

Chapter 1 : Political Islam in Indonesia - by Paul Marshall

Running for president in Indonesia seemed also to entail having to show off one's commitment to Islam. The presidential election featured a prominent use of Islamic cultural and ritual.

The presidential election featured a prominent use of Islamic cultural and ritual symbols. Both Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto showcased their connection to Islam through public displays of piety. Both also looked for support from Islamic political parties, religious leaders, Islamic boarding schools and mass organisations to increase their electability. Widodo, more popularly called Jokowi, flew to Mecca three days before the presidential election on a pilgrimage, staving off smear campaigns that he was secretly a Christian of Chinese descent. Why does Islam play a large role in this election? New Order legacy

Actually, in the s, Indonesia had a more diverse ideological landscape than today. In the general election , many Islam-based political parties freely used Islam as their ideological foundation and fought to make Islam the state ideology. At the same time, it was common for the Indonesian Communist Party and other secular parties to oppose the Islamic parties. He merged Islamic parties into one United Development Party PPP and forced them to abandon their ideal of formalising and legalising Islam as state ideology. The PPP had to accept Pancasila as its party ideology. While Islam as a political ideology experienced a setback, it flourished culturally. This can be seen in the tagline popularised by the late Islamic scholar Nurcholish Madjid: From then until the fall of Suharto, Indonesian Islam no longer promoted formal and legal aspirations. It instead emphasised moral and ethical principles, such as justice, equality, freedom and common good. People kept away from leftist ideology due to the stigma created by government propaganda. As a result, under the New Order, educated Indonesians could only use Islam as a powerful ideological language to protest about social and economic inequality. With PKI banned, Islam became the only refuge from their social, economic, political and moral problems. Religion is tightly connected to human psychology and culture. Indonesians seem to be more open in expressing their Islamic religiosity compared to the s following Dutch colonial rule. But the important question is: How far does Islam correlate with or manifest in the attitudes and behaviours of members of a society in upholding social ethics and politics? Will it translate to rule of law, good governance and social justice, including economic justice? We are still waiting for the answers.

Chapter 2 : Why Islam matters in Indonesian politics

Islam is the most adhered to religion in Indonesia, with % of Indonesian population identifying themselves as Muslim in estimate. Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world, with approximately million Muslims.

Radical Islam in Indonesia, with the Islamic Defenders Front leading the charge, is the main force behind the rise of populism in Indonesia. Radical Islamists have called for the adoption of Sharia law nationwide and penetrated mainstream moderate Muslim organizations, Islamic political parties, universities, Islamic schools and the media. The boldness of the movement is striking, particularly its savvy use of social media. The anti-Chinese sentiment of many radical Islamists is not a new phenomenon. Radical Islamists, among others, were blamed for igniting the riots. The son-in-law of former President Suharto, General Prabowo Subianto, was also accused of having a role behind the anti-Chinese movement. However, he continues to reject the accusations. Meanwhile, mainland Chinese companies have been aggressively targeting Indonesia especially in infrastructure and natural resources. Controversial high-speed rail, power and mining projects in Sulawesi are some examples. With mainland Chinese investment, an increase in Chinese workers has triggered resentment and anti-Chinese sentiment, which is now a key part of the populist movement in the country. This also affects feelings toward Indonesian nationals of Chinese heritage, who traditionally dominate the economy and business in the country. Ahok, as he is known, is both a Christian and ethnically Chinese. Islamic parties in Indonesia do not perform well at local or national elections, and often suffer severe internal party conflicts; the United Development Party, for example, is divided into two camps with two different chairmen, and the National Awakening Party is similarly divided between supporters of former president Abdurrahman Wahid and the current chairman. The radicals have still not been able to garner enough support to form an official political party. In spite of this, radical Islam significantly impacts the Indonesian economy. The burden for this law falls on consumers, who now pay higher prices for many necessities. Inequality is also helping fuel populism in Indonesia. President Joko Widodo commonly known as Jokowi and his administration are working to overcome the growing populism ignited by radical Islam. The effort has had some positive results so far, as shown by their commitment to fight against radicalism and not changing the state principles to align with Sharia law. Islamist populists are well-positioned to strengthen their movement, especially as Muslims continue to feel marginalized in a country where they are the majority. The government is making efforts to overcome inequality by redistributing state land to the poor. Cash transfers for the poor have also increased. In addition, village development is intensified through the higher allocation of the village fund. These efforts by the Indonesian government to curb populism led by radical Islam are steps in the right direction but not enough. Wider participation by moderate Muslims is required. Meanwhile, economic policies need to better address poverty and inequality by creating jobs. Foreign direct investment should be encouraged in order to contribute to economic growth and jobs. However, the sensitivity related to anti-Chinese economic domination should also be addressed, especially relating to the issue of bringing in large number of mainland Chinese blue-collar workers. The potential for populism led by radical Islam continuing to grow in Indonesia remains strong. Though they have failed to dominate mainstream politics, Islamist populists are well-positioned to take advantage of social, political and economic trends to strengthen their movement, especially as inequality between ethnicities remains high and Muslims continue to feel marginalized in a country where they are the majority.

