

Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social, and Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century

*K. S. Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali, eds.
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This book is a revised version of the proceedings of a conference of the same title held in Singapore during 2002. The papers comprising this highly relevant and timely text cover topics from the history of Islam in Southeast Asia to Islamic doctrine, politics, civil society, gender, modernization, globalization, and the impact of 9/11. However, Islam and politics are the central themes, with special attention given to the challenges of the recent context for Southeast Asia's Muslim-majority societies. As such, it is of interest to scholars of diverse fields, including history, political science, international relations, religious studies, sociology, and anthropology.

The introduction, "Understanding Political Islam Post-September 11," criticizes the inequality and militarism of western-dominated globalization and the violent responses of *political Islam* or *radical Islamism*. Clear definitions of these pivotal terms used throughout the collection would sharpen the argument about the particular kind of political uses of Islam that the authors view as a threat. The editors provide an adequate and enticing overview of this interesting collection of papers. However, it would be helpful to acknowledge that they focus on Malaysia and Indonesia, with the exception of one paper on the Philippines. Addressing the situation of Muslim minori-

ties in the mainland Southeast Asian countries of Burma/Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam, where they live under the hegemony of Buddhist or communist majorities, would add an important comparative dimension.

The book is divided into four theme-based parts. The first part focuses on the spread of Islam and doctrine in the region. Azyumardi Azra analyzes the doctrinal diversity of Sunni Muslim groups in Malaysia and Indonesia, including the recent upsurge of radical, puritanical groups. He concludes, contrary to several later chapters, that it is “terribly wrong to assume that these radical groups are influential in Southeast Asia” (p. 19). Johan H. Meulman studies controversies over the origins of Islam in Southeast Asia and argues for an approach that considers diverse factors and successive stages of its growth there. He also notes the varied transnationalism of liberal and radical Muslims in Indonesia. Carmen A. Abubakar makes a major contribution with her excellent historical overview, including the Filipinos’ early contacts with Muslims from other parts of insular Southeast Asia and the current period of Muslim struggle for autonomy and liberation from the Catholic-dominated state of the Philippines. Bahtiar Effendy provides a fine analysis of the emergence of Islamic banking in Indonesia under Suharto, and Mohamed Aslan Haneef describes how Islamic values have been an integral part of Malaysia’s economic development.

The second part examines the complex topics of politics, governance, civil society, and gender in Southeast Asian Islam. Shamsul A.B. makes an important contribution by addressing two major versions of political Islam: the recent Islamist movements and the older form of the Malayo-Indonesian sultanates. Zainah Anwar and Patricia Martinez criticize how political Islam is establishing a stronger public presence in Malaysia’s multi-religious society, with the two major Malay Muslim parties competing over which one is the most Islamic. Martinez concludes that full democracy may be possible in Malaysia only after a long period of negotiation and reinterpretation with political Islam.

Peter Riddell presents perspectives of Malaysian non-Muslim minorities about the ongoing process of Islamization, noting the numerous Christian and multi-religious organizations that have formed in response to Islamic revivalism. He could have strengthened his argument by noting the continuing marginalization of Indians in these coalitions and the tensions associated with intermarriage between Christians and Buddhists or Hindus. Lily Zakiyah Munir argues that traditional Muslim scholars and those following their rigid views have reinterpreted the gender egalitarian values

embedded in Islamic texts to construct patriarchal societies. She recommends new methods of reading the Qur'an.

The third part considers modernization, globalization, and the Islamic state debate in Southeast Asia. Syed Farid Alatas observes that despite strong Islamic ideals of development, there has been a weak formation of empirical theory in Islamic economics. He concludes that there is a need to combine Islamic and western models. Abdul Rashid Moten, expanding on this point, argues that most Islamic principles are in harmony with the processes of modernization and globalization. Shad Saleem Faruqi, who discusses the Malaysian constitution and implementation of Islamic laws, remarks that Malaysia, with its commendable record of multicultural relations, has a hybrid legal system, one that is neither totally Islamic nor secular. Mohammad Hashim Kamali examines Muslim scholarly perspectives, both Sunni and Shi'a, on the "Islamic state," arguing they project a civilian state with Islamic law rather than a "theocratic" state, which is proscribed by Islamic law.

The fourth part analyzes the impact of 9/11 on Islamic thought and practice in Southeast Asia. Noorhaidi Hasan describes the rise of Islamic militancy in post-New Order Indonesia and the range of groups comprising the anti-American coalition. He notes that although there is no evidence of direct links between al-Qaeda and radical groups in Indonesia, Osama bin Laden has great symbolic meaning for thousands of young people. Bernard Adeney-Risakotta uses "ideal types" to describe western and Islamic emotional responses to 9/11 and definitions of *terrorism*. This approach tends to oversimplify the complexity of this critical matter and produces monolithic opposing caricatures of the West and Muslims. He also makes the reckless and unsubstantiated claim that two Indonesian mainstream Muslim leaders "have ties to violent and radical Muslim groups" (p. 332).

In the conclusion, Nathan and Kamali focus on "applied Islam," calling for moderate Muslim voices to come to the fore and utilize wisdom and creativity in finding ways to combine religious and secular spheres in order to move beyond outdated theocracies. Despite some shortcomings in particular papers, this collection is an important contribution to the literature of Islam in insular Southeast Asia and contemporary studies of Islam and politics in the post-9/11 context.

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