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Islam and Nation-Building in Indonesia and Malaysia

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Abstract
The increasing tensions between Islamists and the political leadership in Indonesia and Malaysia reveal that the relationship between religion and state has not yet been definitively settled in either state. The ongoing sociopolitical struggles over the relationship between Islam and national identity in both countries are also a result of their very different nation-building processes. To understand the current dynamics, it is necessary to analyze the specific ways in which Islam was incorporated in the constitutions of both countries after independence and how nation-building was directed by their respective political elites. Whereas Malaysia tried to build a nation based on the coexistence of different ethnic/religious groups, Indonesia meanwhile adopted an assimilationist approach — in which members of every ethnic/religious group were to be absorbed into one overarching nation. Due, not least, to these historical reasons, we can now observe a growing tendency toward dissatisfaction with the results of the nation-building processes among the Muslim communities in both of these countries.

Keywords: Indonesia, Malaysia, Nation-building, Islam, Religion and State, History

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Introduction

As neighboring countries, Indonesia and Malaysia share many cultural and historical similarities and a strongly interconnected past. Both are home to a very diverse, multiethnic, and multireligious population, among whom Islam is the majority religion. After they became independent from their colonial masters, however, the two countries faced the shared difficulty of developing a feeling of togetherness among their various heterogeneous societal groups and of creating an overarching national identity. After much protracted debate, the two countries eventually developed quite different models for including Islam in their respective nation-building processes.

In this paper I will not only show the differences between these two approaches, but also seek to broaden the understanding of the ambiguous relationship between Islam and nation-building in both of these countries. There are a high number of publications in existence about the sociopolitical role of Islam in Malaysia and in Indonesia (e.g. Butt 2010; Hefner 1997; Martinez 2001; Platzdasch 2009), and also about their respective nation-building processes (e.g. Schefold 1998; Shamsul 1996; Williamson 2002). Comparative studies between the two countries in terms of nation-building processes do exist (Brown 2005; Federspiel 1985; Lian Kwen Fee 2001), but for the most part do not focus explicitly on Islam as a decisive factor herein. The study of Keikue Hamayotsu (2002) that includes religion is quite comprehensive, but nevertheless is not structured in a strictly comparative way. In this way, this paper fills a lacuna in comparative social science research on the key issue of the relationship between Islam and nation-building in Indonesia and Malaysia.

My core argument is that the specific ways in which Islam was incorporated into their respective constitutions more than 50 years ago has had a decisive impact on the nation-building processes of both countries until today. Or, in other words, the specific legal positioning of Islam vis-à-vis other religions with the onset of national independence is still a hot topic of sociopolitical debate in both Indonesia as well as Malaysia. Consequently my hypothesis is that we can observe path dependency in the role of Islam in both social and political systems; while having been challenged by recent sociopolitical changes, the respective founding constitutional settings created after independence have still remained the reference frameworks until today however.

In order to analyze the ongoing debate about Islam and nation-building in both countries, I will first refer to relevant definitions and theoretical concepts of “nation-building” and of “religion.” Thereafter I analyze the nation-building models of Indonesia and Malaysia from a comparative perspective, and highlight their similarities and differences before comparing the current debates on Islam and the state in both countries. I will hereby also refer to public opinion surveys on this issue.

Finally, I will summarize my findings and present some tentative conclusions about the importance of path dependencies for the role of Islam in the nation-building processes of both countries. It is not my aim to provide a detailed and meticulous historic description of this topic, but rather to "simplify" the more complex historical dynamics in both countries in order to be able to draw pertinent conclusions on them from a comparative perspective.

Nation-building and religion

Since the early 20th century, the dominant political units in the world have been nation-states. In theory, "nation-state" refers to a political unit in which all inhabitants share a common identity. In practice, however, it is an arduous struggle to even cultivate such an identity. In Europe, most states were created by wars in the 19th and 20th centuries and borders were drawn by taking into consideration different ethnic and religious groupings. There, but also in other parts of the world, nation-building is still an ongoing process even at present, and competing narratives have led to bitter struggles and the unmaking of nations (Alagappa 2012: 2) — as the splitting up of the former Yugoslavia into at least seven new nation-states since the 1990s has demonstrated.

