

# The Rise of the Liberal Islam Network (JIL) in Contemporary Indonesia

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## **Abstract**

This paper seeks to shed some light on liberal Islamic movements in Indonesia, with specific reference to the Liberal Islam Network (Jaringan Islam Liberal [JIL]). It examines the network's political, organizational, and intellectual origins, and also addresses an important alternative topic at a time when most scholarly research on contemporary Islam is focused on the phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism.<sup>1</sup> The article's importance lies in its examination of the network's rise in light of oversimplified views regarding contemporary Islam's supposed homogeneity.

JIL can be regarded as a social movement that is primarily intellectual in origin and orientation, but one that also has to face continued dialogues with political, social, and cultural circumstances. This paper will argue that JIL's rise is a product of dynamic local, national, and international circumstances that lead to intellectual dynamism among the younger generation of Indonesian Muslims.

## **Introduction**

Social movements do not emerge in a vacuum, but rather are shaped by a wide range of environmental factors that condition the objective possibili-

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ties for successful movements.<sup>2</sup> The Liberal Islam Network (JIL) was founded in March 2001, partly as a counter-movement to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism within the more open political circumstances made possible by President Soeharto's fall in 1998. Within the context of the modern nation-state, Islamic reformism evolved in Indonesia partly as a response to immediate political processes.

After the attempted communist coup of September 1965 and subsequent massacre of communist members by the military, General Soeharto took over the government from President Soekarno (ruled 1945-66, called the "Old Order" by the later regime). The Soeharto era, or the "New Order" era (1966-98) was predominantly marked by the depoliticization of Islam. The number of political parties was restricted, and organizations could not use Islam as an ideology. During the latter part of the "New Order," Golongan Karya (the Functional Group Party), Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (the Indonesian Democratic Party [PDI]), and Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (the Party of Unity and Development [PPP]) were the only three officially recognized parties. Although not using Islam as its ideology, the PPP claimed to be a representative of the Muslim community.

Instead of Islam, the ideology of all parties and organizations had to adhere to the state ideology of *Pancasila* (Five Principles): the oneness of God, humanism, national unity, representative democracy, and social justice. The core beliefs of the "New Order" were that popular participation in politics must be strictly limited; that the country must accede to the realities of world power and economic relationships; and that what really mattered was the material accomplishment of "development," rather than the realization of a national essence or an international ideal. Political stability and economic development were seen as two sides of the same coin, and, accordingly, diversity was discouraged and even repressed.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, sociopolitical movements did not flourish, despite the increased number of Indonesians (some 200 million). If there were political activities, they tended to work underground and their number was very limited. Thus, most of the Islamic movements were purely cultural or religious, rather than political. It is in this context that Nurcholish Madjid promoted the so-called "cultural Islam." His catchwords were "Islam yes, Islamic party no," "desacralization," "and "secularization." According to Madjid, secularization is a natural effect of modernization. For him, secularization means making secular what is supposed to be secular in Islam. Thus, for example, political and economic affairs should not be part of the sacred.<sup>4</sup> His contemporaries, such as Abdurrahman Wahid, advocated the

“localization” of Islam, or bringing “universal” Islam into accord with local conditions.<sup>5</sup> Ahmad Wahib, who published a journal in the 1970s, also promoted this kind of freedom of thought. However, he died at a young age and therefore did not elaborate upon it more systematically. During this period, these Muslim intellectuals, although controversial within the Islamic community, were not repressed by the “New Order” government because their ideas were primarily cultural (rather than political) and they did not pose a political threat to the political establishment.

Following the Asian economic crisis of 1997-98, which also affected Indonesia, and the still unresolved domestic political conflicts, the Soeharto era ended in March 1998. Students played a significant role in toppling the military-backed Soeharto government. As a consequence, new political parties and social movements, either religious or secular, were established. The people saw the collapse of the Soeharto regime as a great opportunity to express their discontent and their expectations, which until then they had kept to themselves or had met with official disinterest or repression, more overtly.

This era of political openness became a political opportunity for Muslim radicalism. Islamic hard-liners or radicals, some of whom had been oppressed and jailed by Soeharto, came to the surface and became active. In fact, they became so vocal that they caused the new government, as well as the moderate majority of Muslims, to become worried. In some local areas, this political openness was followed by the eruption of ethno-religious conflicts, such as in Maluku and Kalimantan. Muslims and Christians in Maluku clashed on January 19, 1999, and did not reconcile until the end of 2001. Seen by observers as evidence of Jakarta’s failure to build a tolerant society, these conflicts stimulated the rise of radicalism.

Some of the radical movements that emerged after Soeharto’s fall were the Laskar Jihad (the Holy War Fighters), which was led by Jafar Umar Thalib and eventually became involved in Maluku’s ethno-religious conflicts<sup>6</sup>; the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (the Indonesian Muslim Fighters Council), led by Abu Bakar Ba’asyir; and other paramilitary groups, such as the Front Pembela Islam (the Islamic Defenders’ Front [FPI]), led by Habib Muhammad Rizieq Syihab. Apart from such paramilitary groups, other people who wished to follow more formally democratic ways emerged and created parties that used Islam as their ideology. The most important of these parties seemed to be the Party of Justice (Partai Keadilan [PK], which later changed its name to the Just and

Prosperous Party [PKS]). The latter became particularly popular in Muslim youth circles and on campuses, and represented the political vehicle for many Islamic revivalists.<sup>7</sup>

The Islamic revivalism seen in Indonesia was part of a global movement of Islamic revivalism that began in the 1970s and continues until this day. The revivalist Islamic movements also emerged in response to current international events, such as the Iranian revolution of 1978-79 and other events that affected the rise of Islamic revivalism in Southeast Asia. Islamic revivalism has taken different ways, one of them being the use of force. Thus, for example, some of the paramilitary groups became involved in “sweeping” actions against foreigners, particularly Americans, since they opposed Washington’s invasion of Afghanistan and its foreign policies in the Middle East.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, JIL emerged in the context of feeling a greater need to respond to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, which its members viewed as a threat to the peaceful and tolerant lifestyle of Indonesian society. Six young people, namely, Ulil Abshar-Abdalla,<sup>9</sup> Luthfi Assyaukani, Hamid Basyaib, Ihsan Ali Fauzi, Nong Darol Mahmada, and Ahmad Sahal, met a senior journalist, Goenawan Mohammad, in January 2001. In this meeting, they discussed the possibility of establishing a network that would link different intellectuals and activists concerned with liberal interpretations of Islamic teachings to counter the fundamentalist discourse and movement. Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, who became JIL’s chief coordinator, said: “We’ve seen radical Islam grow militant, systematic, and organized, while ‘liberal Islam’ has been unorganized, weak, not militant, not resistant, and unassertive in giving voice to its perspective. The Liberal Islamic Network was in fact motivated by the appearance of these radical Islamic movements.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, the network’s rise in 2001 was a critique of this Islamic revivalism. Later, Ulil reasserted: “Their vision is, in my view, not correct; it must be countered.”<sup>11</sup>

