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TO COMBAT EXTREMISM,
HOW TO FRAME RELIGION MATTERS:
SOUTHEAST ASIA IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Takeshi Kohno

THE ROOTS OF INDONESIA'S RESILIENCE
AGAINST VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Jamhari & Testriono

REVISITING THE DUSUN NYOIR REBELLION
IN NARATHIWAT (SOUTH THAILAND), APRIL 1948

Christopher Mark Joll

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Resilience and Vulnerability

Takeshi Kohno

To Combat Extremism,
How to Frame Religion Matters:
Southeast Asia in Comparative Perspective

Abstract: *Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore are post-colonial states with diverse populations. By looking at how each state has combated Islamic extremism, this paper analyzes the state-Islam relations to identify their commonalities and differences. This paper argues that the Malaysian and Singaporean states frame Islam as a racial issue, thereby making Islam as public a matter is possible in order to achieve racial harmony. On the other hand, Indonesian and the Philippines states frame Islam as a private matter. Indonesian state lets mass Islamic organizations to manage Islam for the faithful. While in the Philippines, making the state's influence over Islam is less effective, and it is further amplified by the state's inability to tame Muslim's grievances. These different policy patterns are critical in understanding the state-Islam relations during national crises, especially to explain how those countries managed the crises around the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack.*

Keywords: Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, Singapore, Extremism, Framing, Islam.

Abstrak: *Indonesia, Malaysia, Filipina, dan Singapura merupakan negara pasca kolonial dengan populasi yang sangat plural. Dengan memfokuskan pada bagaimana negara-negara tersebut memerangi ekstremisme Islam, artikel ini menganalisis hubungan antara negara dan Islam untuk memahami pola-pola persamaan dan perbedaan di antara mereka. Tulisan ini berargumen bahwa negara Malaysia dan Singapura membingkai persoalan Islam sebagai isu rasial, sehingga menjadikan Islam sebagai masalah publik dimungkinkan untuk mencapai kerukunan rasial. Di sisi lain, negara Indonesia dan Filipina membingkai Islam sebagai urusan pribadi. Negara Indonesia membiarkan ormas-ormas Islam mengelola Islam untuk umatnya. Sementara di Filipina, pengaruh negara terhadap Islam menjadi kurang efektif, dan problem ini semakin diperkuat oleh ketidakmampuan negara dalam menjinakkan keluhan-keluhan umat Islam. Pola-pola kebijakan yang berbeda ini sangat penting dalam memahami hubungan negara-Islam selama krisis nasional, terutama untuk menjelaskan bagaimana negara-negara tersebut mengelola krisis di sekitar serangan 11 September 2001.*

Kata kunci: Indonesia, Malaysia, Filipina, Singapura, Ekstremisme, Pembungkai, Islam.

ملخص: إندونيسيا، وماليزيا، والفلبين، وسنغافورة هي دول ما بعد الاستعمار التي تتمتع بتنوع سكانيها. ومن خلال التركيز على كيفية محاربة هذه الدول ضد التطرف الإسلامي، يحلل هذا المقال العلاقة بين الدولة والإسلام لتحديد القواسم المشتركة والاختلافات بينها، ويجادل بأن دولتي ماليزيا وسنغافورة توظران قضية الإسلام على أنها قضية عنصرية، وبالتالي، فإن جعل الإسلام مشكلة عامة أصبح أمراً ممكناً لتحقيق التناغم العرقي. ومن ناحية أخرى، تضع إندونيسيا والفلبين الإسلام على أنه مسألة خاصة. وتسمح الدولة الإندونيسية للمنظمات الإسلامية الجماهيرية بإدارة الإسلام لمعتنقيه، بينما في الفلبين، أصبح تأثير الدولة على الإسلام أقل فاعلية، حيث تفاقمت هذه المشكلة بسبب عدم قدرة الدولة على ترويض شكاوى المسلمين. وتعتبر هذه الأنماط السياسية المختلفة مهمة للغاية في فهم العلاقات بين الإسلام والدولة أثناء الأزمات الوطنية، وخاصة لتوضيح كيفية إدارة هذه البلدان للأزمات حول هجمات 11 سبتمبر / أيلول 2001.

الكلمات المفتاحية: إندونيسيا، ماليزيا، الفلبين، سنغافورة، التطرف، تأطير، الإسلام.

One of the well-known traits of the states in Southeast Asia is the diversity of their populations. Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore all share the challenge of nation-building after colonial rule, and the state relationship with religion has been one of the major contested issues since independence. In particular, the status of Islam within the nation-state framework is often elevated to a heated debate and still engenders an emotional reaction from both its adherents and the other faithful. This paper aims to analyze the status of Islam in these four countries in order to explain Islam's relationship with each state, and attempts to propose two distinctive patterns of state relationship with Islam. Furthermore, in order to examine the state's capacity to respond to violent extremism and why some states are effective, and others are less so, the two proposed patterns are applied to how these four states responded to the events of September 11, 2001 attacks.

Extremism

I borrow J.M. Berger's working definition that "extremism" is "the belief that an in-group's success or survival can never be separated from the need for hostile action against an out-group (Berger 2018, 44)." In this research, in-group refers to a group which seeks to overturn the foundation of an out-group ("state" in this case) by employing Islamic theological ideas and hostile actions, including violence. Violent extremists, therefore, are those who employ violence as the only effective method to reach their objective. Violence includes any actions leading to harm, including the taking of innocent lives and the spread of psychological fear into the heart of a society.

Violent Islamic extremists who employ Islamic theological ideas and hostile actions often seek support and sympathy from fellow Muslims for a campaign of terror to succeed. The state, therefore, must counter extremist efforts by discouraging public sympathy for the extremists, and redirecting it in the state's favor.

Social Stability as a Goal of The State

The goal of the state in this study is to ensure the co-existence of people with diverse backgrounds for the maintenance and survival of the state. The state employs policies, doctrines, and actions to maintain social stability because the state leaders recognize that

instability provides little social incentive for economic growth and may undermine the legitimacy which the leadership enjoys. Given the acute sensitivities of inter-ethnic relations in this region, it is appropriate to place the maintenance of diversity, including ethnic, religious, racial, or class differences, as an important objective for state stability. In other words, any disturbances or social cleavages seriously challenge the very existence of the state in this region. Because the countries in this study consist of socially diverse populations, a critical state policy has been to ensure the people's co-existence – in other words, any provocations or incitement of social cleavages to divide a society almost always require strong state counter-responses in order to maintain social stability. Yet, as this study shows, each state's response is different, mainly because each state frames the issue differently, reflecting the diverse political culture and the institutional structure.

One key factor that needs to be considered when the state formulates a policy and enforces it is how “public” the policy issue in question is. In other words, the more public the issue is, the easier it is for the state to make legitimate decisions. On the other hand, if the issue in question is private, the state, as the ideal guardian of public matters, experiences a more difficult time to make legitimate decisions and enforce policies. Hence, the state needs to frame issues publicly as much as possible if its policy response is to be legitimately effective. This distinction – public vs. private– directly affects how effectively the state can manage social issues, as well as the state's capacity to do so, as explained below.

The State Capacity in Private vs. Public Issues

The state is an administrative mechanism to enforce national will. Because a nation is created based on public fiction (Harari 2015), its leadership and followers repeatedly need to define a sense of unity and have a degree of consensus on what their nation stands for. The consensus for unity manifests as a state response when a national crisis hits, and the manifestation gets stronger when the state foundation is threatened. Therefore, a series of crises and how the state overcomes them has come to be known as the process of state building. For example, the many years of the state-building process in Europe included national crises such as wars and pandemics, which helped build stronger states through extensive taxation and the creation of state administrations to enforce policies (Tilly 1975).

