

Book Reviews

Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social and Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century. Edited by K. S. Nathan and Muhammad Hashim Kamali. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005, pp. 362. ISBN 981-230-282-4.

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The book under review provides an excellent—though some of the chapters are rather patchy—analysis of the political, social and strategic challenges of Islam in Southeast Asia in the twenty-first century. The 9/11 terrorist attacks have left a lasting imprint on the world, especially, as pointed out by Shamsul A. B., on the Muslims of the Malay world consisting of Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore, Southern Thailand, Southern Philippines and Southern Cambodia. Ninety per cent of Southeast Asia's over two hundred and fifty million people live in the Malay world, which occupies the centre of this important region. Shamsul A. B. points out a fact which is rarely highlighted in public that the Malay world "is the largest single linguistic group of Muslims, with Malay as the lingua franca, and even larger than the Arab-speaking Muslims of the Middle East and North Africa" (p.103). Therefore, it is only appropriate that a book examining the multifaceted aspects of the impact of September 11 on the Malay Muslim world should be published. As Nathan and Kamali point out, it requires "a much deeper analysis of the origins and growth of this religion [Islam], its socio-political and ideological character, organisational impulse, and cultural impact on government and society in the region" (p. xv).

Nathan and Kamali provided a forum for scholars from very divergent areas of expertise to offer their views on such questions as whether a Muslim could live in a secular environment, whether Islam

is a modernising force and whether Islam is compatible with democracy. The book is the product of papers presented at a conference on “Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social, and Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century” held at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore in September, 2003. All but one paper presented at that conference has been included in this carefully constructed book.

The editors deserve our high praise for coming out with this book. However, they must be faulted for failing to include an index in their edited volume. Furthermore, they used both the Harvard and Chicago styles of footnoting which reflects badly on the capability of the two editors. The book is divided into an introduction summarising the main points raised by the authors, four distinct parts dealing with various aspects, and a conclusion.

Part one, containing five chapters, provides the necessary background to the book. These well-written chapters provide a historical account of the development of Islam in Southeast Asia, a useful analysis of Islamic doctrine, and the growth and development of Islamic economic institutions in Southeast Asia. The first chapter by Azyumardi Azra provides a constructive analysis of Islamic doctrine (such as *Sunnism*, *Shi'ism*), the realities of mainstream *Sunni* organisations, and the splinter groups within the *Sunnis* in Southeast Asia. He argues that the rise of radical Muslim groups in Southeast Asia is not solely due to religion but also because of the liberalisation of the political system, fragmentation and conflicts among the political elite and parties, failure of law enforcement agencies, economic deprivation, and socio-cultural dislocation and alienation (p. 18). Similarly, Johan H. Muelman provides the history of Islam in Southeast Asia. The two chapters focus primarily on Malaysia and Indonesia.

Chapter three by Carmen Abu Bakar discusses the origins and the development of Islam in Southern Philippines. She identifies trade as a crucial factor in the coming of Islam to the Philippines. In the contemporary period, the globalised communication system, in particular, the development of the Internet has helped the Filipino Muslims to remain in touch with the rest of the Muslims. She also notes the increasing participation of the Muslim women in public life which is mostly viewed as the development of gender equality

in the Philippines (p. 60). In the remaining two chapters of this part, Bahtiar Effendi and Mohamed Aslam Haneef, critically examine the growth of Islamic economic institutions in Indonesia and Malaysia, respectively. Although Bahtiar Effendi considers the establishment of Bank Mu'amalat Indonesia as "historic" in the development of an Islamic economic system in Indonesia, the Islamic banking system is yet to make a major headway to attract clients in Indonesia as "many Muslims remain customers of interest-banks" (p. 78). Mohamed Aslam Haneef identifies two factors for the development of indigenous solutions to the socio-economic problems of people of Malaysia: the need for development in the post-colonial period and the apparent failure of capitalist and socialist frameworks. Thus, the development of Islamic financial institutions in Malaysia is due to external as well as internal factors. Aslam notes that the Islamic financial institutions in Malaysia have been accommodative, flexible and relatively pluralistic in nature.

