamist politics is made of the stuff of compromise. There is not a single mainstream Islamist party that has not entered into political compromises to further its political objectives.

Fourth, it is assumed that Islamist parties are by definition anti-democratic because they are committed to the notion of God's sovereignty that is antithetical to popular sovereignty, which forms the bedrock of democratic systems. On the contrary, one finds that Islamist parties in Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan,

8

Egypt, and Kuwait have internalized democratic values to a very significant extent. Abul Ala Mawdudi, probably the most seminal Islamist thinker, went to the extent of theorizing that since 'man' was the representative of God on earth, political outcomes based on popular will were legitimate in Islamic terms and regimes based on popular will were, therefore, not contrary to Islam. His party, the *Jamaat-i-Islami*, has participated in all the elections held in Pakistan and accepted their outcomes despite its normally poor showing in such elections.

Even in Algeria the civil war of the 1990s was a result not of the Islamic Salvation Front's (FIS) anti-democratic tendencies but the refusal of the regime to accept the outcome of a democratic election that was likely to give FIS a large majority of seats in the National Assembly. In the case of Iraq, it is the Shia clergy who have become the foremost proponents of democratic governance. It was Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani who forced the American pro-consul Paul Bremer to hold direct elections to the constituent assembly by threatening to declare any other way of selecting a constitution making body as illegitimate in Islamic terms. This was an act of *ijtihad* that made democratic government synonymous with Islamic government. It was the Islamist Dawa and SCIRI parties that were engaged in trying to put together a governing coalition in Iraq, a coalition necessitated by the fractured verdict of the Iraqi electorate.

Fifth, there is the common assumption that violence is inherent in Islamist political activity. However, if one looks at the record it is clear that violence is the exception rather than the rule as far as Islamist activity is concerned. Violence is usually committed in the name of Islam by fringe groups, such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, the GIA in Algeria, and a faction of the *Jemaah Islamiya* in Indonesia, that break away from mainstream Islamist formations because they

consider the latter to be too compromising. Similar fringe groups in Pakistan and elsewhere have resorted to violence not because violence is inherent in political Islam but because they conclude that they will not be able to come to power through constitutional means and also assume that the moderate, mainstream Islamist parties have sold out to or compromised with existing regimes. Violent activity is usually a sign of desperation rather than a well-thought out strategy to gain power. Moreover, it is generally counterproductive and usually leads to the decimation of violent groups either by regime suppression or popular revulsion or both.

In addition to fringe national groups, it is the transnational extremist organizations, such as Al-Qaeda, that adopt violence as their primary tool in order to target the far enemy, the United States and its allies, after having failed to overthrow the near enemy, the domestic regimes.[4] These are also fringe groups in the sense that while they may commit dramatic acts of terror their influence on the course of development of Muslim societies is minimal since they operate outside the framework of the state system whose values have been internalized by Islamists, both leaders and followers alike. For the Muslim world they are a distraction that takes attention away from major problems facing Muslim countries which mainstream Islamist parties try to address in their own way within constitutional constraints devised by regimes not particularly sympathetic to the Islamist cause.

Finally, there are Islamist political formations that straddle the non-violent world of political parties and the violent world of movements resisting foreign occupation. Hizbullah in Lebanon and Hamas in occupied Palestine are examples

---

[4] Fawaz Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2005.

par excellence of such groups. But, these are special cases that began their political lives as resistance movements and then transmuted into political parties. Hizbullah, although it has so far refused to give up arms, now acts primarily as a political party in Lebanon that enters into electoral agreements even with Maronite factions, supporting their candidates as quid pro quo for their support of its candidates. It currently has two ministers in the cabinet led by a member of Hariri's party and its spokesmen have proclaimed that it now accepts the multi-confessional nature of the Lebanese party and has for all practical purposes postponed its agenda of creating an Islamic state into the far future and that also by persuasion and not violence.

