Agonistic Democracy and Islamism in Indonesia

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GLOSSARY

Adat	Local customs, habits and practices
Ajengan	A term used in West Java, Indonesia, for a respected Islamic scholar, synonymous with Kyai, a term more widely used in Indonesia
Asas Tunggal	The 'Sole Principle' under the Suharto regime, where all political parties and civic associations were required to adopt Pancasila. Failure to do so would result in their outlawing
DI	Darul Islam, a guerrilla force originating in West Java that later expanded to Aceh, South Sulawesi, and Kalimantan. Initially formed from sections of Hizbullah (the Army of Allah), created by the Japanese to resist Dutch colonization (1945–1949)
FKAWJ	Forum Komunikasi Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah, a Muslim civilian vigilante organization established in response to Muslim-Christian conflicts in the Moluccas in 1999.
FPI	Front Pembela Islam, the Islam Defender Front, a Muslim civilian vigilante organization.
GARIS	Gerakan Reformis Islam or the Movement of Reformist Islam
GM	Gerbang Marhamah, an abbreviation of *Gerakan Pembangunan Masyarakat Berakhlakul Karimah* or the Movement for the Noble Development of Society
Golkar	Golongan Karya or The Functional Group, a political party in Indonesia.
Haul	A memorial event marking the death of a respected Ulama or Ajengan.
Hadith	The second most important source of Islamic law, referring to the sayings and practices of Prophet Muhammad
HISAB	Himpunan Santri Bersatu or the United Islamic Students' Association

HTI	Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, a pan-Islamist political organization advocating for the establishment of a global Islamic caliphate
ICMI	Ikatan Cendikiawan Muslim Indonesia or the Muslim Intellectuals Association
IMAM	Ikatan Muslim Anti Maksiat or Muslim Association of Anti-Sin
Kecapi	A traditional Sundanese musical instrument
Kota Santri	A term symbolizing the "*City of Pious Muslims*," often associated with Cianjur and its strong Islamic identity
Maenpo	A traditional martial art of Cianjur
Mamaos	A traditional form of Sundanese music and song, believed to refresh mental and spiritual well-being
Masyumi	Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia, the Consultative Assembly of Indonesian Muslims, established by the Japanese during the occupation of Indonesia (1942–1945), later evolving into a political party in the 1950s
Maulid	The celebration of the birth of Prophet Muhammad
MMI	Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia or Indonesian Mujahedeen Assembly
Muhammadiyah	Indonesia's largest modernist Islamic organization
Ngaos	The study of religion, especially in an Islamic context
NU	Nahdatul Ulama or the Awakening of Ulama, Indonesia's largest traditionalist Islamic organization
PAN	Partai Amanat Nasional or National Mandate Party
PBB	Partai Bulan Bintang or Crescent Star Party
PERSIS	Persatuan Islam or United Islam Organization
Pesantren	Islamic boarding schools, traditionally located in Java and South Kalimantan, known for both traditionalist and modernist systems of education
PKB	Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa or the National Awakening Party
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia or the Indonesian Communist Party
PKS	Partai Keadilan Sejahtera or the Prosperous Justice Party
PNI	Partai National Indonesia or the Indonesian National Party

PPP	Partai Persatuan Pembangunan or the United Development Party
PUI	Persatuan Umat Islam or the Union of Adherents of Islam
Qunut	A special supplication prayer in Islam, recited during morning prayers
Rajaban	The commemoration of Prophet Muhammad's ascension from Mecca to Jerusalem.
Reformasi	Political reform following the resignation of President Suharto in 1998, ending his 32-year rule (1966–1998)
Santri	A student at a Pesantren
SARA	Suku, Agama, Ras, dan Antar Golongan; an acronym representing Ethnicity, Religion, Race, and Inter-group Relations. Under Suharto's New Order regime, discussion of SARA was banned to promote the unifying national identity of Pancasila
Sunda	An ethnic group from West Java, Indonesia
Tahlil	A religious ceremony unique to Nahdlatul Ulama, involving specific prayers and Quranic recitations
Utusan Golongan	The Representative Group in the Indonesian People's Assembly, representing various interest groups in Indonesia
Warung	A small food stall or shop
Zakat	Alms-giving or religious taxes, one of the Five Pillars of Islam

INTRODUCTION

There has long been a perceived binary opposition between democracy and Islamism, with influential scholars such as Huntington (1991, 1993), Lewis (2004), and Fukuyama (1989, 2001) arguing that the presence of one poses a threat to the other. However, the evolution of democracy in Indonesia since the Reformasi movement in 1998 challenges this notion. The Reformasi, which marked the end of President Suharto's authoritarian regime (1966-1998) and introduced democratic governance, has seen the parallel growth of Islamism alongside democracy. Both forces have persisted and, indeed, become institutionalized within Indonesia's political parties, systems, and civic associations.