In Africa and Asia, however, most states emerged out of borders demarcated during the colonial era, ones that were arbitrarily established with little reference paid to the local ethnic or religious situation on the ground. Additionally, most African and Asian nascent postcolonial states lacked any shared mythology and historical memory on which the new state elites could draw (Smith 1989: 258). Thus following independence, coming mostly in the aftermath of the Second World War, the leaders of these new states faced the problem of harmonizing a heterogeneous society and of developing some form of collective identity as a necessary prerequisite for successful state-building. Since this collective identity is not naturally generated but rather socially constructed (Eisenstadt/Giesen 1995: 74), the governments had to be active in promoting their idea of the nation. To this end history was reinterpreted, and, very often, a national identity was invented in these so-called "imagined communities" (Anderson 2006). The newly founded states tried to give their inhabitants the emotional feeling of belonging to these embryonic nations. The respective governments tried "to sell" their own idea of a nation, and they were successful if these ideas were convincing to large segments of society (Derichs 2003: 69) — and particularly the ethnic and religious minorities. Nation-building can thus be defined as a process in which governments construct and try to spread a specific national identity. The target is to deploy cultural and religious forces — both ideologically and organizationally (Hamayotsu 2008: 174) — so as to bring the population together within a cohesive nation-state, ultimately in order to foster political and economic development as well as social stability.

A crucial question, then, is what factors even definitively create a nation? Traditionally, common ethnicity and/or religion are a strong basis for binding a society together. However, there are not many areas/countries in this world that are more than 90 percent homogeneous in terms of ethnicity or religion. Therefore many states have adopted the concept of a "civic nation," which emphasizes common territory, common citizenship, and equality regardless of ethnic, cultural, and/or religious differences (Alagappa 2012: 7). Many states have multilingual societies. For them, language policy is very important for the nation-building process. Should there be only one national language, and, if yes, how will non-speakers be convinced to use it?

Since a largely peaceful interethnic and interreligious coexistence is crucial for the very survival of the nation-state, the clear definition of the ideological foundations of it with reference to religion is also of the utmost importance (Ufen 2007: 320). Should there be a single state religion, a number of them, or a religiously neutral or even secularist state? Religion is thus an important part of the idea of a nation, since it can be either beneficial to or undermining of the desired shared identity of the population within a state.

There have been a variety of approaches in bringing Islam and the nation-state together. Some countries like Pakistan shifted toward an Islamic republic model, giving Islam an important role in state direction and development. Others like Turkey, under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, tried to develop a secular state in a large Islam-influenced society so as to reduce religious threats to national unity (Landé 1999: 108). Between these two extremes is the approach of certain other states like Egypt or Tunisia, namely to permit certain Islamic principles while also promoting equality with other religions and values (Federspiel 1985: 805).

The state position on religious issues is usually mirrored in its constitution, because a "constitution is not only the product of political and socioeconomic forces operating at the time of its framing, it is also about the intentions and motives of its framer" (Fernando 2006: 250). Since the constitution provides the legal foundation of a state, its impact on the nation-building process cannot be underestimated.

Nation-building and Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia before independence

Malaysia is a multiethnic state with three major groupings. The Malays, who are considered indigenous to Malaysia and follow Islam as their religion, constitute more than 50 percent of the population, whereas the Chinese and the Indian Malaysians are the major minority groups — making up about 30 percent and 10 percent of the local population respectively. Chinese and Indians had been living on the Malaysian peninsula for centuries, but the majority of them would arrive there to work as laborers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries during the period of

British colonial rule. Other indigenous groups, being mostly based in Eastern Malaysia, constitute about a further 10 percent of the population. Particularly those Malaysians with Chinese or Indian ethnic backgrounds typically use their own languages, but also have a quite different culture and religion than the Malays do. This delicate demographic balance has implications for the question of upholding Malaysian national identity.

According to Anthony Milner (1995: 89), the construction of a Malay nation (*bangsa*) only started in the early 20th century under British rule. Different to other countries in the region, Malaysia did not have to take up arms against their colonial master but rather only to negotiate about the exact terms of independence in the aftermath of the Second World War. British proposals for the creation of a Malayan Union, a confederation of Malay states intended to treat all Malayan residents equally regardless of their ethnicity, were met with strong protest from the Malay elites. They rejected the Union's potential formation because it elevated the status of other ethnic groups to that of equal citizens and abrogated the special privileges given to them as the indigenous people of the peninsula (Hassan 2007: 292). There were also fears that in the proposed confederation conferring equal citizenship would lead to Chinese domination in both the economic and political spheres (Neo 2006: 97).