Hamas's transformation into a political party has been far more difficult because the Israeli occupation provides the framework for and basically determines all political activity in occupied Palestine. But, even Hamas has undergone major transformation. In 1996 it rejected participation in the legislative elections because this would have been an endorsement of the Oslo process, which Hamas opposed, and would have detracted from its role as a resistance movement. In 2006 Hamas not only participated in the elections but also emerged as the majority party in the Palestine National Council (PNC). Leaders of Hamas have made statements after the elections offering Israel long-term truce if it withdraws to the 1967 borders and clearly implying that they would at some point accept a two-state solution within the 1967 borders. More recently they have been on the verge of accepting a compromise with Fatah, which would have implied acceptance of a two-state solution. Unfortunately, this process has been derailed by a chain reaction of violence, initiated by Hamas's militant wing dissatisfied with the leaderships increasing pragmatism and moderation, and Israel's highly

disproportionate military response that only serves to further radicalize Palestinian society.

The difference between Hamas and Fatah is that unlike Fatah Hamas is unwilling to recognize Israel and give up its right to resist occupation until a final settlement is reached and there is simultaneous mutual recognition of the Israeli and Palestinian states. It is unfortunate that instead of giving credit to Hamas for this transformation the US, Europe and Israel are bent on isolating Hamas and punishing the Palestinian electorate for electing it to office. This may eventually force Hamas back solely into the resistance mold leading to the eventual collapse of the Palestinian Authority and a return to the pre-Oslo framework of conflict by removing the buffer between the occupier and the occupied. Hizbullah and Hamas are, however, unique because their contexts are unique. As Lebanon has normalized, Hizbullah has normalized; when Palestine becomes a normal state, Hamas is also likely to become a normal political party.

However, there is one question that still needs to be answered: Will Islamist parities and movements continue to prosper if and when Muslim countries, especially in the Middle East, undergo democratic transformation? Political Islam has been a very effective oppositional ideology. But, once Islamists achieve political power or a share in it, their rhetoric can no longer act as a substitute for concrete policies and the Islamist's feet are also be held to the political fire. Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey all provide examples of this phenomenon at national and provincial levels. These are all democracies of one sort or another. One can argue that democratization, therefore, may be the ideal antidote to the appeal of Islamism and the rhetoric accompanying it. Acquiring and holding power necessitates compromises and induces pragmatism. Witness

the fact that AKP in Turkey no longer calls itself an Islamist party but has re-packaged itself as a "conservative democratic" party.

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Egypt may never go that far; but if it comes to hold or share power through democratic means it will have to compromise even further than it has done so far to maintain a governing coalition that by necessity will have to transcend its ideologically committed supporters. Some of the more politically entrepreneurial elements within the MB have in fact broken away to form the post-Islamist Wasat party, which, in a classical case of political shortsightedness, has been repeatedly denied legal status by the Mubarak regime. The regime and MB share the objective of preventing Wasat from legally entering the political fray because it has the potential to challenge the regime as well as the MB's hegemonic role among opposition formations. If and when Egypt becomes an open polity, Wasat is likely to draw away substantial number of votes from MB, the way AKP did from Erbakan's Saadet Party, which received only 2.5 percent of the votes in the November 2002 elections in Turkey as against AKP's 35 percent. Wasat may not be able to do so well, but it will certainly fracture the mainstream Islamist movement through electoral means and present a post-Islamist alternative to MB's moderate Islamism.

This is the case elsewhere in the Muslim world as well where political openness has encouraged the appearance of several Islamist tendencies. Indonesia and Pakistan are the prime examples of this phenomenon. In the former the split between the modernist *Muhammadiya* and the traditionalist *Nahdlat-al-Ulama* (NU) has been a fixture of political life and is now manifested in a number of Islamically inclined parties, some inside the present government and others opposed to it. In Pakistan the ulema-based parties such as the *Jamiat-al-Ulema-i-*

13

Islam (JUI) and the *Jamiat-al-Ulema-i-Pakistan* (JUP), the former espousing a more strict interpretation of Hanafi fiqh than the latter, have competed not only against each other but also against the *Jamaat-i-Islami* thus splitting votes and demonstrating that political Islam is no monolith.

