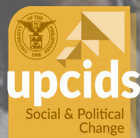




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On Islamic Populism in Indonesia and the Middle East

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VEDI R. HADIZ

I was asked to talk about my recent book on Islamic Populism in Indonesia and the Middle East.¹ I think it might be a good idea to give a bit of a background as to why I took this project while I discuss some of its main ideas and perhaps also its potential implications not just for the societies I've talked about in the book but more broadly in terms of Islamic Politics globally.

I had been extremely annoyed at the increasingly narrow discussion on Islamic Politics that I thought was being undertaken both in academia as well as in more popular discussions you would find in the press. In all of these, Islamic Politics was depicted as being too monolithic, which I thought was quite ahistorical and also devoid of understanding of the broader structural and socio-economic and political context in which Islamic Politics evolves. Any form of politics in the world develops in relation to a particular social structural context. Why not Islamic Politics?

¹ Vedi Hadiz. 2016. *Islamic populism in Indonesia and the Middle East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

VEDI R. HADIZ

When we listen to the pundits in the press and some of the people who have made a name for themselves as “experts” on Islamic Politics, sometimes we get the view that the people who are championing Islamic Politics are simply thinking about 7th century Arab desert society. Well, of course that’s wrong! That’s impossible!

My annoyance prompted me to start looking, start reading the literature—to make myself more acquainted with literature on Islamic Politics, first of all in Indonesia, and Southeast Asia more broadly. One of the things I found was that a lot of the literature was culturally essentialist, almost orientalist. Basically, they talk about some innate propensities of the Muslim, in the same manner some Westerners used to talk about the innate propensities of Asians or Chinese. Another view was basically to subsume Islamic Studies under Terrorism Studies. Well, terrorism may be a part of it, in a sense, for obvious reasons. But Islamic politics cannot be reduced to it. Well, this whole interpretation of Islam really just annoyed me.

Freed from teaching for five years and armed with a grant from the Australian Research Council, I went off to the Middle East which was an intellectually stimulating time. Being a Southeast Asianist, it was also liberating because it was a chance to actually learn about societies I had never really studied before; to master the literature in terms of the themes I studied in relation to Southeast Asia: capitalism, state development, social movements, class conflict, and state formation. I felt that I was being cocooned within Southeast Asian studies.

I found out in my readings on the literature on Islamic Studies and Islamic Politics in the Middle East that, in terms of the approaches, it was much more diverse than the approaches that I would normally find in studies on Islamic Politics in Southeast Asia, and certainly in Indonesia. If most analyses of Islamic

VEDI R. HADIZ

Politics in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, would be, as I have said, cultural or reductionist in terms of the terrorism angle; I found that a significant proportion of the work of the last thirty years or more on Middle Eastern Islamic Politics have actually been undertaken on the basis of political economy, political sociology, and historical sociology approaches. So that's right up my alley.

The frustration of not finding this stuff in most of the Southeast Asian literature, especially Indonesian literature, was kind of placated when I found that this sort of stream was fairly prominent—a minority but prominent—in Middle Eastern literature. Some of the people I'm referring to go all the way back to Rodinson, then Fred Halliday, Sami Zubaida, John Esposito, and Asef Bayat, and all others who are getting known although in a superficial way. I became really immersed in this literature.

The other thing that I started to do was to broaden my horizons. Accidentally, at the same time, I was reading the literature on populism and basically retrieving it again after having left it during the part of the 80s and the 90s. So, I started reading it again.

There are many different approaches to populism, and one of the approaches is what I called the “ideational approach.” This is basically the approach where one pays attention to the rhetoric and ideas of demagogic leaders, of populist leaders. Populism as the ideas and rhetoric of the leaders.

And then there's the approach that one might call the organizational understandings of populism. This I trace back, among others, to the thinker Nicos Mouzelis who first wrote about populism in the 80s. Basically the idea of populism here is that it is there to bypass all of the formal institutions of political

VEDI R. HADIZ

representation because they don't work. So, this is about direct democracy.

Then there's the now very famous *Laclauian* approach to populism. If you go to Latin America, if you talk to Latin Americans, they're all *Laclauians* now when they talk about populism. I went to this populism conference, a couple of them actually, in London, and then there were a lot of Latin Americans and it was all about Ernesto Laclau. I know of Laclau's work from the 70s and also his work with Chantal Mouffe in the 80s and sort of lost touch with him in the 90s as he became a post-structuralist.

But then I picked up belatedly his *On Populist Reason*, the 2005 book. My first reaction to it was "what is this all about?". Because the prose was very obtuse, as Laclau tends to be. But then I started reading it very seriously and I thought, you know, this fellow has got a point and I wish that he would write about this the way he would write about things in the 1970s.

So, what I did was when I rediscovered Laclau, I did what Marx did to Hegel: I turned him on his head, and put him back in the late 1970s where he would then be paying more attention to history and political economy. The material base of populism was gone by the time he wrote *On Populist Reason*. As I was trying to develop my own approach, I rediscovered all of these things that had been written partly under the auspices of Ionescu and Gellner in the 60s, some of which was about the social base, the different social bases of different populist movements. It was written all the way back in the 60s! And then I started reading all this stuff from the 50s and the late 19th century. Basically, I thought that one approach to populism that has been missing from the literature, and which I wanted to re-establish, was class analysis of populism.

VEDI R. HADIZ

Now the thing I got from Laclau's *On Populist Reason* was something that was interesting – I don't know if anybody here has read the thing, and it is hard work – he talks about a concept which I find really useful (except in the way he wrote it) and the concept is about the “chains of equivalence.”