Ulil’s explanation was then supported by Goenawan.<sup>12</sup> In his public lecture at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), on November 19, 2001, Goenawan considered JIL’s rise to be a response to Islamic fundamentalists who, although small in number but great in influence, had adopted an increasingly threatening attitude toward democratic values. As mentioned previously, the Islamic radicals did not grow until Soeharto fell in 1998. While they sometimes used violent or hard means to overcome their grievances against the government, which they perceived as “impotent,” and against those symbols and practices that they perceived as “un-Islamic,” the

young Muslim liberals of JIL pledged themselves to a publicly declared policy of anti-violence. Thus, since JIL used a counter-discourse, it can be regarded as a counter-movement, since it represents a set of opinions and beliefs in a population opposed to another social movement.<sup>13</sup>

## Intellectual Origins

The rise of JIL cannot be explained in terms of its resistance against Islamic fundamentalism alone, for it came into being as part of the various Islamic reform movements that have taken place over the last two or so centuries in the Muslim world. In Southeast Asia, the tradition of Islamic reformism has existed since the seventeenth century and has primarily been engaged in theological debates on orthodoxy and heresy, or legalism and mysticism.<sup>14</sup> However, the Egyptian Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and his contemporaries affected later Islamic reformist movements in Indonesia.<sup>15</sup> The first reformist movement in Indonesia, the Muhammadiyah, was founded in 1912 in Yogyakarta, Central Java.<sup>16</sup> Subsequent reformist movements in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, led by those ulama (Islamic scholars) who were seeking to interpret Islamic teachings according to the spirit of their time and place, were originally adopted and adapted by Indonesian reformists from such Middle Eastern reformists as Abduh, Rashid Rida (1865-1935), and Ali Abd al-Raziq (1888-1966).

In the late twentieth century, more reformists emerged in the Middle East and elsewhere, including the West. Such reformist thinkers as Nasr Abu Zaid (Egyptian, now in Leiden, the Netherlands), Abdulkarim Soroush (Iranian), Fatima Mernissi (a Moroccan feminist), Muhammad Shahrour (Syrian), Fazlur Rahman (Pakistani), Mohamed Arkoun (Algerian), and Ashgar Ali Engineer (Indian), despite their different intellectual inclinations, have contributed to the intellectual underpinnings of JIL's intellectualism. Liberal Islamic organizations in the Muslim world (e.g., Al-Qalam [South Africa], An-Nahdha [Tunisia], the International Institute for Islamic Thought [the United States and Malaysia], the Liberation Movement [Iran], Liberty for Muslim World [England], Progressive Dawoodi Bohras [India], Sisters in Islam [Malaysia], and Progressive Muslims [the United States]) all coincided with JIL's rise. Thanks to the Internet, they all have websites that can be accessed.<sup>17</sup> As Charles Kurzman argued in his book, *Liberal Islam: A Source Book* (1998), liberal Islamic movements emerged independently throughout the

Islamic world. But in terms of discourse, JIL is tied to liberal Islamic movements that take place elsewhere.

Thus, JIL emerged within a national and international political context. Indonesia's regime change in 1998, the subsequent rise of Islamic radicalism, and the intellectual influence of global Islamic reform movements were all necessary factors that contributed to its rise.

### **Organizational Origins**

The network was formally established on March 8, 2001, in Jakarta. Originally a discussion forum through a mailing list (islamliberal@yahoo groups.com) that had existed since 1999 (following Soeharto's fall), its six young Muslim activists, who had met Goenawan Muhammad on January 4, 2001, started to recruit students and intellectuals to join the mailing list. They decided to use *network*, rather than *organization*, *association*, or *political party*. For example, Hamid Basyaib argued that JIL is a cultural and intellectual movement, for it is not a political party, an organization, or a religious sect that has strict rituals with sanctions and punishments. Its focus, therefore, should be on countering fundamentalism. Eventually, JIL chose to create itself in the form of a network, rather than as a strict organization or to get involved with party politics. As a result of this deliberate decision, JIL is a loose alliance open to anyone who is willing to subscribe to liberal Islamic ideas.

The founders considered their alliance to be a network, so that individuals could have multiple memberships as well as temporary and limited involvement. In addition, the creation of a collective identity occurs in the midst of tensions created by the inadequacy of those means currently available to achieve personal and collective goals. From these tensions, as well as from close face-to-face interaction, a heavy emotional investment develops and encourages individuals to share in the collective identity, as Mueller (1994) has argued.

From the outset, there was a debate about the network's nature. Saiful Muzani, another JIL activist, offered a formulation of three different but related attitudes of JIL activists: theological/philosophical, sociological/social, and political. From the "submerged network" perspective, the reason for choosing a network may be explained in the following way: More members are expected to be recruited without their new JIL membership causing them to leave their original organizational affiliation, for, as Melucci (1980) argued, people tend to have multiple memberships.

Muslims and non-Muslims who are concerned about Islamic liberalism are welcome to join the ranks of JIL's activists, members, contributors, or supporters. A strict organization would limit the range of movement of its activists, who have emerged from among those young intellectuals, students, professionals, and others whose access to the Internet enables them to be in constant communication without leaving their own offices. To put it another way, a network makes it possible for activists to be involved in the discourses and activities regardless of time and place constraints.

JIL needs resources (e.g., legitimacy, money, facilities, and labor) to succeed. The political processes and intellectual origins, as elaborated above, are important factors in its rise, but they are no more than opportunities. Although political opportunities are necessary, they are not sufficient in themselves for a movement to arise and develop. If there is discontent, it should be defined, created, and manipulated by issue entrepreneurs and organizations so that a movement may emerge. Such social movements as JIL depend on some combination of formal and informal groups for their persistence and success. JIL has some human resources (*viz.*, the educated youth as the elite) with adequate access to modern as well as traditional Islamic sciences (e.g., Arabic, theology, and others). In addition, JIL has capital resources (financial support from foreign agencies),<sup>18</sup> technology (mass media and the Internet),<sup>19</sup> and other facilities, such as a permanent office.<sup>20</sup> JIL also has wide communication networks with national, regional, and international Islamic and non-Islamic organizations. This phenomenon resembles quite nicely the creation of a "new public" in eighteenth-century France by Frenchmen who wanted a forum in which they could discuss liberal or Enlightenment ideas.<sup>21</sup>

In terms of a support base, JIL has not emerged simply out of its beneficiaries' grievances.<sup>22</sup> Committed constituents provide sources of support. Strategy and tactics include mobilizing supporters, transforming mass and elite publics into sympathizers or even members/constituents, and achieving specific goals. Indonesian society provides the infrastructure that JIL utilizes, including its communication media, its degree of access to institutions and individuals (e.g., religious thinkers), and such pre-existing religious organizations as the Muhammadiyah (founded in 1912), the Nahdlatul Ulama (founded in 1926), a number of the State Institutes for Islamic Studies, and others.

The emerging young members of the educated elite, who emerged prior to Soeharto's fall in 1998, constitute its primary human resources. These young people are more likely to participate in protest activity than their

seniors.<sup>23</sup> JIL also involves women activists such as Nong Darol Mahmadah, a graduate of Jakarta's State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN). Women have also been playing an increasingly prominent role in contentious politics. The emergence of JIL's young elite is also attributed to young people's increased access to education; universal access to media; and well-educated people who travel widely, read newspapers and magazines quite regularly, and have increasing contacts with people outside their local areas.