Yet, the effective demonstration and policy implementation of the leadership's will and its success depends on the state's capacity. Building on Francis Fukuyama, this paper identifies a state's scope and strength as a measurement of state capacity (Fukuyama 2005). According to Fukuyama, a state's functions can be categorized into two: SCOPE (realm of coverage of state activities in society) and STRENGTH (effectiveness of a state's planning, execution, and enforcement ability). For example, providing basic infrastructure, such as roads, water, and an electricity supply, and maintaining national defense are the minimum scope of state activities. Maintaining law and order is also a key example of a narrow state scope. On the other hand, a wider state scope including state subsidies for agricultural production, for example, represents an activist role which may distort the demand-supply market mechanism. An additional example of wider scope could include social policies such as unemployment benefits and national medical insurance.

It is clear that the scope of state activities varies among countries, and so does their strength. For example, a citizen may find the procedure to obtain driver's license in India costly (both the fee and the time it takes), compared to other countries (Bertrand et al. 2007). This example demonstrates how both the scope and the strength of the state are focused on pursuing a clear public interest. This is exactly what policy is about – ensuring that public interest is met and satisfied in the eye of the public, thereby providing the state political legitimacy to govern. In most democracies, and even in an authoritarian government where election is a key part of government legitimacy, this logic is applicable.

However, the focus of this study – religious affairs – often does not clearly represent public interest in a society, particularly where both multiple religions co-exist, and a wide degree of religiousness is displayed. In such a social setting, state policy intervention in religious affairs usually creates problems because religion covers both private and public realms. As a rule, the more public the issue is, the easier for the state to make legitimate decisions. On the other hand, if the issue in question is private, the state, again as the ideal guardian of public matters, has a more difficult time making legitimate decisions. In other words, Fukuyama's framework is useful in explaining the appropriate role of the state when the state's will is aligned with public interest. For example, there is little public dispute to the state's role in support of public safety by enforcing traffic laws. But when the state's scope covers part of the

private realm, such as religious faith and activities, the state's will may not be clearly aligned with public interest. The state may provoke anger from a particular religious group if its strength is manifested to enforce regulations to limit and influence such private faiths and activities. It is often the case that even a small indication of the drift of the state's will from what is perceived as public interest among certain religious groups creates the opportunity for, in Berger's word, an "in-group" to form, and some of the in-group members who disagree with the state policy may resort to violence to correct the policy. This explains the state's difficulty in regulating religious beliefs and activities.

Framing Religion As Policy Issue

There are two opposing ways to understand the relationship between the state and religion. First, when religion has been severely abused by the political power of the state in the past, the current state must strictly protect the freedom of religion from abuse. France's *laïcité* is a prime example of this. Until the French finally decided to legally separate the church from the state, the institution of church and state often paralleled with an agreement to share power between the two – the church dominates the sphere of spiritual authority and the king the sphere of political authority (Bendix 1978, 596). This power-sharing agreement helped support the Catholic church with state protection, and in return the state enjoyed legitimacy to rule with powerful religious authority. Learning from past abuses of power, the historical trend to separate state power from religious authority continued as more political power was held by civil authority via electoral process, and not by aristocratic order.

However, the historical lesson from power abuses resulting from the marriage between religion and state authorities did not lead to a complete separation of state from religion in the world. The second extreme view is that the state has a legitimate claim over religion in order to make the religion the foundation of political power. Claims for establishing an Islamic state, for example, are based on the belief that such a religious foundation brings stability and prosperity for a given society. An extreme example of such a state is the Islamic Republic of Iran where the supreme religious authority oversees, and vetoes, if necessary, the workings of civil authority in every segment of society, even such private realms as dating and clothing.

Not all states are as theocratic as Iran or adhere to the strict separation of religion and state that France does because most states fall somewhere in-between. The countries in this research – Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore – are no exception. They all have different political cultures as well institutional structures which are still emerging. What is common among them, however, is that they are all post-colonial states and endowed with very diverse populations. They also share authoritarian experiences under powerful leaders, namely Suharto, Mahathir Muhammad, Ferdinand Marcos, and Lee Kwan Yew, and managed emerging opposition to the governments by strict rules - both judicial and extra-judicial. Legally, Malaysia and Singapore are equipped with the Internal Security Act and similar laws which allow the state to detain opposition preventatively and suppress subversion. Indonesia under Suharto also used subversion laws. The Philippines under Marcos suppressed opposition by declaring martial law. In addition to judicial instruments, extra-judicial means such as the use of military were heavily used to silence opposition in Indonesia and the Philippines. Yet, this paper will show two general patterns of the state management of religion by analyzing how each state responded to violent Islamic extremism: framing religion as a religious affair or framing religion as a racial affair.

What then makes a difference when it comes to state strength to plan, execute, and enforce a policy over religion? As we will see, how the state frames the issue makes a difference in its ability to influence religious affairs. I borrow the concept of framing from social movement literature, which says, in essence, that framing is a process of establishing beliefs that give meaning to movement participants for action (Polletta 2009, 34–35). Concretely speaking, assigning meaning occurs in protest symbols, rhetoric, schema, and discourse, and is often visibly seen in messaging on protest placards and social media. Although social movement literature initially made use of this framing concept as an explanatory factor to motivate protest participants, this concept is also useful for explaining the process to counter protest in the hands of state. Pursuing an empirical analysis of shipyard union disputes in Scotland in the 1970s, Ignatow described how protest and opposing factions competed for power by issuing series of statements in a hope to capture public motivation (Ignatow 2009).

As a counter-protest framer, the state needs to frame their actions and policies as publicly as possible because the framing of policies

as public interest will garner more support among its citizens for compliance, and hence increase state strength. This is because citizens who maintain a degree of religious privacy and attempt to protect it from state intervention need to find the state's effort legitimate in protecting public interest. Although religious faith, legally, is considered to be within the realm of privacy in many countries and is one of the fundamental individual rights (freedom of religion), its role often extends to managing communal disputes within the same religious community. Accordingly, the state is mostly obligated to observe this right and protect it from any infringement, unless public interest is in danger. For this reason, state policy choices and enforcement strength over religious issues are much more limited than issues of clear public interest such as preventing traffic accidents and combating crimes. The state, therefore, needs to frame religious issues as publicly as possible in order to pursue and implement policy choices to influence public perception in the state's favor.

The shifting emphasis of religion from the public to the private realm can be historically seen from the fact that the majority of states at present do not sponsor a particular religion. In the discussion on state religion, McCleary and Barro show that, out of 188 countries in the study, the percentage of countries which have state religion dropped from 59 percent in 1900 to 39 percent in 1970 and 40 percent in 2000 (McCleary and Barro 2019, 93, 112). McCleary and Barro found that a country sponsors a particular religion when most of the population are adhering to the main religion and a country is usually intermediate in size. Indonesia does fit with this majoritarian pattern, but the size is too large. Malaysia does fit both patterns and it is the only country of the four that sponsor a state religion. Singapore may qualify to have the majoritarian pattern, but the tiny size of the island would disqualify it. The Philippines may fit with the majoritarian pattern and size, but it has no state religion. While acknowledging that each state has its own patterns in managing religion, the next task is to focus on identifying Islam both legally and politically in these countries.

Locating State's Relationship with Islam in the Four Countries

In order to explain how the state can manage religious beliefs and activities via its scope and strength, we first need to examine the relationship between the state and the religion of Islam in Indonesia,

Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore. Table 1 is an overview of the Muslim population, its percentage of the whole population, Islam’s legal status, and the state’s influence (scope) over Islamic affairs in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore.

