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**The Enduring Threat of Islamist Politics
in ‘Reformasi’ (Post-Soeharto) Indonesia and its Global Ramifications**

JAKARTA, Indonesia: On May 22nd, 2018, Indonesia’s leading English-language daily, *The Jakarta Post*, published a collection of articles that analyzed the progress and prospects for reform in the world’s largest Muslim-majority democracy, twenty years after the fall of Soeharto. Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf, General Secretary of the Nahdlatul Ulama Supreme Council, contributed an [1,800-word essay](#) in which he examined the perennial Islamist threat to Indonesia and its roots within Islamic orthodoxy.

As Mr. Staquf writes: “[O]ne thing cannot be denied: the aspiration for Islam to attain political domination is, indeed, an intrinsic part of orthodox Islamic teachings, if we employ the term ‘Islamic orthodoxy’ to describe ‘an array of theological doctrines accepted, by the majority of Muslims, as the most authoritative religious reference standard.’ And how could this *not* be the case? Islamic orthodoxy includes a remarkably extensive discourse about public law, both civil and criminal, which is generally described as ‘God’s law’ (*sharia*)—or at least, as ‘the interpretation of God’s law’—which must be operationalized in daily life. Obviously, this cannot be achieved without political domination by those who wish to implement *sharia*, which precisely describes the Islamist agenda....

“So long as obsolete, medieval tenets within Islamic orthodoxy remain the dominant source of religious authority throughout the Muslim world, Indonesian Islamists will continue to draw power and sustenance from developments in the world at large.... Preservation of Indonesia’s unique civilizational heritage—which gave birth to the Republic of Indonesia as a multi-religious and pluralistic nation-state—requires the successful implementation of a [global strategy to develop a new Islamic orthodoxy](#), which reflects the actual circumstances of the modern world in which Muslims must live and practice their faith.

“[This global effort](#)—already launched by key elements of the Nahdlatul Ulama, including its 5-million-member young adults organization, Gerakan Pemuda Ansor—is not just an inevitable corollary of efforts to defeat Islamist subversion of Indonesia. It is vital to the well-being and preservation of virtually every other nation in the world, whose laws are derived from modern political processes and whose people/governments do not wish to be subsumed in a universal Islamic caliphate, nor exhausted by the struggle to prevent its establishment.

“The recontextualization and reform of Islamic orthodoxy is thus crucial to the welfare of Muslims and non-Muslims alike, for it constitutes the one indispensable prerequisite of any rational and humane solution to the multi-dimensional crisis that has plagued the Muslim world for over a century and not only shows no sign of abating—despite an ever-growing toll of human lives and misery—but rather, increasingly threatens to spill over and engulf humanity as a whole.”

[Read the complete article here.](#)