Chapter 3 : Indonesian Politics - The Political History of Indonesia | Indonesia Investments

Islam and Identity Politics in Indonesia Rising Islamic conservatism, especially among youths, is a worrying trend for Indonesia. By Neil Thompson for The Diplomat.

Several days later, a mendaciously edited video of the talk, omitting some of his key words, went viral on the Internet. One demonstration drew over a million people in Jakarta, and Ahok was charged and tried, though he continued to canvass votes, commuting daily between the campaign trail and the trial. The campaign was ugly. Radical preachers declared that Muslims were forbidden to vote for a non-Muslim, and several mosques displayed signs stating that Ahok voters could never have an Islamic burial. The governor continued to seek votes, but on April 19, he lost percent. The day after the vote, when it could not help him politically, the prosecution dropped some of the charges against Ahok and recommended that he be given the very light sentence of probation plus a one-year suspended jail term. The following day, three of those judges were promoted by the Indonesia Supreme Court. The verdict has split the country in a way not seen in decades. There are widespread demonstrations defending Ahok, but many of his supporters are too afraid to speak out. The president and the national police have been at odds with the military. There is widespread fear that Indonesia may lapse into authoritarian government. This radicalization is often led by a well-funded Saudi network of schools, scholarships, imams, and mosques determined to wrest Indonesians away from local interpretations of Islam, which have usually encouraged democracy and peaceful relations between religions. The national police have been cracking down on radicals. Rizieq has spent the last month in Saudi Arabia, partly to avoid police questioning, but on May 30, the police charged him under the pornography law for allegedly sending sexually explicit messages to Firza Husein, who has been arrested for treason on suspicion that she was trying to orchestrate a coup through her role as an organizer of the mass demonstrations. Meanwhile, the government has announced that it will ban the radical group Hizb ut-Tahrir. But the opposition to Ahok extended beyond radicals. Many ordinary Muslims believed that he had deliberately insulted them and this genuine religious sentiment has been manipulated by senior politicians, the military, and other elites, who also likely funded the radicals. The FPI does not have the money or other resources to organize massive demonstrations with thousands of buses, lunch boxes, and neatly printed signs and T-shirts. There are other tensions between the president and the military. Jokowi reportedly reprimanded General Gatot Nurmantyo, chief of the Indonesian Military TNI, after the latter unilaterally declared a suspension of defense cooperation with Australia. General Nurmantyo has also publicly contradicted the National Police chief, General Tito Karnavian, a Jokowi ally, about whether there has been anything treasonous in the recent demonstrations. Indonesia has many strengths. Despite Wahhabi inroads, its dominant forms of Islam remain open and tolerant, and can be important allies in the struggle against Islamist terrorism and extremism. Muslims from Indonesia are still 20 times less likely than Muslims from America to try to join ISIS, and 50 times less likely to do so than Muslims from England or other parts of Europe. If this gubernatorial election becomes the paradigm for the next presidential contest, then they may collapse. If it succumbs to Islamic radicalism or authoritarian rule, it will be a dark day not just for Indonesians.

Chapter 4 : Introduction to Islam in Indonesia - Development of Indonesian Islam | Indonesia Investments

One thing seems clear, and that is, that the intensity and scale of the actions by the anti-Ahok coalition has, arguably, taken to a new level the deployment of Islam as a tool in Indonesian politics.