Contrary to the claims of Huntington, Lewis, and Fukuyama regarding the inherent incompatibility between democracy and Islamism, the case of Cianjur, West Java, illustrates that Islamism does not always conflict with democracy, nor does it always support it. At times, Islamism can impede the democratic process, while at other times it can align with it. These dynamics of conflict and convergence are shaped by the broader social, economic, and political contexts at local, national, and global levels.

Indonesia's democracy has garnered global attention, often praised as an extraordinary success story and even referred to as a "*miracle*." From 2006 to 2013, Indonesia was the only Southeast Asian country deemed "*free*" by Freedom House. However, its status shifted to "*partly free*" in subsequent years due to increasing government oversight of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the enforcement of the monotheistic component of Pancasila, which requires belief in one God (Freedom House 2014). This increased bureaucratic control, in part, was a response to the rise of Islamist-affiliated NGOs engaging in vigilante-style activities and the perceived resurgence of communist groups threatening the Pancasila ideology.

Amid Indonesia's democratic flourishing, various Islamist movements have continued to assert their values through both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary channels. In 2012, for example, Islamist groups successfully mobilized protests to cancel Lady Gaga's concert in Jakarta, and similarly, they blocked the book launch of Canadian author Irshad Manji. At the formal political level, between 1999 and 2012, between seventy-eight and 160 local sharia-based regulations were passed by local parliaments across Indonesia (Bush 2008; Buehler 2013). As Platzdasch (2009) observed,

political parties associated with Islamism continue to exert influence in Indonesian politics, including the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), United Development Party (PPP), National Awakening Party (PKB), National Mandate Party (PAN), and Crescent Star Party (PBB). These parties collectively secured significant parliamentary representation, with 175 out of 560 seats in the 2014 election, marking an increase of 11 seats since 2009.

Beyond formal politics, Islamist organizations such as the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), Forum Komunikasi Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah (FKAWJ), and the Front Pembela Islam (FPI), alongside transnational-linked groups like Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), have wielded substantial influence over national policy (Azca 2011; Hasan 2006; Hilmy 2010).

The persistent coexistence of democracy and Islamism in Indonesia calls into question the dominant discourse of their incompatibility. Given these developments, this book seeks to explore how and why Indonesian Islamists have adapted their ideologies to align with democratic processes, and how democracy itself has been shaped by Islamist engagement in post-Suharto Indonesia.

Qualitative fieldwork conducted in Cianjur, Indonesia, as part of this research, reveals a complex interplay of factors that underpin both the contestation and convergence between Islamism and democracy. These dynamics are closely tied to specific social contexts and the processes of democratization. Cianjur is characterized by a diverse landscape of civic associations and political groups, with no single entity dominating the public sphere. As a result, these competing groups must constantly negotiate their public religious identities and formulate strategic and ideological movements to exercise political power and maintain influence over society.

As explored in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, the process of "*shariatisation*" in Cianjur reflects that both Islamist and moderate Muslim identities are fluid and subject to change. The evolving interpretations of shariatisation also signal a shift among nationalist groups, who have moved from a critical and antagonistic stance toward a more accepting and supportive position regarding sharia-related symbolism within the district.

Sharia-associated policies are best understood as products of democratic processes, wherein Islamists and nationalists engage in contestation and compromise within an ongoing, open-ended dialogue. The emergence of these policies is also connected to a growing desire to revitalize local religious and transcendental identities, a trend that has developed in response to the perceived threats posed by modernization to local cultures, traditions, and religious values. This sentiment has become especially pronounced in the post-Reformasi era. To address these perceived threats, Islamists have proposed sharia-based policies, yet their interpretations of

sharia have remained flexible, shifting from one perspective to another in order to navigate both detachment from and engagement with democratic processes.

In sum, Islamist engagement with democratic politics in Cianjur exemplifies a form of "*Agonistic Democracy and Islamism*," where neither democracy nor Islamism remain fixed entities. Rather, through continuous contestation and compromise between Islamists and nationalists, both ideologies have taken on dynamic and multiple forms. This fluidity challenges dominant assumptions about the inherent incompatibility between Islam and democracy, a theme that will be further explored in the following sections.

Diversity within Islam(ism)

This book contends that one of the fundamental flaws in arguments about the incompatibility between Islam and democracy lies in the oversimplification of the diversity within Islam and, consequently, Islamism. Such arguments often overlook the capacity of Muslims and Islamists to exercise agency, allowing them to shift between Islamism and more moderate forms of Islam, and vice versa. Islamists' interpretations of democracy are not static; rather, they exhibit a degree of flexibility, enabling both detachment from and engagement with democratic processes.

