THE POLITICAL ORIGINS OF RELIGIOUS RIGIDITY AND FLEXIBILITY: THE DISSEMINATION OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL ISLAM IN MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA

A Thesis

Submitted to the Master's Study Program of Political Science at the Faculty of Social Sciences in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (M.A.)

by:

Aldi Nur Fadil Auliya

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UNIVERSITAS ISLAM INTERNASIONAL INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

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The Dissemination of Contemporary Political Islam in Malaysia and Indonesia

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Why do Muslim-majority democracies express religious rigidity while others reflect flexibility? Previous studies emphasize the religious constitutional forms and political rivalries in electoral competition between political parties chasing Muslim voters in addressing the question while overlooking the types of social capital within political struggle as a causal factor. This paper employs process tracing for theory-building and conducts comparative history in Malaysia and Indonesia. In proposing the interaction of two variables, political rivalry between political parties chasing Muslim voters and social capital to promote religious inclusivity, this thesis argues that the divergent power of social capital to promote religious inclusivity results in either political Islam expresses religious rigidity or reflects religious flexibility in a Muslim country with a democratic system. Malaysia is a case of weak social capital to promote religious inclusivity under political rivalry between political parties chasing Muslim voters, which triggers the undertaking of top-down Islamization policies in formal democracy and results in the spread of political Islam expressing religious rigidity. In contrast, Indonesia is a case of strong social capital to promote religious inclusivity under political rivalry among political parties chasing Muslim voters, which leads the policy to work from the bottom-up in the frame of substantive democracy and results in the dissemination of political Islam expressing religious flexibility.

Keywords: *Religious Rigidity, Religious Flexibility, Political Islam, Malaysia, Indonesia.*

ABSTRAK

ASAL USUL POLITIK KEKAKUAN DAN FLEKSIBILITAS AGAMA:
Penyebaran Islam Politik Kontemporer di Malaysia dan Indonesia

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Mengapa negara mayoritas Muslim dengan sistem demokrasi mengekspresikan kekakuan agama sementara yang lain mencerminkan fleksibilitas agama? Studi-studi sebelumnya menekankan pada bentuk-bentuk konstitusi keagamaan dan rivalitas antar partai politik yang mengejar pemilih Muslim dalam kompetisi elektoral untuk menjawab pertanyaan tersebut, sementara mengabaikan bentuk-bentuk modal sosial selama perjuangan politik sebagai faktor penyebab. Makalah ini menggunakan penelusuran proses untuk membangun teori dan melakukan perbandingan sejarah di Malaysia dan Indonesia. Dengan mengusulkan interaksi dua variabel, rivalitas antar partai politik yang mengejar pemilih Muslim dan modal sosial yang mempromosikan inklusivitas agama, tesis ini berpendapat bahwa kekuatan modal sosial yang berbeda untuk mempromosikan inklusivitas agama menyebabkan apakah Islam politik akan mengekspresikan kekakuan agama atau mencerminkan fleksibilitas agama di negara Muslim dengan sistem demokrasi. Malaysia memiliki modal sosial yang lemah untuk mempromosikan inklusivitas agama di tengah rivalitas politik antara partai politik yang mengejar pemilih Muslim, yang memicu dilakukannya kebijakan Islamisasi dari atas ke bawah dalam bingkai demokrasi formal dan menghasilkan penyebaran Islam politik yang mengekspresikan kekakuan agama. Sebaliknya, Indonesia memiliki modal sosial yang kuat untuk mempromosikan inklusivitas agama di tengah rivalitas politik antara partai-partai politik yang mengejar pemilih Muslim, yang membuat kebijakan diformulasikan dari bawah ke atas dalam bingkai demokrasi substantif dan menghasilkan penyebaran Islam politik yang mengekspresikan fleksibilitas agama.

Kata Kunci: *Kekakuan Agama, Fleksibilitas Agama, Islam Politik, Malaysia, Indonesia.*

الملخص

الأصول السياسية عن الجمود الدينية والمرونة:
انتشار السياسة الإسلامية المعاصرة في ماليزيا وإندونيسيا

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لماذا تعبر الدول الأغلبية المسلمة ذات النظام الديمقراطي عن الجمود الدينية بينما تعبر غيرها بالمرونة الدينية؟ قد ركزت الدراسات السابقة على الأشكال الدستورية الدينية والتنافس السياسي في المنافسة الانتخابية بين الأحزاب السياسية التي تسعى لجذب الناخبين المسلمين في التعامل مع هذا السؤال مع إغفال أنواع رأس المال الاجتماعي داخل النضال السياسي كعامل مسبب. استخدم هذه الرسالة منهج العملية لبناء النظرية و مقارنة تاريخية في ماليزيا وإندونيسيا. بتقديم تفاعل متغيرين، التنافس السياسي بين الأحزاب السياسية التي تسعى لجذب الناخبين المسلمين ورأس المال الاجتماعي لتعزيز الشمولية الدينية، وقد رأى الباحث أن القوة المتباينة لرأس المال الاجتماعي لتعزيز الشمولية الدينية تؤدي إما إلى تعبير الإسلام السياسي عن الجمود الدينية أو تعكس المرونة الدينية في الدول الأغلبية المسلمة ذات النظام الديمقراطي. ماليزيا تمتلك رأسمالاً اجتماعياً ضعيفاً لتعزيز الشمولية الدينية تحت التنافس السياسي بين الأحزاب السياسية التي تسعى لجذب الناخبين المسلمين، مما يؤدي إلى اتخاذ سياسات إسلامية من الأعلى في الديمقراطية الرسمية ويؤدي إلى انتشار الإسلام السياسي الذي يعبر عن الجمود الديني. بالمقابل، إندونيسيا تمتلك رأسمالاً اجتماعياً قوياً لتعزيز الشمولية الدينية تحت التنافس السياسي بين الأحزاب السياسية التي تسعى لجذب الناخبين المسلمين، مما يؤدي إلى أن تعمل السياسات من الأسفل في إطار الديمقراطية الفعلية ويؤدي إلى انتشار الإسلام السياسي الذي يعبر عن المرونة الدينية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: *الجمود الدينية، المرونة الدينية، السياسة الإسلامية، ماليزيا، إندونيسيا*

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Finally, I recognize that this thesis represents a collective effort. I am extremely fortunate to have been surrounded by such a remarkable support network. Thank you all for being an essential part of my academic journey and helping me reach this milestone.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

The ups and downs of democracy in Muslim-majority countries have been tightly connected to the movements and spread of political Islam. This relationship has fueled ongoing debates on the compatibility between Islam and democracy. When it comes to Muslim-majority democratic countries, the ideas of statism and political recognition play a preeminent role in the formation of social cleavages. It may contradict the "freezing hypotheses" proposed by Lipset & Rokkan (1967), where, in this case, the state confronts the challenge of balancing democratic values such as liberty, equality, and justice with the pressures of Islamist groups demanding religious exclusivity, resulting in intense political competition. These conflicting forces generate intricate dynamics, potentially leading political elites to institutionalize strict religious doctrines that can collide with democratic principles. For instance, in Pakistan, Malaysia, and Nigeria, the state's interpretation of Islamic doctrine in enacting strict Sharia laws to regulate public morals is considered a positive development. Conversely, in Tunisia, Turkey, Indonesia, and Lebanon, the development of Sharia restriction enforcement is considered negative, and the state is more likely to accommodate freedom of religious practices. Thus, Muslim countries with democratic systems present intriguing cases of diverse expressions of Islam, ranging from rigid interpretations to more flexible approaches, concerning the institutionalization of religious interpretations within the democratic system.

Why do some Muslim countries with a democratic system express religious rigidity while others do not? This question leads us to the center of a complex relationship between rigid and flexible political Islam. Recent research has offered two broad alternative explanations for these political origins. First, religious constitutional forms may cause religious rigidity or flexibility (e.g., Rahman, 2019; Lerner, 2013; Adil, 2007; Hosen, 2005). Second, intense political rivalry in election periods will affect whether or not political Islam becomes rigid since the elites have to secure political legitimacy to gain support from religious-based voter to stay in power (e.g., Hamayotsu, 2012; Weiss, 2004; Liow, 2004; Harding, 2002). However, these two alternative explanations do not fully address this comparative question.

Malaysia and Indonesia offer unique cases for comparative study to explain this puzzle. It is yet to be understood why Islam more heavily influences Malaysia's politics and government than Indonesia's. Yet both countries with democratic systems have been unable

to avoid the rise of Islamist political movements, sparking numerous protests and offering various alternative avenues for demanding Islamist aspirations in the spirit of a secular political order that can accommodate multi-ethnic/religious settings. Therefore, the cases of Malaysia and Indonesia offer an interesting theoretical and empirical case for comparison. Even though Malaysia and Indonesia have multi-ethnic/religious populations and are confronted with similar waves of Islamist movement groups at the national level, the two countries have contrasting characteristics, particularly in the state response toward religious doctrine.

Against this backdrop, whether we realize it or not, the rigidity or flexibility of religious interpretation always comes back to the state authority. There are instructive cases that can reflect the religious rigidity or flexibility. In Malaysia, the word "Allah" has been prohibited from being used by Christians since 1986 to protect the specificity and sanctity of the Islamic position in Article 3 of the Malaysian Constitution (see Shah, 2015; Nor, 2011; Kuppusamy, 2010). Meanwhile, this is not a serious problem among Muslims in Indonesia; Allah can be used by both Muslims and Christians and the state does not regulate the use of the word, even though the word Allah is also contained in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution, paragraph 3 of the Indonesian Constitution. More obviously, Malaysia has the *"Pegawai Penguatkuasaan"* under the Jabatan Agama Islam (Islamic Religious Department) in each state, which is granted the authority to act as morality police to arrest individuals who commit moral offenses[1] such as *khalwat* (close proximity), lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) acts, and apostasy.[2] Indeed, these policies have attracted much criticism, mainly due to claims that it encroaches on personal freedom and violates human rights. Conversely, Indonesia is more tolerant in that it does not require religious/morality police or strict sharia to enforce religious standards in society. The state is more accommodating to religious freedom and does not criminalize LGBT, apostasy, or *khalwat*.

Given such examples of institutionalized religious rigidity and flexibility, at least two major developments have impacted the different forms of contemporary political Islam within Malaysia and Indonesia. For my purpose, political Islam is defined broadly as the pursuit of political influence by remolding the relationship between state and society based on

[1] Morality police are typically employed for social control, prohibiting Muslims from violating Islamic teachings. Furthermore, the Local Government Act 1976 and the Park By-Laws of 1981 (Federal Territory) contain several other provisions prohibiting public indecency and disorderly behavior.

[2] See Azhar (2018), Ismail (2016), and Ismail (2008) for research on the *Pegawai Penguatkuasaan* under Jabatan Agama Islam or *hisbah* and sharia restrictions in Malaysia. See also Ismail (2016b) for a full explanation of sharia criminal procedure law.

Islamic precepts. Furthermore, the term ‘political Islam’ used in this paper has to be understood in both senses: rigid and flexible.

Rigid political Islam is the implementation of a strategy for governing or to articulate a detailed Islamic political vision, enforcing a superiority of Islamic texts in society (both privately and publicly) through Islamic politicization, weak Muslim civil society views to promote religious inclusivity, and the failure to uphold individual rights and religious freedom in democracy.[3] Consequently, the state expresses religious rigidity, which is confrontational to the substance of liberty and equality in a democracy, and tends to conserve that image so long as there are no major calls for reform. For example, rigid political Islam could be measured by the state's coercion of individual morals to practice strict religious doctrines and has punitive consequences if individuals violate religious laws that the state has regulated, such as criminalizing those who commit acts of proximity, apostasy, or LGBT.

By flexible political Islam, we mean a political strategy in the context of substantive Islamic articulation, characterized by seeking to emphasize Islamic culture through the development of a personal relationship with God rather than the politicization of Islam, a robust civil society to promote religious inclusivity and a greater emphasis on civil liberties, the principles of justice, equality, or inclusivity, and unity by respecting democratic values.[4] For example, Indonesia does not interfere with individual religious practices. However, in some instances, the LGBT community in Indonesia is not criminalized yet does not receive protection from the state. In the case of other religious issues, especially under Jokowi's tenure, the state canceled regulations covering investment in alcoholic beverages in Muslim minority provinces because the regime was still subject to religious authorities (see Hasyim, 2021). As a result, the state reflects religious flexibility. It tends to accommodate democratic values to benefit a pluralistic and tolerant society.[5]

[3] I prefer to use the term 'rigid/rigidity' on the consideration that the word 'rigidity' can better express non-compromising stances of religious interpretations, which positively impact hostility both socially and politically (see Hansen & Ryder, 2016). For comparison, the term 'conservative' has more variations in interpretation; some argue that conservative Muslim will impact on Islamist political orientation (see Bruinessen, 2013). However, one might also be "socially conservative, but politically liberal" (see Auliya, 2023).

[4] The term 'flexible/flexibility' is more appropriate than the term 'liberal' since the flexible term indicates the politically fluctuating attitude (sometimes liberal and sometimes conservative) in responding to issues related to traditional religious doctrines. However, it tends to be accommodative or adaptable toward democratic values. In this regard, flexibility can be characterized as an attempt to hold sacred texts and traditions as sources of inspiration and value to understand the modern context. It can be understood as an attempt to find a balance between conservatism and liberalism. Although they tend to uphold religious teachings, they are also receptive to human rights, tolerance, and pluralism.

[5] I elaborate my understanding of political Islam and its dissemination in Malaysia and Indonesia based on my own interpretation with the consideration that Islam can be interpreted and practiced politically, which is somewhat different from 'Islamisme.' For instance, some Muslim political actors consider that Islam should be

Table 1. The characteristic differences between rigid and flexible political Islam

Rigid Political Islam	Flexible Political Islam
Institutionalizing formalistic Islam	Propagating substantive Islam
Strong exclusive Muslim civil society	Strong inclusive Muslim civil society
Confrontational toward democratic values	Accommodative toward democratic values

Nevertheless, rigid or flexible political Islam, which lead to the image of a democratic country that is predominantly Muslim does not occur in a vacuum. When it comes to Muslim countries, the politicization of religion is often attributed to state actions (Wiktorowicz, 2000). This study posits that the difference in structural conditions within democracies is a crucial variable for explaining the various manifestations of political Islam within both countries.

These two typologies can be helpful to facilitate the discussion on the raised topics while emphasizing that the term "political Islam" differs somewhat from the term "radical/extreme political Islam," which can refer to jihadists taking up arms, resorting to revolutionary ways to gain political power to rule, or Islamic political events taken from the 'heartland' of Islamism in the Middle East. Rather, on this topic, political Islam, using Gellner's thesis on "high Islam" vs. "low Islam" (Gellner, 1983), is shaped in the area of “peripheral Islam” within the context of a democratic country with competition between political parties to gain Muslim-majority legitimacy and the authority for policy-making power, where political Islam is adapted to respond to social change at a level that is 'established' without losing its core “identity”. Since typologies are often very complicated, we cannot avoid them in an attempt to understand the existing phenomena around us. Thereupon, the question is not whether it is necessary to employ a typology but rather how

implemented as laws that regulate social, political, and personal life. In contrast, others consider Islam should be implemented as mores and social ethics, not laws. In this regard, Islam is not a monolithic political force, in which political Islam can be owned by secular actors or Islamists, keeping Islam as their core identity to promote modern national understanding. See Eickelman & Piscatori (2018), Cesari (2017), Hefner (2000) to comprehend the dimensions of political Islam. See also Syamsuddin (1995, p. 58–61) in reading formalistic and substantive Islam. To comprehend the characteristics of accommodative and confrontational towards democratic values, see Diamond et al., (2005, 183) and Voll, (1994) on how Islam's tenets can be interpreted to accommodate and even encourage pluralism; the central drama is to reconcile Islam and modernity. Conversely, confrontational is how Islam's tenets are interpreted to see that democratic values are incompatible or alien to Islam, where *"Islam is a single, definitive essence that admits of no charge in the face of time, space, or experience"*.

it should be utilized and contextualized within the sociohistorical context in which it is applied relevantly (Shepard, 1987). Thus, I construct the previous typologies to seek causal arguments regarding the different outcomes of political Islam that can explain the historical origins of the religious image (rigidity vs. flexibility) in the democracies of Malaysia and Indonesia, which many scholars have often cited as models to disprove the thesis that Islam is incompatible with democracy and modernization – albeit somewhat debatable (see Hefner, 2011; Buehler, 2009; Embong, 2007; Elisabeth, 2007; Esposito & Voll, 2000; Bican, 2006; Madjid, 1994).