In Iraq the three main Shia Islamist parties, Daawa, SCIRI, and the Sadrists compete with each other thus splitting the Shia Islamist vote and providing greater leverage to the Sunni Kurds and Sunni Arabs to influence the future course of the country's development. Political democracy creates political space for Islamist parties in the truly plural sense of the term, splitting the Islamist base within polities and cutting individual Islamist political formations down to size thus neutralizing the possibility that a monolithic Islamist bloc will take and hold power. Democracy in action truly shows the many faces of political Islam within each individual Muslim country in addition to demonstrating that Islamist political formations operating within different national contexts are very different from each other because they are responding to different societal needs and demands.

To conclude, the notion of 'Political Islam' comes in various shapes and sizes and these differences can be perceived not only among countries but within countries as well. There are certain factors inherent in Islamism, such as the use of vocabulary that resonates with the masses that may be responsible in part for its popularity. However, there are important factors, exogenous to the Islamist phenomenon, such as the authoritarian and repressive nature of regimes that play an even greater part in according political Islam legitimacy and credibility. Democratization of Muslim polities, as several cases have demonstrated, not only induces pragmatism and compromise in Islamist politics, it also has the potential

to fracture the Islamist base as a consequence of electoral competition. This makes Islamists appear less of a threat to their secular counterparts and more normal players of the political game. The future of political Islam is, therefore, intimately tied in more than one way to the future of democracy in the Muslim world. This applies with special force to the Middle East, which has been the slowest in moving towards genuine democratic change.

IDSS Working Paper Series

1. Vietnam-China Relations Since The End of The Cold War (1998)
   Ang Cheng Guan

2. Multilateral Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region: Prospects and Possibilities (1999)
   Desmond Ball

3. Reordering Asia: "Cooperative Security" or Concert of Powers? (1999)
   Amitav Acharya

4. The South China Sea Dispute re-visited (1999)
   Ang Cheng Guan

5. Continuity and Change In Malaysian Politics: Assessing the Buildup to the 1999-2000 General Elections (1999)
   Joseph Liow Chin Yong

6. 'Humanitarian Intervention in Kosovo' as Justified, Executed and Mediated by NATO: Strategic Lessons for Singapore (2000)
   Kumar Ramakrishna

7. Taiwan's Future: Mongolia or Tibet? (2001)
   Chien-peng (C.P.) Chung

8. Asia-Pacific Diplomac*ies:* Reading Discontinuity in Late-Modern Diplomatic Practice (2001)
   Tan See Seng

9. Framing "South Asia": Whose Imagined Region? (2001)
   Sinderpal Singh

10. Explaining Indonesia's Relations with Singapore During the New Order Period: The Case of Regime Maintenance and Foreign Policy (2001)
    Terence Lee Chek Liang

11. Human Security: Discourse, Statecraft, Emancipation (2001)
    Tan See Seng

12. Globalization and its Implications for Southeast Asian Security: A Vietnamese Perspective (2001)
    Nguyen Phuong Binh

13. Framework for Autonomy in Southeast Asia's Plural Societies (2001)
    Miriam Coronel Ferrer

14. Burma: Protracted Conflict, Governance and Non-Traditional Security Issues (2001)
    Ananda Rajah

15. Natural Resources Management and Environmental Security in Southeast Asia: Case Study of Clean Water Supplies in Singapore (2001)
    Kog Yue Choong

16. Crisis and Transformation: ASEAN in the New Era (2001)
    Etel Solingen

17. Human Security: East Versus West? (2001)
    Amitav Acharya

18. Asian Developing Countries and the Next Round of WTO Negotiations (2001)
    Barry Desker

19. Multilateralism, Neo-liberalism and Security in Asia: The Role of the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation Forum
Ian Taylor
(2001)

20. Humanitarian Intervention and Peacekeeping as Issues for Asia-Pacific Security
Derek McDougall
(2001)

21. Comprehensive Security: The South Asian Case
S.D. Muni
(2002)

22. The Evolution of China's Maritime Combat Doctrines and Models: 1949-2001
You Ji
(2002)

23. The Concept of Security Before and After September 11
a. The Contested Concept of Security
Steve Smith
b. Security and Security Studies After September 11: Some Preliminary Reflections
Amitav Acharya
(2002)