Comment Joko Widodo is a strange character, a superstar in his country and a figure of growing importance in Asian politics. Sometimes he behaves like the legendary Kalif Harun al-Rashid, who used to sneak out of his palace in Baghdad at night to mingle, in disguise, with ordinary people and learn what they were thinking. Sometimes he emulates Nelson Mandela, who has charmed people with his optimism and eloquence throughout his life. And sometimes he comes across as a Mick Jagger type, charismatic and assertive, but perhaps a little too self-absorbed. For his fellow Indonesians, this is apparently an irresistible blend of character traits. Widodo, 52, widely known as "Jokowi," is a pop star and an inspirational tribune of the people. He is the governor of the regional district of Jakarta, a megalopolis of about 23 million people on a strip of land along the coast, which is constantly threatened by flooding. In fact, scientists believe that most of Jakarta will be underwater by Greater Jakarta is one of the most chaotic collections of people in the world, a seemingly ungovernable Moloch. This would also make him one of the leaders of the G group of 20 major economies. It encompasses more than 5, kilometers 3, miles from west to east, or about the distance from Lisbon to well past Moscow. It also holds volcanoes and tropical rainforests, the home of giant, meter foot trees, along with mangroves and coral reefs, orangutans and Komodo dragons. There have been periodic attacks by Islamist fanatics, with the worst claiming lives on the island of Bali in But terrorism is seen as the exception in Indonesia, while religious tolerance is the norm. For many people, Southeast Asian Islam serves as proof that an open-minded, gentler version of the religion exists. Is Indonesia truly an exemplary country, a role model for the radically changing societies of the Arab Spring? Can this country truly claim to be proof that the Koran, with its strict rules, is compatible with parliamentary democracy and its freedoms? Those who believe that Islam and pluralism do not have to be contradictions are pinning their hopes on Governor Jokowi. He describes himself as a devout Muslim, and yet his religious affiliation does not figure prominently in his rhetoric or his actions. He has also chosen a lieutenant governor, year-old Basuki "Ahok" Purnama, who belongs to two minorities. He is neither Javanese nor a member of other local ethnic groups, but Chinese. He is also a Christian. Wearing jeans, a T-shirt and a baseball cap, he is accompanied only by an assistant, instead of arriving with an entourage and a police escort. The officials there are supposed to be available, starting at 9 a. But inefficiency has become the norm over the years, and hardly any of the offices he visits opens its doors on time. The governor pulls out his ballpoint pen and takes notes. In one office, an employee came to work 35 minutes late, while another arrived 90 minutes after the office was supposed to open. This will not be without consequences. Jokowi will later send out warning letters, and the worst of the offenders will be threatened with dismissal. He listens to citizens as they vocally complain about the capriciousness of government officials and the bribes they are constantly expected to pay. But most of all he listens, and before long he is one of them. Then Jokowi departs just as quietly as he arrived, leaving behind astonished slum residents who will likely repeat the story of his spontaneous visit frequently in the future. They are not accustomed to seeing such an important politician turn up. Commitment to Transparency On another occasion, the governor attends a town meeting in eastern Jakarta, this time arriving in an official car and with an entourage. The traffic is horrendous. Local residents refer to them as "Big Durian," a reference to the large, foul-smelling tropical fruit that few find appealing. People have settled in the area for more than 2, years. Jokowi grew up in a middle-class family. His father, a carpenter, had to save every cent to send his children to school. Jokowi studied forestry and later became a furniture maker. Friends suggested that he run for mayor of his hometown of Surakarta, a city of about half a million people. He won the election with more than 90 percent of the vote. Then, in October , he took office in the capital, where a handful of prominent families and high-ranking military officers have traditionally been in charge, like almost everywhere else in Indonesia. Jokowi scored a surprise coup with his anti-establishment campaign, and he has been riding a wave of public approval ever since. Few people in Jakarta point out that the popular governor has yet to make good on many of his

campaign promises, from a planned expansion of public transportation to flood mitigation measures. With each appearance, Jokowi manages to convey the hope that something could change. He unites instead of polarizing. He stands for a reform program, but most of all he stands for himself and the integrity of a new policy. This is Jokowi as Nelson Mandela.

Chapter 5 : Why Populist Islam Is Gaining Ground In Indonesia | HuffPost

Few people outside the region know much about the Indonesian archipelago, the practice of Islam among its diverse peoples, or the religion's powerful influence on the politics of the republic.