In the light of this, choosing Malaysia and Indonesia as case studies is advantageous. Despite the strikingly different outcomes of political Islam, the comparative approach adopted in this study of Malaysia and Indonesia also illustrates comparable conditions. During regime changes, both countries were led by Muslims from nationalist parties. They constantly encountered intense pressure to expand their policy toward adopting religious teachings. The challenges confronting both countries are similar in that the constitution-makers had strike the right balance between religion's role in the public sphere and the secular constitutional mandate. It thus prompted a schism between those who pursue religious state dominance and those who pursue a secular state. The conflict between the two camps continues to increase in intensity over time. Political actors and policymakers continue to be challenged on the question of the proper role of religion in the state, which has implications for the commitment to protect and uphold the right to religious freedom and the challenge of creating inclusive citizenship with a democratic formula.

From the vantage point above, the differing outcomes of the image of religious rigidity and flexibility in both countries following several regime changes have indicated that both ruling regimes or elites have the same political pressure from two camps: those who support and oppose strict religious teachings as public policy choices. To be sure, this will have a practical effect on state policy practice, leading to disputes between majority and minority interests. Hence, it is timely to address the question of why political Islam in Malaysia expresses religious rigidity, whereas political Islam in Indonesia reflects religious flexibility; it will also unravel the confusion as to why political Islam in Malaysia is more confrontative toward democratic values within the framework of a formal democracy whereas Indonesia is more accommodative within the framework of a substantive democracy.

Research Question

As briefly indicated above, this research aims to dissect the causal mechanisms of the political origins of religious rigidity and flexibility. This study seeks to answer **Why is political Islam in Malaysia expressed through religious rigidity, whereas political Islam in Indonesia reflects religious flexibility?**

Objective of Study

This study aims to demonstrate the causal argument of why political Islam in Malaysia expresses religious rigidity, whereas political Islam in Indonesia reflects religious flexibility.

Significance of Study

The findings of this comparative study of Malaysia and Indonesia would have a significant study of theory building and comparative value to be employed in comparable cases that examines the relationship between religion and state in the context of democratic countries with a Muslim majority. Practically, the findings of this study would benefit interest groups concerned with the development of political and civil Islam, which would have a significant impact on social and political outcomes, especially in the Muslim world.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Literature Review

Islamic political thought has been elaborated in various works by Muslims and non-Muslim scholars, particularly studies revolving around various aspects of Islamic radicalism and the concept of religious fundamentalism such as the "Islamic state," "Islamic party," and "sharia imposition," which are constantly being studied and debated. My approach to understanding political Islam, however, referred to in this paper, differs from Roy's thesis (Roy, 1994) on "the failure of political Islam" because Islamists are considered incapable of implementing strategies to govern and articulate a detailed political vision. Roy's mode of thinking puts political Islam, or Islamism, in the case of the failure of transnational Islam, cutting the boundaries with the Islamic ummah,' yet to achieve significant results. According to Roy, the "neo-fundamentalist enterprise" relies heavily on enforcing personal and traditional Islamic criminal laws, which causes political Islam to fail. Furthermore, it somewhat differs from Giles Kepel's (2002) so-called political Islam by tracing the track record of violence and bloodshed in the history of Muslim politics, which contradicts what is purportedly humanitarian. As such, the term "political Islam," taken from the intellectual perspective of the "French school," is more trained in the heart of Islamism in the Middle East and Central Asia.

By contrast, Jocelyne Cesari's decisive work (2018) has rightly described "that political Islam is not all about religious fundamentalism." Instead, the author contends that "political Islam in Muslim-majority countries, including Senegal and Indonesia, is the process of interaction between religious and secular actors and institutions as the core of political mobilization in the name of Islam to share a national modern understanding." For Cesari, political Islam is a set of multiform political identities in which political elites use religion to consolidate, organize, and discipline citizens. The focus is that political Islam is understood in the context of nation-building rather than theological or ideological centrality. Accordingly, in this paper, instead of asserting that political Islam, in general, has failed, I contend that Malaysian and Indonesian case studies can illustrate different types of political Islam that have a coherent political vision to shape national/modern understandings and have been able to engage in the political struggle in democracies, in which it could lead to consequences of the differential outcome of political Islam: rigidity and flexibility.

My observations in Southeast Asia, specifically in Malaysia and Indonesia, have presented an interesting manifestations of social life and the development of non-violent and peaceful political Islam in Muslim countries. As demonstrated by Eickelmen and Piscatori (2018), Muslim politics cannot be categorized as a monolithic or homogeneous phenomenon. Therefore, to fully comprehend the development of political Islam, it is imperative to consider the diverse historical, social, and cultural contexts that shape it. It is indivisible from how Muslim politics has taken on different forms, ranging from conservative and radical to reformist and liberal, which are then expressed primarily through political parties and civil society organizations in democratic societies. By recognizing the multifaceted nature of Muslim politics, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the development of political Islam, particularly in Malaysia and Indonesia. Hence, in more depth, it is necessary to explain how the development of political Islam in the two Muslim countries has also led to different embodiments of socioreligious life and the political dimensions of Islam in Muslim countries with a democratic system.

What then, explains the contrasting outcome in political Islam between Malaysia and Indonesia in terms of religious rigidity or flexibility? Existing theories do not offer viable alternative explanations or persuasive ones to address the question. First, religious constitutional forms cannot be placed as a causal variable to explain why Malaysia has become more rigid in religion while Indonesia has become more flexible. Why do we not merely consider the forms of the religious constitution only as a dependent variable, which is the outcome of the political struggle between two camps: those who pursue a secular state and those who uphold religious dominance in the state? Making the constitution's existence an independent variable is difficult to accept since its existence may be changed at any time by the various interests of the political elites. Even some scientists, like Howard (1991), assess the Constitution as nothing more than a worthless piece of paper. Moreover, Sartori (1962) argues that the constitution inevitably contains some ambiguities, where guarantees of rights considered necessary for citizens in the constitution have been ignored—the same as no constitution at all. Likewise, such arguments become a necessity, as happened in the Malaysian constitution.

In Malaysia, as a democratic country with a Muslim majority, by considering constitutional forms, Islam's position as the religion allied with Malaysia's federal state does not imply that Malaysia will adhere to Islamic principles and systems, but rather it would initially follow the Indonesian and Egyptian model of secularism, as a political commitment to ‘Reid Commission’ (Suffian et al., 1978). Furthermore, it should be noted that the Malaysian Constitution guarantees religious freedom as a fundamental right (Ali, 2019).

However, in practice, it is very complex and leaves many contradictions in ideas and systems between Islam and citizenship; problems between Islam and constitutionalism; political difficulty; and intellectual confusion (see Mohamad, 2017; Shah, 2017; Adil, 2007; Harding, 2002). This is affirmed by Shah's study (2017) titled *Constitutions, Religion, and Politics in Asia: Malaysia, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka*, which states that the supremacy of law may be weakened if the intense politicization of religion endures. The constitutional commitment to protect religious freedom may be ignored. It may become an existential threat or have unfavorable effects on protecting the right to practice an individual's religion.

In light of this tension, Islamization endeavors are proceeding, influencing the extent to which Islamic doctrines can be enforced in the public sphere, whether rigidly or flexibly. After several critical junctures, the Malaysian government legalized Islamic law in national legislation to solve Islamic disputes performed by a religious court. On the other hand, as in Malaysia, Indonesia, which has a secular constitutional model, also recognizes Islamic laws as national legal laws and has a religious court dedicated to Muslims.[6] However, why does Indonesia not legalize Sharia criminal offenses and become rigid in adopting Islamic criminal law values amid Islamist demands as in Malaysia? Indonesia actually has the capability of implementing such criminal offenses and operating morality police through the power of the government by utilizing state coercion if they want to – while ignoring the constitutional commitment to protect religious freedom. Thus, the state constitution formation in both countries cannot constrain, give a reason, or has no bearing to explain religious rigidity and flexibility in terms of political Islam.

Second, an alternative explanation commonly used by political scholars is that the regime or elites may act to garner political legitimacy or gain electoral support from religious-based voters because of visible issues that are able to threaten it or their power. Therefore, these issues may also illustrate the conditions of rigidity and flexibility in religion in the two countries. Indeed, in most cases, politicians will choose the most accessible alternative for the majority by politicizing existing ideas, cultural, and social structural conditions rather than taking opposing actions that can potentially place their power at risk. A study by Hamayotsu (2012), for example, has examined the enforcement of Sharia law by countries with secular regimes, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, which emphasize secular political interests in the face of doctrinal debates among Ulama. The author describes how the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and the ruling regime pursued the

[6] See Barlinti (2011) on similarity and differentiation of the existence of Islamic law in Malaysia and Indonesia.

enforcement of the apostasy prohibition only to satisfy Muslims and alleviate existing political pressures promoted by Partai Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS). However, the UMNO, particularly the prime minister, prefers not to literally enforce it due to the UMNO's concern for urban non-Muslim constituencies, such as the ethnic Chinese in particular. Moreover, based on his observations, this has also happened in Indonesia with various Sharia regional regulations emerging to attract the constituencies regardless of the absence of criminalization in the regulation. Moreover, Liow's study (2004) also shows how the politicization of Islam carried out by the UMNO and PAS has played a key role in the Islamization process, which has had an impact on the intensity of the Islamization and Islamic policies, especially under Mahathir Mohamad's regime over 22 years.

Existing studies, nevertheless, merely focused on the weaknesses of the ruling regime in imposing policies to garner political legitimacy or gain electoral support while ignoring the regime's efforts and strategies, which have coercive power to pursue other policy options. It thoroughly disregards the condition of civil society movements, as in Indonesia, which should have had the power to control political elites and political party actions to enhance institutional performance without politicizing Islam. More importantly, those studies only focused on the process of Islamization in some specific cases, in which they cannot comprehensively address the object of study to be discussed, that is, the political origins of religious rigidity in Malaysia and religious flexibility in Indonesia.

In addition, an interesting quantitative study by Hansen and Ryder (2016) has examined the relationship between intrinsic religiosity, coalitional rigidity, and intergroup hostility. The authors found a positive relationship outcome that rigidity in religion (the attitude of superiority of norms and exclusive religious beliefs to one's own group) and hostility. Meanwhile, there is a negative relationship between intrinsic religiosity (inwardly held religious devotion) and hostility. Unfortunately, this study did not explain why some individuals embrace religion rigidly while others embrace it inwardly or flexibly to avoid hostility.

Given the limitations of these studies, we can see that the different types of political Islam in Malaysia and Indonesia are caused neither by the religious constitutional form nor by mere political competitiveness between political parties. I show that the political origins of religious rigidity or flexibility should be traced to the political strategy of the Muslim elites, coalition constraints, personal preferences, and social networks in civic society. Rigidity is actually a product of conflict between domestic groups organized into two camps: those who support and those who oppose state-sponsored religious doctrines to be implemented

in society – which leads to explanations of why supporters are winning the rigid Islamic political struggle in Malaysia, whereas, in Indonesia, they are not. As such, extensive research will be required to explain further why political Islam in Malaysia expresses religious rigidity, whereas political Islam in Indonesia reflects religious flexibility. Nevertheless, the specific underpinnings rest in the illustration of under what conditions a democratic country commits violations of individual rights than other countries. Hence, the empirical evidence, which I will discuss in this thesis, reveals there are several causal factors under which these differences occur.

Theoretical Framework

I follow a procedural and minimalist definition of democracy, with a competitive election and mass participation serving as the primary benchmarks (Mazzuca & Munck, 2014; see also Boix et al., 2013; Schumpeter, [1947] 2013; Dahl, 1971).[7] The dynamics of the institutional set-up, in which electoral competition embodied in the political party system forms the relative power between the ruling party and the opposition, must be explored. The difference in the dynamics of intense political rivalry between political parties becomes an important aspect to investigate in the cases of Malaysia and Indonesia, where Islamic parties color electoral contestation because this can determine how the personal religious principles are politically expressed (Fealy, 2005). This is very plausible, considering religious parties have served as essential agencies of political mobilization, and religiosity will not, by itself, lead to ideals of more overtly Islamic politics[8]. In other words, the more intense the political rivalry between political parties in chasing Muslim voters, the more intense the politicization of Islam and policies based on religion will be publicly enacted to gain political legitimacy—and vice versa. This may help to explain why Malaysia is inclined toward rigid political Islam, whereas Indonesia tends toward flexible political Islam. However, it does not imply that the different dynamics of intense political rivalry between such political parties are the most potent influence on the rigidity of political Islam; we can rely on these dynamics as the only variable, which can explain why the state tends to express religious rigidity whereas others reflect flexibility.

In the structural approach, the social structure-oriented theoretical tradition, typically studied through the lens of civic society, also significantly influences the state's position or the preferences of political elites when executing their political strategy. The term "social

[7] Freedom House categorizes Malaysia and Indonesia as "partly free" countries in its democratic index.

[8] When I speak 'Islamic politics', I focus on the thoughts and actions of Islamic political movements, not on Muslim politics as a whole.

capital", defined by Robert Putnam (1994), will be fruitful for this study case. Using Putnam's definition taken from political science literature on civic society, I will focus on social capital, precisely the level of trust, norms, and networks in society, as a solution to overcome the problem of collective action. Putnam (1994) describes the "civic community" as an association with active participation in public affairs, strong associational life, reciprocal horizontal relations and cooperation, and mutual trust.

In this respect, to anticipate the various dimensions of social capital, Putnam (2000, p. 22–24) also explained how social capital can behave in a "bridging" and "bonding" role, with "bridging" (or inclusivity) referring to outward-looking connections and networks from various types of people and "bonding" (or exclusivity) referring to inward-looking networks, yielding homogeneous groups from different types of people together to solidify or reinforce their exclusive identities, such as ethnic fraternal organizations. Another essential dimension of social capital is "linking" civic relationships, in which this third type of social capital is necessary to capture the power dynamics of vertical associations. Linking social capital involves social connections that portray a relationship of respect and a network of trust between different social positions or powers. For example, relationships between community-based organizations and authorities, governments, or other funders enable them to access power resources to avoid adverse outcomes.[9] By this specification, it will be advantageous to make comparisons between Indonesia and Malaysia, which have plural societies, given that both countries share a certain amount of historical heritage (Buddhism and Hinduism, late Islamization, and syncretization tendencies). Moreover, since post-independence, both countries have shared comparable characteristics, and collective actors play a distinct role and form a unique constellation at the national level.

In most cases, popular policy prescriptions based on religion are regularly debated by those who oppose and those who support the religious policy, organized through collective actions in society. Many scholars also consider that both camps have specific aims and strategies for promoting or preventing the politicization of Islam.[10] Therefore, civil societies along with actors with interests, design strategies, and set goals that differ from state actors are very visible in countries with vigorous political party struggles. As such, in the context of this study, the political origins of religious rigidity or flexibility can be influenced by the involvement of "civic society" and political actors. This is extremely

[9] See Claridge (2018) on the functions of social capital – bonding, bridging, and linking.

[10] See Eickelman & Piscatori (2018), Hamayotsu (2002), Esposito & Voll (1996) on exclusivist and inclusivist strategies of politicians. See also Ashour & Ünlücayakı 2006, on preventing the politicization of Islam in Algeria and Turkey in defending a secular country identity with military force.

beneficial since the strength or weakness of the civic society will affect how political actors behave. As is demonstrated by the study conducted by Embong (2007) in developing the term "democracy" in both senses: formal and substantive. Formal democracy refers to institutional democracy, that is, the institutional set-up to facilitate state leaders fighting for power through their respective political parties. Meanwhile, substantive democracy is a participatory form of democracy, which not only aims to attain state power through a parliamentary system but rather provides space for civil society, NGOs, community-based organizations, grassroots communities, and various interest groups to influence state power and engage in policy-making processes at various levels with access to equal opportunities, regardless of minority identities such as ethnicity, gender, and religion, etcetera.