The widespread nature of modern higher education has, in many respects, broken the traditional religious institutions' monopoly on religious scholarship and religious authority. But, one can ask, what kind of education has contributed to JIL's rise? The young intellectuals, many of whom were not yet in their 40s, who decided to call themselves representatives of "liberal Islam" began their studies of religion at Indonesian-style Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*).<sup>24</sup> However, the educational background of JIL activists varies. Some graduated from *pesantren*, while others acquired a secular education but auto-didactically learned Islam. This diversity creates strength, because they can exchange views in different ways. In addition, as Goenawan observes, most JIL activists came from provinces that are quite far way from Jakarta. At first, only very few of the group's leading members had been to any school in the United States or Europe. Later on, some of them went abroad to further their studies, but still remained in constant contact with those back home.<sup>25</sup>

### **Formulating a Liberal Discourse**

How did JIL come up with its liberal discourse? Its predominant frame, one that emerged right before and in the early period of its establishment, was pacifism (anti-violence), for the founders regarded violence as antithetical to Islam, a religion of peaceful humanity. These ideas of peace and moderation were also present during their early discussions. Separately, both before and after Soeharto's fall, other young Muslim students, fresh graduates, and activists were involved in the rethinking of Islamic teachings. Many remained within their individual organizations or affiliations, while others had no affiliation at all. Some were connected with student organizations or study clubs, such as the Islamic Student Association (HMI), the Indonesian Islamic Student Union (PMII), the Muhammadiyah's Student Association (IMM), the Forum of Ciputat's Students (Formaci), and the Paramida Circle, among others. These young activists had been exposed to

modern ideas and theories as well as to Islam's traditional sciences, and were familiar with such liberal ideas as freedom of thought, moderation, human rights, democracy, and so forth. At the early stage of building bridges between the founders and other young intellectuals or activists, anti-violence became a congruent frame.

Some congruency in discourse can also be discerned between the Muslim majority and some of the non-Muslim minorities. Historically and sociologically, Indonesian Muslims and non-Muslims have been religiously and politically moderate. Fundamentalists constitute a very tiny minority. Religions in Indonesia (viz., Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and others) have been localized in such a way that compromises and accommodations between the universal and the local, as well as between the authentic and the modern, became the norm rather than the exception. The anti-violence that JIL attempted to promote was not an unfamiliar frame within Indonesia's religious and political circumstances. Thus, when Islamic fundamentalists engaged in violence against their perceived enemies, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, partly out of their disillusionment with the government's perceived failure and the silent majority, JIL's anti-violence policy corresponded with that of the majority.

Such values as moderation and liberation became JIL's modes of conduct to be promoted within the context of the perceived threats posed by the rise of Islamic fundamentalism.<sup>26</sup> JIL positioned itself as an anti-fundamentalist movement and decided to choose moderation, non-literalism, and liberalism as its preferred values or frames to which its efforts will be devoted. As it developed, however, its activists did not confine its discourse and frames to anti-violence, but began to develop discourses that are still relevant to what they view as liberal values.<sup>27</sup>

There was a lively internal debate over the meaning of "liberal Islam," particularly regarding what *liberal* should imply. JIL activists interpreted *liberal* in different ways, although they eventually seemed to agree on the spirit of freedom of thought and expression, while the application depends upon the context. They read Kurzman's definition of liberal Islam, in which he uses *liberal* to refer to basic themes in the history of liberalism, such as democracy, freedom of thought, social equality, and human progress. Despite the variety of this term's meanings, those Muslims who share parallel concerns with western liberalism (e.g., separation of church and state, democracy, the rights of women and minorities, freedom of thought, and human progress) can also be considered liberal.<sup>28</sup> Previously, Leonard Binder outlined in his *Islamic Liberalism* (1988) the archeology of liberal

knowledge in the Middle East. Binder viewed liberalism as a critique of development ideologies.<sup>29</sup> But JIL activists were inspired more by Kurzman than by Binder while defining and formulating liberal Islam.

They discussed the term via conversations and mailing discussions,<sup>30</sup> and eventually reached some common understanding about what liberal Islam should mean for JIL: a liberal and liberating form of Islam that emphasizes ethics rather than formalism, stresses relativism and inclusivism rather than absolutism, promotes the interests of the minority and of the oppressed, and supports religious freedom and the separation of religion and politics. These liberal themes developed as JIL activists increased their discussions.

Thus, JIL activists sought to broaden their discourse from merely anti-violence to various kinds of discourses, including freedom of expression, promotion of a secular Indonesian state, monogamy, social liberation, and even anti-war campaigns, as new situations allow. For example, Goenawan Mohammad contended that JIL's rise can be put into the context of those pro-democracy movements in Indonesia that evolved prior to Soeharto's fall in 1998. In other words, since JIL also struggled for human rights, it can be considered a "rights" movement, like the women's liberation movement and civil rights movements in the United States.<sup>31</sup>

The value of secularism, as well as the separation of state and religious affairs, were repeatedly emphasized. For JIL,

Islam is not incompatible with secularism if it does not mean total rejection of religious faith ... The doctrine that religion and politics should be integrated in Islam is merely a later historical construct rather than the Qur'anic doctrine.<sup>32</sup>

Denny JA (Denny Januar Ali), another JIL activist, sought to formulate a theology of a secular state, using the secular American state as his reference, although his suggestion led to debates.

JIL also developed issues and discourses that included interfaith marriage, interfaith dialogue, pluralist and multicultural education, freedom of artistic expression, gender equality, anti-polygamy, and so forth.<sup>33</sup> In this process, it attempted to formulate a liberal Islamic discourse in different ways. For example, Ulil once discussed Islamic liberalism in terms of authenticity and modernity. Thus, for him, JIL is an attempt to reconcile the tensions between authenticity and modernity.<sup>34</sup> Denny JA viewed liberal Islam as an interpretation of Islam that sustains civic culture (e.g., pluralism, equal opportunity, moderation, trust, tolerance, and a national

sense of community). Luthfi Assyaukani stressed a liberating element of liberal Islam, a kind of liberation theology.<sup>35</sup>

### **Promoting Liberal Ideas**

JIL activists and contributors have written on a wide range of themes. Many of their articles are responses to current social issues, for they are interested in issues of public concern. In organizing the articles written by different authors, JIL's website has made a thematic index, as follows: the relationship between Islam and politics, gender relationships, veil (hijab, *jilbab*), radicalism and terrorism, interpretation of Islamic texts (hermeneutics), Islam and the arts, struggle of faith, polygamy, philosophy of religious education, the debate on liberal Islam, Islamic law (Shari'ah), pornography and democracy, and the American war in Iraq. To shed some light on where JIL stands on these issues, we shall discuss the relationships between Islam and politics, Islamic law, gender, and terrorism.