Laclau is saying that you got all of these particularistic demands coming out from society and they all represent different kinds of interests (but he doesn't use the word ‘interest’). What populism does is it tries to establish equivalence and is basically a project of homogenizing difference. And it does so, in his terminology, by what he calls the use of “signifiers.” Floating signifiers. This could be anything. He says it can be people, it can be socialism, it can be democracy. Basically, it is something that can mean anything to lots of people but can bring them together behind a political project. This is really interesting because of all the societies that one may be talking about in this room, societies that were born from capitalist transformation and so on, they've actually become much more diverse than they were twenty or thirty years ago. So, the sources of social interest can be quite different.

How do you develop a political project? Why would you homogenize in one project all of these particularistic demands? This is what populists do and they do that with nationalist hyperbole and ethnic or religious identity. And what they do really is they homogenize a set of interests that they will then put under the rubric of the *People*. The *People* are always the oppressed, the marginalized, the people who get the short end of the stick in any political social order and they are juxtaposed against the elites. The *People* are always virtuous, moral, and hardworking. They are the majority. The elites are always rapacious, they can be foreigners and because of that they are culturally aloof. Basically, out of touch with the oppressed and the downtrodden.

VEDI R. HADIZ

I thought that's an interesting idea. If you turn Laclau on its head, what are the social and material bases for forming cross-class alliances representing divergent interests in society? And in that context, what language of politics, e.g., slogans, can you use to attract people behind a particular political project?

Laclau doesn't say this but for me, it involves something tantamount to a "suspension of difference." Why do I say a suspension of difference? Because I think it's almost always going to be temporary. All cross-class populist alliances are tenuous because they try to bring together usually contradictory interests. They will always be internally contradictory and that's why populisms often dissolve for some reason or another or reconstitute to become something else.

Going back to Islam, I thought, Islam is actually a cultural resource pool in which you can find the language to bring together divergent sets of interests within increasingly diverse societies behind a political project. And you can actually identify a very nice political project.

The difference between Islamic Populism and populisms in general, for me, is that Islamic Populism substitutes the key concept of the people (the virtuous people, the moral people) with the idea of the *ummah*, the community of believers. So again, they are the pious; they are the good; and they are the majority in Muslim majority societies. There is a narrative, in almost all of Muslim majority societies that Muslims, since the age of Western dominated colonialism, have been marginalized.

Because of the way that societies and economies of the colonial era were organized – that certainly is a narrative in Indonesia and is a good reason why you have those anti-*Ahok* (and relatedly anti-Chinese Jakarta rallies) recently². What they did is that they tapped into the language of the historical memory of the

² "Ahok" is the Chinese Hakka nickname of former Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama who was accused and jailed for insulting Islam. He lost his re-electionist bid in 2016 as large crowds of Muslims held demonstrations against him.

VEDI R. HADIZ

marginalization of the *ummah*. But the people in the ummah are from different classes and different social groups.

The genius of Islamic Populism is that it substitutes the People for the *ummah*. Although the ummah is supposed to be global but modern politics is almost always fought within national confines. Therefore, the ummah gets to be re-imagined within national confines. It's the struggle of the ummah in contestations over power and resources, and this is where the political economy and stuff comes in again.

This is because they have always been marginalized during the colonial era. And then at the advent of post-colonial states in most of the Muslim world, what developed were secular-nationalist states dominated by bureaucratic and/or military and technocratic interests where the representatives of Islamic politics tended to be marginalized.

They figured, "we lost in the colonial period, we lost in the post-colonial period, we're losing in the globalization period." Why? Because it's only the rich people that are getting richer and richer. So, there you have a narrative that can be tapped. And this is not just in Indonesia. I found this in Egypt, Turkey, and Tunisia. I found this in various Muslim majority societies where people self-identify with being part of the ummah that has been perennially marginalized at least for over a hundred of years. And that's where Islamic Populism comes in.

So, I thought, well, this could be one of the conceptual underpinnings of a comparative study. I went to the Middle East and I decided that my two comparisons would be Turkey and Egypt. Why? Because they were also two major Muslim majority societies like Indonesia. Turkey and Indonesia are the 16th and 17th largest economies in the world. Egypt has fallen behind in terms of those sorts of things but it has experienced

VEDI R. HADIZ

like Indonesia and Turkey some of the same things. The struggle against British colonialism where the Muslim Brotherhood was a major force. And then they had Nasser and then after Sadat they had Mubarak who also marginalized the Muslims.

In Turkey, obviously, you had Atatürk and then there was a brief period in the 50s where there was a kind of a mainstream party, the Democratic Party, that appealed to what was then a nascent culturally Islamic bourgeoisie coming from the provinces which would become important as the social base for the populism of the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) when it emerged in the 2000s. So here's the class analysis coming in.

But basically these are three big Muslim majority societies where there is the self-narrative of historical ummah marginalization by a secular nationalist state; they experienced the same thing in the Cold War whereby the Left in all these three societies (although in different decades) was smashed, not as violently in all places—most violently in Indonesia in the 60s. In the 70s when Sadat wanted to get rid of the Nasserists he actually released the Muslim Brotherhood from prison to help attack the Nasserists and the leftists. In the 80s, after the 1980 coup, the official military came about with what they call the Turkish Synthesis (the Military Islamic Synthesis) whereby the Muslims, and the military, and the sort of Kemalist State helped smash the Left and the trade union movement.

