

the focal point of Islamist ire. A mob attacked the magazine's Jakarta offices, forcing the editors to move base to the Hindu island of Bali. Headscarved women picketed and harassed the magazine's models. The government buckled under the pressure and took Mr. Ernada to court.

In practical terms, Islamist movements around the world -- from Hamas in the Palestinian territories to the Jemaat-e-Islami in the Indian subcontinent to Indonesia's Justice and Prosperity Party -- follow a two-pronged strategy. They seek to emulate the West's science and technology while walling off their societies from the taint of Western culture. These groups see the path to an Islamist state through the creation of a fundamentalist society. This requires shutting down anything that gets in the way.

American popular culture challenges Islamism like no other force on the planet, certainly more effectively than State Department diplomats, who seem to spend all their time apologizing on al-Jazeera or trotting out banalities about the universality of motherhood. The idea of a woman dressing or undressing as she pleases, or that you may personally disapprove of the Playboy bunny but respect your neighbor's right to fantasize about her, undermines the very core of Islamist totalitarianism.

On a more flippant note, persuading young men to blow themselves up in order to claim 72 dark-eyed virgins in paradise is that much harder when the dark-eyed virgin next door can be found spread across a centerfold. It's no coincidence that 15 of the 19 9/11 hijackers came from Saudi Arabia, a country where Starbucks isn't allowed to use its mermaid logo lest it cause offense.

If we're lucky, the Indonesian court deciding on Mr. Arnada's fate will see the larger issues at stake -- the choice between an open society and a repressive one -- and vote to acquit. If we're luckier still, Indonesian Playboy will be joined one day by Baywatch Pakistan and Desperate Saudi Housewives.

Mr. Dhume, a Bernard Schwartz fellow at the Asia Society, has completed a book on the rise of radical Islam in Indonesia.

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