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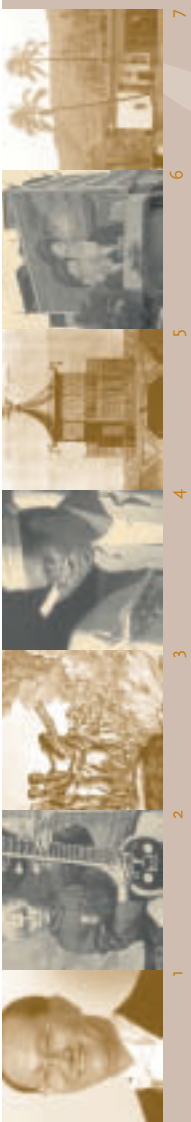
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# IIAS NEWSLETTER

International Institute for Asian Studies

August 2002 | the IIAS newsletter is published by the IIAS and is available free of charge



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## Amien Rais on US Foreign Policy and Indonesia's Domestic Problems *The War against Terrorism in Indonesia*

Forum >  
Indonesia

20 March 2002  
Leiden,  
the Netherlands

On 20 March, Amien Rais, Chairman of the Indonesian People's Assembly, paid a brief visit to the IIAS. Addressing a large, attentive audience, he gave his views on the American war against terrorism after 11 September. He went on to discuss the state of Indonesia under the current President, Megawati Sukarnoputri. Wearing a Western jacket and tie professor Rais, showing little emotion, spoke with a dry sense of humour. His often outspoken opinions and the ensuing game of question-and-answer are summarized below.

By Freek Colombijn

Let me start by saying that the situation of the Muslims in my country is more or less the same after 11 September. I believe that 99 per cent of the Muslim people in Indonesia were shocked and stunned by the barbaric and inhuman act committed by terrorists. According to Islam, all Muslims have to respect the invaluable existence of human beings. Al-Quran says that when a soul happens to be pure and clean, and has never caused any earthly corruption, whoever kills the innocent soul without any reason has committed a grave crime against humanity, as if he has killed all human kind. But whoever saves a soul has done a noble act, as if he has saved the human kind. So I think there is no Muslim in this world who condones the terrorist act committed by irresponsible and evil people, of bombing both the Pentagon Building and World Trade Center in Washington and New York, respectively.

My President, Megawati Sukarnoputri, was the first head-of-state who visited Washington after the attacks of 11 September. She was there saying that Indonesia is more than willing to have international cooperation to fight and defeat, once and forever, international terrorism.

And then, there were developments that made us uneasy. Mr Bush said, 'Now for all nations of the world, there are only two choices: either they join America, and if they don't, they

join the terrorists'. This is rather excessive and not very intelligent, if I may say so. It reminded me of John Foster Dulles at the beginning of the Cold War in the 1950s. He then said to all the Asian and African countries that there are only two alternatives: either they are going to join Washington, or they join Moscow. But what was said by Mr Bush made us even more uneasy. He said that there is an axis of evil, consisting of Iran, Iraq, and North Korea and that there is no right of life for them. Again I think this is excessive.

Indonesia, my country, is, of course, fully committed to hunt down, to punish and to eliminate international terrorists in an orchestrated effort. I think not a single man or woman in Indonesia has taken another position. Maybe there are some insane and lunatic people, but less than one per mille, or one per one hundred thousand persons. This is also why even the most moderate men became very angry when Lee Kuan Yew, the former Prime Minister of Singapore, made the very careless statement that Indonesia is probably full of terrorists.

The attacks of 11 September did not really influence the life of the Muslim people in my country. Of course, we know that there is a negative impact. For example an economic tremor, which makes trade more difficult. But otherwise it is alright. We are more than ready to join forces with other countries to eliminate terrorism, but we must keep freedom of action, meaning that we do not have to follow Washington all the

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time. This is why I told you that we felt very uneasy and became rather angry to Washington, when Mr Bush said any country who does not join America, ultimately is seen as joining the terrorists.

When Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy-Secretary of Defence in Washington, said that after bombing Afghanistan, Washington's target will be South Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia, we felt that this was very unfair. My country happens to be very weak economically, and naturally his words really were like hits on our heads. We cannot fight back, simply because we don't control the international mass media. We cannot respond in kind. We are positive, we are not pessimistic. We have to stand up against this accusation. We have to stand tall vis-à-vis those people who throw dirt at our faces. And of course it takes time, but I believe that one day, when we have become much stronger, we can play an equal game with these strong and powerful countries. We must be patient.