Regarding the relationships between Islam and politics, JIL promotes the separation of religion and politics, although the authors have different ideas about the extent to which this separation should take place. Basyaib, for example, argued that "Islamic political secularism" is possible and desirable. Secularism intends to separate religion from politics. For him, the Iranian case is an example of a religion-politics integration that has deprived the people of the clerics (*ulama*). He asserts:

The Iranian case is the best contemporary example about bad political systems confiscated by religion, and therefore it affirms the need for the secular political system. It always happens when religion and politics get in bed together. Since the revolution in 1979, Iranian theocracy deprives people of their *ulama*, since the mullahs are absorbed into the state and become rulers. In this blend, the biggest loss must be endured by the state for the benefit of the elites. Secularism intends to separate both, by positioning religion and politics in their own separate systems. What's the matter with this separation, and why do people sturdily oppose it?<sup>36</sup>

In rejecting the integration of religion and politics, JIL does not refer merely to the Middle East. Another JIL activist, Burhanuddin, points to western cases, referring to the works of Karen Amstrong, in which kings or queens dominated both the spheres of religion and politics. Burhanuddin remarks:

Karen Armstrong attempts to explore chronologically the emergence of fundamentalist movements in Judaism, Christianity and Islam from 1492 up to 1999. To Armstrong, the seeds of the first fundamentalism grew when King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella conquered Granada and expelled the Jews and Muslims from that country. They suffered constantly in a situation full of spiritual alienation and experienced social, cultural and political disorientation. This condition led them to a new model of religiosity, a conservatism which she argues produced the seeds of fundamentalism.<sup>37</sup>

In Jakarta on January 7, 2003, JIL discussed the relationships between Islam and secularism with Abdullah Ahmed An-Naim.<sup>38</sup> An-Naim, author of *Toward an Islamic Reformation*, conveyed the fact that secularism is historically and sociologically an integral part of Islamic history. Islam is provided as a guidance for humanity (*hudan li al-nas*), and, therefore, no religious text is “purely” Allah’s revelation. But the text is not present in a vacant space, for there is always an extracting process between the divine and the profane. Furthermore, he said, the text talks about humanity in the public discourse and, hence, there always has to be human interference. Secularism is, to him, a perpetual negotiation between a society’s ideals and its reality. On this occasion, Ulil Abshar Abdalla affirmed that the Qur’an contained secularist dimensions or elements, and argued that it was revealed gradually in order to respond to historical and sociological events. Furthermore, the *asbab al-nuzul* (the reasons behind the revelation) indicate a dialogical process between God as reflected in His revelations and human needs and conditions. Many Qur’anic verses, if analyzed semantically, show the geographical, cultural, economic, political, and social settings of seventh-century Arab society.

The question of the relationships between Islam and politics is theologically, historically, and sociologically a complex one, and thus this discussion has never ended. In an interview with Robert Hefner, an anthropologist from Boston University, Ulil Abshar-Abdalla learned that Islam can play a role in politics, but only in “proper” manners. Political Islam should not be entirely eliminated from Muslim societies, because Muslims have participated in politics throughout history and will always do so. What must be promoted is the understanding of Islam as politically democratic, inclusive, and tolerant. Any form of political Islam that is at odds with democracy emphasizes symbols rather than substance, the use of force rather than the use of democratic and peaceful means.<sup>39</sup>

The debate on religion and politics in Islam is always tied with the issue of the Shari'ah, often conveniently translated as Islamic law. JIL activists generally reject politicizing the Shari'ah, if this is understood as implementing the ulama's legal rulings. For JIL, the effort of making Islamic law the public law is problematic and, therefore, should be rejected. Islamic law is not monolithic, for it consists of rulings made by previous scholars that are often irrelevant for a multi-religious country like Indonesia. What is more important for JIL is the substance, or the principles, of Islamic law (*maqasid al-Shari'ah* [the Shari'ah's intents], *al-kulliyat al-khamsah* [the five universal truths], and *hikmat at-tashri'* [legislative wisdom]) that constitute its five goals: safeguarding people's reason, religion, spirit, wealth, and honor and family. Ulil Abshar-Abdalla put the argument in the following terms:

A radical new perspective should be adopted to transform the dominant perspective among the *ummah* nowadays, which I call as "bibliolatristic." We have to restore the Muslim's awareness regarding what is described in *fiqh* tradition as "*hikmatut tasyri'*," the philosophy behind the law legislation. In other word, the ethical aspects of the Islamic teaching should be addressed persistently and vocally to compete with the modern fundamentalism tendency which would shallow the Islamic comprehension as "political ideology" or as a bundle of teaching which should be followed likewise since it is God's commandment. The theory about the religious value or ethical vision must be addressed clearly. ... The ethical vision of Islam actually had been formulated some of them by the classic Islamic jurist, which is described as "*al kulliyatul kham-sah*" (five principle pillars) or "*al kulliyatul kubra*" (the magnitude pillars). That vision is formulated as "safeguarding" upon (1) reason, (2) religion, (3) spirit, (4) wealth, and (5) honor and family. The Qur'anic verses should be read in the light of these ethical visions, on one hand, and be dialogued with the modern Moslem experience on the other hand.<sup>40</sup>

Along these lines, JIL is also very concerned about equal gender relationships. JIL believes in the equality of men and women and, therefore, rejects the fundamentalist view of male superiority. Muslim women, who have been largely subordinated in traditionalist and fundamentalist environments, should be emancipated and empowered so that they can become independent and equal to their partners at home and at work. One female JIL activist, Nong Darol Mahmada, for example, has argued that women cannot achieve equal status due to the textual understanding of religious

teachings and the cultural circumstances in which they live. In her review article on Fatima Mernissi, Mahmadah seems sympathetic to Mernissi's feminist ideas, especially her rethinking of the religious tradition of wearing the veil (hijab, *jilbab*) and her resistance to patriarchal establishments in Muslim societies. Mahmadah wrote:

I notice that Mernissi's works stem from her individual experiences which triggered her to conduct historical research about things which have disturbed her religious comprehension. For example, in her work *The Veil and Male Elite* which she revised later as *Women and Islam: A Historical and Theological Enquiry*, her investigation of the sacred texts of Alqur'an and Hadith is based on her individual experience, as for instance the case of the misogynist Hadith which equate a female's position to that of dogs and donkeys. Mernissi's heartbreak deepened when she heard about Hadith regarding female leadership. Her motivation to investigate such Hadith seriously was instigated by the Hadith spoken by a trader in the market who negated female leadership. Surprised by her questions, the trader quoted the Hadith that "there is no salvation within society led by females." To her, this indicates that the Hadith[s] are embedded within the Muslim community and that therefore female leadership is still debatable, despite the case of Benazir Buttho who became the prime minister of Pakistan, and despite the fact that Alqur'an discusses the leadership of Queen Bilqis.<sup>41</sup>

JIL's discussion on gender relationships has taken on different issues, ranging from the veil (is it obligatory?), domestic violence, polygamy (is Islam polygamous or monogamous?), to women's political role (can they be leaders?). A variety of arguments are proposed, but the tendency of JIL writers is to promote justice in the sense of men's and women's equal rights and obligations in all fields of life. One way of pursuing such a goal is to reinterpret and contextualize religious teachings related to women.