In all of these cases, Islam and the military, have, from time to time, been in an alliance with the state to smash the Left. This is even though Islam has proponents of the ummah that have always thought that the state has been against them. But in all of these cases as well, right after they smash the Left, the military smashes them back again. In Indonesia after the Muslims helped the military smash the Communist Party they were smashed in the 70s. After the Muslim Brotherhood helped

VEDI R. HADIZ

Sadat smash the Left, the honeymoon ended quickly to the point where Sadat was assassinated by Muslim Extremists and Mubarak smashed the Muslims again.

So you have some of these patterns which are common among these three cases. And also they are all neo-liberalizing societies. All of these societies from the 1980s went into neoliberal globalization but with different kinds of social structures and therefore different kinds of effects on the potential social bases of Islamic Politics, as explained in my book.

Now if the Left suffered the same fate as the ummah, wouldn't that have been the basis for unity in those sectors? The answer is "no", because the Left and the Muslims are often competing for overlapping social bases of support amongst the poor and low-income classes. And also because the Left, most especially the communist Left, have an agenda of the expropriation of private property while a lot of the leading figures of Islamic Social movements were petty owners of property - petty commodity producers and traders. So they felt that the Leftists, especially with the communist agenda, were a threat to their own class interests. In fact, in the 1940s, when the Left in Egypt developed trade unions, Hassan al-Banna, the head of the Muslim Brotherhood said: "We have to form trade unions too." This was to show workers that the struggle of trade unions is not only about expropriating private property but for owners and workers to work in coordination with each other.

The trajectories of Islamic Politics have been really different in all three of them. Let's say, Islamic Politics have resulted in, A in Turkey; has resulted in B in Egypt; has resulted in C in Indonesia. But they all went through those broad social processes and the the global context I mentioned, yet the outcomes are different. Why? And actually that's always my question whenever I do

VEDI R. HADIZ

anything: why is it A here and why is it B here and why is it C here.

In Turkey, finally, you get the case whereby the representatives of Islamic Politics in the form of the AKP, even though they can't call themselves an Islamic Party given the secular constitution of Turkey, have actually, basically, taken over the state. They won the elections but it's taken them ten years of struggle with the military and bureaucracy and now they have much more complete control of the state than they did 15 years ago. So you have the trajectory there where Islamic populism wins the state.

In Egypt, apart from the one year that the Muslim Brotherhood rose to power, and also apart from or prior to the destruction of the Muslim Brotherhood by the military recently, what you had was the inability of Islamic Populism to gain control over the state and yet manage to dominate civil society. In the 80s and 90s, the most organized group in civil society were the Muslims.

In Indonesia, meanwhile you have the third trajectory: the inability to win power over the state and the inability to dominate civil society. So you have three different trajectories and my question was, "Why?" What I started to do was the empirical analysis in terms of history, sociology, and also in terms of the political economy.

In Turkey a solid cross-class populist coalition was established on the basis of Islam as the sort of basic lexicon. A big culturally Islamic bourgeoisie came basically from the provinces. And the reason why you have them really is this: when in the 1980s, Turkey went neoliberal and became export oriented, it was the companies of these Anatolian business people who were best positioned to take advantage of them because they were export oriented. And so they grew from the 80s and 90s and then developed as a major pillar of Islamic rule. They had money.

VEDI R. HADIZ

The middle class also emerged and expanded in Turkey. But the middle class in Islam is not monolithic. You have this sort of migrations of families from the provinces, the big cities, and they go to school, and they try to find work and so on but because of the increasing inequalities and structural bottlenecks that have been the result of neoliberal globalization they find that there's a limit to how far they can go. Even though big Muslim companies are now under this organization called MUSIAD, the really big companies are under TUSIAD – that's the posh corporation, the big corporations. And if I talk to them what they want is to take over from TUSIAD. What they want really, is not to overthrow capitalism but to be the masters of Turkish capitalism. And they mobilize support for that on the basis of latching onto the narratives of Muslims having been perennially disadvantaged by the Kemalist state.

All the young guys who were students and became Professionals in the cities and the modern economy, they joined the party and the social organizations. They became the activists and would join charity organizations, a model copied from the Muslim Brotherhood. Charity work is a way of bringing together the large urban poor masses who live in huge swaths of slums in all the big cities of Turkey. They have been created by neoliberalization as people move from the villages into the towns and cities and don't get absorbed into the industrial sector. So how do you get them in? You get them in by giving them the social services that the state doesn't provide because of the neoliberal retreat. You do that by providing them education. And how do you get the money from that? You get the big businesses for the funding. So then finally you get a fairly coherent cross-class coalition on the basis of Islamic Populism. That's what you get in Turkey.

In Egypt, the business component is not as robust as Turkey, although they also benefitted from the neoliberal turn in the late 1980s under Mubarak. Mubarak hassled them politically but

VEDI R. HADIZ

let them be economically—except during political crises when he would freeze their assets for a while. But generally, a culturally Muslim bourgeoisie started emerging out of Egypt and linked to the networks of the Muslim Brotherhood. So for example, the number two man in the Muslim Brotherhood, Khairat el-Shater, is a big businessman, though not as big as the cronies of Mubarak but that was his ambition.

When Morsi was in power and these guys were in a state of euphoria, their idea was to set up this business association where they were going to basically displace all the Mubarak cronies. Now we again have the same thing, all these middle class people coming in to the cities. In Egypt though, middle class existence often is not that different from urban poor existence. So if you're a university lecturer, you're living in a similar area and you're thinking "look at all these consumerist dreams which are sold by neoliberalism and I can't attain them". That stimulates a way of identifying with the poor although you still have those upper class dreams. And so what happened with the Muslim Brotherhood, even to a deeper level, they created this entire parallel state where they have clinics, hospitals and delivered social services to the poor independent of the state. The poor then gets brought in contact with the middle class that runs these operations, the doctors and so on, and funded by the bourgeoisie but also in this case some Qatari money as well. Because the Qataris—although we can talk about this a bit later—were against the Saudis, so the Muslim Brotherhood was their way of balancing the power of the Saudis in the Middle East.

