

# Striving for Islamic Governance: Varying Contexts, Different Strategies

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## Abstract

Muslim-majority countries are striving with some success to re-shape their governance models along Islamic lines. Some countries have opted for implementing the Shari‘ah, whereas others have focused on applying personal status laws. This study analyzes the attempts made by specific leaders in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the secular Republic of Turkey, and multi-ethnic Malaysia to improve their governance models in the areas of human, economic, and social development. As these countries adopted different strategies, the resultant models of Islamic governance are due largely to the contexts and features of their respective societies. Unlike Pakistan’s authoritarian top-down approach, Turkey and Malaysia largely embraced democratic principles, operated a new hybrid economic model that combined the characteristics of Islamic and capitalist market systems, and worked closely with the West. Many consider these two models, although “partial” in their approach, to be examples of open and democratic Islamic governance that are relatively appreciated by the West.

**Keywords:** Islamic governance, secularism, Pakistan, Turkey, Malaysia

## Introduction

Islam has “something important to say about how politics and society should be ordered in the contemporary Muslim world and implemented in some fashion,”<sup>1</sup> for it requires its followers create a just society to look after the people’s

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welfare. Consequently, movements in Muslim-majority countries demand a voice for Islam in public life to one degree or another. They rightly believe that their states, ruled by post-colonial secular elites, have failed to bring prosperity, modernization, and good government. Some countries have implemented the Shari‘ah by jettisoning existing structures, as exemplified in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. Others consider it a code of punishments and thus reduce it to applying personal status laws (e.g., marriage, divorce, and inheritance).

This study analyzes the attempts made by General Zia ul-Haq (d. 1988) in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Recep Tayyip Erdogan (b. 1954) in secular Turkey, and Mahathir Mohamad (b. 1925) in multi-ethnic Malaysia to improve their governance models. The variations in their strategies and resultant models of Islamic governance are due largely to the contexts and features of their respective societies. Scholars have written extensively on the success and resilience of Islamic revolution in Iran, Afghanistan, Algeria, and elsewhere; however, not much attention has been paid to the efforts made to reassert Islamic principles in the social, economic, and political spheres. This study is further justified by the need to document the attempts made by Muslim countries to formulate a new Islamic identity, which required redefining traditional Islamic institutions and redesigning political structures in view of their socioeconomic and political requirements. Relying on the author’s observations and analyses, this study draws information from government documents, journal articles, newspapers, scholarly research and analysis, and analysts and practitioners on the countries studied.

## Islamic Governance

Muslim revivalists and thinkers have directed a great deal of creative effort toward formulating Islamic answers to the sociopolitical and economic challenges faced by the Muslim world’s rapidly changing societies. They invariably looked to the prophetic period and that of the first four caliphs (*al-khulafā’ al-rāshidūn*) as their model “to reconstruct society through a process of Islamic reform in which the principles of Islam applied to contemporary need.”<sup>2</sup> As John Voll points out, these formulations were necessitated by the introduction of unwarranted flexibilities and compromises that had the potential to threaten the community’s very existence.<sup>3</sup> And yet there is no unanimity among scholars and practitioners on the nature of Islamic governance or an Islamic state.

Abu al-Hassan al-Mawardi’s (d. 1058) *Al-Aḥkām al-Ṣultānīyah* (*Ordinances of Government*) describes the characteristics of a caliphate based upon

the guidelines found in the Qur'an and Sunnah as well as the realities of Abbasid practice. He stressed power orientation rather than a Shari'ah-oriented governing system. In his magnum opus *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn (The Revival of Religious Sciences)*, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111) tried to make a fresh start in that direction by reviving the Shari'ah. Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328) sought to weave its principles into government practice in his *Al-Siyāsah al-Shar'īyah (Governance According to the Shari'ah)*.

However, Muslim scholars continued to debate the nature and characteristics of Islamic government. Beginning with the twentieth century, they began addressing such modern issues as the nation-state as well as checks and balances among governmental branches. The idea of an Islamic state first appeared in the writings of Rashid Rida (d. 1935) in his magazine *Al-Manār*. Others followed suit, among them Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi (d. 1979) in his *Islamic Law and Constitution* and Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) in his *Social Justice in Islam* and *Milestones*. But "many issues of interest to Islamic political thought and constitutional law remain shrouded in ambiguity, which tends to cause hesitation and impede research."<sup>4</sup>

The search for planned and organized changes designed to improve the conditions of individuals and society along Islamic lines continues. The term *Islamic governance* is concerned with (1) the act of governing or ruling in terms of how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources to ensure the realization of the public welfare, (2) the set of policies and laws enacted by leaders to be implemented through various government agencies, and (3) the reforms enacted to ensure that the political system's outputs conform with the dictates of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Most Muslim scholars and political leaders, however, consider *Islamic governance* to mean a system that integrates Islamic elements with what they regard as "positive" elements in the contemporary western models of governance.