Apart from the gender issue, JIL writers are concerned with ethno-religious conflict, violence, and terrorism. The main feature of their thought is their outright rejection of any form of violence and rejection of using religion to pursue political goals. As an example, such a comprehension of the relationship between religion and violence can be seen in the following selection:

Islam is not a religion of terrorism. But this explanation is unable to reduce the impression that Islam is a terrorist's net. This ethical-normative argument is true, although it hides many facts not only related to the behavior

of [the] religious community, but also related to the religious doctrine. We must admit that several religious doctrines can be used to legitimate terrorism, regardless [of] whether it is right or not.<sup>42</sup>

It is clear that JIL is anti-violence and anti-terrorism. However, its resistance is not simply against Muslim radicalism, but also against the use of force in international relations, such as the American war in Iraq. JIL activists are very critical of American unilateralism in the Middle East. Saiful Muzani called the war in Iraq a “chauvinistic democracy,” a democracy that is forced from outside. Hamid Basyaib described the American occupation of Iraq as an “illegal genocide.” Abd A’la regarded the American actions in Iraq as “radicalism in the name of democracy.” Nurcholish Madjid said that the rhetoric of liberating the Iraqi people, as American leaders claim, is simply nonsense.<sup>43</sup>

JIL participated in anti-war demonstrations when the United States attacked Iraq, and demonstrated its rejection of such terrorist acts as 9/11 and the bombing in Bali in 2002. Yet, JIL equally criticized the Bush administration for attacking Iraq without international support and evidence. On March 24, 2003, JIL organized a peaceful campaign against the American war on Iraq, involving several well-known Indonesian art performers, including Iwan Fals, Franky Sahilatua, and Trie Utami. Washington’s foreign policy in Iraq caused some dilemmas on how to behave. “When the Bali bombing occurred,” Mahmada, a JIL activist, said:

I thought the fundamentalist groups would fade, because people would see that they were wrong. But now the Iraq war becomes a new justification for the fundamentalist attitude against America or the West. Everything we’ve been working for democracy, freedom of thought – all seems in vain.<sup>44</sup>

## **Programs and Activities**

Within a short period of time, JIL has been able to attract a growing number of activists and contributors. Although its membership remains relatively small, it has increased significantly: from 200 in 1999, to around 500 in 2002, and to more than 1,000 in 2004. Its members come from a wide variety of professional and educational backgrounds, ranging from theology, philosophy, and political science to sociology, history, and economics.

JIL also has been hosting mailing list debates. The website [www.islam-lib.com](http://www.islam-lib.com) contains information about the network, as well as editorials, arti-

cles, interviews, talk shows, and schedules. It has published many articles in some 40 local newspapers, and has created an organization of Islamic liberal writers that seeks to collect writings from junior writers, either already well-known or not yet known by the public, as inclusive activists. This organization provides writing materials, interviews, and articles from national newspapers for local newspapers, which usually have a hard time obtaining good writers. With regional autonomy, the role of the local media becomes increasingly important in disseminating tolerant religious voices.

So far, JIL has published four books: *Discourse of Liberal Islam in Indonesia*, *Islamic Shari'a (Law) From Liberal Islamic Perspective*, *A Critique of Jilbab (Islamic Female Headscarf)*, and *The Koran for Women*. For general readers, JIL has published fifty 100-page booklets in a simple and easy-to-read language as its response to religious issues of public interest. The topics include reinterpreting jihad not as "holy war," but as a spiritual and intellectual struggle, the Shari`ah as a system of ethics rather than a system of strict ritualism or legalism, wearing the *jilbab* as a personal choice rather than an obligation, and so forth. In addition, JIL publishes weekly bulletins on Fridays for distribution in mosques during the Friday prayer.

JIL also sponsors radio talk shows at Radio Station 68H (Jakarta). These shows were being broadcast by approximately 15 regional radio stations in early 2001, including Radio Namlapanha (Jakarta), Radio Smart (Menado), Radio DMS (Maluku), Radio Unisi (Jogyakarta), Radio PTPN (Solo), Radio Mara (Bandung), and Radio Prima FM (Aceh). At the time this article was written, such programs were being broadcast by approximately 50 radio stations throughout Indonesia.<sup>45</sup> The talk shows bring together intellectuals from different organizations in Indonesia that are concerned with Islamic liberalism. For example, one talk show invited Nurcholish Madjid, who spoke about the significance of pluralism in the context of ethno-religious conflicts in recent years.

In addition, JIL has produced a number of public service advertisements with such themes as pluralism and the prevention of social conflict. One of them, "Colorful Islam" ("Islam Warna Warni"), has been broadcast by various television stations and even sparked a degree of public controversy, because some fundamentalist groups were opposed to it. JIL criticized a bill on religious harmony, designed by the Department of Religion of Indonesia, on the grounds that it violates human rights and individual freedom of religion.<sup>46</sup> From a similar point of view, it also criticized a bill

that criminalizes interfaith marriage.<sup>47</sup> Other cases of similar nature also took place.

JIL attempts to emphasize its regular discussions held in the JIL office and elsewhere in collaboration with various organizations and individuals. Apart from national figures, international Islamic figures are invited to discuss certain liberal topics. Intellectuals from universities have also participated. Having seen the growth of Islamic fundamentalism on Indonesian campuses (public and private universities and colleges), JIL has begun to turn its attention to such institutions. As Ulil said: “So we go to the universities and institutes to provide different views on Islam. We confront every effort to limit the field of discussion.”<sup>48</sup>

The syndicated media is considered the most effective channel, for according to Ulil, “people’s reactions to the articles we published in the *Jawa Post* were amazing. I didn’t realize it until I visited local communities, especially in East Java and Eastern Indonesia.”<sup>49</sup> Given this focus, JIL does not use such traditional or conventional methods as street demonstrations, as some Islamic fundamentalists do, to gain support. Instead, it deliberately and cleverly uses various modern technologies. This should not come as a surprise, because JIL was established within the context of technological advancement. In other words, there would be no JIL without the Internet. Moreover, JIL used modern channels and depended upon the current openness of Indonesian politics and society, which makes these channels safe, effective, and efficient to use. And finally, the number of JIL activists was small, which meant that they had to find ways both to connect themselves and to attract as many people as possible.

Computer technology was crucial, and Internet technology was vital. To broaden its range of audience, JIL used local radio stations to spread its views, wrote for newspapers and magazines, and took advantage of television. They did this in order to reach as many segments of society as possible. As a result of this strategy, a dialogue among JIL and other movements and the audience at large became possible.

Thus, JIL used strategic tactics to promote its views and to oppose counter-movements that tend to use direct attacks and street demonstrations. The use of modern technologies was encouraged primarily to reach a broad audience from a relatively small and scattered network. Through such channels, the network’s activities can be quickly followed by a broad audience. Consequently, JIL has gained increasing support. For example, Indonesia’s Christian minority has been sympathetic and supportive of JIL.

In addition, Ismartono supported the idea of separating religion and politics: “In Catholicism, we don’t ask the government to take care of our affairs.”<sup>50</sup> Non-Muslim individuals and organizations have joined JIL programs and activities, and JIL members have invited non-Muslim intellectuals and figures to talk about liberalism.