Table 1: Muslim population and its percentage, its legal status, and the state’s influence

	Population (millions)	% Muslim	Legal Status of Islam	State’s influence (scope) over Islam
Indonesia	268	88.1	Recognized along with others	Limited – Personal faith managed through religious organizations
Malaysia	32	61.4	Constitutionally “the religion of the Federation”	Broader – Framed as inter-racial relations and managed by state apparatus, while intra-racial competition over Islam
Philippines	107	5.1	Recognized “the separation of church and state”	Limited – Legally barred to intervene in personal faith and separatism complicates state policy responses.
Singapore	5.7	14	Recognized along with others	Broader – Framed as inter-racial relations and managed by state apparatus

Source: (Population) The World Bank, World Development Indicators database (% Muslim) Singapore from General Household Survey (2015); Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines from Pew Research Center (2010)

Indonesia

Indonesia is by far the largest nation of the four, and the vast majority (88%) of the population identify as Muslim. Islam enjoys a constitutionally-recognized status along with the other major religions

of Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism, which means Indonesia does not provide an exclusive legal status to Islam. Although around the time of independence Indonesian leaders debated making Islam the basis of the state, they instead settled on a compromising policy called *Pancasila* (or the five principles, the first of which refers to belief in a supreme God) which avoided an explicit mention of Islam as the sole basis for the new state (Anshari 1985).

Furthermore, the Indonesian state at the national level managed to avoid implementing sharia law up until 2001, when the central government allowed only the Aceh province to adopt sharia as part of their criminal code (implemented in 2003). During the aftermath of the power transition in 1998, however, the provincial governments passed numerous local sharia regulations, although an increase in such regulations faltered toward the end of 2000s (Bush 2008).

Islam in Indonesia has remained within the realm of religious privacy, but such religious privacy remained in the hands of unique and active mass Islamic social organizations, such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. They are unique in the sense that there are about thirty million members in each, and their socially, deep-rooted organizational strength helped these two largest organizations last longer than the history of the Indonesian Republic. Although Muslim elite efforts for wider representation in institutionalized politics has not been successful, Muslim social leadership has enjoyed significant public support through these mass Islamic social organizations. Although the founding of these mass Islamic social organizations predated Indonesia's independence, they have successfully managed to keep themselves relevant to changing social needs. In addition, both NU and Muhammadiyah, despite their differences in Islamic practices and interpretations, co-existed without significant antagonism, and concentrated their efforts on supporting the social needs of their adherents, in areas such as education and health. NU and Muhammadiyah's party politics have remained in a minority role, or at best a coalition partner, in the parliament.

The state apparatus managing Islamic affairs is the Ministry of Religion.¹ The Indonesian state, in 1946, established the Ministry of Religion which was charged with overseeing state-recognized religious activities (Islam, Christianity, Catholic, Hinduism, and Buddhism) and religious schools. In other words, the Ministry of Religion is tasked with ensuring the implementation of state policies in all religious

matters nation-wide, except in politics. Therefore, the Ministry's influence in effect has been very limited compared to its counterparts in Malaysia's JAKIM and Singapore's MUIS (both of which will be explained in later sections). For example, the Ministry neither appoints the leadership of the mass Islamic social organizations nor coordinates the standardization of Islamic legislation and teaching content. Yet in the eyes of NU and Muhammadiyah, the Ministry has been, and remains, a lucrative government institution for prestige and funding because of the large state funding provided for the pilgrimage program.

In his analysis of social disturbances and violence in Indonesia, John Sidel's study on violence points to the fact that the class tensions between Chinese and Malay ethnic groups, originating from economic disparities and prejudices, is often fueled by religious rhetoric and justifications (Sidel 2006). Notice that there is a racial element in Sidel's findings on political violence. For President Suharto, whose aim was to rebuild Indonesia by reinvigorating domestic industries with foreign capital injection, any kind of social disturbance from class and racial cleavages fueled by religious rhetoric was something to avoid at all costs. After learning from the failure of divisive politics by his predecessor, Suharto and his men in the armed forces were committed to avoid provoking social cleavages in Indonesia. Called SARA, an acronym of *Suku* (ethnicity), *Agama* (religion), *Ras* (race), and *Antar-golongan* (class), the state explicitly prohibited the use of these social cleavages in public narratives, let alone political campaigning, while portraying the state as defenders of *Pancasila*. For example, Suharto himself, along with his vice president Adam Malik in the early 1980s, made sure to instill "*Pancasila* democracy" in the hope of creating Indonesia's own version of governance style by rejecting individual-based Western democracy and portrayed SARA as something the Western democracy cherishes in the name of protecting individual rights and freedom. Islam also fell victim to the *Pancasila* democracy which put a strict lid on the public narrative of religion. In the state's eyes, a society was supposed to unite regardless of a diverse ethnic population under the banner of *Pancasila*. Therefore, the armed forces became the domestic instrument to put down social instability and conflicts arising from these social cleavages, and it is not difficult to imagine how Islamic activism often became a target of military repression. One major incident of such repression of Muslim activism by the armed forces was the Tanjung Priok riot in 1984. The state claimed that anti-*Pancasila* Islamic

extremists rioted as radical Muslim preachers incited attacks against local law enforcement. The army intervened to put down the riots with brutal force by killing 18 according to the military commander, but the media reported hundreds more were killed (Ramage 1995, 37).

The state policy to suppress social antagonism arising from SARA indeed restricted Islamic activities, but the state did not wipe out Islam. Historically, Indonesia was not immune to religious rebellions. For the newly independent Indonesia, the immediate task for the state was the management of regional rebellions in Sulawesi, Sumatra, Java, and Aceh. Sulawesi and the Sumatra-based rebellion was organized by dissident military commanders joined by politicians who opposed the central government. Jointly called PRRI/Permesta, only the elements of the Sulawesi-based rebellion (Permesta group) carried an Islamic banner and their strength was mainly limited to ethnic support in the South Sulawesi region. On the other hand, Java and the Aceh-based rebellion, called Darul Islam movement, did carry Islam as a banner to oppose the central government by proclaiming an Islamic State. All of the above rebellions by the mid-1960s were put down militarily, but the Darul Islam movement went underground and reemerged later in the form of Jemmah Islamiyah in the 1990s.

Generally speaking, the Indonesia state allowed Islamic activities within the boundaries set by the state. As mentioned above, Indonesia's Islamic affairs is framed as a private issue, and the ownership of Islam is in the hands of private citizens, many of whom belong to mass Islamic social organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah, not to the state. In other words, by surviving within the boundaries of the state, Islam flourished in moderation. Not until Suharto himself found Islam useful in strengthening his legitimacy to rule, did the state gradually accommodate Islam from within. Selected elites were allowed to establish the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association (ICMI) in December 1990. ICMI as the name indicated was a highly elitist group of people who had been the true beneficiary of Suharto's successful social development – well-educated Muslim middle-class intellectuals. They were also exposed to Islamic political movements overseas, and made an effort to meet the rising aspirations and expectations of the Muslim middle-class to participate in politics. Contrary to their initial hope, however, with the fall of Suharto in 1998 and political opening that accompanied it, ICMI's prominence diminished.