Malay resistance and nationalism found its expression in the formation of the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO) in May 1946. Since then, Malaysian postwar history has been dominated by the antagonistic relationship between inclusive Malaysian nation-building and exclusivist Malay nationalism (Brown 2005: 20). UMNO as well as other Malay and Muslim organizations urged the election drafting commission to make Islam the state religion (Fernando 2006: 255). They did not succeed completely with that demand, but the first Malaysian constitution did however contain provisions that were inserted so as to protect the special rights that Malays received on the basis of their status as *bumiputera*, or indigenous "sons of the soil."

Compared to Malaysia, Indonesia meanwhile is not only much more heavily populated but also far more heterogeneous. With more than 250 million inhabitants it is the fourth-most populous nation in the world and there are hundreds of distinct ethnic groups there, speaking more than 700 (local) languages between them. However there is one clearly dominant ethnic group, the Javanese (Schefold 1998: 265), who have a distinctive language, culture, and history and who make up more than half of the entire Indonesian population. This composition — but also the sheer size and diversity of Indonesia's population — has resulted in enormous challenges for uniting the nation and for developing feelings of togetherness.

Islam is by far the most influential religion in Indonesia. Nearly 88 percent of the population adhere to Islam, but some islands and areas — particularly in Eastern

Indonesia — are clearly dominated by other religions. Thus being an Indonesian is neither legally nor culturally synonymous with being a Muslim. Additionally, at least half of the Indonesian Muslims "are either secular or nominal Muslims and do not consider Islam as the most important aspect of their identity" (Bruinessen 2002: Footnote 45).

Islam did however play an influential role in the struggle for independence, as well as in the development of the Indonesian nation-state in the first half of the 20th century. Islam hereby served as the basis for the country's first pan-ethnic mass social and political organization (*Sarekat Islam*), while the "shared consciousness of common religious belief helped foster a sense of Indonesian national identity" (Cammack 1999: 47f.).

In Malaysia, Islam is the religion of only slightly more than half of the total population. In contrast it is the followed religion of nearly 90 percent of Indonesians, thereby making it far easier to invoke Islam there in the context of nation-building. Most interestingly, this has not occurred in Indonesia however — yet it has to a much greater extent in Malaysia.

Drafting the constitution in Indonesia and Malaysia

Despite the existence of different concepts and reservations among the various minorities, Islam was eventually made the official, but not the state, religion of independent Malaysia. Article 3 (1) of the Constitution states that "Islam is the religion of the Federation; but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation." Although the Constitution has been amended many times since 1957, the provisions concerning Islam have nevertheless remained unaltered (Harding 2002: 161). However the abovementioned constitutional article and the term "official religion" are both very ambiguous, since their actual meanings are open to interpretation. While the early Malay elites regarded the clause as merely symbolic, it has come to be viewed differently from the original intention of its crafters over time (Hassan 2007: 293). Malaysia's first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman stated that his country "is not an Islamic State as it is generally understood, we merely provide that Islam shall be the official religion of the State" (Quoted in: Fernando 2006: 266). However at least three other prime ministers (Mahathir, Badawi, and Najib) would declare Malaysia, at some point in time, to be an Islamic state, often to counteract more orthodox Islamic groups demanding such a state (Hoffstaedter 2013: 478).

The position of Islam was strengthened in the Constitution of 1957, by directly connecting Malay ethnicity with Islam. This was done through the definition of "Malayness" in Article 160, Clause 2, which stated that Malay means a person who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, and who conforms to Malay customs. This definition is problematic however, since many

ethnic Malays in the neighboring states of Indonesia and the Philippines are not even Muslim. Additionally there are quite a number of people in Malaysia who are of Chinese or Indian descent and who are also followers of Islam. Nevertheless, in the Malaysian context, the abovementioned Article 160 reflects "how closely Islam is integrated into Malay identity and cultural practices, and with the way Malays perceive themselves" (Hassan 2007: 294). Since the Islamic faith was declared inseparable from Malay ethnocultural heritage and a symbol of Malayness, the "division between the Malays and non-Malays is widened by the religious divide between Muslims and non-Muslims, creating a distinct, acute awareness of the 'Other'" (Neo 2006: 96).