### **Some Supportive Responses to JIL**

University professors are supportive of the movement, partly because they learned of JIL through the mass media. For example, Azyumardi Azra, the rector of the State Islamic University of Jakarta, has supported JIL’s discourse movement in his writings and public comments. When a fatwa (religious edict) calling for Ulil’s death was issued by a fundamentalist institution on the grounds that he had written a controversial piece in a national newspaper, Azra contended:

No doubt, freedom of expression is a basic human right ... in any expression of thoughts of feelings by words, drawing, music, performance or otherwise, a Muslim should observe the values and ethics of Islam. Therefore, should any writing or statement contain controversy, the best way to respond to it is not by issuing a death fatwa, but rather by proposing [a] counter argument.<sup>51</sup>

A number of articles were published in *Kompas* to provide moral and intellectual support for Ulil.<sup>52</sup>

Hashim Muzadi, then the head of the Nahdatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia’s largest socio-religious organization, which claims to have approximately 40 million members and in which such JIL activists as Ulil were educated, was not too worried about the young liberal activists’ impact. However, he said that they need to be guided so that they do not deviate from Islamic principles and norms. Hashim asked that they create an internal forum for discussion before they disseminate their discourses to the general public, so that any potential chaos and uncertainty could be prevented. But JIL differs from the NU in that the latter holds the opinions of classical Islamic scholars as recorded in the classical reference books.<sup>53</sup> In this sense, JIL did not want to be associated with NU’s conservatism; rather, it wanted to split from the NU’s mainstream viewpoint. As a result, it has become an independent network.

For example, *The Economist*, in its May 31, 2003 edition, contained an article on Islam in Southeast Asia. Its author explained the history of radicalism in the region and concluded with some appreciation for JIL. Under

the subheading “Tolerance Reasserted,” *The Economist* stated its hope: “The Liberal Mr. (Ulil Abshar) Abdalla pops up all the time on Indonesian television and radio shows. As long as the moderates keep on getting their fair share of air time, there is every hope that the extremists will fail.” *The Jakarta Post* also issued several articles emphasizing the need for liberal Islam to be more active in order to counter the fundamentalist discourse and movements.

### **The Fundamentalists Respond**

As shown previously, JIL was a counter-movement to the Islamic fundamentalist movement. Yet, it not only provoked a response from the original groups, but also from fundamentalist movements. From JIL’s perspective, it was the protagonist, the fundamentalists became the antagonist, and the majority became the general audience (the silent majority). In common with the fundamentalists, JIL often makes an “us versus them” distinction in order to gain wider support. As the small number of fundamentalists became active and vocal in the public space, through their demonstrations, public meetings, and the like and by taking advantage of the resulting media coverage, JIL attempted to counter them through non-violent means.

The striking appearance of JIL in Indonesia’s mass media, as well as its activists’ intense and active involvement, the broad range of its programs, and its increasing level of support with the public, have all encouraged the fundamentalists to strive for a greater mobilization, because they see JIL’s success as a threat to their understanding of Islam. One striking example was given by Ja’far Umar Thalib, leader of Laskar Jihad (Warriors of God), whom JIL had criticized. He rebutted the criticism by charging that JIL’s campaign was an attempt to blur the true meaning of Islam on the pretext of pluralism. According to him, the JIL movement is a de-Islamization movement. As he told a reporter: “The difference between us and them is the difference between Islam and infidels (*kafir*).”<sup>54</sup>

Islamic fundamentalist individuals and groups became increasingly disturbed by JIL’s promotion of such western ideologies as the concepts of liberalism and religious pluralism. For fundamentalist groups, JIL’s use of these two concepts indicated its adoption of western ideologies, which constituted a deviation from true Islam.<sup>55</sup> Hartono Ahmad Jaiz, a vocal critique of liberal Islam, wrote in his *The Danger of Liberal Islam*, that JIL had blurred the “clear” and “obvious” teachings of Islam and had caused some

doubts among the public about “true” Islam. He further asserted that those who promote liberal Islam are all deviants and need to be fought, or else they will turn Muslims away from Islam.<sup>56</sup>

Another part of this counter-discourse is *Sabili* (My Path), a national magazine that tried to trace the liberal Islamic movement in the State Institutes for Islamic Studies (IAIN) around Indonesia, especially the IAIN in Jakarta.<sup>57</sup> *Sabili* claimed that liberal Islam was led by thinkers who have studied in western universities, such as Harun Nasution, a graduate of Canada’s McGill University, and Nurcholish Madjid, a graduate of the University of Chicago. Liberal Islam also flourished in such study clubs as the Forum of Ciputat Students (Formaci), Indonesia’s Islamic Student Movement (PMII), the Islamic Student Association (HMI), the Institute for a Free Democratic Indonesia (LS-ADI), the Piramida Circle, Makar, ISAC, and some others. *Sabili* charged that these clubs promote Marxism, secularism, and westernism, all of which are alien to Islam.<sup>58</sup> Thus, the fundamentalists charged JIL with anti-westernism, given that the latter promoted concepts that, according to the fundamentalists, were derived from western philosophies.

The rise of JIL also triggered the creation of new counter-movements. One of them was the Islamic Studies Club of True Islam (Lembaga Kajian Islam Hanif [Eljihhan]), which was established on November 16, 2003, in Surabaya. Eljihhan intended to recruit members from among the intellectuals and Islamic scholars from Islamic boarding schools, as well as from such existing organizations as the Muhammadiyah, the second largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, and the hard-line Hizbut-Tahrir. Eljihhan said that JIL had deviated from true Islam.<sup>59</sup>

In the case of the interaction between JIL and the Forum of Indonesian Islamic Scholars (FUUI), some intention to destroy JIL can be seen: The counter-movement issued a religious edict (fatwa) calling for Ulil Abshar-Abdalla’s execution. Ulil’s November 2002 piece on “Rethinking Islam” in the country’s largest daily paper, *Kompas*, sparked controversy and anger. A group of religious scholars known as the Forum Ulama Umat Indonesia (FUUI) in Bandung, West Java, issued a death sentence on the grounds that Ulil had insulted the Muslim community and had spread enmity and hatred throughout society via his writings.

Athian Ali Muhamad Dai, FUUI’s head, turned Ulil’s case over to the police, complaining that what Ulil had written in his article was an evil act against Islam. Athian said that he had reported Ulil to the police based on complaints from the Muslim community in Bandung.

Around 700 people complained. We distributed [a] questionnaire for this purpose – this was also what police wanted, proof of how much influence this act had on society. Some people who were fed up [wanted] to see Ulil hang.<sup>60</sup>

Since the counter-movement used legal tactics, JIL also undertook legal action by filing a police complaint against FUUI. The result remains to be seen. But one impact of such an intentionally damaging effort by the counter-movement was that JIL's national and international reputation grew.

Ulil's writings, however, were not responded to in similar ways, for they created internal disputes among the fundamentalist groups. Fauzan Al-Anshari of the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia – a fundamentalist organization that counts among its members Abu Bakar Baasyir, the man accused of complicity in several terrorist bomb blasts in Indonesia, including the one in Bali – said that he disagreed with the death fatwa. He suggested that the decision should be left in God's hands by way of a *mubahah* (mutual cursing). "For example," explained Fauzan over the telephone, "we ask for a sign from God within three days, that one of us should be struck by lightning, and that's how we'll know which of us is wrong."<sup>61</sup>

In addition to the death threat directed against JIL activists, private television stations eventually cancelled JIL's television advertisement that promoted Islam's diversity (Colorful Islam) after being pressured by such Islamic hard-line organizations as the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (the Indonesian Assembly for Islamic Fighters) to ban it or else face legal action.<sup>62</sup> Television stations were reluctant to assume any risk of being charged with "destroying Islam" by Islamic fundamentalists. In addition, they did not want to lose their viewers because of this controversy. In this case, however, JIL did not seem inclined to take further action to demand that its advertisement continue to be aired.