The details of such a mixture naturally differ, for Islam is conceived of as a system that nurtures humane and accountable leaders who will enact and implement policies for their people's wellbeing. In my opinion Islamic governance must have, at the least, the following features: (1) knowledge and accountability of the leaders, (2) the centrality of consultation in decision making, (3) religious and material education for all, (4) the people's welfare as the primary goal of governance, and (5) justice for every citizen.<sup>5</sup> The first two elements are usually found in a "participatory" system in which the country's leaders, elected in free and fair elections, exercise power in consultation with the members of the elected legislative assemblies. The third element may be referred to as the human development dimension, for it emphasizes

cultivating the Muslim's logical and rational faculty and inculcates the true spirit of Islamic philosophy, ethics, and traditions. Inevitably, the focus here is on establishing educational institutions that can, among other objectives, attain a high literacy rate and promote an Islamic curricula in secular educational institutions.

The fourth element is related to the economic dimension, for it requires devising effective measures for evolving a just and egalitarian economic order that is free from corruption and exploitation. This would require, as well, restrictive regulations on "un-Islamic" forms of entertainment, products, and practices. The fifth element may be referred to as the social dimension, for it requires policies directed at inculcating saner elements in society either through the legal sanctioning of specific social practices deemed to be Islamic or attempts to remove obstacles that prevent the people from practicing such customs. Using these five elements as a framework, this study analyzes the cases of Pakistan, Turkey, and Malaysia.

### **Islamization by Decree in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan**

Approximately 97% of Pakistan's over 180 million people are Muslim. Upon achieving independence in 1947 it was ruled by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, "an impeccably dressed Westernized Muslim with Victorian manners and a secular outlook" as governor general.<sup>6</sup> Upon his death one year later, his successors set about making the country an "Islamic republic" after adopting a constitution on March 23, 1956. However, the only specifically Islamic element it contained was the non-justiciable "Objective Resolution" meant to provide general guidance to successive governments. In 1958, the government reversed its earlier decision and erased "Islamic" from the country's nomenclature. In 1963, mounting pressure from the religious groups forced the president, General Ayub Khan (r. 1958-69), to rename the country the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Ever since it became independent, Pakistan has witnessed periods of military rule, political instability, and civil conflict that culminated in the 1971 emergence of Bangladesh, the former East Pakistan.

In the "new" Pakistan, the ulama' and other groups continued their struggle to Islamize the country. A 2011 survey comprising 2,738 men and women living in Pakistan found that 67% of all Pakistanis believe that government should take steps to Islamize the society.<sup>7</sup> While successive governments only toyed with the idea of Islam, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (r. 1971-73 [president]; 1973-77 [prime minister]) declared Pakistan an Islamic republic and Islam the state religion in the 1973 constitution. The next president, General

Zia ul-Haq (r. 1977-88), prioritized policies toward Islamic governance and acquired the state's full backing. The anti-Soviet Afghan jihad and the free flow of Saudi money and Arab volunteers into Pakistan contributed greatly to his striving for Islamic governance.<sup>8</sup>

Zia, who deposed and executed Bhutto, declared martial law in 1977 and then went on to assure the public that he had taken control of the government solely to administer national and provincial assembly elections. He repeatedly pledged new elections within ninety days, but reneged in 1978 when he promised Islamic administration instead. He remained the chief martial law administrator until he assumed the presidency in 1978. The following year he banned all political parties and replaced Parliament with a nominated Majlis-e-Shoora (Consultative Council) with advisory powers. After securing his position as president through a referendum held in 1984, he held elections in 1985 in which political parties were not allowed to participate.<sup>9</sup> He appointed a civilian, Muhammad Junejo, as prime minister; his government was unceremoniously dismissed in 1988 for acting against the president's wishes. Zia died in a mysterious plane crash during August 1988.

Regarded as "personally honest, modest and simple in his lifestyle, a devout and pious Muslim,"<sup>10</sup> Zia accused politicians of serving their selfish interests in the name of Islam. Describing himself as a "soldier of Islam," he declared that "Pakistan was created in the name of Islam and would survive only if it sticks to Islam."<sup>11</sup> Determined to enforce *nizam-e-Islam* (the Islamic system), he sought to replace Anglo-Saxon law. His first target was the education system, which was almost in shambles due to successive governments' neglect and chronic underfunding. During his term, Islamic studies became a compulsory subject for the bachelor's degree in all faculties to ensure that all graduates would have some knowledge of Islamic rites and rituals and as well as Islamic history. Government schools operated alongside traditional schools of Islamic education,<sup>12</sup> Islamist student groups on college and university campuses were favored, and the higher degree (*sanad*) from Islamic seminaries (*madaris*) was proclaimed equivalent to a master's degree from a university. Thus, *madaris* graduates were now qualified to compete for government jobs.