Islam was also institutionalized in Articles 32ff. of the Malaysian Constitution by determining that the King/Supreme Ruler (*Yang di-Pertuan Agong*) is to be chosen for a period of five years from among the nine Muslim rulers (sultans). Accordingly, one of the nine sultans is the highest authority in the land — symbolizing the hegemony of Malay Muslim rule in Malaysia. Article 153 is particularly controversial, since it stipulates that the King, acting on Cabinet advice, has the responsibility for safeguarding the special position of the Malays in the federation. This article is the basis for all privileges and affirmative action programs enjoyed by the Malay population in Malaysia, such as the so-called "*bumiputera* policies", the dominance of Malays in the public sector, and the economic advantages for Malays in the "New Economic Policy" after 1969.

In Indonesia, in contrast, as independence came closer the nationalistic leaders led by President Sukarno (1945–1966) decided not to put Islam at the ideological center of the nation-building process. After long and heated debates among the leaders of the independence movement, they decided that national unity would be threatened if Islam was chosen as the foundational basis of the state for a religiously and ethnically highly fragmented Indonesian nation (Hamayotsu 2002: 355). Islam was thus superseded by Sukarno's nationalist populism instead (Hadiz/Khoo Boo Teik 2011: 478). The idea of ensuring Islam a special role in Indonesia was hence dropped, as with the other minority religions in view this would have been a heavy burden for the young republic (Schefold 1998: 268).

In contrast to the Malaysian Constitution where Islam is treated prominently in Article 3, the Indonesian Constitution of 1945 (*Undang-undang dasar negara Republik Indonesia Tahun 1945*) does not even mention the word "Islam" at all. Instead, the Constitution stipulates a "state philosophy" — the Pancasila ("Five Pillars"), which recognizes a number of religions defined as monotheistic. Article 29 of the Indonesian Constitution, which has remained unchanged until today, consequently states that "The State is based upon the belief in the One and Only God." Before the declaration of independence and the founding Constitution of 1945, Muslim activists lobbied in vain for the inclusion of the so-called "Jakarta Charter" (*Piagam Jakarta*) in Article 29 of the Constitution. The seven advocated

words were "*dengan kewajiban menjalankan syariat Islam bagi pemeluknya*" ("with the obligation for adherents of Islam to follow syariah"). It is not clear if the inclusion of the *Piagam Jakarta* would have been the starting point from which to work in the direction of an Islamic State (Boland 1979: 27), but it would certainly have included the management of Islamic issues as a task of the government.

With the introduction of Pancasila, Indonesia did not become a secular state either however. The government has not only to safeguard religious freedom but is also compelled to utilize the state machine to encourage and promote the exercising of faith, including Islam (Butt 2010: 282). Pancasila can thus be seen as a compromise between secularism and an Islamic state, where religion (especially the one of the vast majority of Indonesians: Islam) becomes one of the key pillars of the state (Hosen 2005: 424).

The language and culture question in Indonesia and Malaysia

Language plays an integral role in nation-building and identity formation in multiethnic societies. It is a key factor in developing an overarching feeling of togetherness, given that a precondition for national development is that citizens can actually all communicate with each other. Many studies of nationalism and the emergence of nations have shown "that a broadly shared language is the most significant and critical component in the successful building of a nation" (Gill 2014: 17).

Article 152 of the Malaysian Constitution designates Malay as the official language of the country. The Malay language (*Bahasa Melayu*) was thus made the national one of Malaysia (*Bahasa Malaysia*). Intended as *bahasa kebangsaan* ("national language") or even *bahasa persatuan* ("unifying language"), it was considered vital to help work toward a single national language for this multiethnic country (Gill 2005: 246). However, this did not work in practice. While for more than 40 years the Malaysian government would promote Malay in the education system, the language used in the private sector, including business and industry, was different. In 2002 the government announced a reversal of its language policy vis-à-vis the education system, calling for a switch to English as the medium of instruction at all levels (Gill 2005: 241).