Islamism, defined as politically-oriented Islam (Hale and Ozbudun 2009), actively seeks to assert and promote Islamic beliefs and laws in societal governance (Azca 2011). To fully grasp Islamists' responses to democracy, it is crucial to recognize that Islam is understood, practiced, and implemented differently across the Muslim world (Esposito 1998; Asad 1986). Islam, whether in its theological dimensions or in the various schools of thought (Mazhab), is neither singular nor fixed. Indeed, this diversity dates back to the earliest years of Islamic history, beginning shortly after the death of the Prophet Muhammad with the first generation of his companions during the Fitna of the 7th century. The diversity in Islamic interpretation, including that of the Quran, is closely tied to specific sociological, cultural, historical, and political contexts. This diversity has often led to conflict between different branches of Islam, most notably between Sunni and Shia traditions.

In Indonesia, national culture, historical experiences, political trajectories, and class affiliations have produced distinct cultures and sub-cultures within Islam. Clifford Geertz (1960) famously used the term "*Religion of Java*" to describe Javanese Islam, which represents the practice of the dominant ethnic group in Indonesia. This book draws a connection

between contemporary expressions of Islamism and the tradition of religious knowledge production among Islamists in Cianjur. Using the concept of Islam as a "*discursive tradition*," it examines the current manifestations of Islamism as reflected in Cianjur's shariatisation movement. It shows that shariatisation in Cianjur is neither fixed nor permanent but is instead a negotiable and fluid phenomenon, shaped by specific social and political contexts. This is not to suggest that Islamism in Cianjur lacks connection to the foundational Islamic texts—Quran, Hadith, and Islamic jurisprudence—but rather that these connections are subject to multiple reinterpretations.

Sunni Islam forms the theological foundation of Cianjur Islamism, specifically following the Shafi'i school of thought, one of the four major Sunni schools (Mazhab). These include the Hanafi (named after Abu Hanifa), Maliki (named after Malik b. Anas), Shafi'i (named after Shafi'i), and Hanbali (named after Ahmad b. Hanbal) (Böwering, Crone, and Mirza 2013). The majority of Indonesian Muslims adhere to Sunni Islam, particularly the Shafi'i Mazhab (Hefner 1999b; Ali 2011).

One of the defining characteristics of Sunni Islam is its teaching that Muslims should obey the laws of local rulers, even if these laws are not explicitly Islamic. This principle was demonstrated in 15th-century Spain when Muslims remained loyal to the state after the Christian conquest of Granada (Moore 2010). The Sunni-Shafi'i tradition developed theological justifications for obeying rulers, emphasizing the avoidance of disorder (Munson 1989). In Cianjur, this tradition manifested during the Reformasi period. While some Islamist groups in Cianjur suffered under Suharto's regime, their resurgence during the Reformasi was not aimed at opposing the state. Instead, Cianjur Islamists were primarily concerned with defending the state's overarching principle of theism and responding to lawlessness in the aftermath of Suharto's fall. These state-level concerns were expressed alongside local worries about threats to traditional Islamic values.

Another key feature of Sunni Islam is its decentralized religious authority. There is no single institution or individual with the power to dominate the interpretation of religious texts. This "*open religious authority*" creates space for reinterpretation, allowing for fluid applications of sharia. This flexibility was evident in Cianjur between 2001 and 2006, when Islamists in the local government replaced overt sharia terms with "*Akhlaq al-Karimah*" (noble character), reflecting an interpretation that this concept was as central to Islam as sharia. Citing the Hadith in which the Prophet Muhammad said, "*Verily, I was sent only to perfect noble*

character," the Islamists viewed Akhlaq al-Karimah as the primary objective of Muhammad's prophecy and the ultimate goal of Islam.

This adaptive and context-driven approach to shariatisation in Cianjur underscores the fluidity and diversity within Islamism. Rather than being rigid or uniform, Islamism in Cianjur, as elsewhere, is shaped by local socio-political realities and reflects the ongoing negotiation between religious principles and the demands of governance.

In addition to the influence of the Sunni tradition, Cianjur is characterized by a diverse array of civic associations and political groups, with no single group holding a dominant position. While Nahdatul Ulama (NU) serves as the primary cultural expression for many in Cianjur, it is not overwhelmingly more popular or powerful than other significant Islamic organizations, such as Persatuan Islam (PERSIS), Muhammadiyah, or Persatuan Umat Islam (PUI). This social and political plurality has played a crucial role in shaping the evolving relationship between Islamism and democracy, particularly in the post-Reformasi era, where group diversity has expanded.

Before 1998, Islamism in Cianjur was primarily represented by a singular identifiable group—those Islamists who distanced themselves from Suharto's regime. These Islamists were largely excluded from formal politics and, despite their marginalization, did not openly resist the authoritarian repression imposed by Suharto's militaristic government. However, the Reformasi era ushered in significant changes, leading to the development of three distinct Islamist movements in Cianjur.