Now in both these two cases, the point that I'd like to reiterate is this: even though they were all talking about Islamic morality and so on, nobody was saying at that time that capitalism was bad. What's bad is immoral capitalism. So what we need to do is infuse capitalism with Islamic morality. We won't fund gambling or alcohol-based industries. Everything else is okay.

VEDI R. HADIZ

So the point here is, they were thinking, the Turks being right because they're still in power, and Egyptians following on the Turkish experience thinking, "you know what, we actually don't really need an Islamic state anymore". Why? Because the existing state that has been taken over can actually advance the ummah if we control all its levers. So this idea that is often in liberal theory that when you bring in the Muslims, the extreme ones, they become more moderate as they understand the values of democracy and so on--that's hogwash. What really happens is that they develop a stake in the system and then the values come later (if they do at all).

That's not just the case for Muslims. It's the case for everybody. That's why Authoritarians become Democrats, like in the Philippines in the 80s and 90s. All these people who used to be Authoritarians became Democrats in the 90s. And now people who are leftists are rightists. It's when you develop a stake in a particular system that you change your behavior and ideals and so on.

Now, the Indonesian case is different. The colonial period and the way that the order was constituted saw the big bourgeoisie being dominated by ethnic Chinese business. And it is very difficult to conceive of them as being part of the ummah. Besides ethnic Chinese businesses have never bothered to be part of the ummah since they know they can just develop alliances with those in power.

Apart from the big Chinese businesses, there were the other crony capitalists of the Suharto era and also very difficult to be put under the ummah because they identify with the regime. Interesting thing now is some of them, like the Suharto family and those related to them, are starting to make noises as if they were protecting the interest of Muslims and therefore they were involved in the anti-Ahok demonstrations in 2016 and 2017.

VEDI R. HADIZ

What they're trying to do now is to re-cast themselves as the Muslim bourgeoisie.

So that cross-class, Islamic populist alliance in Indonesia has always been kind of wobbly because you don't have that component that exists in Turkey and to a certain extent in Egypt. The middle class component is the biggest one because you have all these people coming into schools, thinking about social mobility and consumerist dreams, and "experiencing the broken promises of modernity and being disenchanted therefore with the existing system." That's another aspect of populism--disenchantment with the existing social, political set of institutions.

They go down and try to mobilize the poor and the way they've done this is somewhat different from Turkey and Egypt. As they don't have the resources to bring the poor together through provision of social services, what they do is they back competing oligarchs during intra-oligarchic conflict and they become the foot soldiers when you need mass mobilizations. That's how they try to get in.

But the interesting thing is this: In Turkey, with this taking over the state, there is of course "Islam-ization" happening but we don't talk of an Islamic state ruled by Shari'a. It's authoritarian like other authoritarian regimes are.

In Egypt, as soon as the Muslim Brotherhood was destroyed, the younger people who have all been arrested now had the attitude that: "Look, our leaders were wrong. We won elections. We used the democratic route and look what happened." So what they're doing now is they're bombing Cairo and Alexandria. They're going back to the tools, the strategies of the 1960s when Islam was completely out of the picture. So they're thinking that: we're completely out of the picture so if we can't win, we'll bomb

VEDI R. HADIZ

things. In Turkey, you almost have none of that violence. If there are bombings; it will have to do with the Kurdish struggles. Lately, ISIS too but that's partly a geopolitical regional issue, rather than strictly Turkish.

So in Indonesia such a cross-class coalition has no chance in the near future of winning the state and has never dominated civil society because it can't. You've got a very factional and fragmented Islamic Populism. Some of them go the democratic route because of the money politics and all that. They can also accrue money by engaging in rent seeking activities. The Islamic parties are just as corrupt as any other party although they talk about the ummah and morality and so on. But you also have organizations that are anti-democratic and those that take the route of violence, including terrorist groups like Jemaah Islamiah. And the reason for this is not about the lack of liberal values, pluralism, and the like. It's the consolation of social power whereby these guys don't have the chance of dominating the state or civil society through the mainstream institutions and therefore they use strategies outside of those institutions. I think that in many ways, if you're going to talk about terrorism and so forth, it does have to do with people who don't think they have a chance of getting through the normal channels so they have to go outside of them.

I've talked about why I did the research, as to why the approach is political economy, the three trajectories, and I've talked about what Islamic Populism is all about. The thing I want to say is that although I'm talking about things that are a global phenomenon, their manifestations will be contextual and that's why you have those different trajectories. So if one were to think about Islamic Populism and strategies of Islamic politics—whether they be democratic, non-democratic, or violent in different countries, let's say the Philippines, one has to look at the position of Islamic politics within the constellation of power.

VEDI R. HADIZ

If you've got Marawi, you've got to think whether this is actually a response to the particular context that they find themselves in the Philippine case. Again, I'm against this one view that says: "it's innately Muslim" and that sort of thinking. It's the context of things that determines the kind of alliances that are made, the kind of strategies undertaken, and the kinds of goals and objectives that agents of Islamic politics set for themselves.