In political terms, Malaysia is dominated by a coalition (*Barisan Nasional*) of three ethnic parties: the earlier mentioned UMNO, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC). This coalition rules continuously, which underlines the ethnicity-based nature of Malaysian politics. There is no constitutional provision that the prime minister must be a Malay/Muslim. However, in the history of Malaysia to date, every single prime minister has been a Malay/Muslim, and furthermore has come from the UMNO — as the dominant force within the *Barisan Nasional*.

Due to the prevalence of multiple competing ethnic and cultural groups in both Indonesia and Malaysia, the establishment of nationhood required the cultivation of a (new) national identity. Not surprisingly, in Malaysia *bumiputera* culture — including Islam — was defined by the government "as the 'core' of the Malaysian national identity while recognizing, if peripherally, the cultural symbols of other ethnic groups" (Shamsul 1996: 323). The "National Culture Policy" (*Dasar Kebudayaan Kebangsaan*) introduced in 1970 and defined in 1971 emphasized the assimilation of non-Malays into Malay culture. It defined three principles as key guidelines for the Malaysian national culture:

1. The National Culture must be based on the indigenous [meaning Malay] culture
2. Suitable elements from the other cultures may be accepted as part of the national culture
3. Islam is an important component of the National Culture.

In this way, Malaysia adopted in its nation-building process both a national language and a national culture connected with the Malay ethnic group — and consequently Islam.

The Indonesian political elites at the time of independence rejected federalism to represent the country's diversity politically — the model that was preferred by the former colonial power, the Netherlands. Sukarno and most of the other important Indonesian leaders insisted instead on a unitary state, in order to promote a solitary Indonesian identity. Consequently the Indonesian leadership, and particularly President Sukarno as well as President Suharto (1966–1998), sought to subsume the hundreds of local ethnic and religious identities as part of a greater national Indonesian identity. The most important tool for the development of a unitary Indonesia was the development and promotion of a common national language. The choice for this was not Javanese, which more than 50 percent of the population had as their mother tongue, but rather Malay. This was the native language of less than 5 percent of the population at the time of independence, but was the *lingua franca* in the archipelago and was regarded as easier to learn than Javanese. During a pan-Indonesian youth convention in 1928, Malay was declared the new national language as part of an affirmation of the unity of fatherland, nation, and language (Schefold 1998: 266). At this congress of the Indonesian independence movement, the word "Malay" was replaced by "Indonesian" to describe the nomenclature of the future common language of the nation (Alisjahbana 1974: 399). If Javanese had been chosen as the national language, it would have been very difficult for the nationalist movement to obtain the support of all ethnic groups and to build a united front against Dutch colonialism (Montolalu/Suryadinata 2007: 41).

After independence, the Indonesian Constitution of 1945 made *Bahasa Indonesia* the official national language of the new country. In the years that followed,

Indonesian nation-building was closely connected with the dissemination of that national language. This project was ultimately quite successful. The common language *Bahasa Indonesia* became one of the most important tools in overcoming ethnocultural fragmentation and in superseding ethnic diversity, so that Indonesian identity could be constructed and institutionalized along the lines of a unitary national culture as a common frame of reference (Jinn Win Chong 2012: 21).

Nowadays *Bahasa Indonesia* has spread and is used everywhere in the archipelago, and serves as the official language in the domains of administration, politics, religion, education, culture, science, and technology (Montolalu/Suryadinata 2007: 48). Different than in Malaysia, non-Islamic groups agreed to use this language in their daily communications. Indonesia's national language policy effectively united its people, creating a strong national identity and promoting education and literacy throughout the country (Paauw 2009: 13). Peter H. Lowenburg gives the following reasons for why Indonesian was accepted so readily as the national language: "Its central role as a vehicle and symbol of the movement for political independence, its ethnically neutral status in not being the first language of any prominent ethnic group, and the freedom it provides from encoding in all utterances distinctions in rank and status" (1990: 114).

Nation-building and Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia since the 1980s

During the late 1980s and early 1990s Malaysia's then-Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad introduced his *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian Nation) approach of nation-building, emphasizing a Malaysian instead of a predominantly Malay identity for the state. This understanding of national culture centered on people being able to identify themselves with the country, to speak *Bahasa Malaysia* (the Malay language), and to accept the Constitution. This approach did not mention Islam as being an integral part of the Malaysian nation.