The first group consists of members of Islamist pesantrens, which include the Ajengan (respected Islamic scholars) and the santri (devout Muslims educated within the pesantren tradition). This group is primarily concerned with defending religious values and moral principles that they believe are integral to Cianjur's local identity, as embodied in the nickname *"Kota Santri"* (City of Pious Muslims).

The second group is composed of Islamist political parties, which gained prominence after Reformasi. This group includes Islamist politicians who, prior to 1998, were regarded as "*moderate*" Muslims due to their collaboration with the Suharto regime, allowing them to participate in state bureaucracy and political institutions, with some even serving in parliament. After Reformasi, many of these politicians experienced a shift in their ideological stance, embracing political Islam and aligning themselves with newly formed Islamist political parties.

The third group comprises Islamist vigilantes, who assert their influence through street demonstrations and extra-parliamentary activities. These movements often involve the use of violent threats in their campaign against

what they perceive as the rise of socialism, communism, and atheism in the post-Reformasi period. Under Suharto's regime, these vigilantes were excluded from engagement with the state and primarily operated within privately owned businesses and social foundations.

This book demonstrates the diversity and fluidity of Islamism in Cianjur, as these three major groups strategically navigate their roles as Islamists or moderate Muslims in the democratic era. Each group negotiates its position within the broader political landscape, illustrating that Islamism in Cianjur is not a monolithic or fixed ideology but one that adapts in response to the changing democratic context.

Contested Symbolism of Sharia

The social diversity in Cianjur has led to ongoing contestation among various groups, both within and between Islamists and nationalists. These groups, in their efforts to assert influence, have been compelled to reach compromises through processes of accommodation and moderation. In this context, *shariatisation* has emerged as a *"discursive symbolism"* that reflects a complex blend of local cultural identities, political interests, and economic considerations within the increasingly competitive political landscape of post-Suharto Indonesia. This book argues that the introduction of sharia-related ordinances in Cianjur post-Suharto should not be understood as a straightforward Islamisation of policy. Instead, it represents a manifestation of local political contestation within the framework of Cianjur's democratic system.

Shariatisation serves as a "*nodal point*" where multiple interests converge and compete. These interests include not only the elites in the context of political elections but also ordinary Cianjurians, who express a grassroots desire to revitalize their local culture, traditions, and religious identity, particularly in connection to Cianjur's image as the *Kota Santri* (City of Pious Muslims). Therefore, viewing shariatisation solely as a form of political activism driven by the incumbent regime or religious groups to politicize religion is insufficient. To fully understand the movement behind shariatisation, a wider range of motives must be considered, encompassing cultural, spiritual, psychological, and economic factors.

Since the proliferation of Islamist movements in Cianjur after 1998, debates over sharia and its implementation have intensified, resulting in polarization among Islamists. This polarization, which gained momentum in 2001, is framed by three key incidents. First, the enactment of the Local Autonomy Law in 2001 granted local governments increased authority,

empowering Islamists in Cianjur to assert local identity and culture, which they saw as intrinsically tied to Islamic traditions. From their perspective, this decentralization provided them with unprecedented political power at the local level, which had previously been curtailed by central state control. Islamists viewed this as an opportunity to engage with democracy and state laws in order to secure their rightful position as local leaders.

Second, global events following the 9/11 attacks, particularly the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, heightened a sense of Islamic identity among Cianjur's Islamists. These events fueled criticism of Western-style democracy and intensified the demand for shariatisation as an alternative system of governance that aligned with their religious and cultural values.

Third, the election of Cianjur's executive head, Mr. Wasidi Swastomo, in December 2001, with the backing of prominent *Ajengan* (Islamic scholars), significantly reshaped the political landscape for Islamists in Cianjur. Prior to this victory, Islamist groups were fragmented and pursued individual agendas. However, the electoral success led to a consolidation of these groups around a unified agenda of shariatisation. This unity coalesced under the banner of *Gerbang Marhamah*(GM)—an acronym for *Gerakan Pembangunan Masyarakat Berakhlakul Karimah*, or the Movement for Noble Society Development. The GM provided a framework for repackaging sharia in a way that was tailored to local Cianjur conditions. It created a form of symbolic unity that brought together previously disparate groups, including the *Pesantren*, Islamist political parties, and vigilante organizations. Remarkably, it even garnered support from segments of Cianjur's nationalist groups.

