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Islam, Christianity, and the Formation of Secularism in Indonesia 1945-1960

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In this article, I will apply the varieties of secularism theory developed by Elizabeth Shakman Hurd and Ahmet Kuru in the case of Indonesia. Following Kuru's typology, I argue that Indonesian secularism resembles that of passive secularism. This form of secularism came about from an alliance between secular nationalists and a religious minority (Christianity). The alliance between the two groups had successfully prevented Islam from becoming a dominant religion when an independent Indonesian state was formed in 1945. It was also successful from preventing reformist Muslims from instituting a state based on the *sharia* law during the crucial period of state-building in Indonesia between 1945 and 1960. However, this alliance also results in the formation of two authoritarian regimes that ruled Indonesia for four decades (1959-1998), and in the often-tenuous relationship between two religious groups that sat on the opposite end of this conflict, namely Indonesian Muslims and Christians.

Keywords: passive secularism, Indonesia, secular nationalists, Muslims, Christians, Jakarta Charter

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a renewed attention among scholars working in the field of religion and politics, on the origins of secularism and separation of religion and the state in different parts of the world. This renewed interest occurs in conjunction with a growing recognition that religious actors throughout the world are increasingly contesting the boundaries between religion and politics that are determined based on the rules and regulations that separate the public and the religious realm. Recently, social scientists have started to study the varieties of interactions between religion and the secular in different historical contexts in multiple countries around the world. The varieties of secularism theory developed by Elizabeth Shakman Hurd and Ahmet Kuru is instrumental

in establishing the study of varieties of secularism as a research program within the field of religion and politics and in opening doors for future research in this emerging research program.

In this article, I will apply the varieties of secularism theory that were developed by Hurd and Kuru in the case of Indonesia, from the time of Dutch colonial rule in late 19th century to the new nation's early state-building period between 1945 and 1966. I shall argue that the Indonesian case could bring a new insight in the study of religion and politics, by the country's adoption of a passive form of secularism that preserves a space for religion to remain active in the public sphere while leaving the state to be run as a secular entity. This form of secularism came about from an alliance between secular nationalists and a religious minority (Indonesian Christians) and arose from their concern that while religion should be allowed to have some voice in the public sphere, no hegemonic religion should be allowed to dominate it either. The alliance between the two groups had successfully prevented a dominant religion (Islam) to impose its theology (through the *sharia* law) on the majority of Indonesians. However, the secular state that was formed from this alliance was not a strict secularist state, but a passive secularist one. This came about because this alliance also established a space where all religions (including Islam and Christianity) would have a voice in Indonesia's public sphere.

The above assertions will be elaborated in the following manner. First, I will review the theoretical literature on the relations between religion and the secular, as well as on the varieties of secularism, focusing primarily on the recent works of Elizabeth Shakman Hurd and Ahmet Kuru. Next, I will introduce the Indonesian case and show the historical conditions during the Dutch colonial period in Indonesia that served as the basis for the cleavage between secular nationalists and Christians on the one hand and Indonesian Muslims on the other. Then I will analyze the debate between secularist and Christian political leaders with Muslim leaders on the eve of Indonesia's independence in 1945, resulting in the enactment of the Jakarta Charter that was quickly abrogated when Christian political leaders issued a threat to secede from the newly declared republic in August 1945. The debate between the three groups continued throughout much of the 1950s and only ended with President Sukarno's decision to dissolve

Indonesian Constitution Assembly in July 1959. Finally, I will show how the Indonesian case could contribute to the theoretical debate on the relationships between religion and the secular, specifically to the typologies proposed by Hurd and Kuru. I will also show how the alliance between secular nationalists and Christians in Indonesia have long-term consequences in Indonesia's political development, specifically in the formation of two authoritarian regimes in Indonesia that lasted for nearly four decades, and in the often tenuous relationship between Indonesian Muslims and Christians during this time period.

Explaining Varieties of Secularism: New Approaches

Until recently, social scientists have not paid attention to the historical conditions and trajectories that contributed to the origins of secularism in different societies throughout the world. This is because for many decades, the most dominant theoretical framework that sought to explain why secularism takes hold in modern society was the secularization hypothesis. It assumes a linear movement in all modernizing societies towards secularism signified by the gradual retreat of religious expressions from the public sphere, the decline of individual religiosity and adherence to a given religious institution, which finally contributes to the decline of religious institutions due to the loss of its social welfare function (taken over by the state) as well as spiritual function (taken over by secular ideologies such as liberalism, nationalism, and socialism) (Gill, 2001, p. 122).

However, recent events as well as new empirical evidence, have raised serious doubts on the validity of explanations offered by the secularization hypothesis. The resurgence in the political activities of religious groups and actors that occurred simultaneously throughout much of the world in both advanced industrial as well as developing societies have caused a serious blow to the theory's assumption that religion will decline as societies became more developed (Gill, 2001, p. 122). The failure of the secularism hypothesis to explain religious resurgence and the return of religion in the public sphere of many "secular" countries has led critics of the theory to declare that "the old theory of secularization can no longer be maintained" (Casanova, 1994, p. 19). Finally, new empirical findings also show that highly developed countries tend to have a

much higher percentage of instituting an official religion than countries that have lower level of development (Kuru, 2007, p. 574). Such findings directly contradict earlier predictions of secularization theory that predicted highly developed countries to have little or no involvement in religious affairs whatsoever. The inability of the secularization hypothesis to explain these contradictions have resulted in its disreputation and abandonment by most contemporary social scientists studying religion and politics, and even by some of its earlier proponents (Berger, 1999).

There is also a growing recognition among scholars studying religion and politics that secularism is not a value-neutral philosophical idea that many of its proponents have claimed it to be. Instead, like other political ideologies, it seeks to dominate the public sphere in the hope that it will prevail over other ideologies that try to preserve a space for religion in the public realm. Supporters of secularism also do not hesitate to use coercive power that they have to impose their views to other citizens, particularly those who come from a religious background and want to keep religion as a relevant voice in public discourses (Smith, 2003).

Finally, religion and politics scholars have also begun to recognize that the secularist policy in different parts of the world are not similar and that the degree of separation between religion and the state in every countries in the world are path dependent, based on the historical relations between religious and political sphere in each respective countries, as well as the degree of conflict or cooperation between religious actors and their secular counterparts. Within the last few years, scholars have developed a new theory of secularism that maps the different interactions between religion and the secular in different parts of the world, as well as the outcomes of these interactions in the development of either more restrictive or less restrictive policy that regulate the role of religion in the public sphere. The theory is commonly known as varieties of secularism theory.

One scholar that has developed this theory is Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, who argues that there are two different forms of secularism prevailing in our contemporary world. The first one is laicism, which is based on a philosophy that was developed during Enlightenment period by figures such as Immanuel Kant. Laicist form of secularism has the following purpose:

....to create a neutral public space in which religious belief, practices, and institutions have lost their political significance.....or been pushed into the private sphere. The mixing of religion and politics is regarded as irrational and dangerous. For modernization to take hold, religion must be separated from politics. In order to democratize, it is essential to secularize (Hurd, 2008, p. 5).