Demokrasi Terpimpin on July 5. From , the Guided Democracy was the political system in place until the New Order began in . It was the brainchild of President Sukarno , and was an attempt to bring about political stability. Instead, he sought a system based on the traditional village system of discussion and consensus, which occurred under the guidance of village elders. Transition to the New Order[edit] Further information: Transition to the New Order The transition to the " New Order " in the mids, ousted Sukarno after 22 years in the position. Described as the great dhalang "puppet master" , Sukarno drew power from balancing the opposing and increasingly antagonistic forces of the army and the Communist Party of Indonesia PKI. By , the PKI extensively penetrated all levels of government and gained influence at the expense of the army. Within a few hours, Major General Suharto mobilised forces under his command and took control of Jakarta. He was formally appointed president one year later. Sukarno lived under virtual house arrest until his death in . Orde Baru is the term coined by President Suharto to characterise his regime as he came to power in . He used this term to contrast his rule with that of his predecessor, Sukarno dubbed the "Old Order," or Orde Lama. The term "New Order" in more recent times has become synonymous with the Suharto years . Following communal and political conflicts, and economic collapse and social breakdown of the late s through to the mids, the New Order was committed to achieving and maintaining political order, economic development, and the removal of mass participation in the political process. The features of the New Order established from the late s were thus a strong political role for the military, the bureaucratisation and corporatisation of political and societal organisations, and selective but effective repression of opponents. Strident anti-communism remained a hallmark of the regime for its subsequent 32 years. Within a few years, however, many of its original allies had become indifferent or averse to the New Order, which comprised a military faction supported by a narrow civilian group. Among much of the pro-democracy movement which forced Suharto to resign in and then gained power, the term "New Order" has come to be used pejoratively. It is frequently employed to describe figures who were either tied to the New Order, or who upheld the practises of his authoritarian regime, such as corruption, collusion and nepotism widely known by the acronym KKN: Reform [8] [9] [10]. This period has seen a more open and liberal political-social environment. A process of constitutional reform lasted from to , with four amendments producing major changes. Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, MPR , whose functions previously included electing the president and vice-president since the president has been elected directly by the people , establishing broad guidelines of state policy, and amending the constitution. Dewan Perwakilan Daerah, DPD elected by the 26 provincial parliaments and 65 appointed members from societal groups. Societal group representation in the MPR was eliminated in through further constitutional change. Under constitutional changes in , the MPR became a bicameral legislature , with the creation of the DPD, in which each province is represented by four members, although its legislative powers are more limited than those of the DPR. Several other, mostly Islamic parties won shares large enough to be seated in the DPR. Further democratic elections took place in , and . The Indonesian political system before and after the constitutional amendments.

Chapter 6 : Islam and politics: Indonesia's identity crisis | Politics | Al Jazeera

There are more Muslims in Indonesia than in any other country, but most people outside the region know little about the nation, much less about the practice of Islam among its diverse peoples or the religion's influence on the politics of the republic.