On April 7, 1979, Islamabad passed a new national education policy. In the area of primary education, the establishment of new English-language schools was banned and the existing ones were replaced with *madaris* and *makatibs*. English-language schools were required to use Urdu as the medium of instruction,<sup>13</sup> 5,000 mosque schools were approved, and the public school curriculum was rewritten to emphasize the messages of jihad (directed

against Communism and the Soviet Union) and Islamization. International patrons supplied the funds, arms, and religious literature that were used freely in the *madaris*. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) paid the University of Nebraska-Omaha \$5.1 million between 1984-94 to develop and design textbooks that promoted jihad.<sup>14</sup> Overall, about \$13 million worth of such textbooks were distributed in the country's Afghan refugee camps and *madaris* where, according to Joe Stephens and David D. Ottaway, "students learnt basic math by counting dead Russians and Kalashnikov rifles."<sup>15</sup> During 1979-82, Islamabad established 151 new seminaries. By 1988, as the Afghan jihad gained momentum, it had opened another 1,000 *madaris*.

In the economic sector, Zia's government followed a policy of liberalization and Islamization. Relying heavily on private enterprise to achieve economic goals, industrial and trade policies that assured private investors of the government's intention to do away with nationalization were implemented. Several public sector industries, with the exception of banks, were denationalized. Regulatory controls were liberalized and investment booming procedures were streamlined. Fiscal incentives in the form of tax holidays were also extended to the private sector. All of these measures led to an increase in private investment from 33% of total investment in 1980 to 46% in 1989.<sup>16</sup> The agricultural sector, which was also liberalized, produced record levels of major crops (i.e., wheat, rice, cotton, and sugarcane) during 1981 and 1982.

To Islamize the economy, the National Investment Trust and the Investment Corporation of Pakistan were asked to operate on an equity basis instead of interest from July 1, 1979, onward. All of the nationalized commercial banks' 7,000 branches opened interest-free counters on January 1, 1980; the new banking system, called Profit and Loss Sharing (PLS), was inaugurated in January 1981. By mid-1985, all Pakistani banks were switched over to this scheme, a development that led to the generation of financial instruments like loans with service charges, *qard hassan* (benevolent loan), mark down, buy back, leasing, hire purchase, *musharakah* (partnership or a joint business venture), and *muḍārabah* (participation term certificate).<sup>17</sup> On June 20, 1980, the government promulgated the Zakat and Ushr Ordinance. Zakat was deducted from all bank accounts opened by Muslims at the rate of 2.5% annually if they contained more than Rs. 3000 from mainly interest-bearing savings. 'Ushr, a 5% tax, was levied on the yield of agricultural land in cash or in kind at the rate of 10% of the agricultural yield annually.

The country's economy was also boosted by Islamabad's strong support for the anti-Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Washington provided \$4.2 billion in

economic and military aid, generous assistance came from its allies. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states employed hundreds of thousands of Pakistani workers; during 1982-83, their remittances accounted for 10% of the country's gross national product, 45% of current account receipts, and 40% of total foreign exchange earnings.<sup>18</sup> Riyadh even hired Pakistani troops to boost its security.<sup>19</sup> Between 1977-86, the years of Zia's military-corporatism, Pakistan's GNP grew by an average of 6.8% annually, one of the highest rates in the world at the time. It was substantially driven by enthusiastic western governments and investors.

In the social sphere, Islamabad began introducing reforms in the media, which plays a significant role in inculcating Islamic values among the public. Media outlets received orders to reflect Islamic values, music and dancing were replaced with self-reform programs, hajj rites were broadcast live on television, and hajj sermons were aired on the radio. As a mark of respect for Ramadan, a special ordinance that prohibited smoking, drinking, and eating in public between sunrise and sunset was released. Arrangements were made for performing noon prayers in all government and semi-government offices, as well as in educational institutions, during office hours, official functions, and at airports, railway stations, and bus stops. The selling and drinking of alcohol by Muslims was banned. In 1979, Islamabad introduced the Hudood Ordinance, which prescribed punishments for such crimes as rape, adultery, theft, drinking alcohol, and taking drugs.<sup>20</sup> To enforce Islamic law, it established separate religious courts at the appellate level: the Federal Shariat Court and the Shariat Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court. It even appointed judges and ulama' to the Shariat courts, which were granted far-reaching powers of judicial review on the grounds of repugnancy to Islam's injunctions.

Zia adopted a top-down approach to Islamization and enforced the policies by his exercise of presidential power. Islamization thus became synonymous with an authoritarian mode of government that was not acceptable to the public in general. His commitment to free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of five and sixteen remains a dream. Madrasah education flourishes but no meaningful efforts have been made to regulate the seminaries, which propagate religious and sectarian hatred as well as violence.<sup>21</sup> The Islamization policies had only a minor impact on Pakistan's political, legal, social, and economic institutions, as the state was never powerful enough to fully implement its own policies.<sup>22</sup> Zia's death was followed by political instability, inefficiency, and corruption, and all successive governments have tried in various ways to soften and gradually reverse his policies.