Proponents of laicism argue that “a fixed and final separation between religion and politics is both possible and desirable” (Hurd, 2008, p. 5) They view secularism as a “neutral public philosophy that arose from the messy debate over religion and politics, standing over and outside the melee in a neutral space of its own creation” (Hurd, 2008, p. 5). Examples of countries that impose a laicist policy toward religion include France and Turkey.

A second form of secularism proposed by Hurd is what she calls Judeo-Christian secularism. What differentiates Judeo-Christian secularists from laicists is that unlike the latter, the former “does not attempt to expel religion, or at least Judeo Christianity, from public life. It does not present the religious-secular divide as a clean, essentialized, and bifurcated relationship, as in laicism” (Hurd, 2008, p. 6). Judeo-Christian secularists believe that secularism is “part of a Christian, later Judeo-Christian, theopolitical inheritance that constitutes the “common ground” upon which Western democracy rests” (Hurd, 2008, p. 6). However, while Judeo-Christian secularists allow some space for the Judeo-Christian religious tradition to play a part in the public life of Western countries, they are skeptical that other religious groups, particularly Islam, have the capacity to differentiate between religion and politics in their public discourses. Thus, they are more likely to support a strict separation between religion and politics in non-Western (and non-Judeo-Christian) societies (Hurd, 2008, p. 6). An example of a country currently practicing Judeo-Christian secularism is the United States.

Hurd states the possibility that other forms of secularism that are based from different philosophical, religious, historical, and institutional legacies could have been developed in other countries as well (Hurd, 2008, p. 28). However, she does not pursue this possibility further in her study. Thus, she leaves the door opens for other scholars to investigate this possibility further. Non-Western

countries where Judeo-Christianity is not the dominant religious tradition could serve as an interesting location to further test the validity of her theory.

Another scholar that has recently developed a typology of secularism is Ahmet Kuru. He categorizes proponents of secularism and secularist policies into two categories: passive and assertive secularism. Kuru defines passive secularism as one that while avoids the establishment of any religious tradition as the official religion of a state, also allows the public visibility of religion (Kuru, 2007, p. 571). He considers it as a “pragmatic political principle that tries to maintain state neutrality toward various religions” (Kuru, 2007, p. 571). On the other hand, assertive secularism occurs when “the state excludes religion from the public sphere and plays an “assertive” role as the agent of a social engineering project that confines religion to the private domain. It seeks to eliminate religion from the public sphere altogether” (Kuru, 2007, p. 571).

Kuru argues that the historical relationship between religion and the state in a particular country is determined on whether secularists chose to pursue passive or assertive secularism. He argues that the presence of an *ancien* regime that promoted and supported a particular religion would result in more hostile relations between religious and secular actors. This leads to an assertive form of secularism. On the other hand, the lack of an *ancien* regime that promoted a particular religion would result in a more cooperative relationship between religious and secular actors, which leads into a passive form of secularism (Kuru, 2007, p. 572). In his comparison of secularist policies in France, Turkey, and the United States, Kuru argues that the first two countries adopted an assertive form of secularism because of secularists’ reaction against political regimes that promoted a dominant religious tradition in these countries (Catholicism in France and Islam in Turkey). On the other hand, passive secularism prevailed in the United States due to the lack of any dominant religion that was favored by the British colonial government in the United States. This made it easier for secular and religious actors in the United States to reach a consensus in drawing a proper boundary between religion and the state in the United States, while allowing active participation of religion in America’s public discourses (Kuru, 2007, pp. 583-591). Kuru also predicts that passive secularism tend to arise when a consensus is reached between religious and secularist actors within a society,

while assertive secularism tends to prevail when these actors are not able to reach such a consensus (Kuru, 2007, pp. 583-584).

The varieties of secularism theory developed by these scholars have made a significant contribution in understanding different forms of secularism in the world that arose largely from different historical conditions in “crucial case” countries that underwent secularization process as well. The theory is especially useful when we seek to expand the arguments made by these scholars beyond the initial case studies that were used in their analyses. The two authors studied an identical set of case countries because they wanted to develop a strong test to prove that their theories would hold in countries that were frequently analyzed by scholars studying the interactions between religion and secularism (i.e., French, Turkey, and the United States).¹ However, in order to gather additional evidence to prove the theoretical claims of these two scholars, we will need to evaluate the validity of their theories in other countries that have not been studied by them.

In order to provide a comparably strong test to the theories developed by Hurd and Kuru, I choose to study the interaction between religion and the secular in a non-Western country that is predominantly Muslim, yet has a significant number of religious minorities that could play an important role in shaping the country’s policy on the proper role of religion in its public sphere. I choose to study Indonesia because it serves as a good case to test the following theoretical arguments: 1) the country is both a non-Western country with a Muslim-majority population, therefore according to Judeo-Christian secularists, a secular and democratic political regime would be difficult, if not impossible, to be established there, and 2) there is a strong contention between secular nationalists, Muslims, and the Christian minority that aligned themselves with the secular nationalist group, during the process of establishing a secularist state in Indonesia. According to Hurd and Kuru’s hypotheses, assertive and laicist secularism will be more likely to prevail under the above conditions. This article will test whether this prediction

¹ Arguments to select “crucial cases” that serve as “strong tests” for one’s theory in social science research are provided by qualitative methodologists such as Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methodology for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997) and John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Another recent work with many useful advice for social scientists using qualitative case study method in their research program is Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Study and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005).

is indeed correct. Indonesia also serves as a good testing ground for the varieties of secularism theory because to my knowledge, so far no scholars have applied the theory in the case of Indonesia.

The primary data source of this research is the meeting minutes of The Investigative Committee to Prepare for Indonesia's Independence (*Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (BPUPKI) that highlighted the debate between secular nationalist, Muslim, and Christian political figures that were tasked to draft a new constitution for the independent Indonesian state between May and mid-August 1945. The minutes were compiled by Mohammad Yamin, a member of committee who belonged to the secular nationalist faction (Yamin, 1959). In addition to this collection of minutes, previous works that studied the political discourses between secular nationalists, Indonesian Muslims, and Christians from the late 19th century to the late 1960s were also consulted.²

Based from this data, I shall argue that the Indonesia case serves to cast some doubts on the validity of varieties of secularism theory proposed by Hurd and Kuru. A secular state was established in Indonesia in 1945 and it was successfully maintained for more than six decades, despite strong challenges at various times in this period. However, despite many contentious conflicts between secular nationalists, Muslims, and Christians, Indonesia does not become an assertive and laicist secularist state. Instead, the type of secularism that prevails in Indonesia is closer to passive secularism, because religious groups and actors could freely articulate their views in Indonesia's public sphere. At the same time, the Indonesian state provides considerable financial support to religious organizations through the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Lastly, I shall argue that Indonesian secularism is supported and sustained by the country's Christian minority, which has consistently endorsed secularist policies proposed by the country's secular nationalist leaders in order to preserve

² Since this study focuses on the interaction between secular nationalists, Muslims, and Christians from the 1940s to the 1960s, it does not deal with the interaction between these groups from the late 1960s onwards (during much of Suharto's New Order regime and in the aftermath of its collapse in 1998). Readers interested in the interaction between these groups from the 1970s onward should consult studies such as Jacques Bertrand, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); and John Sidel, *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006).

its interests (maintain its religious liberty as well as the rights to proselytize to non-Christians) as well as protect its members from potential reprisal/persecution from conservative Muslims. However, such a support came at a high price for Indonesian Christians, in the form of their support to two successive authoritarian regimes that ruled the country for nearly four decades and the frequent conflicts they have had with conservative Muslim groups.