OPEN FORUM

In the open forum, **Janus Nolasco (Asian Center)** asked where the *ulama* as a class comes in, as he felt sure they historically had a partnership with whoever is in the ruling party, and that the clerical class had business interests as well. He also opined that while Vedi Hadiz focused less on the ideational context, it could be the case that ideas also had an impact particularly in the language used and the themes projected, and not just about class. On the framework used by Prof. Hadiz, Nolasco wondered whether it could also be used in the Iranian context Khomeini, "harnessing the notion of denying the rule of the jurist." The relationship between business and class may not be so easy to determine given that "the bazaar owners also supported Khomeini." Finally, Nolasco asked whether the notion of marginalized Islamic communities could also be applied in the case of the rise of the Islamic State. But what about the context where Islam is not marginalized?

Prof. Hadiz replied that in the case of the *ulama*, a different context would yield a different model. In the Turkish case they threw out the Ulama in the 1920s so the latter had to develop a semi-underground religious order to keep Islam alive in the public sphere. One of these was Said Nursi who was part of a Naqshbandi sect and is considered one of the reference points for the Sufis.

VEDI R. HADIZ

The more general model is that the Ulama supports whoever is in power. In Egypt, al-Azhar and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt criticize each other. When the Morsi government floated bonds, the al-Azhar establishment said that was un-Islamic. When al-Sisi floated bonds they said that is for the national interest. But then, the economic assets of al-Azhar were confiscated by the state and therefore it became economically dependent on the state.

In Indonesia, the ulama are basically under the Nahdlatul Ulama and the Muhammadiyah so they go back to the colonial period and they also tended to be supportive of whoever is in power, partly because a large part of the funding of the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdlatul Ulama came from the state. Although sometimes they can get critical and not be supportive of the state.

Iran is an interesting case because the class structure of Iran was such that in the 1970s the Mullahs were sort of linked up with the interest of small landowners and that of the bazaaris, the merchants. The Shah's modernization project meant a kind of rural transformation that threatened the class interests of the landlords. The Shah wanted industrialization and, therefore, for people to move from the villages to the cities, posing a class threat to the Mullahs.

The 1979 Iranian Revolution was not necessarily an Islamic Revolution as Sami Zubaida pointed out. In 1979, the base of support for Khomeini was everyone including the communist Tudeh Party, the Mujahedin Khalq, the followers of Ali Shariati, and the liberals. They were all behind Khomeini because he was the glue that put them together and he espoused social justice. On the other hand, 1983 was an Islamic revolution when Khomeini and his "revolutionary guards" moved against their allies in the revolution. The Iran-Iraqi War followed where the

VEDI R. HADIZ

Mujahedin Khalq actually moved to Iraq and were portrayed as traitors.

That explains why the Mullahs are part of the Islamic state. But more than that, a current conflict in Iran is between state and private capitalism. Traditionally the Mullahs have been presiding over the state sector. People like Ahmadinejad represented their interest. Against them was this rising liberal current wanting privatization. Some of them had representation within the Mullahs, but it was mainly Rafsanjani, who was considered one of the richest men in Iran.

Asked whether this was the great revolution of 2009, Prof. Hadiz replied it was not necessarily so but that it also brought together people who weren't really all that interested in the state versus private capitalists. They just wanted their freedoms. This was an interesting case of dissent against an Islamic state being couched in Islamic terms, the subject of a book I edited called *Between Dissent and Power: The Transformation of Islamic Politics in the Middle East and Asia*.

In the 70s you have various forms of dissent against the state. Back in the 50s there were leftist Islamic visions as in the case of Mossadegh who was a radical nationalist but whom the CIA portrayed as a Marxist. But it's not only in Iran where Islam is being put forward as a cultural resource to deploy dissent against the regime. In Iran it may be a more liberal form of Islamism which Asef Bayat calls post-Islamism. But in Saudi Arabia it's a more austere form of Islam than the state practices. This needs to be written about more. In the 1960s Nasser kicked out the Muslim Brotherhood who ended up in different countries--in Europe and so on, but many of them ended up in Saudi Arabia. In the 1970s, in Saudi Arabia, the Muslim Brotherhood's organizational capacity met with Wahhabi rigid doctrinairism. And the product of that, to put it in a rather sweeping generalizing term, was Osama bin Laden.

VEDI R. HADIZ

This is where religion is being used to fight religion. In fact, in other regimes which legitimize themselves on religious terms. In the 1970s there was this attack on a mosque by a rather austere group of Muslims. Instead of liberalizing, the state responded by being more austere because they were trying to out-austere it.

Ananeza Aban (Freedom from Debt Coalition) asked about the Egyptian context when Nasser implemented the distribution of land under agrarian reform. She asked what the result of such a strategy was since at this point there still is such elite domination. In Mindanao in Southern Philippines the challenge is that there are still large tracts of agricultural land. The Muslim bourgeoisie or elite Bangsamoro people are also the landlords of the island. And the trajectory of the government is really on developing agribusiness plantations. Conflict-affected areas are being converted into banana and pineapple plantations. In terms of management and the agricultural scheme it's still governed by the elite and definitely neoliberal in structure.

Aban also asked about Prof. Hadiz's analysis on the Marawi crisis and on the Duterte government's federalism project and whether this can work in Mindanao.

In reply, Prof. Hadiz, shared that Nasser indeed had a radical land distribution program and also provided free education. The state was omnipresent and had all kinds of economic and social growth. This is exactly the sort of thing that older people in Egypt and the Nasserists, are nostalgic about. But Nasser got into trouble because of two things: one, was the 1967 six-day war with Israel, where Egypt was completely routed thus beginning the process of delegitimizing Nasser. Secondly, he had fiscal policies born out of this need of funding and they ran out of money. The same with Sadat when he was in power. Not being a major oil producer, Egypt failed to cash on the oil boom of the the early 70s.