## Islamic Governance in the Secular Republic of Turkey

Turkey's estimated population of 75.5 million is 99.8% Sunni. Formally proclaimed a republic in October 1923, its first president Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1923-38) ushered in "a single party regime" that lasted from 1925 to 1950. According to Article 2 of the existing 1982 constitution, "The Republic of Turkey is a democratic, secular, and social state governed by the rule of law . . ." In 1937 the constitution declared secularism one of the republic's founding principles to shield the state from the interference of religion. Evidently Atatürk was against those who "abuse religion" and not religion per se.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, he succeeded in driving Islam out of the public sphere.

But since the 1950s and particularly after the 1980 military coup, Islam resurfaced and the country saw the introduction of compulsory, standardized religion classes in the schools. Islam was rationalized as one of the many subjects that help students develop their personalities and inculcate socially acceptable morality and spirituality, both of which will help them meet the challenges of everyday life.<sup>24</sup> During 1950 Turkey began a transition that would be marked by periodic instability due to oscillations between semi-competitive civilian regimes and direct or indirect military rule.

The Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP; the Justice and Development Party), elected during 2002 on an agenda of "conservative democracy," brought about some stability.<sup>25</sup> It managed to increase its parliamentary majority in the 2011 election; having received 34.28% of the vote in 2002, it won 46.58% in 2007 and 49.90% in 2011.<sup>26</sup> Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was elected prime minister in 2003 and won a third term in 2011 with 50% of the vote. On July 1, 2014, the AKP members of Parliament in the Grand National Assembly nominated him as the party's presidential candidate. He won with 51.79% of the vote and assumed office on August 28, 2014.

The AKP believes in promoting Islamic ethics and values but is not seeking to establish an Islamic state; rather, it envisions a secular republic in which Muslims can be Muslim. In other words, its goal is to promote Islamic values through legislative processes, participation in political or judicial institutions, and extensive engagement with civil society and the media. Its leadership is working to reflect Islamic ethics by, among other activities, fighting corruption and nepotism as well as promoting justice and other virtues through free and democratic processes. According to *The Economist*: "No Islamic party has been as moderate and pro-Western as the Justice and Development (AK) party, which catapulted into government in 2002 promising to lead Turkey into the European Union."<sup>27</sup>



The party follows a bottom-up approach, one in which the state supports religiously motivated individuals to develop their environments via social networks, preaching, education (both religious and secular), and entrepreneurship. Through this approach it has managed to establish a unique model of governance: Turkey is a Muslim-majority secular state that has no constitutionally approved religion. It is successfully run by Muslims who promote Islamic ethics and values through democratic procedures and have no interest in proclaiming an Islamic state or the Shari'ah as the source of law.

In terms of human development, the AKP focuses on educational institutions to increase the literacy rate and "raise pious generations." Its policies' success is reflected by the enrollment rates: 39.7% of children between three and six years of age were in pre-school institutions, 98.86% of all primary school aged children were enrolled, and approximately 70% of all secondary school levels were enrolled in 2012. These developments gave rise to a growing demand for higher education and the subsequent establishment of 97 new higher education institutions. Consequently, in 2008 about 950,000 students secured university admission.<sup>28</sup> Ankara has ensured the installation of nearly 1 million computers in classrooms and, in 2011, launched the "Fatih Project" to improve the classrooms' technological infrastructure and provide all students with tablet computers. In addition, the education system experienced a considerable rise in funding, from 2.84% of total GDP in 2002 to 3.99% in 2013. The World Bank recently concluded:

[there have been] improvements in education outcomes including curriculum reform, phased modernization of teaching and learning materials and practices, stronger focus on measuring learning outcomes through large scale national and international assessments, and enhanced monitoring and evaluation systems.<sup>29</sup>

To inculcate ethical values, Turkey's education council has recommended introducing religious classes in all primary schools, as well as adding an extra hour of obligatory religious classes in all high schools. For example, Ankara has mandated the inclusion of religious references in school textbooks and has sought to expand the Imam-Hatip schools, which formally train students to become qualified imams. Such pupils increased from 65,000 in 2002 to almost 1 million in 2012, a growth that is attributed to the government's 2010 decision to transform general high schools into vocational schools. As a result, the number of such schools increased from 493 to 936. In 2012, the government also enacted legislation that permitted middle schools to operate as Imam-Hatip schools.<sup>30</sup> During 2011-14, the Ministry of National Education is said to have

converted 1,447 schools to Imam-Hatip schools.<sup>31</sup> In 2004, 90,000 students had supposedly attended 453 of these high schools; in 2014 some 474,000 students attended 952 such schools. Critics of the party argue that such an increase is not in line with people's expectations and describe it as a "top-down process." And yet a 2012 survey of 2,689 people in twenty-six provinces, conducted by the Turkey Imam-Hatip Alumni Foundation (TİMAV) found that a majority of Turks hold positive views about these schools.<sup>32</sup>

A ministry regulation issued in 2005 allowed religious school students to earn regular high school diplomas by studying for one semester (or through completing correspondence courses) at a secular institution. Although the Council of State suspended this regulation in 2006, the party emerged victorious in 2009 when the Higher Education Board's General Council moved away from the existing coefficient system of calculating applicants' scores on university entrance exams on the ground that it discriminated against Imam-Hatip graduates by restricting their admission to non-theology faculties (e.g., public administration and law). Graduates of Islamic schools are now accepted into secular universities on equal terms with their peers from secular high schools.