Interactions between Muslims, Christians, and Secular Nationalists during the Dutch Colonial Period (1888-1942)

There are three major actors who were involved in the political struggles over state-religion relations in Indonesia: secular nationalists, Muslim groups (which after 1952 were divided into reformists and traditional/syncretic Muslim groups), and Christian minorities. Muslims comprise approximately 88 percent of Indonesia's population. Virtually all Indonesian Muslims are Sunni Muslims. However, they are about evenly divided between the scripturalist reformists and the syncretic traditionalists.³ Christians comprise about 9 percent of the population. About 5 percent of Indonesian Christians are Protestants while another 4 percent are Catholics.⁴ The contention between these groups dated back from the *ancien* regime period in Indonesia's history, when the Indonesian territory was occupied and colonized by the Dutch, and was then called the Dutch East Indies.⁵ The primary cause of their contention could be traced from the state-

³ Reformist Muslims tend to embrace the original literalist interpretation of Islam as propagated by the Prophet and reflected in the sacred scriptures (Koran and Hadiths). In Indonesia, they tend to become members of *Muhammadiyah* and its political party, *Masyumi*. Traditionalist Muslims tend to blend syncretic local religious traditions (e.g., honoring local saints and shrines, faith healing, etc.) with original Islamic teachings. In Indonesia, traditionalists tend to become members of *Nahdlatul Ulama*. For a typology that differentiates the politics of reformist and traditionalist Muslim organizations, see Yahya Sadowski, "Political Islam: Asking the Wrong Questions?" *Annual Review of Political Science*, 9 (2006), pp. 219-222.

⁴ For the demographic statistics of Indonesia's religious groups, see Leo Suryadinata, Evi Nurvidya Arifin, and Aris Ananta, eds., *Indonesia's Population: Ethnicity and Religion in a Changing Political Landscape* (Singapore: Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, 2003). Most of Indonesia's Christian population is also members of an ethnic group that dominates the population of more remote areas within Indonesia (e.g., the Bataks in North Sumatra, the Manados in North Sulawesi, and the Flores, Moluccans, and Papuans in Eastern Indonesia) (R. William Liddle, "Coercion, Co-optation, and the Management of Ethnic Relations in Indonesia," in *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Michael Brown and Sumit Ganguly (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), p. 274). This is attributed to the relative success of Christian missionaries in converting the population of these areas vis-à-vis population centers (e.g., Java) that were already dominated by Muslims (see this section for more details).

⁵ The Dutch first came to Indonesia in the late 16th century to contest and then took over the very lucrative spice trade in the Indonesian archipelago that from the Portuguese. The Dutch gained effective control over much of Java and Sumatra by the end of the 17th century, and then gradually expanded this control throughout other areas of Indonesia between mid-19th century and early 20th century.

religion policy of the Dutch colonial government, which assigned different status and privileges to these religious groups.

Officially, the Dutch colonial government in Indonesia embraced a policy of separation between religion and the state. According to article 119 of the Dutch Colonial Constitution (*de Regeeringsreglement*) adopted in 1854, religious freedom was granted to all religious traditions (including Islam) and the government would take a completely neutral position on religious matters (Noer, 1973, pp. 165-166). Increasingly, however, Dutch colonial officials viewed Indonesian Islam as a dangerous movement that could be used to inspire indigenous Indonesians to rebel against its rule over the East Indies (Noer, 1973, p. 167; Hefner, 2000, p. 90). They began to believe that indigenous Christian converts were likely to develop more cooperative attitudes toward the Dutch and were more likely to be loyal to the Dutch colonial government as well (Klinken, 2003, pp. 25-26). They were hoping that conversions by Christian missionaries could help reduce Islamic influence among the Indonesian population.⁶

Beginning in 1888, the Dutch colonial government began to actively support Christian missionaries' evangelization effort in the Dutch East Indies, with a special emphasis "to reduce the danger of (Islamic) resistance in the heathen areas against the introduction or spread of Christianity" (Noer, 1973, p. 167). The colonial government designated rural and remote areas that were considered as "borderlines" between Islamic and Dutch influences (usually urban population centers where the regional administrations were centered) as mission areas. Its goal was to turn these areas into "buffer" zones that protect Dutch-controlled urban centers from the encroachment of "radical" Muslim elements in the surrounding villages.⁷

⁶ Not all Dutch colonial officials supported the new policy. Some Dutch officials, including the Islamologist Snouck Hurgronje, opposed the Dutch colonial government's active support of Christian missions in Indonesia, on the grounds that Islam had a much firmer roots in Indonesia and missionary activities could aggravated tensions between Muslim leaders and the colonial government. However, these officials were in the minority within the Dutch colonial officialdom and the Dutch government proceeded with its policy to support Christian missions (Harry J. Benda, "Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje and the Foundations of Dutch Islamic Policy in Indonesia," *Journal of Modern History*, 30 (4) (1958), p. 341).

⁷ Examples of this policy could be seen for instance in North Sumatra (using Batak Christians to isolate Aceh and Malay Muslims), East Borneo (putting Dayak Christians between Banjar and Malay Muslims), and North Sulawesi (isolating Buginese Muslims with Tobaku and Minahasan Christians) (Ismatu Ropi, "Depicting the Other Faith: A Bibliographical Survey of Indonesian Muslim Polemics on Christianity," *Studia Islamika* 6 (1) (1999), p. 83).

In 1890, the Dutch crown gave authority to the Dutch Governor General in the East Indies to grant direct subsidies to Christian missions. Such an authority had not been previously granted, for fear that it could create further tensions between the Dutch and local Muslim authorities (Noer, 1973, p. 168). The Dutch colonial government spent a significant amount between 1890 and the end of its colonial rule in 1942 in subsidizing Christian missionaries and education institutions. While the colonial government also provided subsidies to Islamic schools and organizations, the amount was much smaller in comparison to the support given to Christian missionaries. Between 1936 and 1938, the Dutch government spent approximately 689,000 gulden per year to support Protestant missions and 294,000 gulden each year to support the Catholics while spending only 7,500 gulden per year to support Muslim missions. In 1939, subsidies for Protestant missions were increased to 844,000 gulden and those for Catholic missions were increased to 336,000 gulden. Subsidies for the Muslims remained flat at 7,600 gulden (Benda, 1958, p. 223).