There are evidence of Arab Muslim traders entering Indonesia as early as the 8th century. Marco Polo , on his way home from China in , reported at least one Muslim town. By the end of the 13th century, Islam had been established in Northern Sumatra. In general, local traders and the royalty of major kingdoms were the first to adopt the new religion. The spread of Islam among the ruling class was precipitated as Muslim traders married the local women, with some of the wealthier traders marrying into the families of the ruling elite. Although the spread was slow and gradual, [37] the limited evidence suggests that it accelerated in the 15th century, as the military power of Malacca Sultanate in the Malay Peninsula and other Islamic Sultanates dominated the region aided by episodes of Muslim coup such as in , wars and superior control of maritime trading and ultimate markets. Chinese Ming dynasty provided systematic support to Malacca. By , the expeditions had established Muslim Chinese, Arab and Malay communities in northern ports of Java such as Semarang , Demak , Tuban , and Ampel ; thus Islam began to gain a foothold on the northern coast of Java. Malacca prospered under Chinese Ming protection, while the Majapahit were steadily pushed back. During this process, "cultural influences from the Hindu-Buddhist era were mostly tolerated or incorporated into Islamic rituals. Sufism retained strong influence especially among the Islamic scholars arrived during the early days of the spread of Islam in Indonesia, and many Sufi orders such as Naqshbandiyah and Qadiriyya have attracted newly Indonesian converts, proceeded to branch into different local divisions. Sufi mysticism which had proliferated during this course had shaped the syncretic, eclectic and pluralist nature of Islam in Indonesian during the time. Javanese rulers eventually fled to Bali , where over 2. Unlike coastal Sumatra, where Islam was adopted by elites and masses alike, partly as a way to counter the economic and political power of the Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms, in the interior of Java the elites only gradually accepted Islam, and then only as a formal legal and religious context for Javanese spiritual culture. The eastern islands remained animist largely until adopting Islam and Christianity in the 17th and 18th centuries, whereas Bali still retains a Hindu majority. This last Hindu kingdom in Java fell under the rising power of the Islamized Sultanate of Demak in the s; in , the Muslim ruler renamed newly conquered Sunda Kelapa as Jayakarta meaning "precious victory" which was eventually contracted to Jakarta. Islam in Java then began to spread formally, building on the spiritual influences of the revered Sufi saints Wali Songo or Nine Saints. Despite being one of the most significant developments in Indonesian history, historical evidence is fragmentary and uninformative such that understandings of the coming of Islam to Indonesia are limited; there is considerable debate amongst scholars about what conclusions can be drawn about the conversion of Indonesian peoples. This evidence is not sufficient to comprehensively explain more complicated matters such as how lifestyles were affected by the new religion or how deeply it affected societies. Early modern period [edit] Mosque in Pati , Central Java , incorporating the European architectural style introduced during the colonial era. However, this helped the spread of Islam, as local Muslim traders relocated to the smaller and remoter ports, establishing Islam into the rural provinces. As a result, the interaction between Indonesia and the rest of the Islamic world, in particular the Middle East , had significantly increased. Around two hundred Southeast Asian students, mostly Indonesian, were studying in Cairo during the mids, and around two thousand citizens of Saudi Arabia were Indonesian origin. Those who returned from the Middle East had become the backbone of religious training in pesantrens. Modernist movement in Indonesia had criticized the syncretic nature of Islam in Indonesia and advocated for the reformism of Islam and the elimination of perceived un-Islamic elements within the traditions. The movement also aspired for incorporating the modernity into Islam, and for instance, they "built schools that combined an Islamic and secular curriculum" and was unique in that it trained women as preachers for women. Reformist movements had especially taken roots in the Minangkabau area of West Sumatra , where its ulema played an important role in the early reform movement. He was singlehandedly

responsible for educating many of the essential Muslim figures during this time. The movement had also attained its supporter base in Java. Muhammadiyah rapidly expanded its influence across the archipelago, with Abdul Karim Amrullah establishing the West Sumatra chapter in for instance. Combination of reformist thoughts and the growing sense of sovereignty had led to the brief development of Islam as a vehicle for the political struggle against the Dutch colonialism. The earliest example is Padri movement from Minangkabau. Padri movement was inspired by Wahhabism during its inception, and aimed at purification of Islam in Indonesia reciprocally. The movement eventually turned into a struggle against Dutch colonialism during the Padri War. The educational institutions such as Jamiat Kheir also supported the development. In the process, Islam gave the sense of identity which contributed to the cultivation of Indonesian nationalism. Under this circumstance, early Indonesian nationalists were eager to reflect themselves as a part of the ummah worldwide Islamic community. They also had interests in Islamic issues such as re-establishment of Caliphate and the movements such as pan-Islamism. For these reasons, Dutch colonial administration saw Islam as a potential threat and treated the returning pilgrims and students from the Middle East with particular suspicion. The inner struggle among Sarekat Islam between the reformists and the traditionalists had also contributed to its decline. These organizations upheld non-political position and concentrated on the social reforms and proselytization. This trend persisted during the Japanese occupation as well, whose occupational administration took the ambivalent stance toward Islam. Islam was considered both as a potential friend against the Western imperialism and a potential foe against their vision of Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. When Indonesia declared independence in , it became the second largest Muslim-majority state in the world. Following the separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan in , it emerged as the most populous country with the Muslim majority in the world. Post-independence had seen the greatest upheaval of the Muslim society on various aspects of society. This owes to the independence, increased literacy and educational attainment of Muslims, funding from the Middle East and all the more accelerated exchange between other Muslim countries. Numbers of scholars and writers have contributed to the development of Islamic interpretations within the Indonesian context, often through the intellectual exchange between the foreign contemporaries. Abdurrahman Wahid Gus Dur , later president of Indonesia , went through the Islamic education at the University of Baghdad , and later became the central figure of the liberal Islamic trend in Indonesia. The Ministry of Religion reported that as late as the s, only minority of Muslims were practicing daily prayers and almsgiving. Meanwhile, militant Islamic organizations such as Darul Islam , Laskar Jihad , and Jemaah Islamiyah had also seen its growth, aided mostly by the foreign funding as well. The contentions were mainly surrounding the position of Islam in the constitution of Indonesia. This was denied by the Sukarno regime with the implementation of the more pluralist constitution heeding to the ideology of Pancasila , which deemed as non-Islamic. The hostility against the Sukarno regime was manifested on various other occasions. Most notably the anti-communist genocide perpetuated actively by Ansor Youth Movement , the youth wing of NU which was initially supportive of the Sukarno regime and other Islamic groups. This met strong opposition, with marriage law left as Islamic code as a result. Suharto had also attempted at consolidating Pancasila as the only state ideology, which was also turned down by the fierce resistance of Islamic groups.