Part two, consisting of five chapters, deals with issues of utmost importance to contemporary Islam in Southeast Asia: different interpretations of political Islam, the relationship between Islam, governance, civil society and gender issues. Unlike the misleadingly monolithic and "violent" image of political Islam espoused by the West, Shamsul A.B., in one of the most intellectually stimulating chapters, defines political Islam in a different way. To Shamsul A.B., "the term political Islam has been coined to describe and characterise, both in popular and academic terms, contemporary Islamist movements, that is, the activist groups who see Islam as much a political ideology as a religion, and who are therefore sometimes as breaking with certain aspects of Islamic tradition themselves" (p. 107). He takes a closer look at the concept of "embedded Islam" and, unlike others in the West, explains the complex process that contributes to that "embeddedness." The author states that two forms of political Islam have existed in the Malay world: "the global imagination" version that aims to create a global Islamic brotherhood free of nation states, and the old "embedded practice" version which "is based on something real and empirical and has existed for centuries. Indeed, many parts of it, in a redefined social scenario, still exist today" (p. 108). Shamsul goes on to explain that this version of political Islam resides in the concept of *Kerajaan*, which is both a polity as well as a system of governance based on partial (such as

in *Kerajaan* Malacca) or full implementation (such as *Kerajaan* Aceh) of *sharī‘ah*. It must be pointed out that Islam undoubtedly transformed many aspects of the pre-Islamic cultural practices and beliefs of the people and imbued it with an Islamic world view, but it is an embedded vision not in the pristine form practised by the first community of believers in Makkah and Medinah (p. 113). Shamsul calls for more analytical discussion of *Kerajaan* in contemporary discourse of political Islam in the Malay world. He concludes that global political Islam is unlikely to make much headway in Malaysia as the *Kerajaan* type of political Islam still remains at the core of the country’s politics and governance.

In chapter eight, Patricia A. Martinez addresses a core element of concern in Southeast Asia: “Are civil society and Islam antithetical to each other?” (p. 135). She examines whether the democracy inherent in the notion civil society is in harmony with Islam, especially political Islam. Her chapter contains a very rich literature review of the relationship between Islam and civil society in Southeast Asia and she renders a valuable service to the readers by providing a checklist of the civil society and Islam (pp. 152-154). Peter Riddell, in the subsequent chapter, identifies and discusses the main elements of the Islamisation process in Malaysia, and its impact on the country’s religious minorities.

The final chapter of the second part of the book deals with the gender issues in Islam. Zakiyah Munir’s main concerns are marriage, sexuality, polygamy, divorce, and inheritance. As Nathan and Kamali point out her thesis is that “the arduous and relentless struggle for the realisation of Islam as a women-liberating religion has been exacerbated by the entrenched patriarchy pervasive among most Muslim societies” (p. xix). She further points out that despite explicit provisions in the Qur’an that do not prohibit women’s rights to participate in politics, business and employment; these issues remain controversial in most Muslim societies.

The issue raised by Munir was also raised earlier by many scholars especially in the context of Middle Eastern societies. They tried to find a common ground between applying *sharī‘ah* law and gender equality through an analysis of the textual *sharī‘ah* rulings regarding polygamy and divorce. Like Munir, the earlier scholars argued that the deterioration of women’s rights in many Muslim countries has

nothing to do with their Islamic nature but rather with their patriarchal nature. Munir concludes that the dynamic nature of Islamic teachings, the “evolving” character of *sharī‘ah*, the spirit of Islam towards women’s rights, the principles of justice and public welfare, and the essentiality of “feminist” *ijtihād* leave no room for doubt that a common ground could be found between Islamic law and gender equality.

Part three of the volume consists of four chapters and looks at “Modernisation, Globalisation, and the Islamic State.” In a well-written chapter, Syed Farid Alatas, takes on the important issue of Islam and modernisation. According to him, modernity is the end result of the process of modernisation. It is the condition that a society attains after having gone through specific patterns of social and economic change which began in Western Europe in the eighteenth century and which has been spreading throughout the rest of the world (p. 209).