Finally, the Dutch colonial government also gave preferential treatment to indigenous Indonesian Christians in its recruitment of civil servants and soldiers. Indonesian Christians from Ambon (Moluccan Island) and Manado (North Sulawesi) were preferred to be hired into the colonial civil service (Ricklefs, 2001, p. 178; Chauvel, 1990). The few Muslim civil servants that were recruited by the colonial government tended to come from noble (*priyayi*) families who were syncretic in their religious expressions. Virtually none of them came from conservative Muslim families (Hefner, 2005, pp. 90-91). In addition, in the recruitment of the colonial armed forces, the Dutch preferred to recruit soldiers from the Moluccas, who were mostly Christians and were considered to be more “loyal” to the colonial government than the Muslim Malays or Javanese (Klinken, 2003, p. 23).

As a result of the Dutch colonial government’s encouragement and support for Christian missionary efforts and the lack representation of Muslims within the colonial civil service and armed forces, many Indonesian Muslims viewed their Christian counterparts as willing partners of the Dutch colonial government’s effort to strengthen its rule in Indonesia. Muslim organizations started to aggressively oppose Christian missionary campaigns and accused

Indonesians who converted into Christianity as members of “the Dutch religion,” thereby labeling them as Dutch collaborators (Ropi, 1998).

Beginning in the 1910s, reformist Muslims began to establish organizations *Muhammadiyah*, *Sarekat Islam (SI - United Islam)*, and *Persatuan Islam (Persis - Islamic Union)*, that were established to promote their Islamic reform agenda as well as to counter the Dutch's campaign to promote Christian missionaries (Benda, 1958, pp. 47-51; Laffan, 2003, pp. 161-171). As a reaction against these Islamic revivalist movements, traditionalist Muslims founded their own organizations, the *Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)* to preserve and protect their local customs and rituals that were considered heretical by these reformist organizations (Ricklefs, 2001, p. 223). These organizations later became the center of Islamic nationalist movements in Indonesia, with the ultimate goal of turning Indonesia to become an independent state based on Islamic principles.⁸

While reformist and traditionalist Muslims differed greatly in terms of theological interpretations as well as tradition, what united them during the colonial period was not only the desire to liberate Indonesia from the Dutch's rule, but also their resentment to the fact that Indonesia was occupied by an alien power that did not share the Islamic faith. They believed that colonial rule prevented Muslims from practicing their faith in full and their antidote against it was to put their faith at the center of their struggle to achieve Indonesia's independence (Elson, 2008, pp. 81-82). Islamic activists such as the future Prime Minister and *Masyumi* party leader Mohammad Natsir believed that it was not enough for the future Indonesian state to guarantee the religious liberty for all religions, including Muslims. Instead, Muslims should be in charge of granting

⁸ I am not claiming that most Indonesian Islamic organizations (esp. *Muhammadiyah* and NU) remain committed to the goal of establishing an Islamic state in Indonesia at more contemporary times. During the 1970s, continued repression under the Suharto government motivated figures such as Nurcolish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid to develop a new philosophy that helped to move these organizations away from the Islamic vision they had advocated earlier towards one that accepts the legitimacy of secular nationalist *Pancasila* state. This philosophy prevails among the current leadership of these organizations, although some within these organizations are still advocating the replacement of the secularist *Pancasila* state with one based on *sharia* law. I do claim, however, that during the period covered in this study (from 1910s to the late 1960s) the establishment of a *sharia*-based Islamic state was the goal of the majority of leaders and members of reformist and traditionalist Muslim organizations in Indonesia, including the ones cited above. For the political thinking of post-1970 generation of Islamic leaders and the impacts of the organizations they lead, see for instance Hefner, *Civil Islam* & R. William Liddle, “Improvising Political Cultural Change: Three Indonesians Cases,” in *Leadership and Culture in Indonesian Politics*, ed. R. William Liddle (Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin 1996), pp. 143-178.

these rights to other religions, under the auspices of an Islamic state (Noer, 1973, p. 278). In the mind of these activists, an Indonesian state based on Islam was the only way to remedy centuries of Islamic subjugation under the Dutch colonial rule.

However, the role of Islamic organizations within the anti-colonial nationalist movements was severely contested by secular nationalist activists, which sought an independent Indonesia based not from Islamic principles but instead as a secular state that tolerates religious liberty of all Indonesians regardless of their religious background.⁹ Secular nationalist activists were influenced by the works of the 18th and 19th century European political philosophers such as Ernest Renan and Otto Bauer in forming their own conceptualization on what a nation is and who among its population should be included into it.¹⁰ These elite believed in the idea that a nation is formed by the people who lived in a particular territory and shared a common experience, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, and religious differences. They transformed this idea in their conceptualization of how the future Indonesian state should be constructed.

The secular nationalist's vision that rejected an Islamic state for Indonesia in favor of a state that was based on the principles of secularism and equality for all religious traditions could be seen from the writings of future president Sukarno. In a response to Mohammad Natsir's argument for an Islamic state in Indonesia cited earlier, he wrote the following:

...how do you realize your ideals [about this unity] in a country in which you will uphold democracy and in which part of its population are non-Muslims, as in Turkey, India, and Indonesia, in which millions of people are Christians or embrace another religion, and in which the [secular] intellectuals in general do not entertain Islamic thoughts?....If you become the government of the country in which many of

⁹ The core group of these secular nationalist activists was comprised from the children of the traditional Indonesian noble class (*priyayi*) who received Western education in the Netherlands in the 1910s and 1920s. Due to the Western education they received, most of these *priyayi* children were Western-oriented modernists in their view of the world. While most of them were Muslims (along with a few Christians from Indonesian regions such as Moluccas and Manado (North Sulawesi)), many of them only practiced their religious faith nominally, and often mixed their faith with traditional syncretic beliefs.

¹⁰ Both Renan and Bauer advocated the idea of a nation that belongs to a population that shares a common history and experience regardless of the different ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds of members of this population. For an example of their thought, see Renan, [1882] 1994, pp 17-18.

its people are non-Muslims, do you want to decide by yourselves that the state be an Islamic state, the constitution be an Islamic constitution, all the laws be the laws of the Islamic sharia? If the Christians and those professing other religions do not want to accept [your decision], what will you do? Do you want to force them.....to agree with your decision?.....do you want to play dictator, to force [them] with arms and cannons? If they will still not obey, what will you do? You do not want to eliminate them all, do you? (Noer, 1973, pp. 285-286)

Sukarno predicted that proposals to incorporate Islam into the constitution would certainly be rejected, for “non-Muslim representatives will reject it with all efforts, and other representatives although Muslims will [also] not agree with it” (Noer, 1973, p. 286).

Thus, secular nationalist *priyayis* wanted to establish a state where all Indonesian ethnic and religious groups could live and work together as a single nation. Given this vision, secularists believe that only a state philosophy based on secularist principles would be acceptable to all Indonesians. Thus, secular nationalism principle had to dominate other ideologies, including Islamic-inspired ones (Ricklefs, 2001, pp. 229-230). Christian minorities, as predicted by Sukarno, became increasingly worried about the political agenda of Muslim groups to establish an Islamic state, and increasingly found themselves in alliance with the secular nationalists (Ricklefs, 2001, p. 230).