Chapter 7 : Politics of Indonesia - Wikipedia

Indonesia has many strengths. Despite Wahhabi inroads, its dominant forms of Islam remain open and tolerant, and can be important allies in the struggle against Islamist terrorism and extremism.

About November 13, last updated Prashanth Parameswaran Tuesday, Feb. After mounting pressure from hard-line Islamists who staged mass demonstrations against him, Ahok—who is a candidate for the Feb. This includes over 1 percent who, like Ahok, are ethnically Chinese. Islam in Indonesia is often said to be more moderate than in the Middle East, in part because earlier animist, Hindu and Buddhist traditions gave it a more syncretic character. Though that is true as a broad-brush comparison, the evolution of political Islam in Indonesia has been far more contested and its legacy much less rosy than this narrative suggests. That has been a mixed blessing. On the one hand, moderate, mainstream Islamist parties—including the largest ones, Nahdlatul Ulama NU and Muhammadiyah, which boast tens of millions of followers—have greater room both to provide outlets for peaceful political expression and serve as effective bulwarks against more radical, violent forces. During his leadership from to , former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was reticent to crack down on militant Islamists for fear of reducing his popularity among conservative Muslim groups. During his tenure, harassment, intimidation and violence against religious minorities rose to worrying levels: According to the Setara Institute, an Indonesian nongovernmental organization that advocates for religious tolerance, attacks more than doubled from 91 in to in . In addition to violence, religious authorities and at times even the government itself have restricted the rights of religious minorities. In , for instance, the government passed a nationwide decree against the Ahmadiyya movement that banned the group from proselytizing, following a related fatwa issued by religious authorities in . As for blasphemy, while Ahok is the most senior Indonesian official to be slapped with the charge thus far, Amnesty International reports that the law has been used against over people over the past decade alone, compared to just 10 in the three decades following its passage in . If the evolution and role of Islam in Indonesia is a complex story, then so too is its political influence. Though few would doubt that political Islam remains a force to contend with today, scholars have debated its contemporary significance. In terms of electoral support, the combined voting share for Islamic parties in the past few legislative election cycles has tended to average around 30 percent, though there have been variations. But contrary to some sensationalist accounts, their strong performance was not necessarily linked to their ideology, and was tied in part to more effective campaign strategies relative to the previous election. Political Islam in Indonesia exists on a broad spectrum. Large, mainstream groups like NU and Muhammadiyah preach a tolerant, moderate message; fringe groups like FPI routinely engage in harassment and intimidation of their perceived opponents to advance a more radical agenda. Islamic political parties draw support from various organizations and individuals, at times entering into coalitions with bigger parties. This often leaves them trying to advance their own agendas alongside those of other actors, including the ruling government and religious authorities. With this general picture in mind, certain issue areas or developments can provide some Islamic groups, both political and civic, with opportunities to galvanize support, not only among other Islamic organizations but also other mainstream groups, political parties and the population at large. This is essentially what happened with the Ahok controversy. The blasphemy allegations against Ahok, who is both Christian and ethnically Chinese, has once again brought political Islam in Indonesia into the international spotlight. The Ahok Controversy To be sure, Ahok himself is no stranger to controversy. He—like President Jokowi Widodo, who preceded him as Jakarta governor before running for president—is a reformer who has helped bring change. But unlike Jokowi, who displays a rather Javanese politeness and affability even while governing, Ahok is known for his blunt, no-nonsense style and has alienated sections of the electorate as well as the entrenched elite. Ahok during a campaign event, Jakarta, Indonesia, Nov. Things were also bound to get nasty in the lead-up to the Feb. Jokowi had been supporting Ahok, who was his former running mate when Jokowi ran for governor back in . But Ahok has powerful rivals. While these factors certainly ensured that opposition against Ahok would be fierce heading into the February vote, the blasphemy controversy has proved to be a catalyst for anti-Ahok groups to mobilize. The incident itself occurred on Sept.