This paper will utilize the above-described and selected theoretical framework to study the dissemination of contemporary political Islam in Malaysia and Indonesia in terms of rigidity or flexibility. Extensive research will be conducted to dissect how social capital conditions under political rivalry between political parties chasing Muslim voters may impact the tendency of political Islam towards rigidity or flexibility.

Argument and Hypotheses

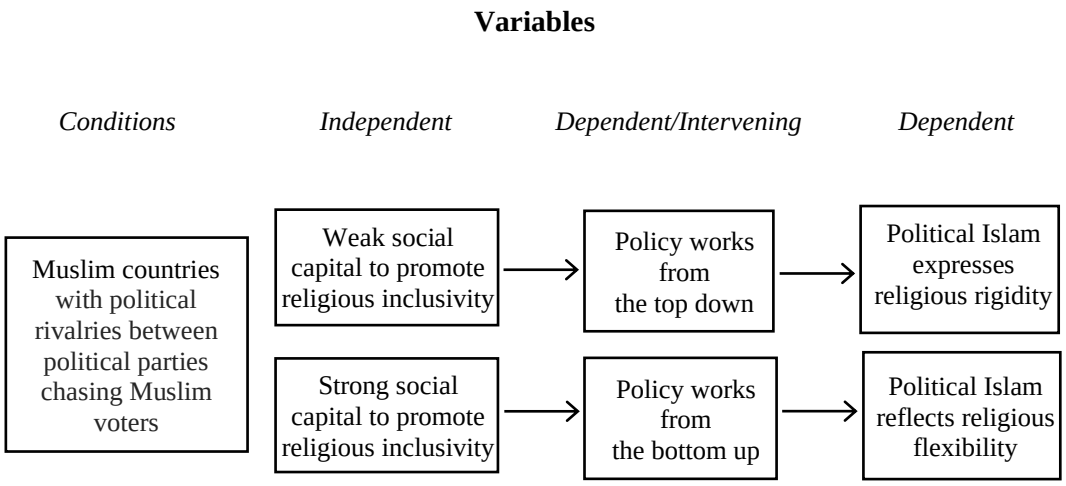
In this thesis, I argue that the divergent power of social capital to promote religious inclusivity results in either political Islam expressing religious rigidity or reflecting religious flexibility in Muslim countries with a democratic system. By social capital to promote religious inclusivity, this means groups or actors who hold a bridging role, such as group movements that voice civil rights.

My argument emphasizes the interaction between two variables: political rivalry between political parties chasing Muslim voters and social capital to promote religious inclusivity. I argue that intense political rivalry between such parties is inadequate in explaining that political Islam in a democracy will express religious rigidity. The interaction variable will show that the impact of one particular independent variable (political rivalry between political parties chasing Muslim voters) is insufficient to explain the outcome (dependent variable) depending on the changing levels of another independent variable (social capital to promote religious inclusivity). In this case, the impact of intense political rivalry between such political parties will have a positive effect on the dependent variable in line with the varying levels of strong or weak social capital to promote religious inclusivity. In other words, my argument implies that intense political rivalry between political parties chasing Muslim voters can lead to religious rigidity in political Islam only when social capital to promote religious inclusivity is weak. By contrast, intense political rivalry between such

parties can result in religious flexibility only when the social capital to promote religious inclusivity is strong.

In this point, the process of policy formulation will be an intervening variable in this study, in which it follows an independent variable (power of social capital to promote religious inclusivity) but precedes the dependent variable (political Islam expresses religious rigidity or reflects religious flexibility) in a causal sequence. It is understood that weak social capital gives rise to a strong state, with a greater tendency to enact policy with top-down approaches. Weak social capital to promote religious inclusivity will make the elite feel threatened by various groups demanding them to implement rigid religious policies. This will then influence political actors to act arbitrarily in deciding policies related to religious doctrine to garner the political legitimacy of Muslim constituencies within the concept of formal democracy. Conversely, strong social capital leads to a weak state, relying more on policy formulation to work from the bottom up.[11] With strong social capital to promote religious inclusivity, political actors will be limited and influenced to act prudently in deciding on religion-based policies in the framework of a substantive democracy. Here, I depict my argument in Figure 1 to represent the causal relationships.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework for Explaining Variation in Political Islam Outcomes



[11] See Migdal (1988) on *"strong societies and weak states: state-society relations and state capabilities in the Third World."*

Following this logic, my hypotheses regarding political Islam in Muslim countries with a democratic system are as follows:

H1: Weak social capital to promote religious inclusivity prompts Muslim political elites to adopt rigid political Islam, causing a Muslim country with a democratic system to express religious rigidity. Specifically, reactionary religious rigidity is growing in Malaysian politics since Muslim political elites focus on handling potential threats by enforcing top-down policies based on a particular religion exclusively to gain religious legitimacy.

H2: Strong social capital to promote religious inclusivity stimulates Muslim political elites to adopt flexible political Islam, which causes a Muslim country with a democratic system to reflect religious flexibility. In particular, reactionary religious flexibility is growing in Indonesia because Muslim political elites have societal preferences to prioritize democratic consolidation to create equal conditions for citizens in diverse societies with a democratic formula.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Method and Case Selection

I apply a comparative case analysis in this study by comparing Malaysia and Indonesia. A qualitative method is employed to interpret phenomena by exploring a variety of empirical material-case studies using a thick approach in national-level analysis (see Coppedge, 2012, p. 14–23). A case study is chosen since it allows for investigating the causal mechanism in more detail. The choice of selecting Indonesia and Malaysia for comparison uses controlled variables in the case studies as a technique to "select cases for analysis that exhibit contrasting outcomes despite their many otherwise similar characteristics" (Slater & Ziblatt, 2013). It is in line with what I show in Figure 2 that despite Malaysia and Indonesia having many similar characteristics, both countries have different outcomes regarding the political image of religious rigidity and religious flexibility.

Table 2. Similarities and crucial differences in the method of difference.

Malaysia		Indonesia	
(C^1)	Democratic country with political parties chasing competitive Muslim votes.	(C^1)	Democratic country with political parties chasing competitive Muslim votes.
(C^2)	Has the spirit of secular constitutional mandate to various degrees.	(C^2)	Has the spirit of secular constitutional mandate to various degrees.
(C^3)	Has experience dealing with popular Islamist mobilization.	(C^3)	Has experience dealing with popular Islamist mobilization.
(C^4)	Government legalized Islamic law in national legislation to solve Islamic disputes, performed by a religious court.	(C^4)	Government legalized Islamic law in national legislation to solve Islamic disputes, performed by a religious court.
(C^5)	Previous regime was authoritarian.	(C^5)	Previous regime was authoritarian.
(X)	Weak social capital to promote religious inclusivity.	(X)	Strong social capital to promote religious inclusivity.
(Y)	Political Islam expresses religious rigidity	(Y)	Political Islam reflects religious flexibility

Methodologically, I use Mill's method of difference to compare selected periods in the history of Islamic political struggle in Malaysia with selected periods in the history of political struggle in Indonesia, in which explicating the selected cases has in common with finding dissimilarities in the independent variables that potentially result in different outcomes (see Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003; Collier, 1991, p. 23–24; Skocpol & Somers, 1980; Lijphart, 1971). To address the issue of biased conclusions, I employ the method of difference with process tracing to identify the causal mechanism chain between independent and dependent variables to derive or test alternative explanations of selected cases for theory-building. Advantageously, process tracing allows the researcher to shed light on causal mechanisms by examining historical narratives broken down into smaller periods. The researcher can then analyze how the sequence of events lead to different outcomes in the two cases (see Beach & Pedersen, 2019; George & Bennett, 2005, p. 205–232). This study also employs the methodological tool "path dependence" to observe ideational, cultural, and social structural factors during critical junctures and legacy in history (Mahoney, 2001, p. 4–11; Pierson, 2000).

In this regard, to research the historical origins of religious rigidity in Malaysian political Islam, I divide it into three periods to trace how the variable works: First, the period of 1969–1981, which was marked by the rise of the Islamist movement and the development of a current of thought that wanted to base the entire order of social, economic, legal, and political life on Islamic teachings exclusively in Malaysia. Second, during Mahathir's regime as prime minister (1980–2003), and an examination of why the government and UMNO party attempted to convince the Malaysian people and Muslims that they were seriously concerned with supporting the role of Islam and Islamization policies such as revising the national legal system to be more aligned with Islamic law. Thirdly, the post-Mahathir era, which resulted in further debate about the expression of religious rigidity by the state. I explore how Islamic politics evolved during the Abdullah Badawi administration (2003–2009), Najib Razak's administration (2013–2018), and subsequent Malaysian prime ministers. Meanwhile, in the second case, I examine the religious flexibility in Indonesian political Islam to test how the variable works. Here, I also divide it into three periods: First, I trace from the Soeharto regime, known as restriction (1967–1989), accommodation (1990–1993), and co-optation (1994–1998) of Islamic political movements. Second, after the downfall of the New Order regime in 1998 (the Reform Era), becoming momentum for liberty and democracy, which also reignited debate over the Jakarta Charter and the position of Sharia. During this phase, political Islam was able to engage in political struggle for the

first time after 32 years of being silenced under the Soeharto regime. Thirdly, I explore the evolution of political Islam under Jokowi's administration to the present.

Data collection relied on secondary sources, such as previous studies, newspapers, and documentation, that enabled an empirical study of the topic. To my good fortune, many scholars in political science, anthropology, sociology, and history have conducted extensive research on the two countries I analyze. However, I also conduct in-depth, semistructured interviews with a number of relevant informants in Malaysia and Indonesia to clarify and uncover limited secondary data sources to delineate political situations from the historical past to the present.

For data analysis, I use *narrative analysis* since it supports the comparative historical analysis, which involves crucial data that is not only related to the context of the study but also closely related to the time, place, and characteristics of the admirably thick and well-grounded explanation expected. *Narrative analysis* is a qualitative research tool that can be fruitful in uncovering the behaviors, feelings, and motivations of the subjects of study that are not explicitly disclosed. Since narrative analysis is able to reveal each of the political actions and reactions sensibly, it supported me to derive valid causal inference from the questions regarding the contrasting forms of political Islam in the two countries.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. A STUDY CASE OF MALAYSIA

Malaysia (1970 – 1980)

The Islamist resurgence has been in the limelight since the 1970s, denouncing the social order of colonialism (as the cause of backward Muslims), capitalism, and the West. Islamist resurgences have threatened the existence of secular Muslim leaders in most Muslim-majority countries. In Malaysia, the aftermath of the May 1969 general election, followed by the ethnic riots tragedy on May 13, 1969, led to significant political and social changes during the 1970s and 1980s, including the rise of rigid political Islam. The Islamic party, Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS), emerged as a significant political Islamic force, advocating for the establishment of an Islamic state and implementing Sharia law (Muhammad, 1994). Moreover, the upsurge of Islamists in Malaysia was also driven by solid grassroots *da'wah*-based (Islamic preaching) Islamist organizations spouting religious fundamentalism, such as Jema'ah Tabligh and Darul Arqam, with calls for a return to the Qur'an and Hadith (see Bakar, 1981).

On the other hand, the political behavior of UMNO leaders, which was initially secular in orientation and promoted Malay nationalism, often confronted strong criticism from Islamist groups due to the lack of Islamic elements in government policies. Such strong criticism was one of the driving forces behind Tunku Abdurrahman's resignation as prime minister on Sept. 22, 1970, as a secular-nationalist politician. In this situation, the ruling regime expressed concern about the emergence of Islamist group movements in the 1970s. Most of these movements spread through various *da'wah* groups at reputed universities in Malaysia and propagated throughout society (Anwar, 1987). In 1971, the establishment of the Muslim youth oganization, Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), further contributed to the rise of Islamic politics in Malaysia and the entry of the transnational Islamic movement (Ikhwanul Muslimin) among the Malay younger generations as a forum for educated graduates from universities and colleagues who were active in preaching graduate students from within and outside the country. They aspired to uphold the ideals of sharia and the demands of breeding Islamic education (Bakar, 1981).

Islamist activist groups, which emerged in organizations such as ABIM, Darul Arqam, and Jema'ah Tabligh, questioned the position of the UMNO and PAS in their Islamist stances

in the 1970s (Noor, 2014, p. 78–80). Considering the UMNO was a multiethnic alliance coalition that provides concessions to non-Malay political partners, ideologically, the UMNO held the highest alliance position – but not the original bargaining power. Consequently, the UMNO often faced pressure from PAS, where PAS was able to take a more militant stance without compromising its position than the UMNO in defending Malay interests, especially Malay Muslims (see Funston, 1980).

In the early 1970s, as a result of this tension, Malaysia became mired in ethnic politicization, facilitated by PAS and the UMNO, in which Islam turned into an integral part of Malaysia's dense identity politics. Both parties' leaders engaged in intense mutual criticism, using Islamist condemnation of "infidel/un-Islamic" governments. It set the scene for PAS' political resurgence, largely fuelled by growing discontent among conservative Malay Muslims with the ruling UMNO party, which was seen as too secular and Western-oriented. The UMNO-led government viewed PAS as a threat to national unity and stability. This pressure was seen in the government's efforts to formulate and introduce *Rukunnegara* (Malaysia's national ideology equivalent of Pancasila in Indonesia) to foster a sense of national identity, instilled among schoolchildren as a guideline to solve the problem of unity between different ethnic and religious groups and to make Malay the official language of the country. After the resignation of Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, the new government under Tun Abdul Razak increasingly introduced government agendas as strategies and mechanisms for conflict resolution to strengthen Malay dominance in politics and the economy. This was done through a 'politicking' strategy, one way being was through thee introduction of new laws, with the Sedition Act introduced in 1971 to prevent sensitive issues that gave Malay-Muslim a particular position on religion and so on, as well as the introduction of state affirmative-action policies and strategies through the New Economic Policy (NEP), aimed to reduce and eradicate poverty, and the expansion of education for Malays to redress economic imbalances along ethnic lines.[12]

In these circumstances, such changes were initiated by the UMNO leader, while Malay issues were also at the center of PAS's political agenda. In 1974, the UMNO and PAS eventually found a point of convergence and allied, with PAS claiming to be "helping the Islamic cause" under the UMNO leadership.[13] Concurrently, *da'wah* activities significantly

[12] See Embong (2007, p. 144-149) on three conflict resolution strategies and mechanisms in Malaysia (nation-building ideology, politicking strategy, and NEP policy implementation) after the bloody riots on May 13.

[13] The UMNO-PAS governing coalition has had consequences on the growth of Malaysia's Islamic bureaucracy, with the inclusion of PAS leaders and members in various government organizations and a significant process of Islamization. This was done by the proliferation of religious study groups, the expansion of mosque congregation sizes, the ubiquity of Islamic greetings and halal food, a heightened interest in Islamic dress, and

influenced the understanding of orthodox Islam in the Selangor area and several newly formed Federal Territories (Bakar, 1981, p. 1043). Indeed, PAS' clarion call for an Islamic and sharia-based state has also been challenged by other segments of Malaysian society, particularly non-Muslims and liberal Muslims. Still, this has been unable to stem the growing power and popularity of PAS, especially the support from rural Malays who felt marginalized due to the rapid modernization and urbanization of Malaysia, such as in the northern states of Kelantan and Terengganu, where PAS controlled the state government. However, during this period, PAS under Asri Muda was more concerned with substantive Malay nationalism than doctrinal Islamism, which faced resistance within the party as it was perceived to be detrimental to PAS's interests. By the late 1970s, internal conflicts within PAS led to the dissolution of the UMNO-PAS alliances (Liow, 2009, p. 30–33).