The different vision of independent Indonesia between the Islamic and the secularist groups set the stage of confrontation between the two groups, with Indonesian Christian minorities caught in the middle of this confrontation. Indonesian Muslims, who were politically and economically marginalized during the Dutch colonial rule, believed that Islam should be established as the state’s official religion because it was the religion of most Indonesian population. On the other hand, Christian minorities, uncomfortable with Muslim nationalists’ goal to establish an Islamic state, sought to protect their religious liberty as well as the economic and political privileges (e.g., subsidies and appointments in the civil service and the military). They saw themselves to be in agreement with the secular nationalists who rejected the Islamic state in favor of a state that would not officially establish a state religion and promise to guarantee the religious liberty

of all religions. Secular nationalists also advocated a secular state that would be inclusive toward ethnic, religious, and cultural minorities in order to realize their vision of a single united Indonesian state. The stage was set for a confrontation between Muslim nationalists versus their secularist counterparts, who were supported by Christian minorities.

The Crafting of Indonesian Secularism: The 1945 Debate over the Indonesian Constitution

The Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia ended in March 1942, when the Japanese invaded Indonesia as part of its greater conquest of East and Southeast Asia in the Second World War and managed to defeat the Dutch colonial force in Indonesia in less than two weeks. The harsh treatment of the Dutch against pro-independent Indonesian politicians (both secular nationalists and Muslims), as well as the economic misery of the Indonesian population that started during the Great Depression and was never resolved by the Dutch colonial government, led most Indonesians to welcome the Japanese as a liberator instead of a new colonial power. Indonesian nationalist leaders such as Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta, as well as Islamic leaders such as Agus Salim, Ki Bagus Hadikusumo, and Wahid Hasjim, considered the Japanese as a transitional power that would eventually grant independence to Indonesia. Thus, they all cooperated with the Japanese occupying forces in Indonesia.

Given that Islamic organizations such as *Muhammadiyah* and *Nahdlatul Ulama* had networks of activists that had access to most villages in Indonesia, these organizations received much political supports as well as favors from the Japanese. As a result, Muslim clerics sat on various governmental departments and committees. They also served as officers within the Japanese occupational army (Benda, 1958, pp. 135-139). Thus, the power of Islamic groups in Indonesia during the Japanese occupation increased significantly compared to their limited influence under the Dutch colonial period. They were also influential in promoting Indonesian nationalism and independent campaign efforts among the general population, something that secular nationalist leaders (who came mostly

from *priyayi* noble background) were never able to accomplish (Benda, 1958, pp. 140-141).

As the Japanese began to incur heavy losses in its war efforts in 1944 and early 1945, it came under increasing pressures from Indonesian leaders to grant independence to Indonesia. On March 1, 1945 the Japanese occupational government issued a declaration that formed a preparatory committee that would design the constitution of an independent Indonesia. The committee was called *Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (The Investigative Committee to Prepare for Indonesia's Independence – BPUPKI) (Benda, 1958, p. 184).

Indonesian Muslim leaders were confident that given the favors they have enjoyed from the Japanese in the previous three years, they would be able to command a majority of members in this preparatory committee. Based on this perceived majority status, they began to prepare for an Indonesian state based on Islamic principles, arguing that Islam should become the ideology of the new state because it constituted the vast majority (in 1945 more than 90 percent) of the Indonesian population. The Muslim leaders' proposal for an Islamic-inspired state was supported unanimously, regardless of the theological debate between modernist (reformist) and traditionalist Muslims that historically often divided the two groups.

However, when BPUPKI's composition was finally announced on May 15, 1945, Muslim leaders were surprised to learn that the vast majority of the committee's members came from the secular nationalist group. Secular nationalists received 47 seats in the preparatory committee (out of a total of 62 seats), which left Muslim groups only 15 seats in the committee.¹¹ Secular nationalists had successfully argued to the Japanese military leaders that they were in a better position to face the Allied military forces once Indonesia became independent, given that they received European education and shared the

¹¹ Jan Aritonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan Kristen dan Islam di Indonesia* [History of Christian and Muslim Encounters in Indonesia] (Jakarta, Indonesia: PT BPK Gunung Mulia, 2004), pp. 235-236. Note that this number not only includes the pro-independence secular nationalist leaders, but also includes older members of Indonesia's *priyayi* aristocracy (who were ambivalent about the prospect of Indonesia's independence due to their privileged position under the Dutch colonial rule), as well as members of Indonesia's ethnic (Chinese, Euroasians) as well as religious (Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist) minorities.

political philosophy of the Allies (e.g., liberal democracy and secularism), unlike the Islamists whose relatively alien religious tradition as well political motives would continuously be questioned by the Allied forces.

Once BPUPKI started to meet on May 29, 1945, secular nationalists immediately went on the offensive, arguing that despite Indonesia's Muslim majority population, the country should be organized as a secular state in order to survive as a unitary, multiethnic, and multi-religious state. This could be seen from the speech made by Supomo, a leading secular nationalist who was trained as a constitutional lawyer, on May 31, 1945. Referring to an earlier speech made by another key nationalist leader Mohammad Hatta, he made the following argument against the establishment of an Islamic state in Indonesia:

Do we want to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia?Based on its geographic locations, Indonesia has a different characteristics compared to countries such as Iraq, Iran, Egypt, or Syria, all of which have an Islamic political culture (*Corpus Islamicum*). Indonesia is part of the Greater East Asia. In this vast region, there are countries such as Japan, China, Manchuria, Philippines, Thailand, and Burma, and all of them are not Islamic states (emphasis added).

...If we choose to establish an Islamic state, this means that we would not establish a unitary state. Establishing an Islamic state means that this country will associate itself with the largest religious group in the country, the Muslims. If we establish an Islamic state, there would be problems with smaller religious groups that are in the minority, Christians, for instance. Despite the assurances from the Muslim group that it will protect the rights of these minority groups, they would never be considered as full-fledged (Indonesian) citizens. Thus, the goal for an Islamic state is not in accordance with the goal for a unitary (and secular) state that we all are striving to achieve (Yamin, 1959, pp. 115-117).

Supomo's speech was followed by that of Sukarno. In a speech delivered on June 1, 1945, Sukarno proposed five principles that would serve as the foundation of a secular nationalist Indonesian state. Among them was a principle he named as "Belief in One God" (*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*), which recognized the diversity of religious beliefs in Indonesia and respected the teachings of each of these religious traditions, without elevating any one of them as the ideology of the

independent Indonesian state. Specifically, Sukarno made the following argument in his speech:

Indonesians not only share a belief in God, but it is expected that each Indonesian should worship their own God. Christians should worship God according to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Muslims should worship God according to the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad.....Each of us should worship a God. The Indonesian state should ideally be a state where each of its citizens could worship their God according to their own belief.... There should be no privileges enjoyed exclusively by any one religion over the others (Yamin, 1959, p. 77).