ICMI's social influence declined but the democratic opening after Suharto's fall gave rise to Islamic party politics and Islamic extremism. New Islamic parties with an Islamic agenda were established and contested elections. Yet, the results of both the 1999 and 2004 elections showed the parties with Islamic platforms were badly divided and failed to win a majority in the parliament (Von der Mehden 2007, 13–14). SARA meanwhile came out of a Pandora's box to give full opportunities for revenge attacks between Christians and Muslims in Poso and Ambon, and ethnic/religious strife in Kalimantan. These local killings attracted nation-wide militant support from Java and elsewhere, making bloody headlines which again attracted more participation from fearless militant youths. The newly democratically-elected state of President Abdulrahman Wahid failed to effectively intervene to stop the killings by extremists, and mass Islamic social organizations could not even influence the Islamic militants. For example, during the 1999-2000 mass killings in Ambon between Christians and Muslims, when a large influx of Muslim militants led by a group called Laskar Jihad joined in defense of local Muslims, Islam as faith - a private and sacred matter - only incited personal emotions and provoked action on both sides as correctly described by the aforementioned Sidel's analysis. Considering the private nature of religion, the Indonesian state had little room to redirect the emotions of warring parties on religious grounds, and even when new garrisons of police and army officers were dispatched, some officers took sides to fight instead of suppressing the conflict.

The power vacuum created after the collapse of long-time authoritarianism was wide open. Political and social chaos ensured that no single state actor was willing to take responsibility or counter on religious grounds. And the events around the September 11, 2001 attacks forced the Indonesian state to step out of the SARA cocoon and gradually move to take the responsibility for state stability.

Malaysia

In Malaysia, Islam enjoys a constitutional status as “the religion of the Federation” and its state practices are ceremonially performed by traditional Muslim leaders (*Sultan*) in federation states.² While the constitution does not mention sharia as a legal tool to enforce civil and criminal code, the state explicitly enforces laws by issuing religious opinions (*fatwa*) through the Islamic Development Department

(*Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia*) at the federal level and the Islamic Affairs Department (*Jabatan Agama Islam*) at the provincial level. Given the ethnic diversity in the country and how closely religion is tied to ethnicity, Islam is perceived as a religion of Malays, and other key ethnic groups such as Chinese and Indians historically possessed and often expressed their suspicion of the states' religious policies (Crouch 1996, 169). For example, the state's subsidies for Islamic propagation programs on mass media did not equal that for other recognized religions such as Confucianism and Hinduism. While Islam being merely a communal identity was upgraded to an official religion in newly independent Malaysia, Islam since then has been unleashed beyond community and mainstreamed into the process of nation-building throughout the 1980s.

Politically speaking, what is notable in Malaysia regarding the status of Islam is that Islam provided a realm for the power struggle between the United Malays National Organization (UMNO, the long-time governing party) and its opposition *Parti Islam Se Malaysia* (PAS). In other words, Islam has been a contested topic closely tied with the elite struggle among ethnic Malay elites in order to showcase the legitimacy of Islamic policies (Anwar 2005).

As a background context, it is important to note that racial balance in terms of economic influence did not translate into power for the Malays, even though Malaysian Muslims are a majority in terms of population. The Chinese population was and has been strong in maintaining the lead in economic activities. Inheriting the pre-independence colonial practices, the elites of major racial groups (Malays, Chinese and Indians) agreed to a political compromise. Originally called the Alliance and later changed to *Barisan Nasional* (BN) in 1974, three ethnic parties - UMNO, Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) and Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) - joined to form a political alliance. From the outset, Malaysia's racial balance was fragile, and the elites were aware that open inter-racial competition in the electoral process made the racial antagonism come to the surface. One major incident which made a lasting policy impact was the May 1969 riot between the Malays and the Chinese. Singapore shortly before its independence in 1965 had already experienced the same in July 1964. The Malaysian government at first blamed a communist insurgency, but the official account a year later acknowledged that there was an ethnic polarization

that contributed to the riot between Malays and Chinese (Comber 1988, 74). This riot prompted the imposition of emergency rule that lasted until 1971 and instilled each racial group with fear, making the state commit to racial harmony as its highest policy goal for the following years. Taking the side of the Malays after this racial riot that revealed Malaysia's social fragility, one member of UMNO leadership and medical practitioner Dr. Mahathir Mohamad heavily criticized then UMNO leadership for being pro-Chinese. It was in this context that, in 1970, the Malaysian state created an official doctrine, similar to Indonesia's *Pancasila*, called *Rukun Negara* (national principles), which also consisted of five principles, including a belief in God, requiring its nationals to pledge support to an officially-recognized religion. Also, another key policy move in this context was the introduction of the New Economic Policy (hereinafter NEP) whose aim was to raise income levels and increase employment opportunities for all Malaysians regardless of race. NEP was a policy tool to enlarge the economic pie so that racial disparities could be evened out, essentially giving the Malays more economic and educational opportunities. After rising to Prime Minister in 1981, Mahathir made official his long-held conviction that there was a degree of mental backwardness among Malays and that it had to be overcome. His book called *The Malay Dilemma*, published in 1970 but promptly banned, was a testament of ethnic Malays' self-criticism for their own backwardness, and a declaration for the state to implement a racial preferential policy. The attempt to overcome this backwardness took the form of a big push by the state to promote more ethnic Malays within governmental ranks by providing state subsidies to climb the social ladder. In other words, racial inequality was seen as an obstacle for state stability.

Meanwhile, the political competition intensified among the Malay elites: the governing party UMNO and the regionally concentrated opposition PAS battled over political legitimacy, including which party represented authentic Islam for the Malaysian state. PAS was expelled from BN in 1977, but its Islamic platform remained as the basis for the party, yet it had a strong base remaining in the northern part of the Malay peninsula, in areas such as Kelantan and Terengganu. As the Malays became educated and wealthy, the middle-class Malays rose in numbers thanks to the state-led NEP and accompanying urbanization in the late 1970s. Politically, both UMNO and PAS had a youthful

infusion from a group called *Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia* (ABIM), which was a campus-based Islamic activist movement group, who wanted to cleanse social ills such as poverty and corruption by adhering to true Islamic teachings. Believing that social ills can be cured by going back to the original practices of Islam, ABIM's educated Malays' youthful passion caused them to pursue an agenda of purifying Islam as a mainstream method of modernizing Malaysia.

In responding to the growing demand for Islamization, the state started experimenting to make Malaysian Islam a global model that incorporated Islam with modernity. Domestically, this state-led Islamization was aimed at containing Islamic critics who claimed that modernizing Malaysia meant Westernization. Concretely, the UMNO's survival strategy was first to co-opt its ABIM critics by employing ABIM activist politicians and inserting Islamic elements into government policies, thereby increasing the state influence in Islamic affairs. For example, the most prolific ABIM leader Anwar Ibrahim joined UMNO in 1982.³ Prime Minister Mahathir in the same year launched a series of Islamization projects, two of which were the establishment of the Islamic Bank and the International Islamic University. Mahathir's state-led Islamization effort also applied to *halal* food certification and the promotion of Islamic values into state management (Crouch 1996, 170–71). In addition, this state-led effort was again a political strategy to counter opposition. For example, UMNO often played an Islamic card to discredit PAS, and vice versa. Using the influence of Islam, therefore, has not only been a method to increase governing legitimacy among the Malays by fending off the opposition challenge, but also to promote the racial equity framework by increasing the Malay's status relative to an economically strong Chinese and Indian population in order to gain legitimacy from Malay voters. One should not overlook that the state also made full use of the Internal Security Act (currently amended to become the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act of 2012) to silence its critics.⁴ This law was an often-used tool to detain communist elements in the 1960s and Islamic extremists in later years.

In sum, Malaysia's state relationship with Islam was, first, closely tied with the state's commitment to racial harmony, and second, with the political competition among ethnic Malay elites. Into the 1980s and 1990s, as Malaysia excelled to become a wealthy country with international standing,⁵ so was the status of Islam in Malaysia. The

state's Islamic bureaucracy expanded to enforce numbers of newly approved Islamic laws (Anwar 2005, 122–24). Even with increasing the state's intervention into ordinary lives by the Islamic bureaucracy, the Malaysian state's management of Islam was essentially confined within its racial harmony efforts and intra-Malay power struggle. These two trends were intensified in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001, which exposed Malaysian Islam on the world stage.