However, at the same time, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad — whose policies during his long period of premiership (1981–2003) were seen as very pro-Islam as compared to those of his predecessors (Hassan 2007: 298) — promoted the strengthening of Islam within the Malaysian state. This went hand in hand with Islamic revivalism worldwide, which was also reflected among the Malay society in Malaysia. Additionally, the pro-*bumiputera* policy led to a slow and cautious state-led Islamization (Ufen 2009: 321). During the 22-year administration of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, political Islam moved from the fringes of society to the political mainstream — with the Islamic opposition PAS attaining a level of maturity and sophistication that posed a fundamental challenge to the UMNO government (Liow 2004: 199). It consequently started to compete with PAS over which party was more Islamic. During this Islamization race, Malaysia witnessed an

incremental transformation wherein the very meaning of Malayness would change. Traditionally, it had been based on three pillars — namely language, religion, and royalty (*bahasa, agama, dan raja*). Gradually, however, the meaning of Malayness evolved in the public's perception away from Malay culture and traditions toward the religion of Islam instead.

Nation-building could either be built upon Malay culture and with Islam in support of Malay ethnic identity as a central pillar thereof or, alternatively, on multiculturalism — as represented in the tourism slogan "Malaysia – Truly Asia." In this regard, Malaysia did not pursue a coherent approach. Some attempts to implement an assimilation policy in terms of Malay language and culture (including Islam) have not been accepted by the country's ethnic minorities. Particularly the large Indian and Chinese minority prefer the state "to adopt a more accommodative position, thus proposing a 'pluralized' nation, where no one single ethnic community predominates" (Shamsul 1996: 347). Whereas the Malays base their claims on Islamic moral, traditional, and historical grounds, the non-Malays take a pluralistic stance, insisting that there should be equal and fair competition in all aspects of life (Yacob 2006: 42). Consequently, the struggle over which direction nation-building should be heading in is an ongoing process. All Malaysian governments are under pressure from the Malays' and PAS's demands for more Islamization, while simultaneously non-Malays continue to voice their concerns and demands for equal treatment (Hassan 2007: 305).

In general, the nature of Malaysian society being multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural, as well as multireligious presents considerable challenges to the task of successful nation-building. Additionally, the anticolonial war against the Dutch was an important unifying factor in Indonesia whereas Malaysia lacked such a shared struggle. In the first years after independence, a feeling of unity was promoted in Indonesia by the fear of a common enemy. The communist threat and the aggressive *konfrontasi* policy of President Sukarno thus promoted national solidarity during this critical period of time (Oh 1967: 428). Since its own independence, Malaysia meanwhile has been engaged in a very self-conscious process of nation-building (Nagata 1997: 130) — but has not yet succeeded in building a unified national identity. The fact that the government of Mahathir even emphasized the need to create a united Malaysian nation as well as the "1Malaysia" slogan of Prime Minister Najib Razak imply that Malaysia is still "one state with several nations" (Shamsul 1996: 327). This shows that Malaysia is currently still more a multicultural society with a variety of different identities, rather than a unified country with an overarching national one.

Some recent opinion polls underline this perspective. Only a small majority, 48 percent of respondents, said that Malaysia is becoming more united as time goes on, whereas 43 percent stated that the country is now more divided than previously (Merdeka Center for Opinion Research 2010: 7). Another opinion poll found that

nearly half of Malaysians identify themselves as members of their ethnic group first and foremost. This number is the highest among Malays (52 percent), and the lowest among Indians (16 percent) (Merdeka Center for Opinion Research 2006: 8). Additionally, 82 percent of Malays believe that their values and culture are superior when compared to the others in Malaysia (Chinese 72 percent, Indians 50 percent) (Merdeka Center for Opinion Research 2006: 27). Also in terms of the relevance of religion for the future, the answers among the different ethnic groups vary significantly. Asked what direction the respondents hoped that Malaysia will head in going forward, 43 percent of Malays wished for a more Islamic country; none of the Chinese or Indians asked shared this aspiration. The latter two hoped instead that all cultures and religions will be given equal rights (97 percent and 98 percent respectively), whereas only 38 percent of Malays supported this proposal (Merdeka Center for Opinion Research 2006: 38).