In this period, the escalation of conflict between Muslim fundamentalist groups such as ABIM, Darul Arqam, Jema'ah Tabligh, and PAS, which sought to establish a strict theocratic state, and Malay secularists who opposed their conservative interpretation of Islamic texts became more serious (Bakar, 1981, p. 1045; see also Anwar, 1987, p. 17). Yet PAS suffered a crushing defeat in the 1978 election due to internal party conflicts and left the Barisan Nasional coalition.[14] Since then, PAS embarked on fundamental party reform initiatives that led to the establishment of its radical Islamist political platform (see Liow, 2009, p. 33). Various intense political consolidation activities have given rise to a new generation of influential leaders, such as Yusof Rawa, Asri Muda's deputy, as the next generation of PAS leadership. Rawa significantly contributed to the perfect religious residency in PAS. This was also exploited and encouraged by Young Turk figures in PAS, a team of prominent and inspired Islamists, such as Abdul Hadi Awang, Fadzil Noor, Subky Latif, Mustapha Ali, Nakhaie Ahmad, and Yahya Othman, who dedicated themselves to Islam and were unhappy with the way Islam was subject to Malay culture and nationalism. They believed they were capable of spreading the message effectively through PAS and, for the most part, openly sought leadership positions at the 1978 PAS Congress (see Muhammad, 1994, p. 182; Abdullah, 2003, p. 141; Noor, 2004, p. 337). Consequently, the Young Turks led to Islamist romanticism in PAS's political activism while destabilizing PAS' old leadership under Asri Muda.

the intensification of da'wah activities especially on campuses to trigger political action and support from Malaysian students at home and abroad with various regular visits made by PAS and UMNO leaders (Liow 2009, p. 33-34).

[14] Barisan Nasional is an intercommunal coalition but subject to Malay dominance, consisting of several political parties, namely UMNO as the leader, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) representing the respective ethnic Malays, Chinese, Indians, in Malaysia (see Liow, 2014).

Driven by the Islamic upsurge and conscious of its vulnerability, Asri Muda strived to accommodate the Young Turks' voices within PAS, turning PAS more critical of UMNO as its policy surrounding Islam had not fundamentally changed despite the declaration of various Islamic projects. At the time, the government, under the leadership of Hussein Onn, felt threatened by PAS' pressure, which led them to adopt an ambivalent stance while still showing great respect for da'wah efforts and devoting increasing attention to Islamic projects. Hence, the concept of state-building became increasingly steeped in religious considerations. The Trade and Industry Minister Dr. Mahathir began to face difficulties in attracting foreign investors as Malaysia faced challenges from religious groups and investments based on sharia. Non-Malays were unhappy with the new Islamic trend during this time but rarely expressed their concerns overtly. Until the outbreak of the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, Asri Muda tried to equate his party's struggle with that of Ayatollah Khomeini to convince the Malay masses, who shared PAS's Islamic character. They benefited greatly from this movement, while the government became more paranoid about the popularity of fundamentalists (Bakar, 1981, p. 1050–58).

Malaysia (1980-2003)

The Islamic revival continued to gain momentum during the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. This historic moment inspired PAS leaders, especially those who wanted to shift the party onto a religious path. Regardless of whether the phenomenon was part of the Shi'a movement,[15] the underlying similarity was that they aspired to apply the so-called sovereignty of God to all aspects of life and challenge American domination (see Rawa, 2000). By 1981, Yusof Rawa had been elected deputy president of the party, defeating Abu Bakar Umar (an ally of Asri Muda). It was also driven by the spirit of the Young Turks within the party, making PAS launch an increasingly more targeted and radical Islamist agenda.

With the strength of this new direction, Young Turks gained stronger influence within the party and, in 1982, overthrew the more nationalist Asri Muda leadership, replacing it Yusof Rawa, the first ulama to occupy the party presidency. Under the leadership of the Ulama faction, the most significant policy was the establishment of the Majlis Syura Ulama (Ulama Consultative Council), which became the center of policy formulation for the party (Liow, 2009, p. 35; Embong, 2007, p. 163–166). PAS thus emerged as a formidable opposition party by advocating for revolutionary and Islamist-conservative change in

[15] Islam in Malaysia is represented by the Shafi'i school of Sunni theology and jurisprudence.

Malaysia's leadership. It proposed that a struggle akin to the Iranian revolution should be undertaken within Malaysia (see Noor, 2014, p. 124–133; Mohamed, 1991, 15-17). The concept of Ulema leadership promoted by PAS inspired and was well accepted by student groups in many universities that simultaneously encouraged the establishment of an Islamic Republic led by the Ulema in PAS, imitating the Iranian model and rejecting the "secular" UMNO government (see Anwar, 1987, p. 34–36).

Hadi Awang became the ideological leader and initiated statements that the Malaysian constitution was nonreligious and demanded an Islamic state with the Qur'an and Hadith as the state constitution. Furthermore, PAS became increasingly vocal that the UMNO was an infidel party and urged the implementation of *Hudud* law as the Muslim penal code. In the 1980s, public discussions and seminars on Islamic law and commitment to its implementation were in progress, encouraged by the obsessive focus of Islamic figures on *Hudud* laws as criminal law.[16] Their aim to establish Islamic law was motivated by the belief that Malaysia's legal system was based on British heritage law. Furthermore, several Islamic figures believe the law was a human invention, incompatible with Islamic law, and incapable of resolving people's problems. (Anwar, 2023).

The rise of PAS under Rawa's leadership increased the traditional political base among rural Malays and urban professionals who could challenge the UMNO's dominance (Mutalib, 1990). This shift was also driven by Malay Muslims' rapidly enhanced self-awareness of Islam amid Islamic politicization, which recognizes Islam as a "way of life" in both the private and public realm (see Nagata, 1984; Hamid, 1999). PAS further condemned the UMNO's Islamization program saying it had been corrupted by Western global capitalists as a vicious circle and was controlled by a handful of people who pretended to implement the Islamization program (Noor, 2014, p. 113). Hadi Awang and other radical leaders in PAS were beginning to feel open to making controversial accusations against UMNO leaders who were in coalition with non-Muslim parties, especially the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), as hypocrites and infidels, and they called for aggressive Jihad statements against the UMNO leadership for failing to enforce the *Hudud* law (Noor, 2014, p. 131–32).[17]

In light of this tension, the UMNO's reaction to the changing landscape of Malaysian politics and society was to aggressively pursue an Islamic agenda to gain political

[16] See the works such as Abdullah (1986), Zuhdi and Abd (1988), Ibrahim (1978).

[17] See also Liow (2009, p. 37-41) about takfir (labeling a religious person as infidels) and Amanat Haji Hadi calling for radical Islamic Jihad against the UMNO government.

legitimacy. The UMNO General Assembly in September 1982 was the beginning of the Islamization policy launched under Mahathir (Anwar, 2023). Mahathir started to invest heavily in Islamizing the government in line with the demands of Islam in the modern era (Mahathir Mohamad, 1982). Since then, a more Islamicized contest with the misuse of race and religion for political gain has led to rigid political Islam in Malaysia until now. The government and the UMNO attempted to establish their Malay-Islamic mandate while preventing and neutralizing the opposition pressures conducted by PAS (see Esposito and Voll, 1996; Mutalib, 1990, p. 133).

Among the UMNO's responses were the institutionalization of its Islamization policies such as streamlining Islamic administration, aligning Islamic banks with conventional banks, establishing the International Islamic University of Malaysia, the Islamic Teacher Training College, the Malaysian Islamic Development Foundation, the International Islamic Youth Complex, a ban on non-halal beef imports, the promotion of *Qadi* to civic judge level and sharia courts to the level of civil courts,[18] closer relations with Middle Eastern countries, and the establishment of a number of institutions with Islamic credentials, among other responses (Embong, 2007; Mauzy & Milne, 1986).

The 1980s and 1990s saw ongoing "Islamization" on a large scale in Malaysia under Mahathir's strategy of promoting political Islam.[19] Beginning in the 1980s, Mahathir granted the Malaysian Ulama great authority to make religious, social, and political statements (Saat, 2017; Liow, 2009, p.48).[20] Furthermore, to formulating policies to inculcate Islamic values, Mahathir empowered Malaysia's official ulama to determine the parameters of his government by utilizing formal institutions such as the Majlis Ulama (Religious Council) and the National Fatwa Council, state offices of the Mufti.[21] Moreover, to strengthen the credentials and religious legitimacy of the UMNO government, Mahathir also created additional prominent institutions or think tanks, such as the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM/Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia) in 1996 under the previous names of the Islamic Center (Pusat Islam) and the Malaysian Institute for Islamic Understanding (IKIM/Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia) in 1992, and placed religious leaders from the UMNO party in strategic positions rather than calibrate Ulama

[18] Qadi is judges who make decisions based on Islamic law.

[19] Liow, (2009, p. 43) defines Islamization as "the process in which what are perceived as Islamic laws, values and practices are accorded greater significance in state, society, and culture."

[20] Saat (2017) argues that Malaysian official clerics have far-reaching actions and impacts that may influence state official appointments as well as access to other materials and resources for personal material purposes.

[21] Saat (2017) read that this was part of the government's co-optation strategy against clerics under Mahathir's authoritarian regime.

within PAS. This aimed to centralize the power of the UMNO government and weaken the strength of the PAS opposition and religious elites, as well as to prove a "pro-Islamic" UMNO government while modernizing the country without undermining Islamic values (Liow, 2009, p. 47–8).

However, the UMNO's distinctly 'materialistic' and 'secularistic' approach to government was in striking contrast to the PAS platform, which was embedded in the theological and intellectual traditions of reformist Islamic ideas that highlight the absolute intertwining of religion and politics (Liow, 2004, p. 182). In sharp contrast to the UMNO personas, the personas of PAS politicians have a noticeable impact on their public image. PAS politicians' modest and accessible lifestyles were praised and recognized as greatly enhancing the institution's credibility. Concomitantly, PAS' socioeconomic platform of social redistribution and collectivism was viewed favorably compared with the corruption that plagued the UMNO (Hilley, 2001, p. 193). In order to deal with PAS' religiosity, the UMNO appointed Anwar Ibrahim, chairman of ABIM, as deputy prime minister in 1993 to inflate UMNO's Islamic credentials during Mahathir's administration (Nagata, 1984, p. 159).[22]

Nevertheless, amid the density of power within the political rivalry between PAS and the UMNO, Mahathir and the man chosen to deliver his Islamic policies, Anwar Ibrahim, lost control of their Islamic agenda to Islamists within their own bureaucracy, within the opposition, and within society (Anwar, 2023). The Department of Islamic Affairs' role as a moral enforcer was further strengthened in the mid-1990s, while sharia was enacted gradually in each state. It contributed to the implementation of the Quran and Hadith scriptures in the lives of all Muslims, starting with establishing punishments for those who did not attend Friday prayers in the mosque, for drinking alcohol, and for those suspected of *"khalwat,"* (close-proximity) (Esposito and Voll 1996, p. 126).[23] Furthermore, this was against the backdrop of the escalating Islamic politics between the UMNO and PAS over the correct punishment for Muslims who committed apostasy or left Islam (Saravanamuttu, 2009; Liow 2004, p. 64–85). In the center of these tensions, Mahathir stood in the crosshairs between Islamic fundamentalism on the one hand and liberal opponents on the other, both

[22] Anwar Ibrahim had previously been an outspoken critic of the UMNO and had been persuaded to join PAS. Mahathir's successful persuasion of Anwar to join the UMNO in 1982 and the appointment of Anwar Ibrahim as a deputy prime minister in 1993 were strategic consequences of Mahathir strengthening and legitimizing his Islamization project, as Anwar had a broad network of *da'wah* movements and significant support within ABIM. However, most of ABIM disagreed with Anwar and preferred to join PAS (Liow, 2009, p. 47).

[23] See Liow (2004) on investigating the political combative between UMNO and PAS under the Mahathir regime and the challenges in the enforcement of Islamic criminal law.

from within the UMNO elites and the opposition. Mahathir's solution was to continue appeasing Islamic leaders.

Procedural democracy in Malaysia during Mahathir's authoritarian rule often clashed with the ideas of Islamist groups that wanted to implement a Sharia Penal Code to regulate religious practices for citizens with Islamic status. JAKIM's role as an institution that elevated and maintained Islam as the official federal religion in Malaysia also drew criticism from various parties. However, JAKIM remained a key pillar in the implementation of government policies on Islam to strengthen the UMNO's credibility about its "pro-Islamic" government while weakening PAS' political power with its Islamist platform. Though Islamic law was still disputed, many Malaysian Muslims argued that Islamization was incomplete without the perfect enforcement of the *Hudud* law. With the growing pressure on Malaysian society promoted by PAS, Mahathir argued that *Hudud* was impractical in multireligious Malaysia (Liow, 2009, p. 58–60).

Yet, the politicization of Islam constantly resonated, PAS intensified its campaign to introduce *Hudud* law. It then extended the intensity to religious or moral police operations under the Department of Islamic Affairs in Malaysia to arrest Muslims for drinking alcohol, gambling, kissing in public, practicing homosexuality, and committing adultery, which can be adjudicated under the authority of an Islamic judge in a sharia court. Consequently, in 1997, the Morality Police even raided a beauty pageant in modern Kuala Lumpur and arrested two Muslim contestants who were still wearing their formal attire and carrying trophies after winning. They were charged with wearing improper dress and penalized with a fine of US$160. Furthermore, under the broadest interpretation of the sharia penal code regulation, the Morality Police could arrest and charge any Muslim for simply sitting close together in a house or room, as this was sufficient to arouse suspicion of a moral violation. Officers only indicated "close" as the standard to judge whether a spouse was committing *"khalwat"* and that they could be identified as a Muslim through their identity card (Paddock, 2001).

In 1998, Anwar Ibrahim's removal from office as deputy prime minister over allegations of sexual misconduct (sodomy, adultery, and cover-up of evidence of infidelity) and corruption led to a reform movement in Malaysia. Anwar denounced the government for unfounded allegations and insisted on clarifying that he had been pressing for change from within the government that Mahathir could not tolerate. The Anwar factor triggered a massive demonstration movement in Kuala Lumpur on Sept. 20, 1998, calling for Anwar's release, reforms, and the prime minister's resignation, which was largely supported by

Islamist groups that controlled a massive grassroots network. Opposition parties such as PAS and the Democratic Action Party (DAP) also expressed their strong support. Ultimately, this did not stop the arrest of Anwar and several other activists who had close ties to him.[24]

The impact of the Anwar case further strengthened the consolidation of the opposition's influence in pressuring the status quo. Preexisting Islamist groups gained momentum, with one being the Islamic Representative Council (IRC), which later transformed into the Congregation for Islamic Reform (JIM/Jamaah Islah Malaysia) in 1990, formed in 1975 by Malaysian students based in Brighton, the United Kingdom, and grew into a significant force in the mission of reforming Malaysia into an Islamic state by taking a puritanical stance and emphasizing a strict dichotomy between Muslims and "infidels". This group also spread its ideas through formal and informal education to raise the awareness of the Malaysian Muslim community about the reform movement to uphold Islamic principles and values (Liow, 2022, p. 30–33).[25]

At the height of the reform movement, Anwar's followers in ABIM and JIM broke with the incumbent and flocked to PAS to question their beliefs about the Islamic State through the mobilization of *da'wah* (Liow, 2022, p. 61). PAS further enjoyed its growing popularity in the states of Kelantan and Terengganu as a consequence of its stand on the implementation of *Hudud* law. With a staggering performance, PAS won in Terengganu state in the 1999 election and retained control of Kelantan state. [26] In 2001, DAP left the Barisan Altenatif coalition in August 2001 after disagreeing with PAS amid the heated debate on sharia, *Hudud,* and the Islamic State of Malaysia (Saravanamuttu, 2009, p. 88). It was followed by a controversial statement by Mahathir in 2002 that Malaysia was an Islamic State (Tan, 2002). Yet Mahathir appeared to be motivated solely by the desire to appease the conservative constituency, calling for Malaysia to return to the spirit of the essence and substance of Islam as preached in the Qur'an and Hadith rather than the call of ultraconservative ulama who rendered Islamic practice complicated and challenging to implement in the modern era. Unfortunately, Mahathir never provided any approach for the kind of Islam he advocated.

[24] See Ufen (2009); Liow (2022).

[25] See also Omar (2017), Hamid (2009) on the movement of *da'wah*-based Islamist groups that had exclusive views as political power in Malaysia.

[26] See also Funston (2000) in "Status Quo, 'reformation' or Islamization?" for the implications after Mahathir sacked Anwar Ibrahim in the 1999 election in Malaysia.

Post-Mahathir Era (2004–)

After the end of the Mahathir regime, Islamic fundamentalist groups continued to secure Malaysia's status to integrate into an Islamic state model. However, PAS' memorandum on the Islamic State was countered by Abdullah Badawi with his brand of Islam, *"Islam Hadhari"* (Civilizational Islam) promoted through seminars and media with a more tolerant and inclusive approach. This led the UMNO to victory in the 2004 general election, costing PAS control over Terengganu and a narrow defeat in Kelantan.