The Philippines

The Philippines case is more complex. It is complex in the sense that historically deep-rooted social discrimination between Christians and Muslims is firmly established by the state-sanctioned land grab by Christians, and exacerbated by state elites mishandling of rebellions with intense military operations which has resulted in countless civilian casualties.

Although religion (dominant Catholicism as well as minority Islam) projects a powerful influence in social life, the state constitution (the 1987 Constitution) clearly states that “the separation of Church and State shall be inviolable” (Article 2 Section 6). This, in effect, prohibits the state's institutional influence on religion, including Islam. Hence, the ownership of religion is in the hands of private citizens who belong to social organizations such as churches and mosques. Socially speaking, this may appear to be similar to that of Indonesia, except that the Filipino Muslims are regionally concentrated in parts of Mindanao and the surrounding islands and represent an extreme minority (barely 5% of the whole population). As another vivid contrast to Indonesia, Filipino Muslims do not enjoy unity by belonging to mass Islamic social organizations such as Indonesia's NU and Muhammadiyah, but instead are divided by years of war and rivaling traditional clans. From a nation-building perspective, the core issue for Filipino Muslims is that many of them do not feel part of the whole nation called the Philippines. In other words, from the perspective of the state, the Muslim problem is an obstacle for nation-building, and often argued that it is a separatism problem that needs to be put down by force.⁶

Called *Moros* (by Spaniards during colonial time) or *Bangsamoro* (by themselves nationalistically), Filipino Muslims consist of distinctive ethno-linguistic groups living on the island of Mindanao and nearby islands. For the Philippine state, Muslims are “forgotten” independence

fighters, whose contribution to resist Spanish and US colonialism was historically significant but much ignored (Majul 1999). Partially due to elite ignorance and a lack of interest in the Muslims, the Philippine state used Islam as a political cure to co-opt Muslim political opposition, but the success of such an effort has been at best questionable.

Originally called the Commission on National Integration, the Office of Muslim Affairs (OMA) was created by the government in 1987. It was later remolded into a more Muslim leadership organization called the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos in 2010, placing representatives from major Muslim clans, such as Maranao, Maguindanao, Iranon, Yakan and Tausug in leading positions. Despite the state's effort to continue using Islam for unity, the traditional clan customs, and practices, as well as their social hierarchies, remain strong and undermine the state's perception that all Muslims are the same when in fact there is a vast diversity among them.

The Philippine state, with a tiny fraction of Muslims among a majority Catholic population, operating under the constitutional separation of state from religion, recognized *sharia* as one of the legal instruments which has jurisdiction over all Muslims in small areas in Mindanao and Sulu. These areas were initially called the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).⁷ In other words, compared with the fellow archipelagic states of Indonesia and Malaysia, the Muslim social recognition is acutely concentrated in Mindanao and the surrounding islands, which is more than a thousand kilometers away from the capital elites. This acute minority status at the margin is the source of Muslim resentment against the central government's ignorance and years of discrimination and abuses, complicating the state's response aimed at maintaining social stability.

Politically speaking, the Philippine state had little incentive to pay attention to Muslim minority issues. In addition, when Muslims rebel, the state treats it as an issue of separatism. The historical context goes back to the state's push of Christian migration to Mindanao in the 1960s, and this one-sided policy favoring Christians became a source of land conflicts (Wurfel 1988, 155). The state-sponsored land grab by Christians escalated local conflicts between Christians and Muslims, and in May 1968, a former governor of Cotabato province in Mindanao established the Muslim Independence Movement. Worse still, the state equated the Muslim independent movement with other local

insurgencies such as the Communist Party of the Philippines and its military arm the New People's Army. Even after the fall of the Marcos regime in 1986, the Philippine state battled against leftist militants sometimes in urban warfare, and Muslim rebels. As for Muslims, Islam became an identity to loosely unify Muslim opposition to the state, although the local clan structure remained strong among Muslims. A unifying military arm of Muslims, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), was established in 1972, and later the Islamic identity within the rebellion was clearly pronounced with a formation of a splinter group in 1978, called the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). MILF declared that its goal was to create a separate and independent Islamic state.

Concurrently with the armed operation to put down MNLF and MILF, the state tried to address the conflict by finding some kind of autonomy for the Muslims. Different presidents proposed and agreed on autonomy compromises, culminating in the formation of the aforementioned ARMM during the administration of President Fidel Ramos. Yet, to fulfil the 1996 Peace Agreement, which outlined a path for peace, faced backlash even among the signatory MNLF elites. The splinter group MILF rejected ARMM and intensified its armed struggle, while clandestinely working with other extremist groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah and Al-Qaeda.

The events of September 11, 2001, which occurred during the Macapagal-Arroyo administration, exposed the extent of the foreign extremist network in Mindanao. Faced with the wrath of the United States and occasional terrorist attacks, the Philippines state was forced to rethink the *Moro* separatism problem in a new light.

Singapore

From the beginning, the Singapore state's threat perception has been much more directed toward external factors which influence domestic social conditions. Surrounded by regional giants Malaysia and Indonesia while its survival depends on external trade, it is not a fair treatment to compare Singapore with the other three. Indonesia's first president Sukarno believed that newly independent Malaysia (including Singapore at that time) was an outpost of British colonialism, and decided to launch subversive actions against it. Locally called *Konfrontasi* (confrontation), Sukarno saw Singapore as the colonial

epicenter in the region (Legge 2003, 407). The 1965 bombing of MacDonal House (a building of a British Bank office) in Singapore was carried out by infiltrated Indonesian soldiers.

Furthermore, the Singaporean state, despite having only 14 percent of Malays in the whole population, treats its inter-racial relationships very seriously, as the peace can easily be disturbed by the smallest quarrel between Chinese and Malays. At first glance, Singapore remains a secular state which does not interfere in religious matters, but due to its experience with racial tension, the state is a willing actor to manage religious affairs through the lens of race. As mentioned in the above section on Malaysia, it is useful to remember that even before independence in 1965, Singapore was extremely sensitive to inter-racial relations. The July and September 1964 racial riots between the Malays and the Chinese is a historical testimony to this extreme sensitivity. The fact that the Chinese had been and still are newcomers to the island, whereas the Malays were considered indigenous people, speaks to the social tensions that can easily be instigated if unfairness between them can be exploited. Adding to this, just like Malaysia, the substantial Indian population (about 11 percent) who are also migrants complicates the racial balance of Singapore.

To establish the state's performance legitimacy as quickly as possible, the state invested in elevating the standard of living of all races, while underplaying racial distinctions by promoting Singaporean national identity. As in Malaysia, Singapore employs the Internal Security Act to detain criminal suspects, including extremists, as a preventative measure. Furthermore, as the highest law of the land, the Singapore constitution in Part XII also provides the state powers to act against subversion, which includes preventative measures to detain a person who "promote[s] feelings of ill-will and hostility between different races or other classes of the population likely to cause violence."

On religion, the constitution (Article 15) guarantees the right to profess, practice and propagate one's own religion, although separation of religion from the state is not written in the constitution. On race, the constitution recognizes Malays as indigenous people who have a "special position" (Constitution Article 152 (2)) and whose predominant religion Islam is also legally enforced through the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) enacted in 1968. AMLA allows the state-appointed Islamic Religious Council (*Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura* or

MUIS) to be the sole regulator of Islamic affairs. MUIS by regulation is responsible for overseeing and administering mosques and madrasas and even for filtering religious messaging. Furthermore, Lee Kwan Yew also placed race as a key foundation for social engineering. His obsession with race in the 1990s went overboard to include a genetic argument to buttress Singapore's elitism while apparent preference to "Chineseness" is reflected in their overrepresentation in civil service recruitment (Barr 2014, 258–61). Those who were left out were minority Malays.