The AKP pledged to remove the headscarf ban when it came to power in 2002, arguing that it infringed upon the right of free expression. In the face of severe challenge from the secular bloc, however, it faced a hard fight. Although the wives of such top party leaders as Erdogan and President Abdulla Gül wore headscarves, very few attempts were made to legitimize it. Finally, a law granting amnesty to all expelled hijabi university students was ratified in 2005. The major turning point occurred in February 2008, when two constitutional articles were amended to allow universities to accept such students. Despite the Supreme Court's voiding of these changes as unconstitutional, headscarves on university campuses are unofficially permitted.<sup>33</sup> In 2010, a memo from the Turkish Higher Educational Council appeared to lift the ban at universities<sup>34</sup> and in public institutions, including Parliament. The AKP has also taken other steps to promote ethics and values in higher education institutions.

The rule of Erdogan, who champions capitalism, has been associated with rapid economic growth, the reduction of inflation, and decreasing budget deficits. The AKP deregulated the economy, which grew three-fold from 2002 to 2007 and has shown robust economic growth ever since. Per-capita income increased from \$2,598 in 2002, to \$5,477 in 2007, and to around \$10,000 in 2011.<sup>35</sup> The agricultural sector's contribution fell from about 30% of GDP and employing 77% of the labor force in the 1960s to 15% of GDP and employing 35% of labor force in 2008. Turkey's foreign policy, now that

it has become a “trading state,” is increasingly shaped by economic considerations, as reflected in its expansion from less than USD 20 billion in 1985 to about USD 30 billion in 2010. Economic investment from other Muslim countries, most notably Saudi Arabia, has grown, and the number of Islamic businesses and businesspeople has greatly increased. The party has been especially lax in tracking developments within the Islamic business sector, while replacing nearly every member of the banking regulatory board with officials from the Islamic banking sector. As a result, the shadow economy and the flow of illegal money have boomed.

Islamic banking is growing, thanks to both domestic and international interest, and increasing number of Turkish citizens using its services. But due to the constitution’s secular nature, it is known as “participation banking.” The services offered follow Shari‘ah guidelines and allow customers to transact their business within an Islamic framework. Until gaining legal recognition by the banking law of 2005, participation banks, previously known as “Special Finance Houses,” were excluded from Turkish banking law.<sup>36</sup> Currently, the banking system consists of deposit-taking banks, development and investment banks, and participation banks. Some of these latter banks work on an interest-free basis and according to the national banking law.

In the social sphere, the AKP has discouraged the consumption of alcohol by passing legislation that allows cities to adopt ordinances prohibiting it and, during the first four years of its rule, raising the existing tax by 450 percent. Its use was gradually banned in certain cafeterias and state agencies, and its availability in the public space has been restricted. “In a few cities, the AKP municipalities also tried to create dry zones by giving alcohol sale permits only in selected areas where there are no schools or residential neighborhoods.”<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, the party commonly justifies its opposition to the public consumption of alcohol by citing its negative impact on health instead of appealing to Islamic values.

These actions are paralleled by a growing number of private Islamic initiatives. Islamic swimsuits are gaining in popularity, and more women are choosing to cover in public. The 17,000 new mosques that Ankara has built since 2002 are also appreciated. The state is planning an enormous mosque, more than 150,000 square feet in size, in Istanbul.<sup>38</sup> Now in power for more than ten years, with former Prime Minister [now President] Erdogan in charge for most of them, the party continues to pursue its goal of making Turkey both wealthy and Islamic. It has turned from its predecessors’ vaguely socialist policies toward capitalism, and has moved away from staunchly secular policies toward religious and Muslim-world-centered policies. Although it has

displayed a tendency to compromise on its religio-political convictions and engage in pragmatic politics, the AKP has tried to remain ideologically committed. And yet it has given in to pressure from other national power centers and the EU to postpone some of its initial initiatives, such as criminalizing adultery. The AKP has endorsed cooperation with the EU and enacted more legislative changes necessary for its accession than any previous Turkish secular government.