Nonetheless, *Islam Hadhari*, which was warmly welcomed as a setback to Islamization in Malaysia, was not as successful as expected. Some observers argued that the *Islam Hadhari* platform promoted by Badawi was ambiguous and lacked a clear implementation strategy because the UMNO's and Badawi's approaches to governance frequently contradicted *Islam Hadhari* ideals (see Gatsiounis, 2006, p. 82). In practice, *Islam Hadhari* operated as a top-down phenomenon with a new level of intense exclusivism; merely paying lip service to the protection of minority group rights due to racial content and communalism; giving no sense of democracy and human rights; and remaining silent on pressing issues such as corruption, human rights, and civil liberties. Furthermore, *Islam Hadhari* did not provide a decisive response to the discourse of policing and Islamic practices toward society (Liow, 2009, p. 91–96). Liow (2009) emphasizes that the concept of *Islam Hadhari* was very vague as its underlying principles were derived from classical Islam, thereby exhibiting minimal divergence from PAS' Islamic State document. Meanwhile, PAS had a clearer and more detailed concept of its Islamic State discourse, empowering the *da'wah*-based conservative camp and government officials in their assertive actions to implement the Islamic State discourse for Malaysia. As a result, the discourse on Islamism intensified and caused concern for Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The absence of a clear implementation strategy for *Islam Hadhari* made conflicts relating to the religiosity and piety of Malaysian society as much of a daily challenge as the controversial issue of moral policing. It inadvertently empowered conservative government instruments, such as the Islamic Affairs Department, which existed in each state in Malaysia with authority to operate *Pegawai Penguatkuasa* as the morality police. The morality police, established in Malaysia to uphold religious/sharia standards, grew braver and more brutal. This institution is assigned to arrest Muslims who violate strict sharia that can vary from one state to another, but mostly disallowed by the state institution are close proximity, being LGBT, and apostasy. In one incident in 2005, under Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's regime, the morality police raided a disco in Kuala Lumpur and arrested all the young Muslim men and women dancing there, including a famous pop singer. Prime

Minister Badawi later released them and publicly stated that the incident should not have happened (Otto 2010: 519). In the same month, the morality police's authority was reviewed in response to this incident, but with no apparent result.[27] Meanwhile, the UMNO leadership in Terengganu could not do much to address the issue of PAS-formulated sharia/*Hudud* laws due to the high political cost of potentially losing votes in the next election (Liow, 2009, p. 97).[28]

Following Najib Razak's 2009–2018 tenure, the approach to political Islam did not differ much from that of his predecessor Badawi. After the UMNO lost its two-third parliamentary majority in the 2008 election, Najib introduced the "1Malaysia" narrative, initially intended to unite Malaysians of all races and religions under a single national identity. However, this narrative did not last long due to intense criticism from various Islamist parties over his approach. Najib was even accused of trying to weaken the Malay leadership, causing the UMNO to suffer further defeat in the 2013 elections, although still maintaining the government under the UMNO-led coalition (see Osman & Saleena, 2016; Hamid & Razali, 2015).

The coalition of Malaysia-based pro-democracy opposition parties, spearheaded by PAS and the People's Justice Party (PKR) in the 2008 and 2013 general elections, also evoked a discontented response from the Malay community on the premise that it could erode the special rights of Malays and downgrade the status of Islam.[29] This was due to the emergence of several contemporary Islamist civil society organization movements with the aim of defending the position of Islam in Malaysia and fighting against perceived secular and liberal attacks (Osman & Saleena, 2016, p. 3). The Muslim Solidarity Front of Malaysia (ISMA, Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia), formed in 1997, emerged as an influential Malay-Islamic ethnonationalism right-wing organization in the landscape of fundamentalist Islamic political discourse in Malaysia, which influenced the UMNO after the 2013 election by agitating the Malay public to subscribe to the upholding of Islamic principles

[27] See reporting facts and details on Islamic Law in Malaysia relating to the rules of religious moral law (Hays, n.d.).

[28] It is known that Sharia Law, including those governing morality issues applied throughout the country, is applied with different penalties. Terengganu and Kelantan have applied more extreme penalties since the Islamic Affairs Department was given more powers to strengthen sharia law in the 1990s under the Mahathir Regime (see Hays, n.d.).

[29] After PAS suffered defeat in the 2004 elections, the party took a softer approach to the Islamic State movement, hoping to win over non-Malay votes to take control of the government and join a pro-democracy coalition with the PKR. For more details, see Embong (2007, p. 170). Meanwhile, ABIM and JIM activists, (who transformed into Pertubuhan IKRAM Malaysia (IKRAM) and allied with the Amanah party political movement) centered on PAS and the PKR trying to shrink its voice in Malay-Islamic dominance (Liow, 2022, p. 32).

and *Ketuanan Melayu* (Lordship of the Malays) as the basis of Malaysian identity (Liow, 2022, p. 32).

In response to criticism from the pro-democracy opposition coalition, the UMNO attempted to strengthen its Islamic legitimacy by recruiting ulama focused on teaching Salafi interpretations of Islam from the Malaysian Muslim Scholars Association (ILMU, Pertubuhan Ilmuwan Malaysia) beginning 2010. Despite the UMNO's anti-Salafi stance, ulama from ILMU were regarded as helping to strengthen the UMNO's Islamic credibility (Osman, 2014). In the interim, PAS, which suffered defeat in the 2013 elections, left the ranks of the opposition coalition, refusing to accommodate the secular-oriented pro-democracy coalition's call, and reasserted its fundamentalist Islamic primacy by pushing to enact *Hudud* law in Malay Muslim-majority areas (Osman & Saleena, 2016, p. 4).

Against this backdrop, Osman (2014) has thoroughly explained how the rise of influence of state-sponsored ILMU ulama under the UMNO-led government shaped the image of religious rigidity in Malaysian political Islam. ILMU ulama were often invited to give speeches at UMNO meetings across the country and were regularly featured in various print and television media to address religious and political matters. Awareness of the implementation of *hudud, takzir,* and *qisas* laws was further emphasized by ILMU and the UMNO as an integral part of Islam that must be implemented throughout the state in response to PAS' criticism of ILMU's support for the UMNO, which had previously rejected the implementation of the Islamic Criminal Law. Therefore, the status of the ILMU ulama has become increasingly dominant in national politics and religious affairs. Because of this, Najib increasingly lost control over the idea of pluralist political practices in 1Malaysia, and Malay voters became critical of the UMNO. Among the most contentious conflict issues over religious freedom in Malaysia was ILMU's strong opposition to the Shiite ulama in PAS, describing them as "deviant", and their rejection of the use of the name “Allah” in Malay translations of the Bible.

In February 2017, various newspapers in Malaysia reported that the country had become exponentially more conservative and that the reach of hardline religion had risen, encouraged by the *fatwa* (decision of the ulama), which has legal force. One newspaper reported that religious officials brought media during a morality raid operation, recorded the suspects’ faces and personal information, and then broadcast it on national television (Salvá, 2017). Another local newspaper also reported that under the supervision of the Department of Religious Affairs, the Islamic Vice Squad police in Malaysia has been assigned to raid people's houses or hotel rooms and arrest those suspected of *"khalwat,"* or

close proximity, and hundreds of couples had been detained. Muslims who commit adultery can be punished with up to two years in prison (wftv, 2017).

Furthermore, ILMU also launched a campaign against the LGBT community in Malaysia. In response to the sensitivity of LGBT issues, beginning 2012, the Najib administration was vocal in its oppression of LGBT rights, liberalism, and pluralism in Malaysia, deeming it a ″deviant culture″ (Malaysiakini, 2012; Malaysia Today, 2012). He was homophobic toward LGBT people and used the sodomy laws to imprison his political opponent, Anwar Ibrahim. At the same time, the government stated that it would crack down on or criminalize LGBT people under sharia applied at both federal and state levels for political gain (see Ellis-Petersen et al., 2018). Meanwhile, ISMA consistently responded to political developments in Malaysia with provocative pro-Malay rights discourse to counter the secular liberalism promoted by the pro-democracy opposition coalition. Until the 2018 Malaysian elections, ISMA's influence became a decisive focus of UMNO politics amid the country's debt-ridden political crisis and Najib's corruption case over the 1MDB (1Malaysia Development Berhad) state fund. Najib used ISMA's political rhetoric to dismiss criticism from the opposition and pro-democracy civil society groups amid the Malaysian public's trust deficit toward the UMNO (Anwar, 2023; Osman & Saleena, 2016, p. 4).

On the opposite side, some Islamic civil society organizations sought to limit Islam's role in Islamic politics in Malaysia (Osman & Saleena, 2016, p. 5). The Group of 25 (G25) emerged as the only Islamic civil society organization that played a constructive role in raising the voice of Islamic moderation and advocates the importance of change and reform in the country's law-and-order institutions. The G25 still acknowledges that Islam is the official religion of the Malaysian federal government. Nevertheless, the group contends that the Malaysian administration must be in line with the constitutional provisions regarding the role of Islam. These provisions are designed to guarantee all Malaysian citizens' fundamental rights, including the freedom of expression and worship, and to ensure justice for Muslims and non-Muslims for the peace and stability of Malaysia. The G25 often voices the polemic of the implementation of sharia in Malaysia, one of which is to review the "*khalwat"* law in Malaysia, and is seen to be forging closer ties with pro-democracy opposition parties in Malaysia. In line with this, the G25 also joined a number of political reform organization movements, such as the *"Bersih"* (clean) political movements (Osman & Saleena, 2016, p. 5–6).

Given the G25's propensity, the group frequently receives criticism and condemnation from right-wing Malay nationalist organizations, religious institutions, and other Islamist movements in Malaysia when calling ISMA an extremist and intolerant organization. The G25 was accused of interpreting Islam according to Western constructs and against the true teachings of Islam. It is unsurprising that prime minister Najib Razak refused to meet with the G25, given its limited role. Underlying the group's limited influence is their perceived elitist stance and little effort to increase their outreach to the Muslim masses, in contrast to strong grassroots *da'wah* movements such as ABIM, JIM, IKRAM, and ISMA. As such, it has become unattractive to the UMNO and PAS, which view the G25 as a liberal group that could threaten their Malay-Islamic support base. Despite this, this group has contributed significantly to the public debate on political, social, and religious issues, particularly on a more rational reading of Islamic law (Ariffin, personal communication, July 12, 2023; Yunus, personal communication, May 12, 2023; Osman & Saleena, 2016, p. 6).

In 2018, the G25 group was of great interest to then prime minister Mahathir and deputy prime minister Muhyiddin Yasin, who attempted to gain its support to topple the Najib government. The group also held meetings with several Malay rulers to discuss the reform agenda of implementing Islamic law in the country, which demonstrates the importance of this group (Osman & Saleena, 2016, p. 6). Pakatan Harapan (PH), the opposition coalition, had managed to form a federal government in 2018 amid a widespread crisis in Malaysia. In the latest development, when Mahathir was reelected as Prime Minister for the second time in 2018–2020, he criticized the relevance of the morality police. The government attempted to regulate and limit the harsh and prominent actions of the *Pegawai Penguatkuasa*. Nevertheless, during the government efforts, fundamental Islamic clerics who had great power under the previous government continued to fight back (LACROIX, Kuala Lumpur, 2018).

With the continued politicization of Islam undermining the rule of law in Malaysia, PAS and the UMNO reached an agreement to form the National Muafakat alliance (MN), which filed a racial case against the PH. This resulted in the so-called "Sheraton Step" in February 2020, which lead to the collapse of the PH-led government and the split of PH's two parties, the Mahathir-led Bersatu and Anwar Ibrahim-led PKR, in late 2019 (Weiss, 2023, p. 3). The government was then replaced with Muhyiddin Yassin, a former UMNO politician, as prime minister with the Perikatan Nasional (PN) coalition, in which the UMNO joined. The atmosphere of Islamic politicization subsided slightly due to COVID-19. Nonetheless, Muhiyidin's governing coalition faced a legitimacy crisis due to its weak coalition

formation. Once COVID-19 abated, the PN government under Muhyiddin proposed resurrecting the sharia courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) bill 355 (RUU355), which would allow offenders of Islamic laws under the State List of the Ninth Schedule of the Federal Constitution to be sentenced to harsher penalties by state-level sharia courts (Hamid, 2021; Yusof, 2021).

In 2021, the UMNO retreated from the PN coalition, and Muhyiddin had to step down from his seat as prime minister. Still, without an election, the UMNO's Ismail Sabri formed a new government to replace Muhyiddin with the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition on Aug. 15, 2021, with the PN, supported by a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the PH that forbade an election before August 2022 (Weiss, 2023, p. 3). Ismail Sabri was the first prime ministerial leader who was not a party leader and had to take shelter under the other governing coalition parties, PAS and Bersatu, as Ismail Sabri did not have a strong grip on the UMNO itself. The return of the government under the UMNO now under Ismail Sabri again intensified the UMNO's Malay-Islamic political issues. Under his tenure, the religious party PAS had significant influence as it was given full control over the Ministry of Religious Affairs to compensate for its weakness in the UMNO despite having to maintain its support from East Malaysian parties who were concerned about PAS' legislative agenda in implementing a more rigid Islamic criminal law (Ooi, 2021). This further paved the way for the massive implementation of the *Hudud* law in all Malaysian states.

On this matter, one of the most notable changes was the criminalization of LGBT people in Malaysia. The government launched the *Mukhayyam* program for LGBT rehabilitation centers. It was reported that the Malaysian government had sent 1,733 LGBT citizens to rehabilitation centers managed by JAKIM (Ang, 2021b). Since the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act, commonly known as Act 355, was considered as having a minor impact on LGBT people and offenders, the government was considering amending the law to impose harsher penalties for LGBT-related offenses (Ang, 2021a). In 2022, this led to a raid by Malaysian authorities on what was suspected to be an LGBT Halloween party by around 40 religious officers backed by police, in which 20 people were arrested for interrogation (AFP, 2022).

Until the lead-up to the 2023 general election, the UMNO and its allies took refuge behind ethnoreligious grandstanding that labeled the PH coalition as anti-Islamic or lacking in Islamic Malay privilege, mainly attributed to the role of police oversight to enhance civil liberties (Weiss, 2023, p. 6). However, the UMNO was eventually defeated in the 15th

general election, while Anwar Ibrahim emerged victorious and formed a government known as the "National Unity Cabinet," which consisted of a coalition of PH, BN and Gabungan Partai Serawak (GPS) and placed the PN in opposition in Malaysia. In the latest development, Anwar, aware of potential Islamist pressure, made it clear that he would not recognize the LGBT community, secularism, or communism when responding to opposition allegations that Islam would be devastated, secularism and communism would be installed, and LGBT would be recognized under his leadership (Malay Mail, 2023; Idrus, 2023). Anwar, nevertheless, has been able to remake himself in the image of the reform movement and a Muslim Democrat during his opposition (Abdullah, 2017). He focuses more on Malaysia's reform project, human rights issues, and democracy rather than fundamentalist Islamic politics, given that he is the leader of a multiracial coalition opposed by a Malay-Muslim alliance. It is hoped that Anwar will be able to maintain a new democratic era for Malaysia.

Yet, the implementation of democratic values may be difficult to implement where it is inseparable from the tug-of-war of interests of the political elites in the government under Anwar. The appointment of UMNO as deputy prime minister might slow down Anwar Ibrahim's reform agenda. So far, it has been difficult to explicitly grant equal citizenship to Muslims and non-Muslims in Malaysia, which has kept Malay-Muslims a priority. Although minorities are legally protected, accepted, and have freedom, due to rising conservatism and fundamentalism in the past few years in Malaysia, it has become more difficult to fully exercise since the majority of Muslims are fearful to admit equal rights of minorities. This is exemplified by the large number of non-Muslims leaving Malaysia. This is borne from the various interpretations of liberty, equality, justice in the concepts of democracy and Islam, with the root of this problem returning to a rigid interpretation of Islam disseminated in Malaysia, which consequently resulted in the implementation of their rigid version of Islam. In this situation, the term "religious tolerance and pluralism" has somehow become "a dirty term" in Malaysia (Yunus, personal communication, May 12, 2023; Shukri, personal communication, May 18, 2023; Ariffin, personal communication, July 12, 2023).