### Reforms

Now let me give you an overview of four years of the process of Reformasi. Nothing important really has changed. Basically, we are facing three big problems.

The first problem is how to maintain our national integrity, in the context of the regionalist movements that push their

Amien Rais and the audience during the discussion, 2002.



Wim Vreeburg

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business and state; in addition, we should first develop mechanisms for interregional communications between all kinds of groups of civil society and next, introduce several consultative forums for ASEM: a workers platform, a NGO platform, an ASEM research platform, and so forth. It is in these forums that decisions should be shaped. Through these platforms, ASEM member states will be informed in a more relevant and nuanced way, and will be able to make wiser decisions on a regional, national, and global scale.

I have gloomy expectations about Copenhagen. In Europe there is a clear tendency towards a new rightwing parochialism and chauvinism. This can be seen in the official policies expressed by the individual European member states. There is still no real consensus on either foreign policy or security in the EU, and most countries still prefer to handle their relations with Asian countries on a bilateral basis. The EC and the individual EU members are still unwilling to provide ASEM with a solid administrative basis - a first prerequisite for sustainable success.

By the same token, the Asian coun-

tries still show a great timidity to really engage in a political dialogue. Neither side seems to be prepared to pay more than lip service to the idea of a social dimension in ASEM. Asian as well as European member states are hesitant to give room to civil society groups: granting such groups a place is perceived as unnecessarily complicating (think, for instance, of the problem of legitimacy). Some believe that an already slow process will be further stymied, and that it may prove to be difficult to curb their influence. Some even fear that civil society groups could take over the ASEM process. Moreover, the financial implications of such an expansion of the third pillar are substantial. No country or constellation of countries will be prepared to finance this new dimension.

To my mind, this is to be regretted. It is from this third domain that new ideas for Asia and Europe will be created! <

**Professor Wim Stokhof** is director of the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden/Amsterdam, the Netherlands.  
E-mail: [iias@let.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:iias@let.leidenuniv.nl)

### Notes >

- 1 In the terminology of ASEM, East Asia comprises Southeast Asia as well as Korea, Japan, and China.
- 2 Recently renewed in Seoul - so much for 'equal partnership, setting aside any donor - recipient relationship'.

own political dream to have a referendum or, some day, to have their own mini states, like in Papua, Riau, East Kalimantan and, of course, Aceh.

Secondly, we have been doing our best to have an economic recovery. But so far, so bad. We called the gentlemen from the IMF to bail out our economy, but the IMF did not deliver. The IMF is a necessary evil: we do need the IMF but at the same time we do not want to be dictated directly by the IMF. We cannot get rid of the IMF, so we have to be a good boy. If the IMF doesn't succeed, then we have to have our own formula to get rid of the economic and financial crisis.

And then last, but not least, I am very deeply concerned that my government has very itchy hands to sell all the healthy government enterprises to foreign companies. Sukarno and Hatta, rising up from their graves, will be, very angry seeing the Indonesian people now, who inherited a beautiful country and very rich natural resources and who are behaving stupidly. They do not make progress and are even selling out the beautiful country. For example: big cement factories. Even some Pertamina [the state oil company] officials were talking to me: 'Pak Amien, probably in 2006 Pertamina will also be sold out to foreign hands'.

Before I leave this podium I want to say something that is more optimistic than pessimistic. I believe that Indonesia will not only survive, but will be much more successful in the future. Let's look at our modern history. We proclaimed our independence in August 1945 and then in 1947 the Dutch forces came back to invade us. And then in 1948, when we were crawling to stand up again, there was a very bloody communist coup d'état in Madiun. One year later, in 1949, again the Dutch forces came back to Surabaya, to Yogyakarta, to other places to recolonize us. Then in 1956 and 1957 there were many rebellious movements in both Java and the Outer Islands. And then in 1965, there was an abortive coup d'état committed by the communist party. But our country, praise be to Allah, survived again and again, up to now. So, if we are facing now multi-dimensional problems of an economic, political, and social nature, again with the creativity of our leaders and the togetherness of our people we will survive again.