Armed with legal tools and strong policy implementation methods for social stability and using race as a means to influence domestic Islam, Singapore successfully weathered extremist challenges, mostly coming from foreign extremists who targeted Singapore as a front office of Western interests. Small scale bombings against U.S. company buildings in November and December 1987, and the 1991 Singapore Airline hijacking were such examples. However, the state's readiness to battle foreign threats was tested by the events of September 11, 2001 attacks, when the state was awakened to the existence of extremists among its own citizens.

Different Treatments of Islam by Broder Scope or Limited Scope

As presented in Table 1, what has become clear is that there is a dichotomous pattern to state influence over Islamic affairs - Malaysia and Singapore both have a broader grip on Islamic affairs on the one hand, and Indonesia and the Philippines have a limited grip on Islamic affairs on the other.

To reiterate, Malaysia and Singapore see Islam through a racial lens, and have a broader state scope over Islam. The treatment of Islam in these countries is motivated by a desire to maintain racial harmony among their diverse populations. In other words, the influence and ownership of Islam by the state is the method for achieving and maintaining racial harmony. Needless to say, the 13 May 1969 riots in Malaysia and the July and September 1964 riots in Singapore had a powerful impact that instilled fear into citizens, triggering the need to uphold the state motto of racial harmony (Comber 1988). To implement social policies, placing race at the center of social control ahead of religion gives the state more room to maneuver when a state response becomes necessary. In terms of policy choices, for example, racial issues can be tackled by closing economic disparities, and providing equitable access to education and health services among different racial groups.

On the other hand, Indonesia and the Philippines treat Islam through a religious lens, and the elites only use it for a power struggle as far as they are allowed. In the eyes of both Indonesia and the Philippines states, using Islamic rhetoric for a power grab is allowed as long as the whole state is not hijacked by it. Indonesia's Muslim leaders have continuously taken advantage of Islamic emotions and motivations, and so did the Muslim elites in the Philippines in remote Mindanao where Islam is the only common thread among divided local clans. In Muslim majority Indonesia, Islam as a religion has been contested, yet only in a limited realm, for political legitimacy, but in most cases continued to reflect a moderation necessary for the maintenance of national unity. Indonesia's Muslim majority population was in fact a mosaic of diverse ethno-linguistic groups whose identity politics were much stronger than Islamic identity. For the Muslim minority in the Philippines, Islam was treated with suspicion by the Catholic majority in the capital as a source of regional separatism, which needed to be put down by force or else packed in "autonomous" region (Ferrer 2005).

Violent Extremism and State Responses during the events of September 11, 2001

Given the different treatment of Islam in each state, the above-mentioned two patterns - the broader scope state vs. the limited scope state - are also reflected in the differing responses to violent extremism in the four states. In this section, how these four states responded to the events of the September 11 attacks in the United States is analyzed in order to shed light on the differences between the two patterns.

To all states in this analysis, the September 11 attacks were a sudden external shock, and forced fast responses because the attacks on foreign soil quickly became a domestic issue, especially when the states uncovered that their own citizens were part of the international extremist network. Below is a description of how each state responded to the events of the September 11 attacks in 2001.

Indonesia

Unable to gain the full backing of Islamic groups in the parliament, President Megawati could not respond strongly against Islamic extremism immediately after the September 11 attacks. Even one year before the September 11 attacks, the Indonesian state did not act quickly

to investigate the massive bombing that almost killed the Philippine Ambassador in Jakarta in August 2000. In addition, the Indonesian state was in denial when bombs destroyed number of churches that Christmas. When the September 11 attacks occurred, the political inaction of President Megawati was quickly filled by her Vice President Hamzah Haz, who publicly opposed the US war in Afghanistan by echoing Muslim leaders who claimed the US deserved the September 11 attacks to cleanse years of “sins” against Muslim societies. The 2002 Bali attacks, however, changed the state’s half-hearted response to violent extremism. A new law to combat terrorism came into effect, and the leader of extremist *Laskar Jihad* was arrested on the charge of inciting religious violence (*Laskar Jihad* self-disbanded at this timing). But the state responses to tackle Islamic extremism were slow compared to Singapore and Malaysia.

The state’s difficulty in tackling Islamic extremism can be seen from the case of *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI)’s living founder Abu Bakar Ba’asyir, who had enjoyed a hero-reception among sympathetic hardline Muslims when he returned to Indonesia from his exile in Malaysia. JI is an Islamic extremist organization whose aim is to establish an Islamic State in Southeast Asia and was the perpetrator of the 2002 Bali attacks. Suspected to have personally approved the 2002 Bali attacks, Ba’asyir was initially arrested on the charge of passport forgery, not terrorism. In the following years, the state’s effort to bring Ba’asyir to justice continued to stumble. In March 2005, Ba’asyir was finally convicted for the 2002 Bali attacks and sentenced to 30 months in prison, but he was released from prison early in June 2006 with sentence reductions. Ba’asyir, a free man, organized a new extremist organization called *Jemaah Anshorut Tauhid* (hereinafter JAT) in 2008, alerting the state security apparatus. JAT is said to be responsible for several church bombings and attacks on police. Ba’asyir was again arrested on the charge of inciting terrorism in 2011 and sentenced to 15 years. Even in jail, Ba’asyir pledged allegiance to Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL) leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in 2014, provoking his followers to commit more attacks. And again, domestic political considerations to use Islamic sentiment intervened in the judicial system. Seeking his re-election in 2019, President Joko Widodo expressed his sympathy to the aging Ba’asyir in jail. Widodo was re-elected. And in January 2021, the Widodo government released Ba’asyir for serving two-thirds of his jail time in good standing.

What is notable is that the state's hands were often tied by Muslim public opinion, which perceives Islam as sacred and Ba'asyir as a good Muslim should be treated humanitarian ground. When it came to responding to Islamic extremism, the same perception applies. Because of this perception, the most influential mass Islamic social organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah often need to calculate Muslim sentiments among its members and weigh its national standing. In fact, Ba'asyir's most recent release in January 2021 was supported by both NU and Muhammadiyah on humanitarian grounds.⁸ A closer look at the political support for the current government provides a hint for this support. Vice President Amin comes from NU, and the coalition partners include NU's political arm, the National Awakening Party (PKB), as well as other small Islamic parties such as the United Development Party (PPP) and the Crescent Star Party (PBB). Muhammadiyah's political arm, the National Mandate Party (PAN), in opposition only gained an insignificant portion (6.7%) of the vote, giving more incentive to gather more Muslim support by agreeing with the Ba'asyir release. The state, therefore, chose a humanitarian cause over its own judicial decision on Ba'asyir, because it was backed by the mass Islamic social organizations.

Malaysia

As explained above, Islam in Malaysia was seen through a racial harmony lens and used as a tool to garner popular support in the bargaining between the governing UMNO and the opposing PAS. Prior to the September 11 attacks, the state under Mahathir wholeheartedly pushed for their own kind of Islamization for years in order to become Southeast Asia's leading example of a modern Islamic society. The state did this, for example, by establishing the International Islamic University staffed with many faculty members from the Middle East and South Asia, as well as by promoting an Islamic economy, including the halal industry, and banking.