To conclude, in Malaysia's political landscape, the ruling regime has always been held hostage by the Islamist agenda because it lacks the political will, intellectual capital, and the bravery to provide alternatives in promoting a progressive and democratic Islam to meet the needs of a multiethnic and modernizing Malaysian society. As a result, the main actors defining Islam are political actors who use religion as a political platform to stay in power. These Muslim political elites and official religious authority are difficult to limit due to the

silence of Islamic NGOs that go so far as to support their top-down policies toward religious rigidity (Anwar, 2023).

B. A STUDY CASE OF INDONESIA

Under Soeharto Regime (1967–1998)

The most critical juncture in the history of political Islam in Indonesia was the debate over the seven-word clause *"with the obligation for adherents of Islam to practice Sharia"* in the 1945 Constitution that polarized Muslim political elites. Before long, this was eliminated because of objections by secular nationalists and Christian leaders, who believed it could lead to the disintegration of the Indonesian nation (Azra, 2004, p. 145–147). Nevertheless, the issue of Sharia implementation is far from being resolved, as each period of leadership in Indonesia has responded differently to demands related to religious interpretations.

The Soeharto regime presented a unique and intricate discussion on political Islam. During the early years of Soeharto's administration, Islamic politics were primarily subject to active repression, particularly in the run-up to the 1971 elections. A factor of the repression under Soeharto was the power of Islamic social and religious activism revolving around the Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council (DDII, Dewan Da'wah Islamiyah Indonesia), formed in 1967 by Mohammad Natsir – a founder and leader of the Masyumi. The DDII is an organization that promotes unity between religion and state, similar to the ideas of *Ikhwanul Muslimin* in Egypt and Jemaah Islam in Pakistan and India, and has Salafi tendencies that seek to establish an Islamic state. In January 1973 the government forced Muslim parties to merge, creating the United Development Party (PPP). The PPP then proceeded with a critical debate on a proposed marriage law that had provisions prohibiting interfaith marriages by Muslims and non-Muslims. These issues continue to be contentious points for Muslims in the debates on inflexibility over classical texts that may discriminate against minorities (see Fuad, 2017; Jones, 2010; Van Bruinessen, 2002).

To promote Islamic awareness, the DDII continued to mobilize among Indonesian higher education students through focused *da'wah* programs on campuses and the provision of *da'wah* training. However, the *Tarbiyah* movement under the Soeharto regime was conducted cautiously, unlike in Malaysia, for fear of repression, especially when the New Order introduced the "Normalization of Campus Life" decree in April 1978, prohibiting political activism on campuses (Liow, 2022, p. 21–23). Soeharto's policy of depoliticizing Islam became increasingly effective and reached its peak in the mid-1980s when all

organizations and parties were forced to adopt Pancasila as their sole ideology and abandon their loyalty to Islam. Muslim student organizations such as the Islamic Student Association (HMI, Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam) had to follow the government and split, as some of its members refused to drop the single foundation of Islam as their guideline and only participated in *halaqah* (discussion circles). Meanwhile, the Indonesian Islamic Students (PII, Pelajar Islam Indonesia), a more radical Islamic student organization (previously affiliated with Masyumi), had to go underground because it rejected the single principle of Pancasila. During this time, there was no overt protest among students. Muslim student activists seemed to be a unified and coherent movement with a primary focus on *tarbiyah* (spiritual nurturing) and indoctrination, rather than overt political activism as before 1978, emphasizing personal piety, morality, discipline, and including an inner rejection of Pancasila and un-Islamic practices in Indonesia (Van Bruinessen, 2002. p. 132–134).

In many ways, the debate over Pancasila under the Soeharto regime as a centripetal concept for Indonesian unity with moderate values was increasingly consolidated. This was exemplified by the acceptance of Pancasila by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in 1983 and Muhammadiyah in 1985, the two largest and most influential Islamic mass organizations in Indonesia, which recognized the compatibility between Pancasila and Islam (Assyaukanie, 2009, p. 106–108). These two organizations would eventually play a significant role in the social capital to promote religious inclusivity in Indonesia that rejected the establishment of an Islamic State and the demands of Islamist groups for the implementation of strict Islamic laws, which reflected religious rigidity in Indonesia. In 1984, Abdurrahman Wahid's election as chairman of NU was welcomed by Soeharto for his moderate image, and he appointed Wahid to be the indoctrinator of Pancasila in 1985 (Barton, 2002, p. 153–154).

However, in 1989, when Wahid was reelected to a second term as NU chairman, Soeharto appeared to be in political conflict with the Armed Forces (ABRI), which has led to the depoliticization of Islam, and garnered the support of “scripturalist” Muslims who had previously criticized him and were close to the previous Masyumi leadership. Soeharto became more accommodating to Islamist groups and supported the establishment of the Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI, Ikatan Cendiawan Muslim Indonesia) in 1990. In fact, the DDII, initially suspicious of Soeharto's sudden change in attitude, joined the ranks in his favor. Meanwhile, the NU and its leader Wahid, who had previously been accommodated by Soeharto's regime, became vocal critics of the ICMI's establishment as potentially coopted by Soeharto. Instead of accepting the offer to join the

ICMI, Wahid considered that the existence of the ICMI could lead to “sectarianism” and antipluralist Muslim fundamentalism, given that most of its members were “reformist” Muslims. Consequently, Wahid preferred to establish the Forum for Democracy with a number of intellectuals from religious and social communities to promote issues of human rights, civil rights, and democracy in the public sphere. The ruling regime disapproved of the forum and it was discontinued in the run-up to the 1992 legislative elections (Van Bruinessen, 2002, p. 134–136; Barton, 2002b).

The NU, under Wahid's leadership, grew into a significant Islamic mass organization as a countervailing force to the Soeharto regime amid the cooperation between the ruling regime and several other prominent Islamic organizations. This attracted international attention as the NU, previously known as the most conservative and narrow-minded organization throughout the 1950s to 1970s, transformed into an Islamic mass organization more amenable to pluralism, interreligious tolerance, and liberal conceptions of democracy (Van Bruinessen, 2002, p. 136).

Meanwhile, other Muslim figures such as Amien Rais, chairman of Muhammadiyah and a prominent member of the ICMI's Board of Experts, only began to criticize Soeharto openly from 1997 until May 1998, as Soeharto's regime was about to collapse. His critical opposition to Soeharto created an unpleasant situation for other the ICMI elites since Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie, the ICMI chairman, was still loyal to Soeharto. As a result, Amin voluntarily resigned from his position in 1997. Yet, as Soeharto's regime was already collapsing in 1998, Habibie seemingly distanced himself from Soeharto. The silence of other senior figures made Amien a natural leader of the anti-Soeharto coalition that emerged with the so-called reform movement. In the wake of the New Order's collapse amid a mounting economic crisis, students became a major force in the reform movement that demanded Soeharto step down. A new Muslim student organization called the Indonesian Muslim Student Action Union (KAMMI, Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia), founded by *da’wah* organizations and influenced by the *Tarbiyah* movement, quickly rose to prominence for its active role in demonstrations. Other national Muslim student organizations, such as the modernist HMI and the traditionalist (NU-affiliated) Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (PMII), did not participate in the movement allied with the Muslim student front. The HMI and PMII activists were more likely to join their secular counterparts in the more radical action committees to overthrow Soeharto (Van Bruinessen, 2002, p. 136–140).

Post-Soeharto Era (1998–2014)

The upsurge of Islamic politics seems to be one of the most visible political developments in post-Soeharto Indonesia. Under the transition of government led by B.J. Habibie, the Indonesian Reform Era has opened the gate to democratic freedoms and political participation. It debated and formulated various aspects of the nation's interests in facing political and economic crises. The widespread euphoria of political liberalization among Muslims resulted in the proliferation of Islamic political parties. The regime transition gave Islamist leaders a chance to articulate a vision of a new national order based on Islam and uphold the oath to implement sharia (Hamayotsu, 2002b, p. 373).

However, with the establishment of 40 political parties identifying themselves as Islamic political parties, there was confusion and tension among their fervent followers at the grassroots level. The Islamic parties were expecting 87% of the Muslim vote in the 1999 elections but, in fact, only received a meager number of votes. This outcome caused concern in the minds of Muslims and left only the PPP, the National Awakening Party (PKB), the National Mandate Party (PAN), and Crescent Star Party (PBB) to occupy a mere 10 parliamentary seats. It then became a stimulus for the fragmented Islamic political parties to unify under the "Islamic faction" known as the *"poros tengah"* to rally behind Abdurrahman Wahid as the fourth president of the Republic of Indonesia (Azra, 2004, p. 140–145).

In 2000, the Islamic resurgence movement was also utilized by the PPP in the Annual Session of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) to reintroduce the reinstatement of the seven-word clause, declaring the state should have *"the obligation to implement Sharia for its adherents,"* omitted from the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution since independence. However, there were disagreements among Muslim groups about the ideas on the application of Islamic principles between conservative-fundamentalist Islamic militants and modern-liberal Islamic groups (Ishaq, 2016, p. 46). Furthermore, as one might expect, Wahid, after successfully becoming the fourth president, swiftly disappointed Islamic political parties with his erratic attitude and unorthodox, even secular-nationalist management style that emphasized democratic values and defended minority rights. This, in turn, became an exploitative move by secular-nationalist groups, who incorporated Pancasila as a national ideology into an integrated part of nation-building (Azra, 2004, p. 140–145; Hamayotsu, 2002, 373).

The debate over the establishment of an Islamic state has flourished once again. Islamic political parties that emerged were typically repolarized and did not focus exclusively on

one power. After the Indonesian regime transitioned under president Wahid, mass-based Islamic political parties, such as the PKB, which was closely aligned with the aspirations of NU followers, and PAN, which shared the same spirit with Muhammadiyah, never proposed the establishment of an Islamic State, and tended to be inclusive of religious placements. Neither party stands in opposition to the government regarding the Pancasila paradigm as a state ideology that respects religious pluralism. Moreover, other prominent Muslim political leaders such as Yusril Ehza Mahendra, chairman of the PBB, and Nur Mahmudi Ismail, founder and president of the Justice Party (PK – and later the PKS, the Prosperous Justice Party), stated publicly that their political parties did not aim to establish an Islamic state. The rejection of the establishment of an Islamic state was also further corroborated by the leaders of the largest Islamic mass organizations in Indonesia, such as Hasyim Muzadi (chairman of NU) and Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif (central executive of Muhammadiyah). As such, it significantly impacted Indonesia's safe transition to democracy (see Woodward, 2008; Azra, 2004b, p. 143).

In view of this, one of the reasons why Islamic political parties have not demonstrated a desire to establish an Islamic state is the changing trend of Indonesia's Muslim society, as shown by the results of the 1999 elections, which indicated that Islamic political parties had less popularity. The Indonesian Muslim population leans more toward *substantive Islam* than *formalistic Islam,* where they separate their ritual beliefs or piety from a more Islamic political orientation (see Azra, 2000).[30] This is also inextricably linked to the influence of high-profile Muslim figures from the *Santri* (Islamic boarding school students and alumni) groups, such as Abdurrahman Wahid, Syafi'i Ma'arif, Nurcholish Madjid, and Ulil Abshar Abdalla, whose idea of Islam as a basis for liberalizing Indonesia was popular among *Santri* and followers of mass organizations such as the NU and Muhammadiyah. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, these progressive Muslim intellectuals, along with the NU and Muhammadiyah, were at the forefront of efforts to reform their authoritarian-ruled country. They persistently advocated the new concept of the importance of a politically and religiously pluralistic system and popularized an agenda centered on the concepts of human rights, equality, and justice in democracy by arguing, based on religious teachings and traditions, that Islam and democracy were compatible (Assyaukanie, 2004). By performing such roles, they were able to gain extensive legitimacy among Indonesia's Muslim majority

[30] Tanuwidjaja (2010) reads that the factor that makes Islamic political parties decline is not because Muslim voters have become "rational" and that religion no longer influences electoral behavior. Instead, he argues that religion is still a major force because nationalist-secular parties also accommodate religious aspirations and shy away from criticizing controversial religious issues.

(Fealy, 2019, p. 117).[31] This circumstance was inseparable from the challenge posed by Islamist-fundamentalist groups that demonstrated the rigidity of their religious standpoint by demanding the enforcement of traditional Islamic criminal law values.

This Reform Era stimulated the growth of extremist Islamic organizations labeled as Islamist radical-conservative to oppose the popularity of progressive Muslim thought as the democratic transition unfolded. Islamist movements anchored in ultraconservative Muslim civil movements increased in number and came to the fore. Broadly speaking, Islamic radicalization is primarily carried out by Islamist groups based on civil society that support the state's exclusive role in enforcing Sharia, namely the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (MMI), Laskar Jihad, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), the DDII, the Indonesian Committee for Solidarity in the Islamic World (KISDI), and other groups (Na'īm, 2008, p. 231). These groups often committed violence to enforce their religious principles. It is evident from the historical records of organizations such as Laskar Jihad, FPI, HTI, and MMI, all of which urged for the enforcement of Islamic criminal law. They frequently resorted to violence to express their desire to realize their role as "Morality Police" in Indonesia, inspired by the teaching *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (commanding right and forbidding wrong). They regularly raided and burned locations they perceive as centers of immorality, such as cafes, discotheques, casinos, brothels, and what they refer to as a hotbed of immorality and Islam's adversaries. At that time, this also disrupted political stability, especially under the leadership of Abdurrahman Wahid (see Hasan 2005; Van Bruinessen, 2002).

Meanwhile, those opposed to such a role were mass Islamic organizations such as the NU and Muhammadiyah, as the mainstream Muslim organizations represented the views of the Muslim majority in Indonesia and spread discourse on democracy and religious harmony (Hasan 2007, p. 22). Given the commitment of these groups to voice an inclusive understanding of Islam and the importance of religious tolerance and democratic principles, it did not make the government careless to remain committed to consolidating democracy. The Wahid era has become a tangible legacy in promoting democratic values and the defense of rights for minorities with his ability to develop a solid methodology to interpret Islamic texts using the *"usul al-fiqh"* method (Ichwan, 2019). Even so, many saw his thoughts as too liberal and un-Islamic.

[31] Assyaukanie (2004) and Liddle & Mujani (2007) suggest that the role of "sectarian politics" proposed by Clifford Geertz (1960), particularly the Muslim *santri* who supported Islamic political parties in the 1955 elections, was no longer a major influence on Muslim voters in the post-New Order elections due to the significant influence of progressive Muslims' thinking and agenda.

In short, reformers in the post-Soeharto era were committed to prioritizing democratic consolidation efforts in pursuit of political and social liberation and good governance. Meanwhile, Muslim civil society organizations and nongovernmental organizations were increasing in number, and groups previously operating covertly under the Soeharto regime were now able to operate more openly. As a result of this openness, there were numerous public talks and debates on television, and books and articles were published (Na'īm, 2008, 257). The rise of Islamic extremists has spawned new generations of Muslim intellectuals, including scholars who are members of the Liberal Islam Network (JIL), founded in March 2001 and led by Ulil Absar Abdalla,[32] in response to the mounting pressure from extremist groups. The Islamic State, sharia enforcement, armed holy war, and gender inequality were all issues that JIL members have consistently opposed.

In 2001, discussions on liberal Islam addressed the great importance of Islam in Indonesia and in contemporary order and the religious position in the lives of individual Muslims (Hooker, 2004, p. 235). To reach a large audience, JIL communicated with the public through various media, such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the internet, to publish various articles and introduce the notion of "the Faces of Indonesian Islamic Liberal" and opened discussion forums on a regular basis, despite the group having also received criticism and threats from other groups. However, these initiatives were critical to demonstrating a dynamic civil society where the relations between Islam and the state were still debatable in society.

It is worth mentioning that these thoughts, again, could not be separated from the roles of the three well-known figures, namely Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Syafi'i Ma'arif. Nurcholish Madjid and Syafi'i Ma'arif, were respected Muslim scholar and public figure, and Abdurrahman Wahid, who served as chairman of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) for three terms and became the fourth President of Indonesia from 1999–2001, were the three figures widely regarded as Indonesia's leading Ulama intellectuals. They succeeded in developing neo-Modernism (Madjid and Ma'arif) and neo-traditionalist (Wahid) thought movement in Indonesia, which were new trends in Islamic thought that emerged in the early 1970s amid many controversies and have had a considerable impact on the growth of Islamic youth thought in Indonesia. The thoughts of the three figures symbolically unite Islamic traditionalism with modernism and Western education (see Barton 1997; Hidayat & AF, 2023).