The push for sharia-related ordinances gained legitimacy among the Islamist constituency, largely because it was seen as a solution to the "*anomic*" conditions created by the rapid and disorienting shift in governance post-Reformasi. For many, shariatisation appeared to offer an alternative to the corrupt state apparatus and a remedy to the impoverishment of the people. Importantly, shariatisation is not merely a reactive response to the crises of the post-Suharto era. Rather, it has evolved through the Islamists' engagement with broader social issues, including economic instability and the perceived degradation of religious and traditional values in Cianjur. It also reflects an Islamist response to the perception of a weak state and an ineffective constitution. In sum, shariatisation in Cianjur cannot be reduced to a simple manifestation of religious zeal or political opportunism. It is a multifaceted process shaped by local identities, political strategies, and socio-economic conditions, making it a dynamic and contested symbol within Cianjur's evolving democratic landscape.

In the context of the newly implemented national policy on local autonomy, the symbolic identification with *Gerbang Marhamah* (GM) became increasingly significant (cf. Connor 1994) and congruent with local cultural and political dynamics (cf. Gellner 2008). Various Islamist groups in Cianjur came to recognize one another as brethren, united by a shared interpretation of the GM symbolism during the anomic period that followed the fall of the Suharto regime. The GM symbolized an idealized vision of governance, akin to a utopian state in which "*everyone in society will live happily ever after*" (cf. Kedourie 1993), thereby alleviating some of the skepticism surrounding the political transition.

The evolution of democracy in Cianjur demonstrates that Islam, Islamism, and democratic politics can coexist when contesting groups reach an agreement on shared symbols and identities. This is exemplified by the persistence of local regulations, such as those related to *Gerbang Marhamah* and the policy of *zakat* (almsgiving/religious taxes). These agreements were achieved under the nationalist-led Executive Head within Indonesia's ostensibly secular state system. The integration of Islamist symbolism into the nationalist-led government's policies functioned as a social adhesive, bringing together competing interest groups. This allowed them to influence one another and ultimately compromise on local policies. In this sense, sharia-related policies in Cianjur became both instrumental and symbolic, reflecting a blend of religious meaning and practical political interests.

Such policies, including the *Gerbang Marhamah* regulation and the *zakat* policy, were not driven purely by religious fervor or piety. They were also shaped by pragmatic considerations, including the desire of political groups to maintain power and influence over the local populace. These motivations were structured not only by oligarchic processes but also by moral-religious beliefs. The intersection of these diverse interests led to the open-ended reconstruction and interpretation of sharia-related Islamic texts and traditions, allowing sharia ordinances to serve as a nodal point where various groups' vested interests could be accommodated.

For example, the approval of the *Gerbang Marhamah* regulation in 2006 and the *zakat* policy in 2010 was not solely in the interest of Islamists but also nationalists, who sought to solidify political and economic power by leveraging the religious channels of influence occupied by the Islamists. Cianjur thus provides evidence that *shariatisation* is not inherently incompatible with democratization, nor does it necessarily signify a decline in democratic quality, as suggested by scholars such as Bush (2008) and Buehler (2013). On the contrary, this book argues that the dynamics of shariatisation in Cianjur have contributed to democratic development by

bringing a diversity of views—including conflicting ones—into constitutional dialogue.

It is also important to clarify that the shariatisation movement in the Reformasi era should not be seen as a direct ideological continuation of the sharia-oriented movements from Indonesia's early independence period in the 1950s. Unlike the debates of the 1950s, which polarized the *santri* (devout Muslims) and *abangan* (nominal Muslims) groups (Geertz 1960), the Reformasi-era discourse on sharia was marked by a different type of polarization. During the constitutional amendments from 1999 to 2002, major Islamic organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, along with their associated political parties—PAN and PKB—opposed the efforts of the PPP and PBB to reinsert the Jakarta Charter's clause on the obligation for Muslims to adhere to sharia into Indonesia's Constitution.

This polarization reflected the broader debate between formalists and substantivists within the Indonesian Muslim community. Formalists argued that Prophet Muhammad and his companions grounded constitutional matters in sharia, and thus sought its formalization in contemporary governance. Substantivists, on the other hand, opposed such formalization, advocating for a reinterpretation of sharia in harmony with democracy and constitutionalism (Hosen 2007).

The emergence of various Islamist groups in the Reformasi era was not intended to undermine the unitary state of Indonesia. These groups did not seek to replace the national ideology of *Pancasila* or the principle of "*Unity in Diversity*." Despite the failure to reinsert the Jakarta Charter into the Constitution during the 1999–2002 amendments, most Islamist leaders did not reject the Republic's authority. Instead, they believed that Islamic objectives should be pursued through the Republic, not in opposition to it (cf. McVey 1994). This highlights the enduring strength of the "*imagined community*" as the foundation of Indonesian nationalism (Anderson 1991), a theme explored further in Chapter 4.