With the September 11 attacks, however, Islam suddenly became a contested issue beyond domestic competition over which party was more truly Islamic within the governance framework of maintaining racial harmony. Soon after the September 11 attacks, Mahathir quickly cooperated with United States to continue hunting local extremists, but at the same time had to keep a clear distance from US invasion of

Afghanistan soon afterwards and that of Iraq in early 2003. The state had already uncovered an extremist group called *Kumpulan Militan Malaysia* (KMM) even a year before the September 11 attacks (M. M. Aslam 2009, 95–96), and detained the key KMM members that included a son of the PAS leader a month before the September 11 attacks in early August 2001 (Hamid 2007, 17). When the state apparatus widened the investigation, they found an extremist network which had existed throughout the region and had been using Malaysia as a terrorist hub. For example, two Indonesian founders of a regional violent extremist JI lived in Malaysia and fostered numbers of extremists in Johor at their Islamic school. The JI network extended to Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore and, to a lesser extent, Thailand, and Australia in their aim to establish a Southeast Asian Islamic State. Devastatingly, Malaysia was found to be a venue for a number of the September 11 attacks plotters who met and planned the attack in Kuala Lumpur.

On the other hand, perhaps because the PAS leadership did not realize the extent to which Al-Qaeda extremists had penetrated Malaysia before the September 11 attacks, PAS launched an anti-USA campaign by declaring jihad against the US soon after the September 11 attacks. With the electoral gain in 1999 after the UMNO's leadership turmoil, PAS was encouraged that the anti-US card would garner more popular support in the wake of the US invasion of Afghanistan. A PAS leader even travelled to Indonesia to attend an Islamic meeting where JI founder Ba'asyir and other extremists gathered.⁹ PAS's strategy to sharpen the Islamic rhetoric backfired as it was seen as too extreme. For example, the ethnic Chinese opposition party left its alliance with PAS, and the security authority was moving fast to investigate Islamic extremism and detain hundreds under the Internal Security Act. In December 2002, Mahathir announced a plan to reform the curriculum of private Islamic schools under state influence. PAS was defeated in the 2004 election.

With the domestic impact of the September 11 attacks and the following terror incidents, the scope of the state's ability to Islamize itself for domestic political competition between UMNO and PAS temporarily stalled. The state's Islamization project was forced to include an international dimension of counter-extremism efforts. But the old challenge remained: to maintain the policy of domestic racial harmony and mobilize political support of majority Malay Muslims.

The Philippines

The Philippines had endured years of Muslim insurgencies that challenged the state's legitimacy mostly on the island of Mindanao – more than 1,000 km away. Contrary to their Malaysia and Indonesian counterparts, the majority-Catholic Philippine state lacked Islamic credentials to start with. This lack of Islamic credentials forced the state to ask for help from Libya, Indonesia, and Malaysia for peace settlements. What became apparent in the wake of the September 11 attacks, however, was that Mindanao had become a training ground and refuge location for both domestic and international violent extremists.

While implementing policies to deal with insurgency problems, first with MNLF and second MILF, the state was battling one of the fringe extremist groups called the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), which aimed at establishing an Islamic State and was said to have the support of Al-Qaeda, and later of the Islamic State. The September 11 attacks prompted the government (under President Macapagal-Arroyo) to launch a military campaign with the United States special forces against ASG, which at that time had already beheaded an American traveler. The US military assistance shrunk the ASG membership, but not only failed to eliminate it but encouraged more splinter extremists to emerge. The 2017 seizure of the Islamic City of Marawi by the ISIS-inspired local Muslim extremists was carried out by such splinter extremists.

Meanwhile, to respond to the long-running Muslim insurgency, the state also formulated plans to ameliorate poverty in the hope of pacifying the insurgency. It did not work. The government discovered that MILF had close ties with Malaysian-born and Indonesian-founded JI and had significant overlapping membership. Putting aside the political motivations of MILF to accept JI members from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, it is clear that the Philippine government's discovery made the state painfully aware of the harmful impact of the long-neglected Muslim population. It is useful to remember that MILF was hoping for a new autonomy deal by rejecting the MNLF-led compromise of the creation of ARMM in Mindanao. The bargaining power of MILF against the state, however, was diminished by the September 11 attacks. MILF was seen as a host for Islamic extremists. But the death of MILF founder Hashim Salamat in 2003 opened up a new page for peace talks to proceed while those against compromise attempted to sabotage the peace settlement efforts (Mercado 2008,

241). Despite the sabotage efforts of bombing attacks and kidnappings, the Philippine state, with help from the International Contact Group and Malaysia as the facilitator, reached an agreement with MILF to create a new autonomous entity called the *Bangsamoro* Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), superseding ARMM in 2012. Sidelined was MNLF which had broken up and receded to the neighboring islands of Sulu. Some former MNLF leaders joined the notorious ASG while the fate of the mainstream MNLF group led by its founder Nur Misuari potentially poses another incident of violence (IPAC 2021).

Singapore

Immediately after the September 11 attacks, the Singapore state was quick to support the US call for war against international terrorism. Singapore was mindful of its sensitive racial relations, its Western business interests, and the use of Changi Naval Base by the US Navy. Armed with the Internal Security Act (ISA), the Internal Security Department, which worked with the US, quickly moved to investigate the regional extremist network that plotted the September 11 attacks, and arrested JI militants on the charge of planning to attack foreign embassies. Thanks also to the close proximity and heightened alarm of terror threat level, the state was able to mobilize their security apparatus and arrest additional JI members, and even those who were radicalized at home. The state investigations into international and regional terrorist networks, which was helped by the information from the US military in Afghanistan, verified that JI militants were indeed targeting US interests in Singapore (A. Tan 2006, 174, 196–97).

To counter extremism at home, the state again managed to mobilize its population to maintain vigilance using the racial harmony lens. Inter-Racial Confidence Circles (IRCC, later to add “religion”, becoming the Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles) were launched by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong soon after the December 2001 arrests of JI members. Under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, IRCC gathers interracial citizens for early detection of racial tensions. In addition, in schools and workplaces, the state-sponsored “Harmony Circles” was instituted to ensure national resilience against extremism. Earlier in 2003, the state experimented by trying to rehabilitate terrorism detainees with help from local volunteers with Islamic credentials. This

effort was formally launched as the Religious Rehab Group (RRG) in 2005. Furthermore, originally launched in 2016, the government implemented a national movement called “SG Secure” to safeguard the state from religious extremism, while still maintaining racial harmony as the utmost priority.

Eugene Tan described the state efforts to counter extremism as the need for combining religion, security, and citizenship to counter extremism (E. K. B. Tan 2020). With significant community mobilization by the state, the citizens are asked to engage in inter-faith discussions in order to develop model citizenship as it fits in Singaporean culture. These efforts go beyond a judicial framework and include community engagement movements such as the 2003 Declaration of Religious Harmony, the 2005 Singapore Muslim Identity Project, and the 2019 Commitment to Safeguard Religious Harmony (E. K. B. Tan 2020, 7–10).

Conclusion

This paper argued that the state’s influence on Islam is the key to responding to violent extremism. This paper also showed that among Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore, there is a considerable difference in their responses, but two major framing practices emerge and have resulted in two different policy responses. Malaysia and Singapore framed Islamic affairs as a racial issue, thereby giving the state room to control and influence Islamic affairs. Indonesia and the Philippines framed Islamic affairs as a personal faith issue, thereby giving them less room to maneuver as the state was not supposed to intervene in private issues.

Inherited from the British colonial administration, Malaysia had the ISA until 2012 and Singapore still has the ISA, allowing the state to detain suspects without legally acceptable evidence. Malaysia repealed its own ISA in 2012, while a new law still allows police to detain suspects for 28 days. This legal tool has been useful in maintaining racial harmony and tying Islam with race has made the state’s legitimacy to control and retain influence over Islam effective.