VEDI R. HADIZ

What Sadat did when he replaced Nasser was to reverse Nasserism. Not only did he get rid of the cult of Nasser, he had to erode everything that was Nasser's and that included the Nasserist State that was in social welfare. This is what opened spaces for the Muslim Brotherhood whose members were let out of jail. They had existed underground in different manifestations. Mubarak allowed them to run in the elections but not under their own party; at first under someone else's banner, sometimes as independent candidates. One time they got a hundred seats or something like that. The next election was completely rigged so the Muslim Brotherhood would win nothing. That was the sad fate of Nasserism, it ultimately hit roadblocks due to loss of a major war, which was disastrous for Egypt; and also because of the failed fiscal policies of the state.

Prof. Hadiz thinks that, essentially, Marawi is a local conflict. And as is happening all over the world – in Indonesia, Africa, Europe, Middle East, the groups who are there have their own nationally defined grievances, and who tagged onto, at first, Al Qaeda and then ISIS to provide them with legitimacy and also to provide them with the idea that they're actually stronger than they really are.

Of course, for ISIS, who are now being eradicated in their stronghold, it is always nice to be able to say that you have followers everywhere because it means they're still relevant. So, even if you did have direct connections with ISIS and you go through certain individuals it's mainly a local conflict. That is also the case with Jemaa Islamiyah in Indonesia even though it's often portrayed as a subsidiary of Al Qaeda. What they really wanted was to form an Islamic state in Indonesia, not an international caliphate.

If it's a local conflict you have to look at the local constellation of power, what's really involved there and what's at stake in the

VEDI R. HADIZ

fighting. In all probability, what's at stake are natural resources, land, and conflict between local elite families.

Dr. Nassef Adiong (UP Institute of Islamic Studies) observed that in Prof. Hadiz' book, the ummah is the common narrative present in Islamic societies. He asks how then does Turkish society, Egyptian society, and Indonesian society use the ummah as a rhetoric in the "suspension of difference" to use Hadiz' term? And there's also the manifest context which American scholars use in the Islamization of knowledge--Islamic politics, Islamic social sciences, Islamic this and that.

Dr. Adiong then inquired as to what are the particularistic demands that support the major narrative of the ummah in the contexts of Turkey, Egypt, and Indonesia that would validate Prof. Hadiz' idea of Islamic populism apart from what has been presented about how populism has been used in these three Muslim societies. In pre-modern and modern times, ummah, as a theological and social scientific term is rather ambiguous in that it can be relevant to different contexts; it can be about the followers of the disciples of the prophet but between the 19th century and a bit oriented in Islamic scholarship, ummah became a dominant source of communicative difference.

In response, Dr. Hadiz said that Muslims still live in the material world and the particularistic demands are going to be followed by and will significantly affect what one encounters in everyday lives. Just like anybody else in this world, whether Muslim, Christian, Atheist, etc., the first thing that people think about is, "okay, we're in this horrible capitalist world." They want a place to live, education, access to health and so on. Now, these things are universal but you can think about the absence of these services for example in moralistic terms. You can say that a government that doesn't provide these services is immoral. A government that doesn't provide these is *zulm*. That brings

VEDI R. HADIZ

together these particularistic demands behind the language of Islam because like populism in general, the people, who in this case is the ummah, is portrayed as the good, virtuous, and the pious.

The point is to articulate these actually profane particularistic demands in religious terms. That is what has been done in the different levels of effectiveness in Egypt, Turkey, and Indonesia. Sometimes the contradiction between the sacred and the profane actually gets kind of amusing. Prof. Hadiz recounts an interview he did of someone from the Al-Nour Party which is the main party of the Salafis in Egypt. The Salafis according to their doctrine should not even be in the elections because elections are part of a Western system of government which is un-Islamic, because Islamic countries should be run by a caliphate. So Hadiz asked this Al-Nour spokesman: "Look you're part of this Salafi front; now you've formed a party and you're entering elections. Doesn't that go against your doctrine?" And the Al-nour person replied: "Well, let's put it this way, Mubarak is out: the field is open. We're contesting everything to help shape what Egypt will become in the future. So we'll enter elections. How we're going to validate that theologically we'll think about that later."

Prof. Hadiz argues that there will always be these internal contradictions between the sacred and profane and Islamic politics is essentially just like any politics in the world. It's about contestation over power and resources and organizing and mobilizing people is part of it. He reiterates his rejection of the "Muslim exceptionalism" thesis which he views as extremely patronizing to Muslims as if they're a different species altogether.

VEDI R. HADIZ

Dr. Eduardo C. Tadem (UP CIDS) asked about the Left and why it never really made a bigger impact in Middle East in all the years. At certain times there were strong Left movements in Middle Eastern countries; in Egypt, for one, as well as the presence of sympathetic heads of state. Nasser was one but so was Saddam Hussein and other leaders. There were legal communist parties operating as well as other leftist groups and they fought against colonialism and participated somehow in the agenda of nation building in the post-colonial period.

Tadem asks why the Left was totally overtaken by the Islamic movement? Is it just the question of ideology versus religion? Because many of the leaders from the Left were also Muslim. Using their Islamic ideology while espousing (sometimes) communist ideas. Nasser had an alliance with the Left but he later initiated a crackdown. Can we say that it is similar with Indonesia where a large number of communists were massacred? There was crackdown, political manipulation, and exiles but no massacre in the Middle East.