[32] Ulil Absar Abdalla is a chairman of the Institute for Research and Human Resources, National Board of NU (LAKPESDAM PBNU), 2022–2027.

The birth of JIL also emerged from the Muslim community's greater awareness of religious inclusivity among mainstream Muslim organizations such as Muhammadiyah and the NU. These two organizations also pushed for the formation of nongovernmental organizations, a group of potential intellectuals dedicated to promoting innovative new ideas about pluralism, Islamic tolerance, and gender equality. Concurrently, the moderate and profound democratic impact on Islam and politics in Indonesia continues to grow as a result of their campaigns to declare the compatibility of Islam and democracy and condemn Islamic radicalism (Hasan 2007, p. 22). To continually nurture the growing thought and trend of moderatism in Indonesia, it has stimulated the formation of various groups of NGOs and foundations such as the Ma'arif Institute, Gusdurian Network, Wahid Foundation, Nurcholis Madjid Society, the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Paramadina, and other social network groups to address various issues of intolerance, divinity, *pesantren*, poverty, economic development, equality, individual rights and civil liberties, democratic transition, traditional wisdom, and other humanitarian issues. At that time, although the endeavors of Islamic militant groups to enforce sharia at the national level were waning as the frequency of the global counterterrorism campaigns were rising, the hopes and ambitions of Islamic militant groups in Indonesia to fight for sharia supremacy in this largest Muslim country in the world remained intact.

The debate between fanatical and progressive Muslims in Indonesia has also colored the debate on drafting criminal law with comprehensive reforms to replace the colonial criminal law. Since its presentation to the president in January 2005, the draft bill has been postponed and shelved repeatedly. Its deliberation in a parliamentary session scheduled for 2008 were postponed. Extramarital sexual intercourse and public kissing were prohibited in the draft bill in a provision included in the chapter on virtuous behavior. Regarding the various moral issues, questions arose about the feasibility of implementation and the economic ramifications in regions that rely heavily on tourism, such as Bali. Religious exclusivity or sharia-based bylaw provisions in the draft criminal code had received widespread opposition from the NU. The NU voiced concern that tolerance and social cohesion in society would erode due to the content of sharia restrictions in the draft bill. On the other hand, Islamist fundamentalist groups in Indonesia have been eager to voice the sharia restrictions in the content of this rule for years (Otto, 2010, p. 473). As a result, the law continued to be delayed indefinitely during the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), who wanted to balance the two opposing Islamic camps that supported his presidency.

Meanwhile, the PKS, which supported SBY's government, evolved into an Islamist political party accommodating conservative groups with an exclusive mindset toward Islamic interpretation. PKS figures have deep ties to the conservative Islamist organizations, particularly the FPI, KAMMI, and the HTI, that want to enforce a sharia penal code in Indonesia. In recurrent fashion, the PKS and such Islamist organizations consistently formed coalitions in political moments, most notably during election campaigns. However, at the national level, the PKS publicly accepts the secular nature of the Indonesian nation-state along with the ideology of Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and the democratic electoral system as the rules of the game to gain power in the national debate.

Indeed, along the way, Islamic political parties have sought to moderate themselves,[33] with the PKS' willingness to form coalitions with secular parties and support candidates from other political parties (Tanuwidjaja, 2012) as one example. Yet, it is imperative to note that it does not imply the PKS has completely abandoned its original Islamist objectives. Although different from PAS' Islamic articulation in Malaysia, the PKS's articulated messages are subject to public or internal party consumption. The PKS may align its ideological and national constitutional commitments with its efforts to emphasize the importance of Islam as a source of its own identity and legitimacy and stick to the ideals of *Tarbiyah's* root principles to realize good, responsible, honest, clean, and transparent governance in line with the ideals of Pancasila (Fauzi, personal communication, July 27, 2022; Hasan, 2009, p. 4–5).

On the other hand, the role of religious authorities such as the Ulama and religious leaders have become important figures that color the administration of the Indonesian government to provide the proper dosage of religion in the public sphere (Hasan, 2019). As demonstrated by Azra (2004), since the colonial era, traditionalist and modernist ulama in Indonesia have spearheaded religious discourse, modernism, and national ideas. They have also established thousands of *pesantren* (traditional Islamic boarding schools) and modern education from the elementary to university levels in various cities up to the present day (see Hasan, 2020; Hefner, 2011; Dhofier, 1982). Meanwhile, Indonesia cannot be separated from the influence of Salafi Wahhabism, which has popularized approaches to Islamic religious texts that are no less widespread throughout the archipelago. Since the 1980s, Salafi Ulema has also built a Salafi–teaching base in *pesantren* and formal education

[33] See Fox and Menchik (2022), Buehler (2013), Tomsa (2012), Woodward (2008) in reading how Islamic political parties moderate to support democracy and pluralism in Indonesia.

institutions from kindergarten to high school level throughout Indonesia, which have become very popular for those wanting to express their Islamic identity and piety in urban communities (Wahid, 2014; Hasan, 2012; Hasan, 2010). These two educational roots show how ulama and religious leaders in Indonesia have built their groups' social networks. This has become an expression of their religious and political attitudes amid the fragmentation within the Islamic mass organization movements. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the ulama plays a significant role in influencing Indonesia's religious, social, and political order.

It is worth noting that the ulama and their networks within the NU and Muhammadiyah are more concerned with the social, educational, health, and economic fields. This pragmatic approach leads to a more moderate and progressive political stance than certain ulama figures associated with the MUI organization. The MUI has gained notoriety for addressing religious issues by issuing fatwas that undermine democratic values and religious freedom when opposing the government (see Hasyim, 2020; Gillespie, 2007; Gibson, 2001). Furthermore, ulama and religious figures from the traditionalist NU and modernist Muhammadiyah factions have their own views to disseminate progressive thoughts about the relationship between religion and the state. Both are of the view that religious affairs should not be the responsibility of the government but rather the domain of the civil sector of society (Hasyim, 2013, p. 16). Both groups have garnered popularity among Indonesian Muslims, who actively opposed the fanatical-conservative clerics' arguments for the establishment of a theocratic state and the imposition of strict Islamic law in the public sphere (Rabasa, 2004, p. 370).

In sum, during the SBY era, political power was balanced between the conservative-radical and progressive Muslim camps in responding to religious and political issues. Social capital groups advocating for religious inclusivity, such as the Wahid Foundation, Nurcholis Madjid Society, and Ma'arif Institute, exerted considerable effort to advance their goals by adopting a more critical stance toward the SBY administration. This differs from the Joko "Jokowi" Widodo era, where they are more likely to be able to collaborate with the government to face the power of intolerant groups. This shift can be attributed to the Jokowi administration's move to distinguish his administration from SBY's by including the "the outbreak of intolerance and the crisis of national personality" as one of the three main problems in the Indonesian Nation in the Medium-Term National Development Plan (RPJMN, Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional). Since SBY's tenure, such concerns regarding intolerant groups have gone unheeded, and there was a perceived laissez-faire approach toward the proliferation of intolerance issues within society and

government bureaucracy (Djafar, personal communication, May 2, 2023; Fitriana, personal communication, June 27, 2023; Majid, personal communication, July 4, 2023).

Under Jokowi Era (2014–)

It seems that the dispute over the harmonization of the relationship between state and religion in Indonesia does not originate from the majority Muslims but rather is centered in the debate between fanatical ulama from Islamist organizations and progressive ulama from the NU and Muhammadiyah to introduce their respective versions of Islamic discourse from the bottom-up. It then leads them to a struggle for religious authority to get state sponsorship.

The most recent development of the relationship between religious authority groups and the state is striking. This can be seen in how fanatical and progressive ulama, along with their respective religious leaders and figures, have stood in line with different candidates during the election process in Indonesia since 2014. The radical/fanatical ulama, Habib Rieziq Shihab, leader of the vigilante group the FPI played a significant role in mobilizing Indonesian Muslim voters to support the Prabowo Subianto-Hatta Rajasa pairing in the 2014 election. Rizieq also successfully led the Islamic populist movement's agitation over blasphemy allegations against former Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) during the Jakarta regional election in 2016-2017. Additionally, in the 2019 election, as Prabowo reran as a presidential candidate, he again received support from fanatical ulema groups and Islamist-conservative organizations. This situation worried moderate religious figures within the ranks of the NU, giving rise to the well-known figure of NU ulama, Ma'ruf Amin, who had also sat in various strategic positions at the MUI, standing as Jokowi's running mate in the presidential election.

In 2019, during a plenary session on the Criminal Code, the ratification of the draft bill was once again postponed due largely to student and civil-society movement resistance (Suharyo 2021: 285). Within the latest version of the draft bill, which received wide public attention, were articles regulating the private sphere or private behavior of citizens. These articles have been points of controversy for years, in part because they have overtones of the sharia notion of *zina* (extramarital sexual intercourse). For example, Article 408 of the bill stipulates that staying together outside of marriage is punishable by up to six months in prison or a 10 million rupiah (US$653) fine. Meanwhile, extramarital sexual intercourse is punishable by up to a year in prison or a substantial fine under Article 417. The Criminal Code bill's orientation in Indonesia is not only on the decolonization of the law but also the democratization of criminal law. In the Indonesian context, it was assumed that adultery

and cohabiting were crimes based on the living law that is found within society, by considering the values of customary law adopted by the Indonesian people, the majority of whom are Muslims (Ishaq 2016: 52). It could be said that it was a conservative-fundamentalist achievement, although the bill had not yet passed. Their achievement, nevertheless, was not without resistance from liberals, secularists, and progressive Muslims who opposed the highly Islamic content of the proposed criminal code because of the contradictions with Indonesian plurality and civil rights.

The NU's support for Jokowi in the 2019 election has played a significant role in bolstering the Islamic credentials of Jokowi's government in introducing a moderate and progressive Islamic discourse in Indonesia. This is inextricably linked to Jokowi's cordial relationships with several prominent Muslim elites of Muslim civil society institutions or organizations to advance the discourse of religious inclusivity, such as Yenni Wahid, founder of the Wahid Foundation; Syafi'i Ma'arif, founder of the Ma'arif Institute, and the family of Nucholish Madjid. Such connections had the potential to provide massive social capital to promote religious inclusivity, by collaborating with the government rather than taking a critical and confrontational stance, as was taken during the SBY era. Thus, these groups can influence government policies and benefit from the increased representation of progressive groups within the bureaucracy.

Furthermore, the appointment of Mahfud MD, an NU member, as Coordinating Political, Legal, and Security Affairs Minister, further underscored the government's firm treatment of conservative-radical groups. It was shown in the efforts of the ruling regime to disband Islamic conservative-fundamentalist organizations such as the HTI, dissolved on July 19, 2017, and the FPI on Dec. 30, 2020, without any sparks of protest from the majority of Muslims in Indonesia. However, this does not mean that Mahfud can work alone to shape political decisions, as his actions are also influenced by his complex relationships with progressive Muslims. In Indonesian politics, moreover, policy decisions always consider the stances of prominent organizations such as Muhammadiyah and the NU. The banning of the HTI and the FPI, for instance, appeared to be supported by progressive religious organizations (Djafar, personal communication, May 2, 2023; Fitriana, personal communication, June 27, 2023; Majid, personal communication, July 4, 2023).

Moreover, the NU indeed has a significant influence over the Religious Affairs Ministry (Aspinall, 2010, p. 133). This was marked by the reshuffle of Religious Affairs Minister

from Fachrurrozi to NU member Ya'qut Cholil Qoumas, known as *Gus* Ya'qut, [34] in 2020, who sought to eradicate the propagation of religious radicalism. Ya'qut has a vision for the establishment of "The Center for Religious Moderation," which was promised to be established in every State Islamic Religious College (PTKIN) throughout Indonesia as a response to declining political identity in Indonesia, which is always related to intolerant groups such as the FPI and the HTI.

The relationship between the Jokowi administration and Islamic mass organizations in Indonesia has been explicitly implemented within the government bureaucracy. It can be traced back to how the ruling government has always accommodated a network of ulama centered within the NU and Muhammadiyah. The government is also increasingly keen to support school operating costs for madrasas and *pesantren*, which are generally headed by ulama. This was conveyed by Finance Minister Sri Mulyani, in commemoration of the 22nd birthday of *Santri* and the People's Representative Council (DPR-RI) PKB fraction, which was broadcast by Nahdlatul Ulama Television (TVNU), who announced that the government had committed to allocate 55.9 trillion rupiah in funds from the State Expenditure Budget (APBN). Funds were also allocated for *Santri* scholarships to study at tertiary institutions, bringing the NU and Muhammadiyah students into the middle class. To be sure of their alignment, a national insight test follows the university-level selection process for potential *Santri* scholarship awardees, to determine whether the students had been exposed to radicalism or not. Moreover, the growth of traditional Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia cannot be separated from government intervention in providing donations for the construction of *pesantren*, which are known for their moderate and antiradical teachings and are therefore able to compete with educational facilities in general.

The NU and Muhammadiyah are Islamic mass organizations that, so far, have significant followers and intense consolidation with the bourgeoisie in Indonesia, making their organizations grow more rapidly than the fundamentalist Muslim organizations. Instead of trying to approach the bourgeoisie, members of fundamentalist Muslim organizations are dominated by blue-collar workers or the lower-middle class and often carry out sweepings, which infuriates the business class. However, it does not mean that, with the alliance between the state and progressive ulama, Jokowi can freely carry out political liberalization in Indonesia. This was proven when Jokowi had to cancel the decision of Presidential Regulation No. 10 of 2021 concerning investment in the alcoholic beverage business,

[34] 'Gus' is popularly used in Indonesia to call the son of a '*kiai'* or ulama.

which was implemented in four non-Muslim majority provinces – Bali, Papua, North Sulawesi, and Maluku – after receiving rejections from the NU, Muhammadiyah, and the MUI. Jokowi explained that the cancellation was based on the advice of the ulama and, of course, after receiving pressure from Vice President Ma'ruf Amin (Farisa, 2021). Indeed, this has disappointed many parties as it is considered that the government is subject to religious authority. However, at least, there are no criminalization measures from the government for those who sell or distribute alcoholic beverages for both Muslims and non-Muslims.

In the recently passed Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP), Article No. 284 restricts extramarital affairs for married couples. Unlike the sharia-inspired *Qanun* in Aceh, this restriction is not expressed in religious terms of *Zina*. The newly passed Criminal Code prohibits premarital sex and includes two controversial provisions. The first provision criminalizes sexual encounters between unmarried couples, but only if the husband, wife, or relatives of the person involved reports the act. Although this may give the impression that the government is interfering in one's personal affairs, it can also be considered as a strategic approach by the government to prevent the occurrence of "wild courts" or vigilantes in the community who judge couples who have been accused of having premarital sex. The second provision places a three-year hold on implementing the new KUHP.

In addition, the LGBT community has encountered considerable challenges in obtaining its rights in Indonesia. This is inseparably linked to the socioreligious dominance of negative views on LGBT identity in Indonesia. It is no alien that Islamic identity-based mass organizations such as the NU and Muhammadiyah have issued a fatwa saying LGBT relationships and marriages in Indonesia are “haram*”* (*Resmi, PBNU Sikapi Perilaku Seksual Menyimpang LGBT*, n.d.). However, in the NU's inclusive view, this does not mean that the fatwa against LGBT relations means the state has to criminalize LGBT relations. In a public debate on a television show, the deputy steering secretary of the NU Jakarta Branch, Taufik Damas, gave his views on LGBT, on the socio-religious and political aspects of the plan to criminalize LGBT in the draft bill of the criminal code (RKUHP) in Indonesia. As a representative of an Islamic organization, Taufik decisively stated that, religiously, LGBT behavior and actions were "haram" and that they would have punitive consequences in the afterlife, however, Taufik stated that under state law, LGBT should not be criminalized as long as it falls in the private territory, does not violate laws that lead to immoral acts, does not use force or coercion, does not involve minors, and does not involve the recording and dissemination of content that violates pornographic laws.