With this speech, the cornerstone for a secular Indonesian state was laid. It should be noted that this is not a strict secularism as prescribed by laicists, but one that mirrors passive secularism. Secular nationalist leaders recognized not only the strong religious belief of Indonesian citizens, but also the diversity of such beliefs. A multi religious Indonesia could survive only when the state does not favor any particular religion. Thus, religious diversity could only be guaranteed by a secular Indonesian state.

However, Muslim members of BPUPKI did not give up their fight for an Islamic state in Indonesia. They were proposing an alternative to the constitution drafted by the secular nationalist camp. This draft contained a clause that proposed the implementation of the *sharia* law as the foundation of the Indonesian state. Besides this clause, Muslim leaders also circulated the following proposals. One called for the appointment of either a monarch who would serve as God's Caliphate on earth, or a republic with an *imam* as the head of state. This proposal was defeated on July 10, 1945, when the vast majority (55 members) of BPUPKI members voted to institute a republic with a president as the head of state (Yamin, 1959, pp. 181-184). Another proposal, introduced by traditionalist Muslim leader Wahid Hasjim, called for the president of the Indonesian state to be a native-born Indonesian citizen who is also a Muslim and for the establishment of Islam as the official religion of the Indonesian state (Yamin, 1959, pp. 261-262).

As tensions arose from the debate between secular nationalist and Muslim members of BPUPKI over the future Indonesian constitution, Christian members of BPUPKI started to play an active role in opposing the proposals made by

Muslim members for an Islamic state and supporting proposals made by secular nationalists for a secular Indonesian state that will protect the religious liberty of all religions. There were three BPUPKI members who were Christian: Alex Maramis (a Manadonese), Johannes Latuharhari (an Ambonese), and Samuel (“Sam”) Ratulangie (another Manadonese whom had served as a member of the Dutch’s *Volksraad*). Maramis was appointed to a special committee that was tasked to reconcile the differences between secular nationalists and Muslim factions over the proposed Indonesian constitution (Aritonang, 2004, p. 242).¹² Latuharhari made a formal objection against the Muslims’ proposal to implement *sharia* law as part of the Indonesian legal system, arguing that “it could create negative repercussions against non-Muslim religions, as well as conflict with traditional customary laws” (Yamin, 1959, p. 259).

Nevertheless, the original compromise that was reached by secular nationalists and Muslims did not fully satisfy these Christian leaders. The preamble of the constitution that was agreed upon by the two groups contained a clause that seemed to have promoted Islam, not as an official religion, but perhaps as a favored religion, of the Indonesian state. The clause read: “*Ketuhanan dengan kewajiban menjalankan Syariat Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya*” (Belief in One God, with the obligation for adherents of Islam to practice the *sharia* law). This clause later became known as the Jakarta Charter (*Piagam Jakarta*). While the clause explicitly stated that the *sharia* would only be applicable to Muslim Indonesians, Christians (as well as other religious minorities) were concerned that the clause seemed to have put Islam into a favored, if not privileged, status in the Indonesian state, thereby threatening the religious liberty of other faiths that is implied by the words “Belief in One God,” (“*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*”) (Yamin, 1959, p. 259).¹³

However, despite the objections made by Christians as well as some secular nationalists, BPUPKI adopted this compromise constitution by acclamation on July 16, 1945. In asking for this acclamation vote, Sukarno, the

¹² The special committee also included four members from the Muslim group and four from the secular nationalist group.

¹³ Some secular nationalists had also objected to this clause, arguing that it could promote “religious fanaticism” and would force nominal and syncretic Muslims to follow the *sharia* against their will. See the statements delivered by BPUPKI members Wongsonegoro and Husein Djajadiningrat

chairman of the special committee that drafted this compromise, made the following plea:

Let us now commit ourselves to this sacrifice, and the sacrifice that I demand from all of you who are not in agreement with the Muslim group is for you to unanimously endorse what I am about to propose. This is my proposal: that in our new constitution we insert a clause that states that the President of the Indonesian Republic must be a native-born citizen who is a Muslim. That the (Indonesian) state is based on the belief in one God, with the obligation to follow the *sharia* for those who are obliged to do so (i.e., Muslims). And lastly, that the state guarantees the freedom of all citizens to adopt a religion and to worship according to the teachings of their respective religions.

I ask again that the above proposal be approved unanimously by each of you, even when I recognize that this is a great sacrifice for my brothers, the patriots Latuharhari and Maramis, who are not Muslims, and have made their objections clear. With my tears, I ask that you all will accept this offer for the sake of our motherland and our country....so that we can peacefully declare the independence of our beloved Indonesia (Yamin, 1959, pp. 392-393).

In this speech, Sukarno made clear that this compromise was difficult to achieve and while he recognized the objections made by Christian BPUPKI members such as Maramis and Latuharhari, as well as those made by other secular nationalists, he believed that this was the only compromise that would make Muslim members agreed to this constitution draft and cleared the way for the constitution to be approved unanimously by all BPUPKI members. Thus, the draft of the constitution was finally approved, with the Jakarta Charter clause calling for the implementation of sharia by Indonesian Muslims and another that called for future Indonesian presidents to be a Muslim left intact.

Christian leaders made numerous behind-the-scene efforts to revoke the above clauses, which they perceived as favoring Muslims over other religious traditions in Indonesia. Their lobbies intensified after Indonesia declared its independence on August 17, 1945 and they realized that the pre-approved Indonesian constitution would need to be reconfirmed by another preparatory commission, *Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (Committee for the Preparation of Indonesia's Independence – PPKI) that was formed after BPUPKI

was abolished by the Japanese occupation government on August 6, 1945.¹⁴ Christian leaders communicated their objections to the BPUPKI draft to several Japanese military officers on the evening of August 17, 1945, who went to see the secular nationalist leader Mohammad Hatta. This encounter was recalled by Hatta in his memoir, quoted below:

On the evening after the Declaration of Independence was read, I received a phone call from Mr. Nishijima, assistant to Admiral Maeda (the highest ranking Japanese naval officer stationed in Indonesia), who stated that a Japanese Navy officer wanted to see me to relay a very important message for the Indonesian people....This officer.....came to tell me that he had just had a meeting with representatives of the Protestant and Catholic communities from Eastern Indonesia, whom have strongly objected to the preamble of the proposed Indonesian constitution, which contained the following clause: "Belief in One God, with the obligation for adherents of Islam to practice the *sharia* law." They recognized that this clause did not directly applicable to their group (Christians), only to Indonesian Muslim citizens. Nevertheless, they argued that this clause, if remained as part of the Indonesian constitution, could be interpreted as a discrimination against religious minorities like themselves. If this discriminatory clause remains intact, they prefer to secede their regions from the newly declared Republic of Indonesia (Hatta, 1956, p. 57).