### 'Round-table'

Following the à l'improviste presentation above, six selected scholars were given the opportunity to ask questions. The term 'round-table' used in the announcement was somewhat misleading, because Amien Rais stood on a rostrum and the six scholars - Martin van Bruinessen, Nasser Abu Zaid, Freek Colombijn, Thomas Lindblad, Fridus Steijlen, and Kees van Dijk - were seated on the left and the right. Despite the encouragement by one of the six questioners to speak freely as a detached academic, Rais continued to give answers like a politician. He scored his political points with unequivocal standpoints and skilfully eschewed the unwelcome pitfalls in the posed questions. Since there was no time for follow-up questions, Rais could get away with it. Although some people in the audience might be disappointed by the lack of debate, one could admire his mastery of the situation.

**Question:** Do you think that the attack on Afghanistan, starting on 7 October, has a negative effect on pluralism in Indonesia?

Rais: Here and there, now and then, there are some offensive, xenophobic statements made by Muslim teachers in the mosque. But, I can assure you that they are only very small, insignificant pockets. When the Taliban regime collapsed after the American attack, I think all people in my country were happy and excited. Why? Because to us, Taliban is a very bad advertisement for Islam. It is anti-Islamic. Islam does not prohibit a woman to be educated. Islam does not order women to stay in the houses, covering all of the body except the two eyes. And Islam does not teach us to grow our beard whereby the beard becomes a sign of religiosity and piety. The wonderful, noble teachings of the Prophet were reduced absurdly by the Taliban.

Some Muslims, especially the youth, were suddenly admiring Mr Bin Laden when America bombed Afghanistan. Maybe, they don't know exactly who Bin Laden is. But they wear a T-shirt with Bin Laden's feature as a means of political protest against the status quo. I asked a student: 'Why are you wearing this Bin Laden T-shirt?' He said: 'I just want to follow my friends. I don't know exactly who he is. But at least I am becoming somebody by cycling around the town using his T-shirt'.

Some young people in my country were talking of cutting off from Amien Rais, Megawati, and Abdurrahman Wahid and to take full leadership of the Muslim community in Indonesia. Let me ask them, 'Who are the next leaders?' They said, 'We don't know'. In Indonesian 'pukul dulu, putusan

belakanga", hit first and then 'the post-hitting problem' could be solved later on. But most of young people are moderate.

**Question:** Why did General Hendropriyono say that Al Qaeda agents were present in Indonesia? Was this a way of joining the American coalition, and to get the army closer to America in order to get military aid again? And to bring a new military regime?

Rais: Hendropriyono said later that he was mistaken. In your country, the general would be dismissed because of giving false information. But, in my country this happens. I don't believe the possibility that the military comes back in Indonesia. The top ranks of the military are aware that it is time to re-establish our democratic parliamentary system.

**Question:** Will Indonesia stay a secular (Pancasila) state or become a Muslim state?

Rais: Pancasila [the state philosophy of 1945 that acknowledges Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism] is our state philosophy and we consider it irrevocable and final. Some time ago, I was told by my colleagues from Saudi Arabia or from other Muslim countries, 'Rais, why you said that you do not make Islam the basis of your state? Why, if eighty-seven per cent of Indonesians happen to be Muslims?' Why? Because our founding fathers did not want to offend non-Muslims in my country, or to make Islam the subject of political controversy. Pancasila has been tested by our history. Some Indonesians said to me, 'Pak Amien, maybe if Lebanon would have had a kind of Pancasila there was no civil war.' Yes, maybe so. We believe that under the umbrella of the Pancasila we can develop our respective religions in quiet, harmonious tolerance.

**Question:** What about the relationship with Israel, a state which is a terrorist state against innocent people?

Rais: I am happy to say that up to now Indonesia does not have any diplomatic relationship with Tel Aviv. America, which is pro-Israel, does not have international leadership. I am proud that Indonesian people still stick very dearly to the preamble of our constitution, which says that Indonesia will never ever make any relations with an imperialist state, whatever it is called.

**Question:** In your columns in the weekly DeTik you write that the present government does not care about the ordinary people, but only nurses corporate and foreign interests. Will such words not stir up a lot of emotions, which make the country ungovernable?

Rais: We cannot afford to have a change in presidency. The world sees us as a stupid nation. In five years, we have had



Nasser Abu Zaid during the discussion

four presidents. I think this is absurd. This is ridiculous. That is why there is an unwritten consensus among the politicians in Jakarta, that we have to guarantee that the present Megawati government must survive until the year 2004. But at the same time, of course, we still have to make criticism to Megawati. Because if we just stay idle, it is not right at all.