Likewise, Taufik further emphasized that LGBT people also do not deserve to be discriminated against since, in fact, a Muslim must emulate the attitude of the Prophet Muhammad, who preached with love, affection, and peace. Even if an LGBT person does not want to repent and still violates religious values, then the attitude of a Muslim needs to be manned or leave the affairs to Allah instead of judging their fellow human beings. Taufiq added that LGBT campaigns that seek to make others part of the LGBT community should be clearly rejected, which is different from LGBT campaigns that invite people to respect LGBT rights, which should be respected in democratic countries ("Debat Keras: Layakkah LGBT Dipenjarakan?!," 2022).

The NU and Muhammadiyah are often known for their inclusive, tolerant, and flexible Islamic discourse. For example, famous NU-caliber scholars such as Ahmad Bahauddin Nursalim (*Gus* Baha), Ahmad Muwafiq (*Gus* Muwafiq), Miftah Maulana Habiburrahman (*Gus* Miftah) preach embracing all Muslims and calls for followers to not be rigid in their religion. Their preaching is always attended by a significant number of Muslims. Even preachers who are famous on social media, such as Abdus Somad and Adi Hidayat, praise the capacity of NU scholars, especially *Gus* Baha as a ulama of *tafsir* (exegesis) and *fiqh* (jurisprudency) with fatwas that are not easily judgmental (see *@kasyafislam*, n.d.; Santri Ndalan, 2020). The content of such figures' *da'wah* contradicts the provocative *da'wah* of fanatic ulema linking to fundamentalist Islamic movements in Indonesia, who want to implement Islamic criminal law and claim themselves to be an army of defenders of Allah, Muhammad, and Islam.

To counterbalance the phenomenon of hardline religious movements or religious rigidity in Indonesia, NU and Muhammadiyah members also present humorous content on religious issues, primarily through social media promoted by NU Garis Lucu and Muhammadiyah Garis Lucu (Asad, 2019). Moreover, preachers such as Hussein Ja'far Al Hadar, known as Habib Ja'far, are incredibly famous among youngsters for preaching content in collaboration with famous stand-up comedians. Habib Ja'far is a preacher known for his funny Islamic *da'wah*, which often becomes viral on media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube.

Bearing all this in mind, the state can be considered allied with progressive, pro-democracy Muslim groups rather than fanatical Muslim groups likely to lead the state further away from an unstable quality of democracy. Cases in point are the alliances between the state and fanatical Muslim clerics or groups in some Muslim countries, such as Iran, Turkey, and Malaysia. In these countries, fanatical clerics have been the main force driving Islamic

populist movements and promoting intolerant policies.

Those militant Muslim groups contrast with progressive Muslim groups who are critical of contemporary Islamic discourse and progressive thoughts in responding to issues of religion, politics, education, economics, and modernity. Progressive Muslim groups affiliated with mainstream Islamic mass organizations such as the NU and Muhammadiyah have been a great inspiration for the success of these two organizations as strong civil society organizations. These two organizations own numerous educational institutions (both formal and informal, from elementary schools to universities), polyclinics, hospitals, orphanages, and myriad other activities (including those related to the economy, family, counseling for women, and other activities) (see Hefner, 2011). Both are organizations founded by prominent ulama in Indonesia without demanding the establishment of an Islamic state or forcing Islamic criminal law to be implemented. Those progressive Muslim groups usually serve as supervisors and evaluators of state policies and programs through their network, centered on the two mainstream organizations, the NU and Muhammadiyah (MacIntyre & Ramage, 2008). Recently, the NU and Muhammadiyah also declared they agreed to eliminate identity politics and appealed to prioritize objective and rational politics within the corridors of modern democracy in the 2024 election and rejected plans to postpone it (Triono, 2023; Tombeg, 2023). It also proves how the two organizations are supervisors and evaluators of state programs as democrat Muslims (see Mujani, 2007).

Indonesia, to some extent, has provided many lessons on how we can live together as equals with the democratic formula as an instrument of conflict management amid competing ethnic and religious identities and a shared view on how Indonesians can be loyal to their religion and loyal to their nonreligious state. Ironically, although Indonesia tends to reflect religious flexibility, the existence of sharia-compliant regional regulations that are often used by politicians to gain votes, even though they do not regulate criminal law provisions, must be addressed comprehensively because they can interfere with the rights of minority citizens.

It should also be noted that the implementation of Sharia Criminal Law in the Aceh region has not run well and has created human rights abuses, as reported by Human Rights Watch. Furthermore, it hinders economic development and modernization efforts in the region. This is the failure of Indonesia to maintain its secular mandate. However, it is crucial to understand the context behind this situation, which can be attributed, to some extent, to the pressures initiated by extremist groups in Aceh seeking separatism from Indonesia. To some degree, the state does need to grant privilege to particular stakeholders to counter the

separatists, where the forces that could counterbalance the separatists and could not be controlled by the government at that time were the ulama in Aceh who wanted the implementation of Islamic criminal law (Interview with Yusril Ihza Mahendra by PinterPolitik TV, 2023). It thus led president Megawati Soekarnoputri to grant the request rather than bear the loss of Indonesian territory, as it could serve as a precedent for other regions.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS

This thesis questions why Muslim-majority democracies express religious rigidity while others do not, which results in different outcomes of the dissemination of contemporary political Islam, and under what conditions the spread of political Islam took place. I propose the interaction of two variables: the dynamic political rivalry between political parties chasing Muslim voters and the condition of social capital present to promote religious inclusivity. I emphasize that the dynamic political rivalry between such parties, again, is an unclear indication in explaining whether political Islam in a Muslim-majority democracy will be expressed rigidly or reflected flexibly. In this case, the adoption of rigid or flexible political Islam depends on the variable of strong or weak social capital to promote religious inclusivity amidst high Islamic activism in the Muslim-majority democracies.

In Malaysia, there was notable weak social capital to serve as a "bridging role" to promote religious inclusivity. Groups that attempted to build this social capital to promote religious inclusivity, such as the G25, had no significant, or weak, influence on restricting the behavior of political elites in enacting top-down Islamization or pushing the political elites to adopt flexible political Islam working within the framework of a substantive democracy. Instead, this the country has seen the achievements of Islamist intellectuals looking to enforce sharia-based moral restrictions in public life through legal seminars and the keys and solutions of its implementation in Malaysia. Furthermore, this trend is bolstered by a burgeoning student *da'wah* movement as a "bonding role" such as ABIM, Darul Arqam, the Jema'ah Tabligh, JIM, IKRAM, ISMA, and Ulama Salafi-Wahabism (ILMU) which have strong links (referred to as linking social capital) with political parties seeking Muslim votes, including both ruling and opposition political parties, that are rooted in Malay-Islam. These groups have effectively intensified the propagation of an exclusive Islamic consciousness among the Malay-Muslim community and commonly regard non-Muslims as secondary citizens. Furthermore, they are able to threaten elite power if rigid religious policies and demands are not accommodated and implemented.

In this situation, the strong exclusionary views of the Muslim community pushed the ruling regime to pragmatically comply with Islamist demands. This accommodation became a crucial electoral consideration for the ruling regime looking to stay in power by imposing policies related to religious rigidity to prove their Islamic credentials for electoral gain. As a result, this situation has prompted political regimes to exercise discretionary decision-

making toward top-down approaches to gain political legitimacy in the eyes of Muslim constituents within the framework of formal or procedural democracy. Before long, Islamization policies working from above inevitably disregard the upholding of human rights and religious freedom because weak social capital to promote religious inclusivity cannot restrain the power of the political elite. Given these characteristics, the proliferation of rigid political Islam is more likely to dominate Malaysia, where the expression of religious rigidity holds greater prominence.

Indeed, there was an attempted move to adopt the flexible form of political Islam in Malaysia; however, this endeavor ultimately failed. We can regard the fact that although Badawi, the former Malaysian Prime Minister, promoted the concept of "Islam Hadhari" during his tenure with a bold cabinet, this concept was considered unsuccessful. Despite extensive promotion through seminars and press releases, the communication was only vertical, only voiced by elite leaders to societies who struggled to put their trust in the government. Consequently, the notion of a moderate form of Islam put forth by Badawi had little impact. This is evident in one incident in 2005, the Malaysian Morality Police became bolder as they raided a Kuala Lumpur disco and arrested all the young Muslim men and women dancing there. Therefore, this incident highlights that Malaysia, where social capital holds a “bonding role” that supported Sharia prohibitions and the Morality Police authority to control religious practices in society, has left the ruling regime with not many alternatives but to choose a pragmatic and accessible policy strategy rather than taking oppositional actions that could potentially expose their political survival to vulnerabilities.

On this matter, it requires strong social capital in a “bridging role” to promote religious inclusivity. This could be achieved through the active engagement of NGOs, social network groups, or high-profile figures who are actively involved in public affairs. They can bridge communication horizontally, not only vertically, thereby enabling practical deliberation on matters of religious flexibility in the broader Muslim society. The ruling regime in Malaysia should consider strategies for fostering social capital to promote religious inclusivity. It may involve establishing, collaborating, or sponsoring groups that actively participate in public affairs characterized by horizontal relationships, encouraging cooperation, and fostering mutual trust to oppose the notions of rigid Islamic articulation. Such endeavors are critical for successfully pursuing an agenda centered on inclusive religious understanding within a pluralistic community. Thus, the ruling regime may have many alternatives to consider state policies that operate within the framework of substantive democracy rather than top-down Islamization.

As demonstrated by the Indonesian case, the existence of social capital as a bridging role to promote religious inclusivity has played a significant role in shaping the sociopolitical landscape. Islamic mass organizations such as the NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) and Muhammadiyah, along with Muslim NGOs like JIL, Ma'arif Institute, Gusdurian Network, the Wahid Foundation, Nurcholis Madjid Society, the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (PUSAD) Paramadina, and other social network groups, have emerged as influential actors addressing various issues related to intolerant or rigid religious doctrines that may contradict democratic values, individual rights, and religious freedom. Furthermore, these entities have effectively curtailed the arbitrary behavior of political elites to prevent the imposition of top-down policies. Instead of allowing policies to be dictated solely from the top, they have successfully advocated for decision-making processes that involve bottom-up participation, thus restraining the state's coercive power within the framework of a substantive democracy. Those groups also have strong links (referred to as linking social capital) with the ruling government to promote religious inclusivity and address intolerant religious issues. This collaborative relationship has significantly influenced Indonesians to be more tolerant toward other religions and does not even require the state to monitor the religious practices or piety in society. Consequently, it has contributed to the cultivation of a collective consciousness of religious flexibility, egalitarianism, civil liberties, and other liberal values that are more accommodating to democracy. Given these characteristics, flexible political Islam is a positive dissemination in Indonesia, reflecting religious flexibility.

To maintain this development, those Muslim civil organizations continue to disseminate their standpoints through seminars, gatherings in society, and various media outlets to reach a broader audience. Therefore, social capital to promote religious inclusivity is steadily strengthening and is being given attention by political elites in Indonesia. This development holds considerable significance as it demonstrated a dynamic civil society where the relations between Islam and the state are still debatable in society. It is also noteworthy that the spread of flexible political Islam in Indonesia is inseparable from the thoughts of Islamic modernism that have previously taken root, influenced by the thoughts of some Islamic intellectual figures who come from *pesantren* or Islamic education in madrassa such as Nurcholis Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Syafi'i Ma'arif. They enthusiastically introduce the concept of "progressive Islam" by discussing the meaning of contemporary Islamic expression, its relevance to the Indonesian context, and the place of religion in the lives of individual Muslims without having to be monitored by the state, which can expose to the reflection of religious flexibility within the context of a democratic society in

Indonesia.

Finally, by structural explanation, this study aimed to address pressing issues with integrated theoretical, empirical, and ethical resources by combining work on markets, culture, civil society, mass participation, democracy, the state, and the international order to derive a strong theory with a complex history (Katznelson, 2009). Focusing more on the social structure, typically explored through the lens of civic society manifested in several types of social capital, proves relevant and justified. It is able to map out the key components to elucidate the state position or the preferences of Muslim political elites when executing their political strategy in facing problems of collective action during the process of Islamization in both countries. The research findings in this comparative study, conducted with the process tracing and methodological tool 'path dependence' over the historical trajectory in Malaysia and Indonesia from the 1970s to the present, have yielded valuable insights to draw appropriate conclusions based on the causal mechanism of the 'why' question on the raised topic.

Nevertheless, the conclusions drawn from this study would be advantageous by further testing involving a broader range of cases. The variables I propose need to be tested for external validity by including more cases, specifically focusing on democracies with a Muslim-majority population. The different historical trajectories of the political origins of religious rigidity and flexibility in Muslim-majority democracies have invariably been inseparable from the movements and dissemination of political Islam. Therefore, conducting cross-regional comparative studies would be necessary and meaningful to understand the differential outcome of political Islam. Additionally, employing large-N research would be advantageous for further testing and generalizing the findings of this study.

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Employment	:	Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM), UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta
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Home Address	:	Jl. Jambu, Desa Purwosari, Kec. Wonoasri, Kab. Madiun 63157.
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B. Education Background

a. Formal Education

i. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah, Mejayan, Kab. Madiun, 2009.
ii. Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) Futuhiyyah, Mranggen, Kabupaten Demak, 2012.
iii. Madrasah Aliyah Negeri, Mejayan, Kabupaten Madiun, 2015.
iv. Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN), Mulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang, 2019.
v. Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII), Depok, 2023.

b. Non-Formal Education

i. Pondok Modern Al-Islam, Kapas, Sukomoro, Nganjuk, 2010.
ii. Pondok Pesantren Futuhiyyah, Mranggen, Demak, 2011.

C. Professional Background

1. Journalist, Jatim TIMES, 2019-2021.
2. Research Assistant, Faculty of Social Sciences, Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII), 2022-2023.
3. Researcher, under Prof. Jamhari Makruf of Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII) & Dr. Zahid Shahab Ahmed of Deakin University, 2023.
4. Researcher, Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM), Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN), Jakarta.

D. List of Awards and Achievements

1. Awarded “Best Student Paper 2022” by FOSS Best Student Paper Award, Faculty of Social Science, International Islamic University od Indonesia (UIII).
2. UIII Scholarship Award, 2021, Awardee of Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia Scholarship 2021 (MA in Political Science).
3. Awardee of the Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP), 2021.
4. Awarded “Best Investigative Report” by Jatim TIMES Media, 2020.

E. Organizational Background

1. A Chairman of The Student Senate Advisory Board, the State Islamic Higher Education of Indonesia, 2020-2023.
2. A Student President, Association of Social Science Student (ASSIST), Indonesian International Islamic University (UIII), 2021-2023.
3. A Chairman of Indonesian Student Legislative Society Forum, East Java, 2019-2020.
4. A Chairman of Student Senate, State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang, 2019-2020.
5. A Chairman of Student Senate, Faculty of Sharia, State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang, 2018-2019.

F. Publications

1. Books

a. "Bagaimana Tuhan Menciptakan Waktu?" Published by Republik Media, 2018.

2. Journal Articles

a. Auliya, A. N. F. (2023). "Socially Conservative but Politically Liberal: A New Trend in Muslim Political Elites' Views in Democratic Indonesia." *Dialog, 46(1), 86–99.*

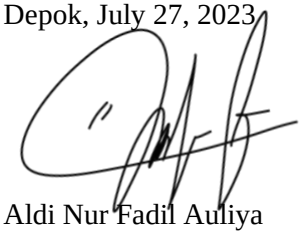
b. Auliya, A. N. F. (2019). Penanggulangan Pelanggaran Hukum Perkawinan Dan Tindakan KDRT di Kota Malang. *Sakina: Journal of Family Studies, 3(4).*

c. Going to be published, Zulfahri, Y. & Auliya N. F. A. "Ideological Parameters for Deradicalization Programs to Measure Changes in Terrorist Ideology in Indonesia" *Journal of Terrorism Studies.*

d. Going to be published, Auliya, A. N. F. "The Dilemma of 'Sharia Restriction Policy' Enforcement in Democratic Countries with a Muslim-majority: A Comparative Study between Malaysia and Indonesia."

e. Thesis, *"The Political Origins of Religious Rigidity and Flexibility: The Dissemination of Contemporary Political Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia."* Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia.

Depok, July 27, 2023



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