

democracy. Indeed what has happened has been the rise of a kind of "demo-crazy," since democracy seems to be understood by certain segments of Indonesian society as meaning mass demonstrations that often end in chaos and anarchy.

The success of Indonesia to hold general elections in such a peaceful way should silence the skeptics who wrongly believe that democracy cannot take strong root in a dominantly or predominantly Muslim country. This may be the case in particular Muslim countries elsewhere, but this should not be taken as a sweeping generalization. The Indonesian case shows that Islam is not inherently undemocratic or incompatible with democracy. In fact there are many Islamic principles and teachings that fit with democracy. The seeming incompatibility between Islam and democracy is a result of the literal interpretation of certain verses of the Qur'an, or of taking only certain aspects of Islam while ignoring others. In addition, the failure of democracy in many Muslim countries is due mainly to a number of internal and external factors that inhibit the growth of democracy. Some of the most important inhibiting factors are weak economic conditions, backwardness in education, the lack of socio-cultural capital and, not least important, the support of Western powers towards undemocratic regimes in Muslim countries.

Furthermore, Indonesia's exercise in democracy has shown the fallacy of the so-called "democratic trap" theory, which argues that the democratic opening in Muslim countries will result only in the rise to power of the Islamists, not to say Muslim fundamentalists. The classic example of the interference in democracy is the Algerian case. Based on this theory, certain regimes, like Algeria, which was supported by certain Western countries, annulled the results of the election when the Islamists or Islamic parties appeared to win the election. This unexpected interference has in fact alienated the proponents of democracy in the Muslim world from democracy. The double-standard attitude of some Western countries has produced some disillusionment among Muslims who would love to see democracy become the order of the day in their country. The democracy trap argument has been proven wrong in the Indonesian case. The Indonesian elections have in fact shown that Islamic parties or the Islamists have not been able to ride the waves of the democratic opening nor to produce a "democratic trap".

As far as Islam is concerned, the results of the 2004 general elections in Indonesia indicate a number of interesting political