Christian leaders issued a threat to the secular nationalist leaders that they will not become a part of the newly declared Indonesian Republic if the *sharia* clause favoring Muslims remained in the draft Indonesian constitution (Ngelow, 2000, p. 126). Despite its minority status nationwide, in Eastern Indonesia Christianity was (and remains) the majority religion of the population living in regions such as Maluku, North Sulawesi, and East Nusa Tenggara. Secular nationalists like Hatta, whom had dreamed of an independent Indonesian state that comprised multiple ethnic and religious groups, took such a threat, which would have shattered their lifelong dream for a united Indonesian state, very seriously.

The following day (August 18, 1945), Hatta and Sukarno convened a PPKI meeting, which they both chaired. They informed other members of the

¹⁴ PPKI consisted of 25 members, most of them were former members of BPUPKI, including Sukarno and Hatta.

committee that they, along with several key Muslim leaders (Aritonang, 2004, pp. 254-255),¹⁵ had agreed in an early morning meeting held on the same day, to delete all clauses that were perceived by Indonesian Christian leaders as privileging the status of Islam in the newly declared Indonesian state. These deleted clauses included the controversial Jakarta Charter clause, along with the clause requiring future Indonesian presidents to be of Muslim faith (Yamin, 1959, pp. 401-402). In place of the *sharia* clause, they installed the original civil religionist principle introduced by Sukarno on June 1, 1945, “Belief in One God” (“*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*”). This amended constitution was unanimously approved by all PPKI members later on the same day, and they remained in their precise languages to this day. However, the PPKI meeting also approved a major compromise to Muslim leaders, by establishing a Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Departemen Agama*) that were primarily staffed by Muslims and administered public programs and subsidies that primarily benefited Muslims.¹⁶ This was done despite the objection of Christian leaders (e.g., Latuharhari) (Yamin, 1959, p. 457; Aritonang, 2004, p. 257). This compromise shows that the Indonesian state is not a strict secularist state, but instead one that still give much room for religious actors (including Muslims) to participate in the public sphere.

1950-1960: Continuing Struggles between Muslim, Secular Nationalists, and Christians

While Indonesian Muslim leaders were very upset with the failure to enact Jakarta Charter, they were willing to set aside their disagreements with the secular nationalists and Christians during the first ten years of Indonesia’s independence (1945-1955). The Muslims (then united under a single *Masyumi* party) were willing to participate in various Indonesian cabinets that govern the country during this period. Masyumi politicians such as Mohammad Natsir, Syafruddin

¹⁵ Muslim leaders who were consulted by Sukarno and Hatta on this last minute changes were Ki Bagus Hadikusumo, Kasman Singodimedjo, Teuku Mohammad Hasan, and Wahid Hasjim, although some accounts have expressed doubts on whether Hasjim was actually present at this meeting

¹⁶ By tradition, the Minister of Religious Affairs in Indonesia normally came from the traditionalist organization *Nahdlatul Ulama*, a practice that continued throughout much of the Liberal Democratic period in the 1950s and is restored after the restoration of democracy in Indonesia in 1998. This gives NU access to patronage funds (e.g., revenue from hajj pilgrims) that are very crucial for the sustenance of the organization.

Prawiranegara, and Mohammad Roem, became known for their moderate, sometime liberal stance on non-religious issues (primarily on economic affairs) that they were hailed as “socialist Muslims” (Kahin, 1952) or as “administrators” (Feith, 1962) by Western scholars studying Indonesian politics in the 1950s. They were hoping that their moderate stance could convince secular nationalists and Indonesian Christians to accept their agenda to turn Indonesia to become an Islamic state. They were also hoping that their moderate stance would result in an overwhelming victory for the *Masyumi* party in the upcoming 1955 election, a victory that was assured given the majority of Indonesians were Muslims, at least nominally (Boland, 1971).

However, Indonesian Muslims was dealt with a heavy blow on April 1952, when the division between reformist and traditionalist Muslims that first arose in the 1920s but were overlooked in the 1930s and 1940s resurfaced. The two groups were now separated into two political parties: *Masyumi*, which represented the reformists, and *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), which represented the traditionalists. The split was initiated by traditionalists for purely strategic reason: traditionalists clerics, who then lived primarily in rural areas with little reliable revenue sources, were not given enough ministerships in previous cabinets and had recently stripped from its right to nominate the Minister of Religious Affairs from its own rank (Fealy, 1997, pp. 22-23). Traditionalists believed that by forming their own political party and presented itself as a moderate alternative to the more conservative *Masyumi*, and thus were more attractive coalition partner for secularist parties. The strategy paid off: in the 1955 election NU won 45 parliamentary seats and were now getting more ministerial positions as well as patronage opportunities than were previously (Fealy, 1997, p. 30).

In contrast, *Masyumi's* influence declined after the 1955 election. Its insistent campaign to include *sharia* in the Indonesian constitution made it vulnerable to frequent attacks from secularists, Christians, and sometimes, from traditionalist Muslims as well. Nevertheless, *Masyumi* held on into this principle and when a newly formed constituent assembly met in 1957 to consider possible revisions to the Indonesian constitution, it intensified its efforts to reintroduce *sharia* into the constitution. The debate that took place in the constitution

assembly echoed the 1945 debate, with the same casts of characters: Muslims (both reformists and traditionalists), secular nationalists, and Christians.

Muslim politicians insisted on the return of the Jakarta Charter in any new constitution adopted by the constitution assembly. On the other hand, Christian politicians, backed by their secular allies, continued their opposition over the charter on the grounds that it constituted a threat to their religious liberty. There is not enough space in this article to discuss the statements and arguments made by Christian politicians to support their position. However, the following remarks made by Wilhelm Rumambi, from the Indonesian Christian Party (*Partai Kristen Indonesia – Parkindo*), well-illustrated their argument:

We believe that the Indonesian state and its government are God's servants who are called to promote justice. It is our belief that the duty of the state is also that of God's. However, while (the state and the church) are serving the same God, their duties, as outlined by God himself, are different. The duties of the state are to promote security, justice, and liberty among its citizens. In performing its duties, the state could use the sword as well as forced coercion. However, the church could never use sword and coercion in its duties. Instead, it should rely on God's eternal mercy. We believe that this is the proper relationship between the state and the church. Our Lord Jesus Christ has said "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22: 21). Thus, it is difficult for us to accept the view that the state has to be based on a particular religion [read: Islam] (Aritonang, 2004, pp. 315-316).

This time, the debate between secular nationalist, Christians, and Muslims over the future of Indonesia's constitution was irreconcilable. No compromise proposal emerged from their debate, since while the secular nationalist and Christian factions were successful in blocking any drafts made by the Muslim faction that contained the Jakarta charter, the Muslims were successful in preventing a quorum to be reached that would have enabled the draft developed by secular nationalists and Christians to be passed.