24. Democratisation In South Korea And Taiwan: The Effect Of Social Division On Inter-Korean and Cross-Strait Relations
Chien-peng (C.P.) Chung
(2002)

25. Understanding Financial Globalisation
Andrew Walter
(2002)

26. 911, American Praetorian Unilateralism and the Impact on State-Society Relations in Southeast Asia
Kumar Ramakrishna
(2002)

27. Great Power Politics in Contemporary East Asia: Negotiating Multipolarity or Hegemony?
Tan See Seng
(2002)

28. What Fear Hath Wrought: Missile Hysteria and The Writing of "America"
Tan See Seng
(2002)

29. International Responses to Terrorism: The Limits and Possibilities of Legal Control of Terrorism by Regional Arrangement with Particular Reference to ASEAN
Ong Yen Nee
(2002)

30. Reconceptualizing the PLA Navy in Post – Mao China: Functions, Warfare, Arms, and Organization
Nan Li
(2002)

31. Attempting Developmental Regionalism Through AFTA: The Domestics Politics – Domestic Capital Nexus
Helen E S Nesadurai
(2002)

32. 11 September and China: Opportunities, Challenges, and Warfighting
Nan Li
(2002)

33. Islam and Society in Southeast Asia after September 11
Barry Desker
(2002)

34. Hegemonic Constraints: The Implications of September 11 For American Power
Evelyn Goh
(2002)

35. Not Yet All Aboard…But Already All At Sea Over Container Security Initiative
Irvin Lim
(2002)

53. Fireball on the Water: Naval Force Protection-Projection, Coast Guarding, Customs Border Security & Multilateral Cooperation in Rolling Back the Global Waves of Terror from the Sea
   Irvin Lim
   (2003)

54. Revisiting Responses To Power Preponderance: Going Beyond The Balancing-Bandwagoning Dichotomy
   Chong Ja Ian
   (2003)

55. Pre-emption and Prevention: An Ethical and Legal Critique of the Bush Doctrine and Anticipatory Use of Force In Defence of the State
   Malcolm Brailey
   (2003)

56. The Indo-Chinese Enlargement of ASEAN: Implications for Regional Economic Integration
   Helen E S Nesadurai
   (2003)

57. The Advent of a New Way of War: Theory and Practice of Effects Based Operation
   Joshua Ho
   (2003)

58. Critical Mass: Weighing in on Force Transformation & Speed Kills Post-Operation Iraqi Freedom
   Irvin Lim
   (2004)

59. Force Modernisation Trends in Southeast Asia
   Andrew Tan
   (2004)

60. Testing Alternative Responses to Power Preponderance: Buffering, Binding, Bonding and Beleaguering in the Real World
   Chong Ja Ian
   (2004)

61. Outlook on the Indonesian Parliamentary Election 2004
   Irman G. Lanti
   (2004)

62. Globalization and Non-Traditional Security Issues: A Study of Human and Drug Trafficking in East Asia
   Ralf Emmers
   (2004)

63. Outlook for Malaysia's 11th General Election
   Joseph Liow
   (2004)

64. Not *Many* Jobs Take a Whole Army: Special Operations Forces and The Revolution in Military Affairs.
   Malcolm Brailey
   (2004)

65. Technological Globalisation and Regional Security in East Asia
   J.D. Kenneth Boutin
   (2004)

66. UAVs/UCAVS – Missions, Challenges, and Strategic Implications for Small and Medium Powers
   Manjeet Singh Pardesi
   (2004)

67. Singapore's Reaction to Rising China: Deep Engagement and Strategic Adjustment
   Evelyn Goh
   (2004)

68. The Shifting Of Maritime Power And The Implications For Maritime Security In East Asia
   Joshua Ho
   (2004)

69. China In The Mekong River Basin: The Regional Security Implications of Resource Development On The Lancang Jiang
   Evelyn Goh
   (2004)