This is a secret between me and her. Basically if I see very grave problems, I phone one of her adjutants to give me time to talk directly to the president. This is what I did last month when I was very concerned seeing the number of unemployment rise. So I use my double method. I am giving public statements, because it is a need in our transparent democratic system. But on the other hand if I want to talk more directly, I just talk to her directly. But usually she is saying to me, 'Pak Amien, I am not going to. Last night, I saw you criticized me on TV, but I cannot do what you expect. I am always slow and consider all the dimensions of the problem before

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making a decision'. So, I agree that sometime my criticism may cause less of trust in the minds of the people. At the same time, we have to guard that our statements are not beyond the limit, causing the government to fall.

*Question: Indonesia always seems to be waiting for a decisive turning point in the recovery of the economy. First it waited for the fall of Suharto, then it was waiting for the new government, then for the replacement of Abdurrahman Wahid. So what is Indonesia waiting for now?*

Rais: President Megawati waited for fifteen days to form a cabinet. One day after her inauguration as our president, the reaction of the market was very, very positive. Suddenly, our currency became much stronger vis-a-vis the US dollar. All the editorials and the comments made by all leaders in my country were also positive. It seemed we had a dream team. But now people talk we are having a dreaming team. Because the dream does not really do anything. What are we waiting for? I don't know. I believe that to overcome our national problems, we need to have a strong national leadership and nation. Right now Indonesia is like Suharto's New Order, but without leadership and vision.

*Question: It seems you underestimate the problem of terrorism. And Lee Kuan Yew did not say Indonesia is full of terrorists, but that Singapore is not safe as long as Indonesia does not act on terrorists in Indonesia.*

Rais: Lee Kuan Yew said, 'Indonesia is a nest of terrorists, who wander everywhere in Indonesia'; and you are right that the Indonesian government is not doing enough to crack down on the terrorists. But we could still cool our emotions, and in reacting to Lee Kuan Yew's statement we sent two police generals to Singapore asking for information, so that we could arrest the terrorists. But Singapore said it was not the right time to reveal this strictly confidential information. Fortunately the reaction of Lee Kuan Yew now has calmed down and the emotion is disappearing.

## Amien Rais: kingmaker and pretender to the throne

Professor Muhammad Amien Rais is Chairman of the People's Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, MPR), which discusses the broad outlines of the national policy and has the right to choose or depose the president. Unlike the national parliament, the MPR meets only at long intervals. In October 1999, Amien Rais chaired the newly elected MPR meeting that replaced the then President Habibie by Abdurrahman Wahid. In July 2001 he called together an extra session of the MPR that voted Wahid out again, in favour of Megawati Sukarnoputri.

Amien Rais' political career started during the long rule of President Suharto (1966-1998), when he led the Muhammadiyah (one of the two biggest Muslim organizations in Indonesia, with a following predominantly consisting of modernist, urban Muslims). He earned praise outside the Muhammadiyah for his open criticism of the autocratic Suharto. Rais' finest hour came in May 1998 when protesting students and defecting collaborators convinced President Suharto to step down. During that crucial month in Indonesia's history, Rais was the most vocal and popular opposition leader, and for a time it looked like he would become President. He joined the 1999 parliamentary elections with the newly established National Mandate Party (PAN). The PAN obtained a disappointing 7 per cent of the votes, so that Rais again missed the presidency at the MPR meeting of October 1999. He still aspires to the presidency and hopes that a direct election of the President will bring him more success. <

*Amien Rais obtained a PhD in political science from the University of Chicago and lectured at the Universitas Gadjah Mada of Yogyakarta.*

If some people in the international community believe Indonesia is not doing enough to crack down on terrorism, I will take that as encouragement. But suppose Washington asked Jakarta to send military troops to Afghanistan or to other countries to fight against terrorism as a pretext, we will say no. Because we are not like America. We are our own. We are respecting America as the single most powerful country in the world - we have to be realistic too - but we are not willing to bow again and again for the sake of satisfying the American wishes. Please understand: Yes, we want to cooperate. Yes, we want to work together with other countries, but, we have to preserve our political sovereignty. <

*Dr Freek Colombijn lectures on the modern history of Indonesia and on the sociology of Southeast Asia at Leiden University. E-mail: f.colombijn@let.leidenuniv.nl*



Amien Rais during his presentation, 2002.