Indonesia and the Philippines lack a legal tool such as the ISA and had to manage Islam as a religious issue. The Indonesian state let mass Islamic social organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah manage Islamic affairs, and the effectiveness and legitimacy of intervention into

Islamic extremism by the state often relied on the opinion of these mass Islamic social organizations. The Philippines state is constitutionally prohibited from intervening in religious affairs, and the problem of Muslims in Mindanao has often been treated as separatism. When the Philippine state made an effort to tame the separatist sentiments by using Islamic faith, the international Islamic extremist (Al-Qaeda, JI, and ISIS) and local militants created chaos in the Mindanao and Sulu islands. Unable to control Islamic affairs, the state response to this heightened religious extremism was a tentative incentive policy to fund Islamic education, but such a policy only served to draw strong suspicion from the recipients.

Twenty years have passed since the September 11, 2001 attacks. But the general patterns described in this paper have not changed. Given the state's managing capacity of Islam among these countries, there are a number of policy recommendations that can be drawn. First, for the four states, it is important to ensure international cooperation to tackle violent extremism, as the current threats are clearly international. Foreign states and civil society organizations are affected negatively by violent extremism and they also need to share lessons and approaches to tackle violent extremism among the four states in this study.

Second, to pursue international cooperation in Islamic affairs, the Malaysia and Singapore states – two countries which have better state grip compared to Indonesia and the Philippines – must continue to be the entry point, and the vanguard to promote and maintain the current racial harmony policy to maintain some degree of influence over Islamic affairs. There is a sensitive civil rights issue over the use of the ISA, but with justifications which are acceptable to public opinion, the state's influence using judicial tools can be effective. Indonesia without the ISA must let its mass Islamic social organizations cooperate with international counterparts, instead of the state being the entry point for international cooperation, because the state has less legitimacy over Islamic affairs. The Philippine state, with little legitimacy in Islamic affairs, often asked for help from other governments, such as Libya, Indonesia, and Malaysia, for autonomy settlements in Mindanao. The problem, in this case, is how to filter the types of international cooperation that take place. The Philippine state may not be equipped with such filtering capacity, and hence the state also needs to make extra efforts to work with its own Islamic social organizations.

Third, all four states need to respond to changing generational needs. Younger generations with highly sophisticated social media skills are prone to be influenced by extremist views, and some have already become home grown extremists. Hungry for new ideas as dissatisfaction with the current society grows, the youth may find extremist views very attractive, and this may even be so when there is a growing populist sentiment in many countries. One immediate worry is that, although the current COVID-19 response begs for effective state intervention, the public, especially the youth, may lose confidence in the state, failing to support the state if such intervention fails. There may be fallout from the current virus crisis that may undermine the state legitimacy.

Endnotes

- This research was supported by the Policy Research Network of Contemporary Southeast Asia (PRN-SEA) with a grant from National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS), Japan.
- 1. *Departemen Agama* as initially called (now *Kementerian Agama*) was established as an independent agency in 1946 after strong calls from the leaders of mass Islamic social organizations such as NU and *Muhammadiyah*. In addition to the funding opportunities for annual pilgrimage program, the high-level ministerial positions (the minister and the director-general) have been the preferred appointments for key Islamic leaders.
- 2. Osman Bakar states that the inclusion of Islam as a religion of the federation was because the Malays “sought a political protection through the Federal Constitution” in light of inflow of Chinese and Indian immigrants. See Bakar (2006, 487).
- 3. Mahathir claims that UMNO did not make “the first move to recruit” Anwar Ibrahim, but it was Anwar himself who had interest in joining UMNO. See Mahathir Mohamad (2011, 404).
- 4. The Security Offences (Special Measures) 2012 Act (SOSMA) replaced Internal Security Act in 2012. SOSMA drew criticism from human rights advocates for still allowing police to detain suspects for a maximum of 28 days without judicial oversight.
- 5. With mineral and oil export revenue and later manufacturing, Malaysia in 1991 announced the Vision 2020 aiming to become a developed country.
- 6. A good example of the coercive policy response using military was the “total war” policy against MILF during the Estrada administration.
- 7. ARMM (1990-2012) was later superseded by BARMM (Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao) in 2012. See the later section on the Philippines.
- 8. Vice President Amin in 2019 ahead of the presidential election stated to release Ba’asyir from jail on humanitarian (“kemanusiaan”) ground. His organization NU went along and so did Muhammadiyah. President Widodo’s campaign adviser and head of PBB also pushed for the early release. See *The Straits Times* article by Linda Yulisman (2019).
- 9. PAP leader Abdul Hadi Awang upon invitation travelled to Makassar, Indonesia, and spoke at an Islamic congress where Indonesia’s key extremists were also present. See Hamid (2007, 18–19).

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S*tudia Islamika*, published three times a year since 1994, is a bilingual (English and Arabic), peer-reviewed journal, and specializes in Indonesian Islamic studies in particular and Southeast Asian Islamic studies in general. The aim is to provide readers with a better understanding of Indonesia and Southeast Asia's Muslim history and present developments through the publication of articles, research reports, and book reviews.

The journal invites scholars and experts working in all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences pertaining to Islam or Muslim societies. Articles should be original, research-based, unpublished and not under review for possible publication in other journals. All submitted papers are subject to review of the editors, editorial board, and blind reviewers. Submissions that violate our guidelines on formatting or length will be rejected without review.

Articles should be written in American English between approximately 10,000 words including text, all tables and figures, notes, references, and appendices intended for publication. All submission must include 150 words abstract and 5 keywords. Quotations, passages, and words in local or foreign languages should be translated into English. *Studia*

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1. Hefner, Robert. 2009a. "Introduction: The Political Cultures of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia," in *Making Modern Muslims: The Politics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia*, ed. Robert Hefner, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
2. Booth, Anne. 1988. "Living Standards and the Distribution of Income in Colonial Indonesia: A Review of the Evidence." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19(2): 310–34.
3. Feener, Michael R., and Mark E. Cammack, eds. 2007. *Islamic Law in Contemporary Indonesia: Ideas and Institutions*. Cambridge: Islamic Legal Studies Program.
4. Wahid, Din. 2014. *Nurturing Salafi Manhaj: A Study of Salafi Pesantrens in Contemporary Indonesia*. PhD dissertation. Utrecht University.
5. Utriza, Ayang. 2008. "Mencari Model Kerukunan Antaragama." *Kompas*. March 19: 59.
6. Ms. *Undhang-Undhang Banten*, L.Or.5598, Leiden University.
7. Interview with K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, Kajen, Pati, June 11th, 2007.

Arabic romanization should be written as follows:

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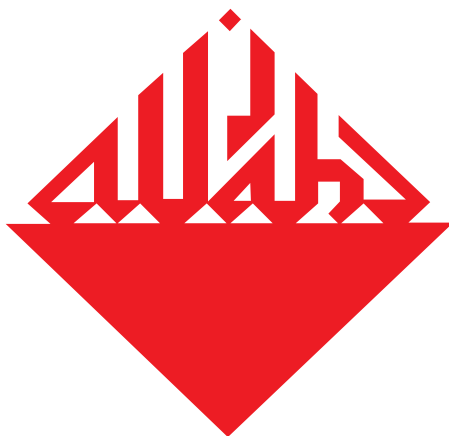
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Jajat Burhanudin

THE POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA
IN JOKOWI'S ERA: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF
ONLINE MEDIA REPORTING

Bambang Irawan & Ismail Fahmi Arrauf Nasution

الحدائة الإسلامية المتغيرة:

صورة للصوفية الحضرية

في إندونيسيا وباكستان

ر. يانعة ورداني ومحمد نداء فضلان