In post-independence Indonesia, two major political turnarounds would influence heavily the social order of the country. One was the military coup and the establishment of the New Order under President Suharto in 1965/66, and the other one was his resignation in May 1998. The following period of democratization and reform (*era reformasi*) led to a huge increase in the number of Islamic organizations in public life as well as to a new debate about the role of Islam for state and society. When the People's Consultative Council deliberated on proposed amendments to the 1945 Constitution between 1999 and 2002, some Muslim parties pushed — again, as in 1945, unsuccessfully — for the entrenchment of provisions resembling the Jakarta Charter (Butt 2010: 282). However Article 29 remained in the Constitution, so that Indonesia did not become a secular state but remained one based on Pancasila, the belief in the one and only God. Therefore, the specifically Indonesian "third way" (Hosen 2005: 440) between an Islamic and a secular state continued.

All Islamic parties together have received only between 20 and 30 percent of the votes in the four Indonesian parliamentary elections held since 1999. These stagnating election results have led many to "conclude that the function of religion is not as significant as expected and the role of political Islam in electoral politics remains minimal" (Hamayotsu 2011: 137). According to my own findings, however, this perception is erroneous, since political Islam has successfully penetrated the nationalist, secular, and Pancasila-based political parties — which has made them stronger in their ongoing electoral competition with Islamic parties. Thus not only Islamic but, in fact, practically all political parties in Indonesia are now a channel for Islamic aspirations (Tanuwidjaja 2010: 44). A good example is the Democrat Party of ex-President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Despite not being labeled as an Islamic party or as an Islamic presidential candidate respectively, they both adopted dogmatic Islamic policies to such a great extent that they were supported by the majority of the country's Islamic parties in the 2004 and 2009 presidential and parliamentary elections.

The growing importance of Islam as a political factor could be witnessed in the campaign for the position of Jakarta governor in February 2017. Then-incumbent Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama ("Ahok"), a Christian from the Chinese ethnic minority, came under threat from Islamic groups who called for his arrest because of alleged blasphemy against their religion. Several huge mass demonstrations with more than 100,000 Muslim participants against Ahok showed also that Islam is used as a weapon in political contests. Ahok lost the gubernatorial elections and was a few days later sentenced to two years in prison for insulting Islam by a controversial court ruling. Jakarta's new Governor Anies Baswedan later made contentious statements about the role of *pribumi* (literally, "native Indonesians"), ones that can be considered racist and discriminative against the country's ethnic minorities.

Until recently, Indonesia was generally regarded as having been quite successful in creating a common national identity despite its ethnic diversity. However, the future role of Islam for the country has yet to be decided. Certain political and societal organizations from the radical Islam end of the spectrum, such as Hizbut Tahrir (banned for now), are demanding the transformation of Indonesia into an Islamic state. Recent opinion polls reveal that more than 70 percent of Indonesians support the introduction of sharia law, and thus would favor an Islamic legal code as the "official law of the land" if given the option (*The Jakarta Post* 2013). Azyumardi Azra, the director of the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University's graduate studies in Jakarta, stated these numbers are surprisingly high — therein referring to the fact that most Indonesian mainstream Muslim organizations like Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama support the state ideology of Pancasila, and thus promote moderation in the application of Islamic teachings (*The Jakarta Post* 2013). Nevertheless, in another survey conducted by the Wahid Foundation in July 2016 around 60 percent of those Indonesians interviewed stated that they felt hatred toward other religious and ethnic groups. Among the respondents, more than 90 percent did not want members of the hated communities to become public officials and more than 80 percent did not even want them as their neighbors (Kompas 2016).

Conclusion

Without any doubt, Islam is an important societal factor shaping daily life in both Malaysia as well as in Indonesia. In the first years after independence, however, nation-building did not focus much on this religion since other issues seemed more important (Federspiel 1985: 806). Nevertheless, the way in which Islam was included in the founding constitution of both countries had a huge impact for the religion's role in the two respective states until today.

In Malaysia, the postcolonial national leadership institutionalized Islam as the state's official religion, "thereby jealously safeguarding the ideological as well as the political supremacy of the Muslim Malays" (Hamayotsu 2002: 354). In Indonesia,

in stark contrast, the rather nationalistic (and to some extent also leftist) postcolonial leadership around President Sukarno decided to not explicitly include Islam as the ideological basis of the state, but also not to pursue the idea of a secular state either. Whereas the sultans, as traditional Islamic leaders, became an important part of Malaysia's state apparatus, their counterparts in Indonesia were (with the partial exception of the Sultan of Yogyakarta) contrariwise sidelined.