## Conclusion

JIL emerged from particular and changing local, national, and international circumstances. Its founders saw an urgent need to counter the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, which was potentially and actually posing a threat to Indonesia's political stability and religious tolerance. As an intellectual network, JIL was established within the context of regime change, transition, and political openness. It was primarily a counter-movement designed to confront the rising fundamentalist movement by becoming involved in

“contentious politics” in its wider sense. JIL’s rise was also connected with the rise of Islamic reformism in the Middle East. However, its concerns and discourses differ according to local events and circumstances.

JIL would not have arisen without the availability and mobilization of internal resources, including human resources (the young educated elite and their knowledge), capital resources, facilities, and, most importantly, modern communication technology. The aggregation of these resources is crucial, as is the erection of a minimal form of organization and involvement on the part of the individuals and organizations concerned.

The founders and early activists of JIL discussed and decided upon particular ideas or frames to be disseminated to the wider public. Their main frame was anti-violence, because they perceived that Islamic fundamentalism promoted violence at a time when Indonesian society and the government were promoting political stability and social harmony. JIL believed that the values of moderation and tolerance had to be revitalized. Yet, as time went on and JIL became better known, its founders and activists enlarged the movement’s values or discourses by incorporating various values and discourses that could help meet the interests of the Muslim community and the public at large: the separation of religion and politics, monogamy, interfaith marriage, interfaith dialogue, anti-war, and so forth. This extension was seen as necessary to developing a more established network with wider support.

JIL members respect different interpretations of Islam. However, they have chosen to promote one or more of them through dialogue. They disseminate their ideas to the public. Internally, JIL is a network of young intellectuals with different intellectual inclinations and sets of arguments. Their interpretation of *liberal* is not monolithic or static. What binds them together is their shared acceptance of such universal values as justice and peace, their readiness to learn from a variety of sources, their tolerance of difference, and their moderation in religious understanding. But these common features are a result of constant dialogue within their own groups and among themselves and others, including the fundamentalists. JIL will continue to act as an agent of consciousness raising and cognitive liberation within multi-religious and multi-cultural Indonesia.

## Endnotes

1. Many books and articles have been published on Islamic fundamentalism. See, for example, Youssef Choueiri, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, rev. ed.

- (London and Washington: Pinter, 1997); John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, 3d ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); S. Yunanto et al., *Militant Islamic Movements in Indonesia and South-East Asia* (Jakarta: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and Ridep Institute, 2003)
2. Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 11-19.
  3. Ruth McVey, "The Case of the Disappearing Decade" (paper presented at the Conference on Indonesian Democracy: 1950s and 1990s, Monash University, 17-20 December 1992), 5; Adam Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia in the 1990s* (Boulder and San Francisco: Westview Press, 1994), 29.
  4. See Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Kemandirian dan Keindonesiaan* (Bandung: Mizan, 1992) and his other books. See also Fauzan Saleh, *Modern Trends in Islamic Theological Discourse in 20th Century Indonesia: A Critical Essay* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 240-94.
  5. Abdurrahman Wahid, "Pribumisasi Islam," in *Islam Indonesia Menatap Masa Depan*, ed. Muntaha Azhari and Abdul Mun'im Saleh (Jakarta: P3M, 1989) and his other books and articles.
  6. Azyumardi Azra, "Globalization of Indonesian Muslim Discourse: Contemporary Religio-Intellectual Connections between Indonesia and the Middle East," in *Islam in the Era of Globalization: Muslim Attitudes towards Modernity and Identity*, ed. Johan Meuleman (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 31-50; Noorhaidi Hasan, "Faith and Politics: The Rise of The Laskar Jihad in the Era of Transition in Indonesia," *Indonesia* 73 (April 2002): 145-69; Sukidi Mulyadi, "Violence under the Banner of Religion: The Case of Laskar Jihad and Laskar Kristus," *Studia Islamika* 10, no.2 (2003): 75-109.
  7. Youssef M. Choueiri treats revivalism, reformism, and radicalism differently in terms of historical context, socioeconomic environment, and conceptual frame of reference, but regards them as fundamentalism, which means an ideology for a return to the supposed classical form of Islam, to the golden age of Islam, to the past, and to the text. See Youssef M. Choueiri, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, rev. ed. (London and Washington: Pinter, 1997).
  8. For general discussion on Islamic fundamentalism and the Middle Eastern question, see, for example, Raphael Israeli, *Fundamentalist Islam and Israel* (Lanham, New York, and London: University Press of America, 1993); Peter Riddell and Peter Cotterell, *Islam in Context: Past, Present, and Future* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2003); International Crisis Group, *Indonesia: Violence and Radical Muslims* (Jakarta and Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2001), 12.
  9. Ulil was born into a family of "traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)" Muslims in the Central Java town of Pati in 1967. He was educated until the age of 19 at an Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) run by his father and

- grandfather. He remains an NU member and continues to head its human resource development research division. He studied at the Institute of Islamic and Arabian Sciences and the Driyarkara Institute of Philosophy in Jakarta.
10. Linda Christanty, "Is There a Rainbow in Islam?," [www.islamlib.com](http://www.islamlib.com).
  11. "Ulil Goes against Fundamentalism," *The Jakarta Post*, 14 February 2003.
  12. Goenawan received the "International Editor of the Year" from the Award Press Review and, in 1998, the "International Press Freedom Award" from the Committee to Protect Journalists. He has published several volumes of essays and poetry, and has written librettos for the stage. "Liberal Islam in Indonesia: A Beginning?," [www.islamlib.com](http://www.islamlib.com), November 19, 2001.
  13. While "a social movement is a set of opinions and beliefs in a population representing preferences for changing some elements of the social structure or reward distribution, or both, of a society," a countermovement is "a set of opinions and beliefs in a population opposed to a social movement." Movement and countermovement take place in "identity fields": a protagonist field, an antagonist field, and an audience field. See John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no.6 (May 1977): 1212-41, reprinted in Mayer N. Zald and John D. McCarthy, eds., *Social Movements in an Organizational Society: Collected Essays* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, Inc., 1987), 19.
  14. Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: Allen & Unwin and University of Hawaii Press, 2004).
  15. For modernist, liberal movements in the Middle East, see Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798-1939* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1962).
  16. Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900-1942* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).
  17. These lists of names and organizations were provided by Charles Kurzman, a professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Kurzman used *liberal* to refer to such basic themes in the history of liberalism as democracy, freedom of thought, social equality, and human progress. He also observed that *liberal* has different meanings, and that its reputation in much of the Islamic world has been tainted by its "hypocritical introduction under colonialism." These links, Kurzman went on to say, include some thinkers who do not consider themselves liberal, although they deal seriously with liberal themes. See [www.unc.edu/~kurzman/LiberalIslamLinks.htm](http://www.unc.edu/~kurzman/LiberalIslamLinks.htm) and [www.id.islamlib.com/id/situs.php](http://www.id.islamlib.com/id/situs.php).
  18. The major financial support has come from The Asia Foundation and The Freedom Institute, a non-profit organization.