Prof. Hadiz acknowledges that on the Left, nothing as bloody occurred in the Middle East as in Indonesia. The general context of Leftist contestations over the post-colonial state took place in the same Cold War global environment which affected the fate of the Left everywhere in the world and, in the Middle East as well. Leaders like Mosaddegh make a good example. As Iranian Prime Minister, Mosaddegh wanted to nationalize British and American companies in Iran and the CIA overthrew him and installed the Shah. Nasser was pro-land distribution but he certainly didn't want the creation of private property, and so he hated the communists.

The first clamping down on communist parties in the Middle East already occurred in the early 60s as the post-colonial state developed and a strata of military bureaucratic interests gained

VEDI R. HADIZ

control that developed an interest in insulating themselves from popular challenges as represented by the Left. This is where all sorts of dirty deals with the CIA would take place as well as other deals with whoever and whatever one could use to fight the Left. For example, the idea of the communist being atheist and so on would be used even by governments that are normally secular and not particularly religious. The reason for this is that in terms of gradation the Left especially the Communist Left posed a more fundamental challenge to the social interests that have gained control of the post-colonial state in the 70s and the 80s. So, destroy the Left first, let's recruit Muslims to destroy the Left, and then deal with the Muslims. That's generally the pattern. In the context of the Cold War there's all sorts of international things supporting that.

Hassan al-Banna, when he set up the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928 actually said something like this: the problem with Egypt isn't that of capitalism, it is that of colonial capitalism. What is needed is Islamic capitalism. So, from that point of view, those people in power could at certain times think maybe you work with the Muslims as long as they behave. Often, they would cooperate as was the case for a long time in Indonesia. So as long as the Left was there, the Muslims were important. When the Left disappeared, the Muslims became more vulnerable and that's always the case.

Dr. Tadem followed up his question by inquiring on the strategies the Left itself pursued in advancing their cause. Were they doing things that eventually contributed to their demise in terms of their strategies as in the Maoist "surrounding the cities from the countryside" or even being pro-Soviet and being more bureaucratic?

Prof. Hadiz replied that the strategies differ in different places. In Iran they chose to support Khomeini. Eventually, that was

VEDI R. HADIZ

revealed as a mistake and that caused their demise. In Egypt, the Communists initially found it easy to live under the tutelage of Nasser but then the state turned against them. They were completely unprepared to deal with that. In other places they let themselves be coopted by ruling nationalist regimes and lost whatever legitimacy they had as a communist party.

The Left in Tunisia, on the other hand, though not necessarily communist, was very much identified with the Habib Bourguiba regime which was before the Ben Ali regime. That cost them in the current fight in Tunisia now. Habib Bourguiba who took over Tunisia at independence was an extremely secular leader; very French in his ways. He went on TV during Ramadan and drank champagne and said: "Stop me from doing this." He did things like pulling over the veil of woman.

Bourguiba, distrustful of the military because he was a civilian, built a party apparatus which was supported by trade unions. So, the trade unions and the Left in general became identified with the Bourguiba regime. In the 1970s, Bourguiba suppressed the Muslims and the people who later became the Ennahda party under Rached Ghannouchi.

In the 80s, Ben Ali raised these people from the 70s to attack the trade unions because he wanted to make his own regime and to distance himself from Bourguiba's state. Once he did that he hit again the Ennahda and Ghannouchi went off in exile in Paris.

In spite of the fact that the Tunisian Arab Spring was really the result of Left and trade union mobilizations, not *Ennahda* mobilizations, it was the latter that won the elections because they were identified as being the representatives of the long oppressed sectors, not the trade unions.

VEDI R. HADIZ

Janus Nolasco (Asian Center) thinks that in the matter of ideology and religion one of the reasons why communism failed to take root in the Middle East was because it was seen as godless, as atheist. Islam itself is not really hostile to trading. Qur'anic texts and Islamic jurisprudence attest to this. And Muhammad was a merchant so this is a religion that may encourage trading so you have communism putting a damper or a hindrance to this.

Prof. Hadiz expressed discomfort when people say things like: "Muhammad was a merchant so Islam is pro-trading." Jesus was a carpenter so is Christianity pro-carpentry? He rejects the notion of any cultural propensity for Muslims to be into trading. Now, like all religions in the world you can take from the sacred book a lot of things that are mutually contradictory. So for example the idea that is culturally accepted that Islam and Islamic populism don't go together is only really true if you look at the past from today's lenses because in the early 20th century Muslim communists were all over the world. They look at the social justice aspects of the Qur'an not the trading aspects. You can do that I think with Judaism and Christianity or whatever.

In Indonesia in the early period, the Communist Party actually came out of an alliance with the Sarekat Islam. There was—Haji Misbach in the 1910s with the Dutch exile who famously wrote: "You can't really be a Communist if you're not a Muslim. And you cannot really be a Muslim if you're not a Communist." In Iran you have Muslim communists all the way to the 1980s in the form of the Mujahedin Khalq. The way that social conflicts have unfolded, mutually contradictory views come together as a matter of historical exigency in the way social conflicts are unfolding rather than something that is innate.

VEDI R. HADIZ

Marvin Bernardo (UP CIDS) asked about the legitimization of power particularly in Turkey. He referred to Prof. Hadiz's statement that as part of developing a stake in the system, the current government in Turkey used secular institutions of the state, like the judiciary, the courts, to legitimize a religious movement or religious rule.

Prof. Hadiz replied that in the case of religious rule and courts, they don't talk about it as religious rule but in terms of morality. And morality is something that people should have. Because most Turkish people identify themselves as being Muslim especially in the hinterlands, though there's a secular part of Turkey. They are not using secular institutions to legitimize religious rule but rather they gain control over secular institutions to advance the interests of those who self-identify with the Muslim struggle.