The *Gerakan Reformis Islam* (GARIS), the most prominent Islamist vigilante group in Cianjur, established in 1999, renounced violence between 2003 and 2005 when they observed that the local government's *Gerbang Marhamah* (GM) policy was responsive to their aspirations. In this period, GARIS began to engage with the democratic process, and in turn, the democratic system adapted to accommodate their goals. This dynamic challenges the essentialist perspectives of scholars like Huntington (1991, 1993), Lewis (2004), and Fukuyama (1989, 2001), who portray Islam—and by extension, Islamism—as rigid and unchanging entities with fixed characteristics.

The transformation in Cianjur can be attributed to several local factors, including the area's strong identity as *Kota Santri*, deeply tied to the history and culture of Islam, the pluralistic composition of its social and political groups, and the intersection of political and economic interests in a democratizing environment. These factors created the conditions for Islamists and nationalists to reach compromises on policies and symbolic representations. Over time, these compromises gave rise to what can be described as a form of "*Agonistic Democracy and Islamism*" in Cianjur—a model that reflects the fluidity and adaptability of both Islamism and democracy in local political contexts.

Agonistic Democracy and Islamism

The formation of *Agonistic Democracy and Islamism* in Cianjur has been underpinned by the flexibility of local political processes, which have been able to accommodate and engage a variety of competing groups. While these political articulations naturally led to conflict and disagreement over specific arrangements, the democratic system proved capable of containing and reconciling these differences. In this context, democracy in Cianjur has functioned as an open space, characterized by ongoing disagreements between groups. Despite these tensions, compromise, moderation, and inclusion have been achieved through dynamic processes that evolve according to local political developments and shifting agendas.

One notable outcome of this democratic engagement was the peaceful transition of power from Islamist to nationalist leadership in the 2006 local election. Despite enforcing large-scale shariatisation between 2001 and 2006, the Islamists faced electoral defeat, losing by 2,621 votes to their nationalist rivals. This failure was partly due to fragmentation within the Islamist camp, as various factions—including the *pesantren*, political parties, and vigilante groups—began competing against one another for control of the local executive office (see Chapter 5). This peaceful transition contradicts the assumption that Islamism inherently threatens or undermines democratization, as posited by Huntington (1991, 1993), Lewis (2004), and Fukuyama (1989, 2001). The case of Cianjur demonstrates that, despite their electoral loss, Islamists did not resort to totalitarian or violent measures to maintain power. This discredits the "*one person, one vote, one time*" assumption, which suggests that Islamist groups would hijack democratic processes to establish an Islamic state, as occurred in the Iranian Revolution of 1979 (Blaydes and Lo 2012; Diamond 2010). In fact, following their defeat, Cianjur's Islamists showed a strong commitment to the democratic system, including the principle of "*one person, one vote.*"

Agonistic Democracy and Islamism in Cianjur reveals a particular mode of relationship between Islamism and democracy in a pluralistic society. The findings of this research contribute to existing theories on how different elements of society engage in democratic processes and cooperate, as seen in theories of inclusion (Habermas 2002), market-based rationality (Dahl 1989, 1997), and political moderation (Schwedler 2006, 2011; Tezcür 2009, 2010; Mecham 2004). While these theories provide valuable insights, they fall short of fully explaining the nuanced relationship between Islamists and nationalists within Cianjur's democratic processes. The concept of *Agonistic Democracy and Islamism* addresses this gap.

In Cianjur, *Agonistic Democracy and Islamism* was not solely shaped by inclusionary politics (Habermas 2002), where a ruling group accommodates the aspirations of weaker electoral groups. After the 2006 election, the nationalists and the defeated Islamists held relatively equal positions and influence within local politics. They engaged in mutual exchange and adjustment, shaping their ideologies and strategies to fit one another's goals. Moreover, *Agonistic Democracy and Islamism* was not purely driven by "*market-rationality*" (Dahl 1989, 1997). Instead, it reflected a mixture of pragmatic market-oriented considerations, oligarchic rationality, and social and cultural orientations deeply rooted in religious sentiment and traditional values. The formation of *Agonistic Democracy and Islamism* was not merely the result of moderation by the Islamists (Schwedler 2011; Tezcür 2009, 2010; Mecham 2004), but also the active moderation of nationalists.

Furthermore, *Agonistic Democracy and Islamism* offers a new lens through which to understand political behavior in impoverished societies. Existing theories often suggest that poverty leads to the persistence of oligarchy and the entrenchment of cartelization (see Katz and Mair 1995; Slater 2010). These explanations, however, are grounded in the assumptions of liberal democracy, which emphasize procedural democracy and individual freedoms, while often neglecting the substantive outcomes of the democratic process. Fieldwork in Cianjur, by contrast, suggests that poverty does not only enable elites to wield wealth as a political tool, but also empowers them to deploy social and cultural capital to gain influence over the populace.