Another crucial difference was the general direction taken in the respective nation-building strategies. Malaysia tried to build a nation based on the coexistence of different ethnic groups, while Indonesia adopted an assimilationist approach wherein the members of every ethnocultural group were to be absorbed into one overarching nation. Indonesia's melting pot strategy stands thus in contrast to Malaysia's multiculturalist policies, which let all ethnic minorities have their own individual rights.

Both approaches are closely reflected in the most important tool of nation-building, language policy. Indonesia has been successful in implementing its policy of one single national language. In Malaysia, in contrast:

> The Malay language was identified closely with the Malay people (and, by extension, the religion of Islam), the ethnic group which controlled the political power of the nation, and was felt to be a threat to the ethnic and cultural identity of the Chinese and Indians, who make up nearly half of the nation's population (Paauw 2009: 12).

For them, the colonial language, English, and not Malay became the language of interethnic communication and the ideal link to the rest of the world. Whereas *Bahasa Malaysia* is de facto mainly the language of the Muslim Malays, *Bahasa Indonesia* is the common language of all Indonesians irrespective of their ethnic or religious affiliation. It should be mentioned, however, that it was easier for Indonesia to give up their colonial language, Dutch, than it was for Malaysia to renounce its own; the latter has had, of course, to contend with the ever-increasing global clout of English.

The global Islamic revival that started in the 1980s has also affected the nation-building processes of Malaysia and Indonesia. In both countries, Islam has gained greater societal importance. The authoritarian governments in the early days were very conspicuous about the rise of political Islam, since it was seen as a threat to existing political structures (Nagata 1997: 134). Incrementally, however, the political elites in both countries would integrate this new societal movement into the political mainstream. The Malaysian state can even be seen as an Islamizing agent (Hadiz/Khoo Boo Teik 2011: 468), or Islam as an instrument that the Malays use to defend their privileged access to state resources (Kloos/Beerenschoot 2016: 202). The Indonesian state and its institutions have remained comparatively more secular meanwhile, despite also having shown an increasing tendency toward adopting Islamic values in recent years.

From a comparative perspective we can see that, despite their divergent colonial legacies, the respective decisions on how to include Islam in the constitutional framework as well as in the concepts of nation-building led to different sociopolitical consequences in both countries. It is remarkable, however, that both the Pancasila principles as well as the constitutionally special status of Islam in Malaysia have not — despite all the major sociopolitical changes experienced in the two countries — been changed or abrogated in the last 50 years. As described above, they were both compromises between contrasting social forces — ones that resulted in an intermediate path between a secular and an Islamic state being taken. Until now, they are the points of reference for nearly all sociocultural and political debates about the future of Islam in both countries. Both can serve as good examples of path dependencies, ones in which different decisions in similar environments lead to different historical developments. The current status quo is still influenced to a great extent by the past trajectory, and by decisions made at the crucial moment of both countries becoming independent.

On the other hand, one could also argue that many elements in the recent sociopolitical developments in both countries seem to be rather similar. In this way, it is justified to claim that despite differences in each's constitutional approach the outcomes are not so divergent. My initial hypothesis referring to a path dependency in the role of Islam in both social and political systems can thus only be partly maintained.

In recent years, it seems that there is a trend in both countries toward the aforementioned historical compromises being increasingly questioned and demands for an Islamic state being on the rise. This would inevitably lead to the conclusion that both nation-building processes were not as successful as originally intended. Indonesia abandoned its assimilation strategy to some extent by introducing strong decentralization measures, which not only give the different ethnic groups substantial autonomy but also enabled intolerant religious regulations at the local level. Like in Malaysia, Indonesia has also witnessed the rise of Islamic orthodox hardliners pushing for the introduction of an Islamic state and questioning the rights of the country's ethnic and religious minorities. Nation-building, which can be defined as a process in which a feeling of togetherness is created in multiethnic and multireligious societies, seems thus currently under threat in both Indonesia and Malaysia.

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