The verse, al-Maidah 51, warns Muslims against taking Jews or Christians as allies; Islamist parties deployed it as a reason why Muslim voters should not support Ahok. A video of his comment went viral online. Viewers alleged that Ahok had blasphemously claimed the verse was false, sparking outrage. Ahok protested that his opponents took his speech out of context and apologized to Muslims. But it was too late. The blasphemy controversy has proved to be a catalyst for anti-Ahok groups to mobilize. These demonstrations swelled beyond expectations, with the Dec. During these rallies, GNPF-MUI promoted aspects of its agenda that participants did not necessarily support, including the implementation of certain provisions of Shariah law. Amid this pressure, the police announced in mid-November that Ahok was a suspect in a blasphemy investigation, and his trial began on Dec. Jokowi himself felt the heat as the protests mounted. He initially took a series of steps to try to quell the growing protests while staying on the sidelines politically, meeting with Muslim leaders as well as several of his political rivals. He initially signaled he would not attend the Nov. However, disregarding warnings about potential security threats, he eventually joined the rally and addressed protesters on stage, expressing appreciation for their peaceful nature in what was seen as an attempt to calm rising tensions. Of Politics and Piety Though some sensationalist accounts have portrayed the Ahok case as a major conservative turn in Indonesian Islam, it would be more accurately read as a rare but important political victory for hard-line Islamic groups. The blasphemy controversy united disparate forces against Ahok; many of those forces, including protesters at the rallies, demonstrated to protest his specific insult to Islam rather than to show their general support for Islamist goals related to Shariah law and the relationship between the state and religion. Nonetheless, what the hard-line Islamic groups were able to accomplish and how they were able to achieve it have triggered alarm bells in the country and abroad. But while Indonesia is often reductively described by outsiders as being a moderate Muslim country relative to countries in the Middle East, in reality the country has struggled with incidents of ethnic and sectarian violence in the past. And even though he is but one case, his experience inevitably sends a chilling message to minorities about their ability to rise to public office. What the hard-line Islamic groups were able to accomplish and how they were able to achieve it have triggered alarm bells in the country and abroad. Furthermore, the fact that smaller, hard-line Islamist groups have dominated the conversation and sidelined larger, mainstream, moderate parties like NU and Muhammadiyah shows how easily fringe voices can take the national stage. To be sure, both parties eventually encouraged their followers not to attend the rally. But the Ahok controversy also forced NU and Muhammadiyah to react to the initiatives of hard-line Islamists and revealed divisions between progressive and conservative elements within the leaderships of both organizations, with some clearly speaking out on the controversy more than others. That some powerful elite forces were said to have latched on to the controversy to promote their narrow political interests instead of confronting it is also a sobering, if unsurprising, reality. In the lead-up to the rally, police rounded up a group of figures suspected of plotting a revolt against Jokowi by leading protesters to parliament. Finally, the fact that Jokowi himself eventually felt that he had no choice but to attend the rally and take the stage next to Rizieq, the FPI leader, was a sign that even the president would have to appease hard-line Islamists in the interest of wider political stability. To be sure, Jokowi was caught between a rock and a hard place: His approach to the controversy did eventually succeed in cooling things down. But in so doing, Jokowi was effectively conferring legitimacy to a hard-line strain of political Islam that could have longer-term implications both for his political future and the Indonesian political landscape more broadly. If he is convicted before the upcoming vote, he would be sentenced to at least five years in prison and would be removed from his position as governor, making him ineligible to run. But as of now, the court is unlikely to convict him before Feb. And barring any surprises, recent polls indicate that he is still the favorite to win, despite the controversy. A poll carried out in December by the Indonesian Survey Institute found that his approval rating had rebounded to That contrasts to a string of surveys released in November that showed his approval rating had plummeted to as low as 22 percent, placing him behind Yudhoyono, but ahead of Baswedan. Jokowi effectively conferred legitimacy to a hard-line strain of political Islam that could have implications for his political future and the Indonesian political landscape. If Ahok is found guilty after winning the election and being inaugurated as governor, he could still appeal the verdict at the Jakarta High Court, and the case could even be taken to the Supreme Court.