Additionally, policy compromise in Cianjur did not facilitate the development of entrenched cartelization or oligarchy that merely benefits the status quo and the powerful. Instead, political power in Cianjur remained fluid, continuously contested by different groups. As allegiances shifted and internal disagreements fractured coalitions, power moved between groups rather than remaining concentrated. No single group could maintain control

without facing challenges, allowing for the regular turnover of leadership and ensuring that political succession occurred.

In conclusion, the emergence of *Agonistic Democracy and Islamism* in Cianjur illustrates how Islamism and democracy can coexist and adapt within a pluralistic, democratic framework. Far from undermining democratization, Islamists in Cianjur have engaged constructively with democratic processes, contributing to a political landscape marked by compromise, inclusivity, and fluidity of power. This dynamic relationship challenges existing assumptions about the incompatibility of Islamism and democracy and offers new insights into how diverse groups can collaborate within a democratic system.

Implications

This book offers multiple avenues for interpretation, depending on the reader's focus. For those interested in understanding Islamists' responses to democratic processes, it illustrates how the diversity within Islamism generates varied movements in response to different aspects of democratization. Some Islamist groups resort to vigilante methods in certain situations, while others adopt peaceful and cooperative approaches. This diversity reflects the nuanced ways in which Islamists engage with democracy, challenging monolithic views of political Islam.

For readers concerned with the broader development of democracy in Muslim-majority countries, this research provides evidence of why Indonesia's democracy has been internationally recognized as a success story, even as Islamism has grown significantly in public life. The resurgence of Islamism does not inherently conflict with the national state or the constitution. Instead, tensions arise only in specific historical and social contexts, underscoring the importance of context-specific analysis.

Additionally, for those interested in the expression of violent Islamism, this book highlights the social conditions that foster or reduce violent actions among Islamists. The research shows that political repression and exclusion are stronger catalysts for violent opposition than merely scriptural or literal interpretations of religious texts. This challenges simplistic assumptions that link violent extremism solely to ideological or theological factors.

The argument presented in this book also has significant theoretical and epistemological implications for the study of Islamism. Traditional interpretations of Islamism have often been shaped by 'orientalist' and 'essentialist' perspectives, framing Islamism as an alien or exceptional phenomenon inherently opposed to secular state systems and democratization.

This study offers an alternative to the static, essentialist view of Islam by drawing connections between the observable local sociological phenomena of Islamism and the tradition of knowledge reproduction concerning the Quran and Hadith.

In this regard, the book argues that democratic values among Cianjur's Islamists have been shaped not only by cultural-historical and political processes, as suggested by Hefner (2000), but also through Islamic traditions and the reproduction of religious knowledge. These processes link interpretations of foundational Islamic texts with institutional and social contexts, contributing to the adaptability of Islamists in engaging with democratic processes. The study emphasizes the importance of understanding both the transcendental and sociological contexts that allow for this engagement between Islamism and democracy.

Moreover, as Islamism and the shariatisation of policies have recently emerged in other Muslim-majority countries, the arguments advanced in this book may hold relevance beyond Indonesia. The insights provided here could inform the study of other nations struggling to reconcile Islamism with the process of democratic transformation, offering a more nuanced understanding of how religious and political movements interact in diverse Muslim societies.

Outline of the Book

This book is structured into six chapters, each contributing to a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between Islamism and democracy in Cianjur, Indonesia. Chapter 1 lays the theoretical groundwork by exploring key concepts and practices related to Islam and Islamism. It provides an overview of various theories on democracy, followed by an examination of scholarly perspectives on the relationship between Islamism and democracy. This chapter frames the discussion by highlighting both the tensions and synergies that scholars have identified between these two forces.

Chapter 2 focuses on the research methodology. It begins by addressing epistemological issues specific to the study of Islamism, acknowledging the complexities of studying religious movements in social and political contexts. It details the methods of data collection and analysis used in the research. Finally, it outlines the social and historical characteristics of Cianjur, setting the scene for the case study.

The subsequent chapters present the main findings, describing the dynamic interplay between Islamism and democracy in Cianjur, while also exploring the multiple forms of Islamist expression that have emerged during Indonesia's post-Suharto democratization.

Chapter 3 delves into the increased engagement of Cianjur's Islamist groups with the newly established democratic processes. It begins with a historical overview of Islamism in Cianjur, highlighting both the continuities and discontinuities in the region's Islamist movements. The chapter identifies three main Islamist groups that have emerged in the democratic era: *pesantrens* (Islamic boarding schools), political parties, and vigilantes. Each group's socio-political history, modes of movement, typical actions, and religious interpretations are analyzed, revealing the diversity of Islamist responses to the post-Reformasi environment.