## Taipei and/or Beijing?

# The Vatican's Dilemma

Forum >  
East Asia

25 April 2002  
Leiden,  
the Netherlands

The year 2002 is a very significant year for the Republic of China in Taipei. It marks the sixtieth anniversary of ROC's diplomatic relations with the Holy See and the ninety-first founding anniversary of the Republic of China, thirty-eight years the PRC's senior. The Holy See conducts its foreign affairs to propagate religious faith in contrast to ordinary states whose objectives are to advance their political and economic interests. The Holy See, therefore, adheres to the principles of religious freedom as a norm for diplomatic recognition.

By Raymond R.M. Tai

The Holy See is currently the only European 'state' that does not officially recognize the People's Republic of China (PRC), but maintains diplomatic relations with the Republic of China (ROC). For the Vatican, I am recognized as the Ambassador of all China as the Holy See's diplomatic list so identifies me, despite the ROC's lack of control over the Chinese mainland for more than fifty years. Furthermore, according to the Vatican, the Church in China as a whole is a 'province' of the Universal Church just as the Church in the United States is a 'province' of the Roman Catholic Church.

From a religious point of view, the Holy See wants to see a 'united' Chinese Catholic Church consisting of the churches in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, and mainland China. More importantly, the Holy See wishes to have a united Church in mainland China - the two communities of the 'Patriotic (official) Church' and the 'Church of silence' together in communion. Since unity is the objective of the Holy See, so I use the wording of 'Taipei "and" Beijing'.

From a political point of view, the Holy See has been forced to make a choice between Taipei and Beijing. The Communist government in Beijing has

set 'two preconditions' for the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Holy See. Tang Jiaxuan, the PRC's Foreign Minister, has officially stated that the first precondition is that the Vatican must break off its diplomatic relations with Taiwan, (actually with the ROC), and must adopt the official position that the PRC is the 'sole' legitimate Chinese government and that Taiwan is an inseparable part of China. Therefore, I use the wording of 'Taipei "or" Beijing' to describe the Vatican's dilemma whether to be able to maintain diplomatic relations with both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Beijing's second precondition is that the Vatican must not involve itself in matters Beijing deems to be domestic affairs even where those matters relate to religious concerns, such as the Church's social teachings and the naming of the Bishops. For example, the Church would not be allowed to preach against Beijing's 'one baby' policy, even though this policy is not in conformity with the Catholic belief of respect of life. To understand this complex Chinese problem, one needs to know Beijing's Communist leaders' way of thinking, their approach to relations with the Catholic Church and the Holy See, and how the Church and the government on Taiwan can contribute to Communist China evolving into a freer society.

Beijing's leaders do not believe in God or hold any religious faith. The PRC President, Jiang Zemin, reiterated this on many official occasions; he even openly claimed himself to be 'atheist' in Rome in early 1999. Beijing's leaders want all religions to be under the control of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) so that no religion will lead towards 'social instability'. According to them, the CCP is the 'Saviour' of the Chinese people, and their authority should not be challenged. President Jiang made it clear to Chinese religious officials at all levels on 13 December last year,

'Communist party members do not believe in any religion but treat religion with a scientific point of view [...] religions should never be allowed to be used for opposing the Communist Party leadership [...] The principle of independence must be followed and foreign interference in China's religious work should be absolutely prohibited [...] the Party's leadership over religion should be strengthened. The work on religion is closely linked to social stability, national security and reunification, as well as China's relations with foreign countries.'

In addition, Article 36 of the Revised PRC Constitution of 1982 states that,

'Citizens of the PRC enjoy freedom of religious belief [...] No religious affairs may be dominated by any foreign country.'

Under such circumstances, the Holy See can hardly normalize its relations with Beijing. As Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, former President of the Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace, said quite openly in a recent interview, 'It is a long road from Bethlehem to Beijing, one strewn with advances and retreats.' What then, is the Holy See, a special religious entity, trying to do?

To the Holy See, the existence of 'diplomatic' relations with Taipei is no longer an obstacle to the establishment of diplomatic relations with Beijing; Cardinal Angelo Sodano, the Vatican's Secretary of State, indicated on 11 February 1999 that if there were freedom of religion on the Chinese mainland, the Holy See would move its 'Nunciature in China' from Taipei to Beijing, rather today than tomorrow. It was evident that the Holy See was trying to initiate immediate talks with Beijing on all Church matters regardless of the existing political system.

It seems to me that the present priority for the Holy See should be to reopen a 'constructive dialogue' with Beijing in order to minimize their differences over religious freedom. To some observers, this is an extremely sensitive issue at a time of an impending

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