### **Islamization in Multiethnic Malaysia**

Malaysia is a federation of thirteen states and three federal territories that has a parliamentary form of government and is also a constitutional monarchy. The Independence Constitution of 1957 envisaged a multiethnic country due to its “highly variegated ethnic mix that makes it one of the prime examples of a multi-racial society in the whole world.”<sup>39</sup> According to the 2010 Population and Housing Census of Malaysia (Census 2010), the total population of approximately 28.3 million<sup>40</sup> comprises Malays (51%); Chinese (26%; mostly Buddhists combining Taoist and Confucian practices); Indians (7%; mainly Hindus with a small number of Sikhs, Muslims, and Christians); and various indigenous groups (mostly situated in Sabah and Sarawak), Eurasians, and migrant workers (16%). Article 160 defines a “Malay” as “a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, and conforms to Malay custom.”

The constitution recognizes only Islam as a religion of the federation and instituted a constitutional monarchy in which the king, a Malay-Islamic political institution, acts as head of state and head of the Muslim religion. Likewise, the sultans (rulers) act as the heads of Islam in their respective states. These and many more constitutional provisions give Malaysia an Islamic color without declaring it to be an Islamic state.<sup>41</sup> The country’s leaders, justifiably preoccupied with ensuring national security and maintaining racial harmony in a multi-ethnic country with “reinforcing cleavages,” downplayed the role of Islam in public life. But with the advent of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (r. 1981-2003), the logic of Islamic governance became more sharply defined.

The reasons for the breadth of Islamic programs under his administration may be due to “the pressures coming from the collective force of the *dakwah* movements, Islamic intellectuals, and most understandably, the Islamic Party, PAS.”<sup>42</sup> However, Mahathir had “an intense desire to locate Islam at the heart of the Malaysian social-political orbit and to contribute to the resurgence of Islam as an intellectual and cultural force.”<sup>43</sup> For example, his administration

established a religious bureaucracy, the Department for the Advancement of Islam in Malaysia, under the auspices of the Prime Minister's Office in order to conduct training and sponsor research on Islam-related issues. The Shari'ah and Civil Technical Committee, located within the Attorney General's chambers, was tasked with preparing the draft bills of new or revised Shari'ah laws. The Office of Islamic Religious Affairs was divided into Sharia courts, the Office of the Mufti (to issue religious edicts), and the Islamic Religious Council, through which Kuala Lumpur tasked itself with administering Islam-related issues. The administration also formed such Islamic think tanks as the Malaysian Institute of Islamic Understanding, which helps articulate and elucidate the Shari'ah perspective on issues facing the country. In 1988 Mahathir started referring to the federation's "Islamic government," pioneered the policy of Islamizing the government, and unilaterally declared Malaysia an Islamic state in September 2001.<sup>44</sup>

As prime minister, Mahathir led the National Front coalition to successive victories in the 1982, 1986, 1990, 1995, and 1999 general elections. In 1982, he told his followers that the government was focused on changing "the attitude of the Malays" in conformity with the requirements of Islam in the modern age. In many of his speeches, Mahathir delineated the parameters of Islamic governance by couching them in developmentalist language and repeatedly emphasizing the lack of tension between modernization and "true Islam." He sought to strike "a balance between the spiritual and material" that would proceed with "incremental, moderate implementation ... taking into account the sensitivities of the non-Muslim population."<sup>45</sup>

During the 1970s, the government consciously sought to improve the quantity and quality of education at all levels. Education is free, but not compulsory, for all school-aged children. According to Kuala Lumpur, the philosophy of education is "developing the potential of individuals in holistic and integrated manner so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on the firm belief in and devotion to God."<sup>46</sup> Aware of the need for religious education, it made Islamic education a mandatory and examinable Muslim-only subject in the mainstream school curriculum.

A wide spectrum of options is available in this regard. Over 90,000 students are enrolled in federal religious schools, state religious schools, or schools jointly controlled by the federal and state religious authority. These schools teach not only Islamic studies and Arabic, but also subjects related to science, mathematics, and technology. In other words, the education provided is broad enough to equip students with the knowledge and confidence they

need to compete in the human resource market and face the challenges of contemporary society while upholding Islamic values.<sup>47</sup> Non-Muslim students are taught compulsory moral (instead of Islamic) education, with an emphasis on a set of sixteen moral values (e.g., compassion, humility, respect, love, justice, freedom, courage, physical and mental cleanliness, and honesty).

Kuala Lumpur also embarked upon a policy of increasing access to higher education by setting up more public and private universities, colleges, and branch campuses of overseas universities. In 2007 it boasted a total of 20 public higher education institutions with 382,997 enrolled students, 27 polytechnics, 37 community colleges, and 488 private colleges.<sup>48</sup> All public universities offer courses and degrees in Islamic studies. However, Mahathir's major initiative in the realm of Islamization was establishing, in 1983, the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) to integrate reason and revelation in every field of study and research. Its unique faculties deal with Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, and the Institute of Islamic Banking and Finance. In addition, all other faculties teach Islam and research methodologies.