Chapter 4 examines the political polarization of Islamists under a shared agenda of *shariatisation*, later repackaged as the *Gerbang Marhamah* (GM), or Movement for Noble Society Development. The chapter begins with the 2001 electoral victory of an *Ajengan*-backed candidate for the Cianjur Executive Head position. It then discusses the processes of compromise between the Islamists and their political opponents, including nationalist parties, religious minorities, and legal activists, illustrating how competing interests were negotiated under the GM agenda.

Chapter 5 analyzes the Islamists' unexpected defeat in the 2006 local election for the Executive Head. Despite their successful implementation of shariatisation policies and broad support from prominent *Ajengan* and local Muslim scholars, the Islamists failed to maintain political dominance in Cianjur's *Kota Santri* (City of Pious Muslims). This chapter identifies several factors behind their loss, including the poor economic performance of the Islamist-led Executive Office between 2001 and 2006, the liberalization of local politics in 2005, and internal divisions among Islamist factions vying for power.

Chapter 6 explores the resurgence of Islamist influence in Cianjur's local politics by 2009, just three years after their political marginalization. The chapter details how the Islamists regained power through the strategic proposal of a zakat (alms) enforcement policy. The approval of this proposal by the nationalist Executive Head suggests that zakat enforcement served the interests of both Islamists and nationalists, who sought to strengthen their political base by leveraging religious institutions and fundraising mechanisms for local development and electoral gains.

The Conclusion summarizes the key social, political, and institutional processes that facilitated the integration of Islamist groups into Cianjur's democratic system. It reflects on broader academic debates about the supposed incompatibility between Islam and democracy, using the case of Cianjur to challenge these assumptions and highlight the adaptability of Islamism within democratic frameworks.

CHAPTER 1

DEMOCRACY AND ISLAMISM: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To address the central research questions—how and why Indonesian Islamists have adjusted their ideologies to align with democratic processes, and how the democratic process itself has adapted to Islamist participation in post-Suharto Indonesian politics—it is essential to examine various conceptions of democracy and differing views on Islamism. This chapter begins by exploring multiple interpretations of democracy, ranging from minimalist to maximalist conceptions. The discussion then shifts to an analysis of key scholarly debates regarding the relationship between democracy and Islamism, focusing on whether these two forces are inherently in conflict or potentially compatible.

Three main arguments are considered in this context. The first two argue that democracy and Islamism are in conflict due to fundamental ideological incompatibilities and an ongoing rivalry between the Islamic world, which promotes the idea of a global *umma* (Muslim community), and the West, which advocates for global democracy. The third argument, however, emphasizes the importance of local and domestic contexts, suggesting that the compatibility of Islamism with democracy depends on specific socio-political factors.

Finally, this chapter presents a theoretical framework that conceptualizes democracy as an open-ended and adaptable process, capable of accommodating the diversity within Islamism. This perspective sees the relationship between democracy and Islamism as contingent and dynamic, with each reshaping the other in response to particular local contexts.

Multiple Conceptions of Democracy

The first significant democratic transformation occurred in ancient Greece, particularly in Athens, where the concept of rule by the many, rather than the few, was established in the mid-5th century BCE. Around the same time, similar ideas about governance were developing in the Roman city-

state. After a thousand-year gap, popular government resurfaced in the republican tradition of Rome and the Italian city-states during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. This marked the so-called "*second transformation*" of democracy.

While the republican tradition—grounded in the ideas of Aristotle—differed from Greek democracy, the two systems shared certain assumptions. Both traditions upheld the belief that humans are inherently social and political beings, and that individuals must live together as part of a political association, with civic virtue being central to good citizenship. However, the republican tradition also emphasized the fragility of civic virtue, recognizing the dangers posed by political factions and corruption. This republican model of democracy was further refined in the British constitutional system of the 19th century, which balanced governance through the separation of powers among the monarchy, the House of Lords, and the House of Commons—a structure famously analyzed by Montesquieu (Dahl 1989).

From its ancient roots to its modern applications, democracy has evolved as both a form of government and a political value (Dunn 2005, 17). As a form of government, democracy implies that public decisions are made not directly by citizens, but through elected representatives chosen on a free and equal basis. This system of representation can be understood through two main models.

The first model is majority rule, exemplified by the Westminster system, characterized by concentrated executive power in one-party, majority cabinets, and a two-party political system. The second model is the consensus model of democracy, which critiques majority rule as inherently undemocratic due to its tendency to exclude minority groups. From the consensus perspective, any individual affected by a decision should have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, either directly or through their representatives. Consensus democracy, therefore, is marked by power-sharing in grand coalitions, separation of powers, multi-party systems, and proportional representation (Lijphart 1984).

This broad overview of democratic models provides a foundation for understanding how democracy, as a flexible and varied system, can engage with the ideological diversity of Islamism. Through the lens of both majority rule and consensus-based systems, this chapter sets the stage for exploring the complex, and often contingent, relationship between democratic governance and Islamist movements in Indonesia and beyond.