To Alatas, the Western notion of modernisation may be encapsulated in one single word “development” with its emphasis on economic growth and materialism. In contrast, he points at *Tawhīd* (the principle of the unity of God); *rubūbiyyah* (the belief that it is God who determines the sustenance and nourishment of man and it is He who will guide us to success); *Khalīfah* (concept of man as God’s vicegerent on earth); and *tazkiyah* (the growth and purification of man in terms of his relationship with God, the fellow men, and with the natural environment) as the foundations of development from an Islamic point of point of view. The end result of application of these is *falāh* (prosperity in the world and the hereafter). Therefore, the Islamic concept of development is *tazkiyah* or purification combined with growth. He laments that Islamic economics lacks empirical works on existing economic systems.

In chapter twelve, Abdul Rashid Moten provides a critical perspective of Muslim responses to the various challenges and opportunities with modernisation, and processes of globalisation. This is a significant contribution towards an understanding of the process of globalisation from the perspective of a section of the world’s population, who have not enjoyed the fruits of globalisation in an equitable way. Moten identifies three Muslim responses to the process of globalisation: the mass response characterised by

violence; the theoretical and intellectual response which emphasises the inextricable ties between Western modernity and Western imperialism; and the response from the governing elite in the Muslim world who believe that globalisation is inevitable and that there is no conflict between Islam and the values upheld by modernisation and globalisation. Moten does not consider these three responses as a rejection of modernisation and globalisation, rather as the Muslim opposition to Western dominance and the suppression of Muslim politics and cultures. Moten's views need to be taken seriously if further alienation of the Muslims is to be arrested. Measures taken by the United States since 9/11 could further estrange Muslims from globalisation processes and contribute towards increasing Muslims' sense of grievance and resentment against the West.

In chapter thirteen, Shad Saleem Faruqi presents an analysis of the on-going debate in Malaysia about the Islamic nature of the state. He concludes that this debate is largely attributable to semantics. In chapter 14 Hashim Kamali undertakes an analysis of the uncertainties surrounding the concept of an Islamic state, and its definition. He also looks at the Islamist demand for the establishment of an Islamic state. Like most of the other chapters of this book, Kamali has some comments about Malaysia. He believes that the Islamic state is more an idea and concept than an institutional forms, an observation other Muslim scholars may not find palatable.

The impact of September 11 on Islamic thought and practice is the general theme of Part four of this book. In chapter 15, Noorhaidi Hasan deals with the vexing question of the rise of Islamic militancy in Indonesia in the post-9/11 period. Bernard Adeney-Riaskotta addresses the issue of the impact of September 11 on Islam in Southeast Asia. Though crucial to the subject matter of this book, these two chapters are rather weak. Descriptive in nature, these chapters simply collate relevant known facts and opinion. However, part four of this book does not tarnish the overall good quality of this book.

Overall, the book and its authors deserve much praise. We are, however, left with a number of questions: If these chapters are so good, why will few people likely to read them? If the authors of the chapters raise important issues – as they do – why will so few people in power respond to deal with those? What the book under review

forces us to consider – by its quality – are deeper questions that we must face up to if we are to be more than an exotic discipline, acknowledged by many but read by a few.

Hoodwinked: The Documents That Reveal How Bush Sold Us a War. By John Prados. New York: The New Press, 2004, pp. 256. ISBN 1-56584-931-0.

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Hoodwinked, according to its author, is “a case study in government dishonesty” (p. xii). The subject matter is the propaganda campaign that culminated in the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. This book analyses the key Bush administration documents in America’s descent into war in Iraq and compares these documents to the public statements of George Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice and Colin L. Powell in which claims were made regarding Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. It compiles the actual intelligence available to the Bush Administration as it made its case for war. It then shows “how this information was consistently distorted, manipulated, and ignored,” as the president, vice president, secretaries of defense and state, and others, sought to persuade the country that facts about Iraq were other than what the intelligence indicated (p. xi). What the intelligence record shows is that “Iraqi weapons programs were nascent, moribund, or non-existent — exactly the opposite of the President’s repeated message to Americans” (p. xi). Based on his meticulous research, Prados concludes that “deception was systematic and carried out purposefully” (p. xii). He, however, shies away from stating the purposes behind systematic deception.

According to Prados, the Bush administration decided even before September 11, 2001 to overthrow Saddam Hussein. This was to be the beginning of a historic crusade to forcibly remake the geopolitics of the Middle East. To do so, it had to convince allies, Congress, and the public to go along. But the drive for war ran into serious opposition in summer 2003. Prados quotes retired general Brent