19. Mass media has played a great role in transforming Muslim society. See Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, eds., *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999).
20. The office address is Jalan Utan Kayu, no. 68H, East Jakarta 1320. JIL is on the Web at [www.islamlib.com](http://www.islamlib.com) in both Indonesian and English. Its e-mail address is [redaksi@islamlib.com](mailto:redaksi@islamlib.com). Its offices can also be reached at (61-21) 857-3388 (phone) and (62-21) 856-7811 (fax).
21. For a good introduction on the Enlightenment in France, see Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
22. The aggregation of such resources as labor and money are crucial, for acquiring them requires some minimal form of organization. In addition, there should be an explicit recognition of the importance of individual and organizational involvement. See McCarthy and Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements."
23. Dalton (1996), in David S. Meyer and Sidney Tarrow (eds.), *The Social Movement Society: Contentious Politics for a New Century* (Boulder: Rauman & Littlefield Publisher, Inc., 1998).
24. Further research, however, is needed to examine the extent to which the *pesantren* life itself contributed to the rise of Islamic liberalism. Goenawan would have argued that mastering traditional Islamic sciences enabled Ulil and other JIL activists to speak more confidently about the nature of Islamic traditionalism, which they criticize, and that they use their traditional Islamic education as one of the bases for Islamic liberalism. I share the suggestion that their solid foundation in Islamic education lends them credibility when they discuss Islam. For Goenawan's opinion, see "Liberal Islam in Indonesia: A Beginning?" November 19, 2001, [www.islamlib.com](http://www.islamlib.com).
25. Daniel S. Lev, for example, recognized the impact of computerization and e-mail, newspapers, and radios on JIL's rise. However, he added that these modern technologies would not be significant without the internal intellectual and mental resources that JIL members have, such as their extraordinary courage, strong self-confidence, self-responsibility, creative imagination, and adequate religious knowledge. Daniel S. Lev, "Islam Liberal: Menciptakan Kembali Indonesia," January 24, 2002, [www.islamlib.com](http://www.islamlib.com).
26. This stage can be called frame amplification, which is defined as clarifying and invigorating an interpretative frame that bears on a particular issue, problem, or set of issues. This involves the use of value amplification in the sense of constructing values, modes of conduct, or states of existence that are thought to be worthy of protection and promotion. See Rokeach (1973) and Turner and Killian (1972), in David A. Snow, E. Burke Rochford, Jr., Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford, "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation," in Doug McAdam and David A. Snow (eds.), *Social Movements: Readings on Their Emergence*,

- Mobilization and Dynamics* (California: Roxbury Publishing Company, 1997).
27. A social movement organization may have to extend the boundaries of its primary framework in order to encompass those interests or points of view that are incidental to its primary objectives but, nevertheless, have a considerable salience to potential adherents. See Snow, Rochford, Worden, Benford, "Frame Alignment Processes," 1997.
  28. Charles Kurzman, ed., *Liberal Islam: A Source Book* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
  29. Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberalism: A Critique of Development Ideologies* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988).
  30. "Islam Liberal: Agenda dan Seputar Istilah," May 1, 2001, www.islamlib.com.
  31. For civil rights movements, see, for example, McAdam, *Political Process*.
  32. Ashgar Ali Engineer, "Islam and Secularism," as circulated on the JIL mailing list.
  33. Muhamad Ali, "Building Interfaith Trust"; "Religious Philanthropy as A Social Capital," "Toward Global Multiculturalis." Online at: www.islamlib.com.
  34. Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, "Menghindari 'Bibliolatry': Tentang Pentingnya Menyegarkan Kembali Pemahaman Islam" (speech presented at Paramadina Foundation, Jakarta, 8 February 2003).
  35. Ibid.
  36. JIL's website, posted on 29 March 2004.
  37. www.islamlib.com, posted on 19 May 2002.
  38. The participants included Munir, SH (Kontras), Johan Effendy (the International Conference for Religion and Peace), Musda Mulia (Litbang Depag), Suzanne Siskel (The Ford Foundation), Gretta Morris (the American Embassy), Gadis Arivia and Nur Iman Subono (Woman's Journal), Syafiq Hasyim (external director, Rahima), Farid Wajdi (LKiS Yogyakarta), Lies-Marcoes (feminist), Rizal Mallarangeng dan Ahmad Sahal (The Freedom Institute), and Martin Sinaga (STT).
  39. The interview with Robert Hefner was held on 19 February 2004 in Jakarta. The report was posted on the website under the title "Indonesians are Hungry of Democracy."
  40. Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, "Avoiding Bibliolatry: The Importance of Revitalizing the Understanding of Islam" (speech given at The Paramadian Foundation, Jakarta). See also *ibid.*, "Syariat Islam," posted on 23 March 2004. For more discussion on the Shari`ah according to liberal Muslims, see Burhanuddin, ed., *Syariat Islam: Pandangan Muslim Liberal* (Jakarta: Jaringan Islam Liberal dan The Asia Foundation, 2003).
  41. "Fatima Mernissi: Rebel for the Sake of Women," JIL's website, posted on 10 December 2003.
  42. Rumadi, "The Relation between Religion and Terrorism," posted on 20 October 2003.

43. The articles by these writers were posted during March and April 2003.
44. Christanty, "Is There a Rainbow in Islam?"
45. "Ulil Goes against Fundamentalism," *The Jakarta Post*, 14 February 2003.
46. *Tempo*, no. 13/IV, November 25-December 1 2003.
47. Muhamad Ali, "Fatwas on Interfaith Marriage in Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 9, no. 3 (2002): 1-27.
48. Ibid.
49. Christanty, "Is There a Rainbow in Islam?," 3.
50. "Penayangan Maya Islam Liberal," *Pantau* 2, no. 021 (January 2002).
51. Azyumardi Azra, "Death Fatwa: Death of Religious Tolerance?" *The Jakarta Post*, 3 January 2003.
52. I wrote an article questioning the validity of such religious edicts and argued that freedom of thought is recognized by Islam and therefore must be defended, rather than be threatened by such a death sentence. See Muhamad Ali, "Menyoal Fatwa Hukuman Mati," *Kompas*, 12 December 2002.
53. "Islam Liberal dan Etika Transendental," *Kompas*, 14 October 2003.
54. "Penayangan Maya Islam Liberal," *Pantau* 2, no. 021 (January 2002).
55. See Muhamad Ali, *Teologi Pluralis Multikultural* (A Pluralistic and Multiculturalistic Theology) (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2003).
56. Hartono Ahmad Jaiz, *Bahaya Islam Liberal* (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2001); also see his "Islam Liberal, Pemurtadan Berlabel Islam." Online at: [www.aldakwah.com](http://www.aldakwah.com) or [www.islamlib.com](http://www.islamlib.com) (a copy).
57. There are now 14 IAINs in Indonesia, established by the Indonesian government through the Department of Religion.
58. "Melacak Jejak Liberal di IAIN" and "Selamatkan IAIN dari Liberalisme dan Amoral," *Sabili*, 25 May 2002. Online at: [www.islamlib.com](http://www.islamlib.com).
59. Gik Mugeno, "Kelompok Tandingan Islam Liberal Didirikan." Online at: [www.mediakrasi.com](http://www.mediakrasi.com).
60. Christanty, "Is there a rainbow in Islam?"
61. Ibid.
62. Berni K. Mustafa, "Islamic Moderates, Hard-Liners wage Battle in Media," *The Jakarta Post*, 24 December 2002.