Facing the threat of the country falling apart over this issue, as well as to deal with emerging threats of regional rebellion and a possible army coup,¹⁷

¹⁷ For more on the role of the Indonesian Armed Forces in instigating the collapse of Indonesia's parliamentary democracy in the 1950s, see Feith, *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia* and

Sukarno decided to end the debate unilaterally. On July 5, 1959, he issued a decree that dissolved the Constitution Assembly, abrogated the constitution, and reaffirmed that *Pancasila*, the secular state philosophy first issued in 1945 to be the foundations of the Indonesian state. He then banned *Masyumi*, and arrested its leaders, whom he accused with instigating a plot to undermine his rule.¹⁸ Sukarno's decree and his assumption of authoritarian powers were supported by secular nationalists, traditionalist Muslims, and Christians (Aritonang, 2004, pp. 335-340; Fealy, 1997, pp. 33-37). He continued to tolerate expressions of religious discourses in the public sphere and provided much patronage to the traditionalist Muslim party NU as well as to the Christian parties (Aritonang, 2004, pp. 339-340; Fealy, 1997, pp. 36-37). However, Sukarno's regime support for passive secularism came under a heavy price: authoritarian rule in Indonesia that lasted for nearly four decades (1959-1998), under both Sukarno and his predecessor, General Suharto.

Conclusion

This article is an attempt to show how further research on varieties on secularism, focusing particularly on Islamic countries could give us insight on how secularism was established in these countries despite the missing conditions that some theorists have argued are necessary to exist before they could be successfully implemented. The Indonesian case discussed in this article shows how a determined coalition of secular nationalists and Christian minorities forcefully imposed secularism in Indonesia at a critical juncture period between May and August 1945, when the country was about to declare its independence and its leaders were deliberating a new constitution that would served as the foundation of the new state.

Daniel S. Lev, *The Transition to Guided Democracy in Indonesia: Indonesian Politics, 1957-1959* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Modern Indonesia Project, 1966).

¹⁸ Some *Masyumi* leaders such as Natsir and Syafruddin Prawiranegara openly supported a rebellion staged by disgruntled army officers from outside Java whom sought to lessen the dominance of Javanese-based politicians and political parties in favor to those from outside Java as well as to have a better distribution of state revenue between the Jakarta-based national government and the outer Java provinces. Their rebellion is called the Revolutionary Republic of Indonesia Movement (*Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia – PRRI*). For more on the PRRI rebellion, see Lev, *The Transition to Guided Democracy in Indonesia*.

Through numerous political maneuvers, they successfully defeated a counter-proposal from Indonesian Muslims who proposed an alternative plan that would have created at least an Islamic-inspired state, if not a full-fledged Islamic state. They did so by arguing that secularism was the only ideology that were acceptable to all Indonesians, especially members of Indonesia's religious minorities, particularly Christians, because secularism was the only ideology that would have protected the rights, as well as the religious liberty, of these religious minorities.

The case of secularization in Indonesia introduces several possible modifications to the varieties of secularism theory proposed by Hurd and Kuru. First, it serves as a partial disconfirmation of Judeo-Christian secularist thinkers whom argued that secularism could only be successfully implemented in Western countries that shares a similar Judeo-Christian political culture that promoted its emergence. Indonesian secular nationalists were primarily Muslims, but due to their nominal and syncretic religious practices as well as the influence of Western-style education they had received in the Netherlands, they absorbed the secularist philosophies of Enlightenment philosophers. Based from these secularist philosophies, they made an argument that due to the ethnic and religious heterogeneity of the Indonesian population, a secular nationalist state is the appropriate state-religion regime for Indonesia, given that it would best preserve and protect the rights of all of these religious minorities and include them in Indonesia's post-independence state-building project.

Nevertheless, the role of Judeo-Christian secularism could not be dismissed entirely in this case study. Elements of Judeo-Christianity also had influenced the development of Indonesian secularism. This could be seen from the policies of the Dutch colonial government that, despite its official neutrality on religious matters, had encouraged Christian missionaries and their proselytization activities, and had provided substantial political and financial resources to support them. The policy of the Dutch colonial government clearly favored Indonesian Christians. It helped to create a political culture that privileged Indonesian Christians over the country's Muslim majority population.

The crucial role that Indonesian Christian minorities played in the debate between secular nationalists and Muslims over state-religion relations in

Indonesia also served as evidence that some elements of Judeo-Christianity have served as a foundation of secularism in Indonesia. A common linkage that unified secular nationalists and Christian politicians at the dawn of Indonesia's independence as well as its early state-building period until the late-1960s was the common philosophy they learned from their Dutch education that framed separation of religion and politics as an appropriate policy in a modern nation-state, especially one that is ethnically and religiously diverse like Indonesia. However, they did not make an argument for a strict separation between religion and politics either, because they recognized that most of Indonesia's population (both Muslims and Christians) considered themselves to be religious and would have resisted a strict separation between the two realms. They also wanted to appease some Muslims whom have originally wanted an Islamic inspired state, by arguing that religion would continue to have a significant role to play in the new state, despite the fact that it is secular, and the government would continue to provide financial support to some Islamic groups. Thus, unlike Kuru's prediction that a severe conflict between secularists and the dominant religious tradition would have resulted in an assertive secularist (laicist) state, the Indonesian state instead became a passive secularist (civil religionist) state.

Two additional insights could also be drawn from the Indonesian case. Firstly, the case provides additional evidence to support Jose Casanova's thesis on the deprivatization of religion in modern societies. In fact, one could argue that at least in the Indonesian case, religious groups never retreated to the private sphere. Instead, both Muslims and Christians have always played an important role in shaping Indonesia's political discourses. This was seen from the very public role they took during the Dutch colonial rule, the Japanese occupation, as well as during the preparation of Indonesia's independence and thereafter. This serves to support the argument that unlike the predictions of laicists/strict secularists, religion was never completely privatized in Indonesia and in fact, have an important role to play in periods of critical junctures in developing societies such as Indonesia.

Secondly, the Indonesian case also supports the assertion that the promotion of secularism often came about through a confrontational and sometimes violent struggle between different actors who were involved in the

formation of state-religion policy in a given country. Secular nationalists and Christians were able to impose passive secularism in Indonesia only after a protracted struggle with Indonesian Muslim groups, whom strenuously proposed a different state-religion policy than what were adopted by secular nationalists. The tactics used by Indonesian Christians were coercive (e.g., threatening the secession of Christian-dominated Eastern Indonesia in 1945 should the constitution continue to declare *sharia* as a foundation of the new Indonesian state, developing a research think-tank that helped the Suharto regime in its repression of Indonesian communists and conservative Muslims). Christians also helped brought about two successive authoritarian regimes in Indonesia that while often violently repressed the aspirations of reformist Muslims, were receiving support from the Christians. This in turn helped brought about direct confrontations between the two religious groups that often (especially within the last decade) had resulted in violent clashes between their adherents.

In conclusion, the Indonesian case have brought about some interesting findings that should be noted by other social scientists working in the field of religion and politics, particularly those who are investigating state-religion relations as well as varieties of secularism in different parts of the world. It also brought an interesting insight to scholars working on inter-religious relations and conflicts, especially those who wish to study how the struggle over secularism could have promoted conflicts between different religious groups, particularly between Muslims and Christians.

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