On the economic front, Mahathir experimented with what is described as a new hybrid economic model that had Islamic and capitalist characteristics. He found this model of double economic regime to be efficient for both financial and commercial sectors. Having inherited a predominantly mining and agricultural-based economy, his government designed economic policies that would lead the transition toward a more multi-sector economy. From 1957 to 2005, the GDP grew an average 6.5% per annum.<sup>49</sup> Such government enterprises as airlines, utilities, and telecommunication firms were privatized starting in the early 1980s. Proton, which manufactures cars in cooperation with Mitsubishi became, by the end of the 1980s, Southeast Asia's largest car maker. In 1991, Mahathir outlined his "Vision 2020," which sought to make Malaysia a fully economically, politically, socially, spiritually, and culturally developed country by that date.

His administration also pursued Islamization via several initiatives. For example, in 1983 the government began issuing a non-interest bearing certificate known as *qard hassan* (benevolent loan) to "enable the government to undertake projects or provide services to help develop the nation."<sup>50</sup> Most importantly, Kuala Lumpur set up an Islamic bank to help Islamize the economy by, according to Mahathir, allowing Malays to "seek wealth in a moral and legal way" and to "obtain prosperity in this world and hereafter."<sup>51</sup> The first Malaysian Islamic bank, Bank Islam Malaysia Berhad (BIMB), began of-

fering Shari‘ah-compliant operations in 1983; within four years it had become the country’s third largest bank and a world pioneer in introducing Islamic financial instruments. In 1984 the government licensed Syarikat Takaful Malaysia Berhad, which opened in 1985. *Takāful* is a form of cooperative insurance based upon the principle of *muḍārabah* (profit and loss sharing). The government assured people that the “conventional financial system will continue to play its role of fostering economic growth and influencing monetary policy in Malaysia.... The non-Muslims could choose between the two alternatives so as to maximise their benefits....”<sup>52</sup>

In an attempt to change “the attitude of the Malays” in conformity with the requirements of Islam in the modern age, the government enacted many policies, among them the 1981 policy of the “assimilation of Islamic values” in the administration. Mahathir adopted the slogan of *bersih* (clean), *cekap* (efficient), and *amanah* (trustworthy), which may be considered Islamization’s symbolic aspect. For framing the practice of Islam in daily life, the Department for the Advancement of Islam in Malaysia (JAKIM) issues *halāl* certification for food products distributed in Malaysia. In fact, Malaysia is now a global player in producing certified *halāl* products. Another think tank, the Malaysian Institute of Islamic Understanding (IKIM), is working to elevate the understanding of Islam among the general public by publishing articles mostly in the local Malaysian media.

Kuala Lumpur also obliges Muslims intending to marry to attend the two-day pre-marriage course conducted by institutions licensed by the state Islamic authorities. This course addresses the needs and expectations (e.g., the nature and meaning of marriage, conflict and anger management) of the soon-to-be couples from an Islamic perspective; graduates receive a certificate. The goal here to to help both individuals strengthen and enrich their relationship and work on building a blissful and rewarding life together.

Almost every town and district has built mosques to accommodate congregational prayers. The *adhān* can now be heard nationwide, and their staff carry out programs and activities to instill and strengthen Islamic values among community members. Most of these mosques are managed by government-appointed salaried officers as well as the mosque committees, which include some members of government agencies. Some of them provide religious classes, sponsor events, and offer assistance for the performance of religious duties. The Pilgrim’s Fund (LUTH), founded in 1969, was re-energized to help Muslims perform the hajj.

Radio and television policies were revised to conform with Islamic teachings, thus giving Islam a “symbolic prominence.”<sup>53</sup> Radio and television out-

lets began broadcasting the *adhān*, Qur'anic recitation, and live coverage of the Friday sermon. No advertisements containing scenes of alcoholic beverages or pork products were allowed, and statements or suggestions that might offend any section of the community's religious, racial, or, sentimental susceptibilities were also prohibited.

Mahathir rejected all demands to implement the Shari'ah for both Muslims and non-Muslims, saying that it was impractical to implement *hudūd* punishments in this multi-ethnic, multi-religious country. Instead, the government upgraded the Shari'ah court system from a lower court (*kadi* court) to three levels of courts: the Shari'ah Lower Court, the Shari'ah High Court, and the Shari'ah Appeals Court. In 1988, Article 121 (1A) of the federal constitution was amended to delineate the separate jurisdictions of Shari'ah and civil courts. This article states that the High Courts of Malaya, Sabah, and Sarawak "shall have no jurisdiction in respect of any matter within jurisdiction of the Syariah courts." Thus Shari'ah court judgments could no longer be appealed at the federal court level, the highest court of the land but considered secular. In matters of family and criminal law, Muslims are subjected to Shari'ah courts.

Overall, these policies helped raise Malaysia's profile as a religiously vibrant, economically successful and politically stable multi-cultural country.<sup>54</sup> Non-Muslim countries perceived it as a Muslim religious but modern and moderate country, one with which they preferred to befriend and trade.