Christine Galunan (UP CIDS) sought clarification about Laclau's identified relationship between populism and democracy. In his framework, Laclau supposes that populism has to come to recognize that the people have a stake and a say in the system. Now, Prof. Hadiz describes one historical trajectory in which Islamic movements are acting to fill in the gaps of the neoliberally oriented state to mobilize interests in terms of a moral capitalism. How different is this from a paternalistic exchange relationship that delivers material gains and feeds legitimacy in societies where democratic claims-making has not yet been established? Can you say that the material is still the basis of ideational success of the populist ideal or do you think this is what's lacking in Laclau's populism?

The other trajectory is Indonesia's extra-institutional populism which Galunan thinks is closer to Laclau's populism as a synthesis of an impossible plenitude, even if the populist doesn't have proof of its institutional capacity or the actual gains so far. She asks whether Prof. Hadiz thinks this lends credence to

VEDI R. HADIZ

Laclau when he describes material realities to be more potent in the social bases of populism but not in the actual delivery of results.

Lastly: populism subsumes the particular identities into a universal identity that fails to actually realize the entire plenitude of interests. Laclau describes this as a cyclical “dialectic of aspirations, disappointments, and grievances.” If this is the case, isn’t it more helpful to think of populist “moments” instead of movements with an already established mass base over time? This question is related to the supposed failure of Communism to take root from marginalized societies because the Left is taken to be an “old” outside force that fails to reconstitute identities. This is helpful to think about because historically, Chantal Mouffe together with the Podemos Spanish party made arguments why Podemos refused to explicitly align its discourse to the Left, eradicating the party’s Leftism in order to successfully re-constitute their social bases’ identity.

Prof. Hadiz replied that Laclau’s core assumption is that populism is democracy. It’s not the anti-thesis of democracy. Populism is genuine democracy for Laclau and so the main weakness of Laclau’s book, if you’re using it for contemporary analysis, is that the Podemos people will love it but what about all these right-wing populisms? Laclau’s view isn’t actually progressive because he doesn’t look at the social bases of populist movements.

That’s why it’s said that Laclau’s populism only works when you have this traditional sovereign people. That’s because of the assumption that populism is democracy. But then populism and democracy may be different from each other and yet can co-exist. This is because populism can be absorbed into the existing structures of power. This is what Laclau doesn’t really address. That would be a criticism of Laclau. Because they’re

VEDI R. HADIZ

all taking about Correa, and Chavez, and Morales. So that only holds if you have Laclau's assumption which Prof. Hadiz does not share. Populism can be democratic and enable different grievances to be articulated when they become universalized. But the articulations can be extremely undemocratic. That's where Prof. Hadiz says he diverges from Laclau. As far as gaps in theory are concerned, in Prof. Hadiz's book, that's exactly what he said, putting the material base back to Laclau.

Prof. Hadiz hesitated to agree on using populist "moments" rather than populist movements because moments are so ephemeral and temporal. What he was worried about in a more existential sense is that we may be moving into a post-liberal, post-socialist world whereby politics in the future is about competing forms of populism and they can be left-wing, right-wing, they can be identity-based, nationalist-based, or different elements can be combined and so on. Furthermore, that we've come to the fate where we've actually entered a post-liberal, post-socialist world where the language and the signifiers have lost their original meaning or have become irrelevant, and a new language evolves based on newly emerging, evolving, and developing populisms. So, it's not moments.

Ananeza Aban (Freedom from Debt Coalition) asked about the "Muslim Sisterhood" and the state of the women and gender issue in the context of the struggle. How do the women speak for activism or activism for women; how are the rights of women being moved forward in the present context of Islamic populism in the Middle East?

And still on the left, what would be the future in terms of the people's movement especially in the intensifying contestation of global powers?

VEDI R. HADIZ

In reply, Prof. Hadiz cites Asef Bayat and his work on post-Islamism. He had nice long discussions with Bayat in Egypt after the revolution. While Bayat is a great authority of Islamic thinking this post-Islamism is really based on the Iranian experience where there is an Islamic state but where they realized they had to run a modern state with all the forms of bureaucracy associated with it. That's post-Islamism and the spillover is that it moves in the direction whereby the ideas such as pluralism and rights are meant to get inserted into the Islamist discourse.

For Prof. Hadiz, it doesn't have to go that way, it can go the other way. Islamic populism doesn't have to be more liberal, it can be extremely regressive depending on its social base. If the social base of Islamic populism is a liberalizing middle-class you'd have gender and women's rights come to the fore. He reports meeting leaders of the group that call themselves the Muslim Sisters in Egypt and they've given talks to men and that looks progressive. But basically the talks are really about being complicit in the subordination of women. So, they can be complicit in their own subordination at the same time they're thinking that they're advancing the ummah. Why? Because the signifiers of the ummah include patriarchy.



VEDI R. HADIZ

Vedi Hadiz is Deputy Director and Convenor of Asian Studies in the Asia Institute. Before joining in 2016 as Professor of Asian Studies, he was Professor of Asian Societies and Politics at Murdoch University's Asia Research Centre and Director of its Indonesia Research Programme. An Indonesian national, he was an Australian Research Council Future Fellow in 2010-2014. Professor Hadiz received his PhD at Murdoch University in 1996 where he was Research Fellow until he went to the National University of Singapore in 2000. At NUS, he was an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology until returning to Murdoch in 2010. His research interests revolve around political sociology and political economy issues, especially those related to the contradictions of development in Indonesia and Southeast Asia more broadly, and more recently, in the Middle East. He is an elected Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia

*Professor Hadiz's latest book is entitled *Islamic Populism in Indonesia and the Middle East* (Cambridge University Press 2016).*

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