Understandably, the Islamization of governance resulted in a backlash from non-Muslim communities suspicious of such attempts to impose Islamic values on them. They reminded Kuala Lumpur of the social contract adopted in 1957, which emphasizes the symbolic nature of Islam as the official religion and of treating all ethnic groups on equal terms. They also objected to Mahathir's shocking 2001 proclamation of Malaysia being "already an Islamic State," as it had not been debated or approved by the Parliament or the Cabinet. In addition, the federal government's approach to Islamization was not well received by some Muslim leaders, especially the opposition Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), which questioned the genuineness of these Islamization policies. In a 1996 interview, PAS' spiritual leader Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat stated that "[w]hat UMNO has done was as a result of pressure from PAS. If PAS did not exist ... UMNO would never talk about Islam at all."<sup>55</sup>

These criticisms did not deter Mahathir; in fact, he continued to use Islam as a positive ingredient in national development without harboring any ill-will toward the Chinese, Indians, and other ethnic groups. His privatization policies, which attracted strong criticism, nevertheless helped propel Malaysia toward Vision 2020. His successors have reinvigorated most of the policies he enacted.



Education continues to receive generous government grants. In 2012, the government allocated RM 36 billion, the largest share of the federal budget (16%), for educational purposes. Student enrolment at the primary level reached 94% in 2011, and enrolment rates at other levels are equally impressive: 96% at primary, 91% at lower secondary, and 82% at upper secondary level.<sup>56</sup> Private sector driven economic growth is encouraged and has achieved satisfactory results. According to current Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak, “Malaysia has always been committed to implementing policies based on the true principles of Islam.” To prove this point, he set up the Maqasid Syariah Index “to measure the government’s efforts towards upholding Islamic virtues, teachings and principles in various sectors.”<sup>57</sup>

## Conclusion

Zia, Erdogan, and Mahathir each followed different paths in their pursuit of Islamic governance, paths that conformed to each country’s unique political, social, and economic characteristics. Zia’s attempt was synonymous with an authoritarian mode of governance that, according to some scholars, stemmed from political considerations. He was presiding over an Islamic republic and thus adopted a top-down approach without preparing the population. His effort was repressive and failed somewhat due to his untimely death. Secular and democratic Turkey could only be ruled by a party that was fully committed to unquestionable secularism. Hence, Erdogan and the AKP presented themselves as upholders of secularism. The main focus of their drive toward Islamic governance has been removing barriers for those willing to embrace Islamic customs, as opposed to codifying Islamic practices. Turkey also relied heavily upon a well-staffed bureaucracy to promote its efforts.

Malaysia largely embraced democratic principles and worked closely with the West. It is neither an Islamic nor a secular republic; however, Islam is constitutionally regarded as the federation’s official religion. Mahathir and the ruling coalition went ahead with attempts to Islamize the country. Including Islamic officials within the governmental bureaucracy helped him steer the course of Islamization, retain the government’s non-secular nature, restrained any encroachment on the rights of the countries’ large non-Muslim minority communities, and limited the disapproval of foreign investors. Turkey and Malaysia have largely embraced democratic principles and work closely with the West. Many view these two models, although “partial” in their approach, as fine examples of tolerant and democratic Islamic governance. Moreover, they are appreciated by the West.

These three governments attempted, with varying degrees of success, to bring about changes in education, economic, and social policies. In the case of Pakistan, Islamizing education involved a massive expansion of religious schools with a heavy emphasis on the traditional curricula, which, in turn, gave rise to religious extremism. On the other hand, Malaysia and Turkey sought to include modern subjects in their religious schools, enfranchise religious school graduates, and rewrite secular textbooks to increase references to Islamic values. But neither one has sought to produce “Islamized” college and university textbooks. Malaysia and Pakistan established universities with this mission, but success in this area has been rather limited.

Islamizing the economy entails imposing restrictive regulations on the entertainment industry and un-Islamic products and practices, most notably alcohol. Yet these reforms tend to be compatible with capitalism. The three countries have encouraged foreign investment. Ankara and Kuala Lumpur have deregulated their economies, promoted Islamic entrepreneurship, and increased living standards and foreign investment. In both of them, the conventional and Islamic economic systems operate side by side. Given their subsequent economic development, the Islamic policies obviously did not lead to very much backlash from the public. The economy, therefore, appears to be a significant variable that must be considered when Islamizing the government.

Social Islamization involves either the legal sanctioning of specific social practices deemed to be Islamic, as in the case of Pakistan and Malaysia, or attempting to remove those obstacles that prevent people from practicing such customs, as in Turkey. One noticeable aspect in all cases is the absence of *hudūd* laws. Zia implemented them and was severely criticized for doing so. Mahathir refused to do so on the grounds that Malaysia’s existing social realities precluded their meaningful implementation. In all cases, any attempt to Islamize governance needs to be pursued with a great deal of determination in order to alter the indigenous political culture by inculcating Islamic values within the people and thereby infusing an inherent sense of duties and responsibilities among them.

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