His running mate would then replace him. For a while, rumors were even circulating that FPI would form a political party with the intention of nominating Rizieq in , which the group has flatly denied. But three years is a long time in politics, especially in a vibrant democracy like Indonesia. What does this mean for political Islam? The Ahok controversy was a rare opportunity for hard-line Islamists to bring together a variety of anti-Ahok constituencies that shared their concern about the issue itself but did not necessarily support a broader hard-line agenda. So this is more accurately read as a one-off victory for a small group, rather than a turn toward conservatism in Indonesia as a whole. Nonetheless, one should not discount the possibility that the incident could provide momentum for hard-line Islamist groups to boost their influence on the national stage. Emboldened by their recent victory, they could identify other issues to rally around, thereby ensuring that their voice is heard and that they remain a force to contend with. If they are able to muster enough support, they may receive backing from bigger political parties looking to bolster their own popularity. That in turn would then allow them to indirectly exert their influence in Indonesian politics as they have done periodically in the past. But perhaps most chillingly for Indonesia, the Ahok controversy is a stern warning of the danger that unchecked extremism and intolerance can pose for minorities, social cohesion and even national security. Prashanth Parameswaran is an associate editor at The Diplomat magazine currently based in Washington, D. You can follow him on Twitter [TheAsianist](#).

Chapter 8 : Amy Freedman on Political Islam in Indonesia - Asia Experts Forum

Instead, Indonesia is a secular democratic country with strong Islamic influences. Since the early political debates on the topic of the ideological foundations of the Indonesian nation, certain strict Islamic groups (including some political parties) have spoken out for favouring the establishment of a Muslim country.

Political Islam in Indonesia Wahhabism runs into the sand Many Indonesians are watching with concern as religious intolerance and violence against minorities continues to escalate. But the vast majority are successfully stemming the tide of radical tendencies. More and more Muslim women are donning veils. In an effort to immunise Indonesians against the lure of communism, he systematically promoted the intensification of religiosity. Only 50 years ago, the majority of the dominant Javanese " who make up 42 percent of the Indonesian population " felt more committed to their Javanese culture than to Islam. Today, they pray five times a day and, if they can, make the pilgrimage to Mecca. Not a new phenomenon There has always been an extremist element to Indonesian Islam. A few terrorist initiatives were put a stop to in the early s. But some 3, Indonesian mujahideen were already fighting in Afghanistan at the time against the Soviets, paid for by the Americans and spiritually supervised by Osama bin Laden. Founding father of Pancasila: According to the state ideology of Pancasila, Indonesia is a secular state where, according to the principle of "belief in the one and only God", Islam together with Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism and Hinduism are the five officially recognised religions The democratic opening in Indonesia in allowed the extremists to enter the public sphere. Some of these groups, such as the notoriously violent "Islamic Defenders Front" FPI , were cultivated by the police and the military " as a counterforce against the students demonstrating for more democracy. It was likewise members of the military that allowed the jihadists trained in Yogyakarta "Laska jihad" to cross the water to the Moluccas, against the express orders of President Abdurrahman Wahid, in order to further foment the conflict between the Muslims and the Christians there. Saudi Arabia has been fostering puritanical Wahhabism for years through generous donations to Islamic educational institutions. In Indonesia, it is alarming to witness how Islamic fundamentalism is spreading, in particular among students at the major state-run secular universities: The smaller terrorist groupings, which despite their size are pursued with great zeal by the security apparatus, have been able to recruit many former Afghanistan fighters. The Islamic mainstream Nevertheless, these groups still have no political influence. Two major Islamic organisations can be taken as representatives of this mainstream: Both groups reject an Islamic state as unfitting for Indonesia. They recognise the current Indonesian regime and its state philosophy of Pancasila, which grants followers of all religions equal rights as citizens, as the definitive form of political organisation for the Indonesian region. Islam not granted special status The ethos of Indonesian mainstream Islam as the pillar of state and community has twice been put to the test. In , after Indonesia declared its independence, the constituent assembly decided unanimously to delete an addition to the state philosophy of Pancasila that had previously been laboriously negotiated: Promoting religious tolerance and upholding Pancasila: In the end, the constitution of did not grant Islam any special status, even though Muslims, at 88 percent of the population, make up the overwhelming majority in the country. Pancasila, which mainstream Islam expressly committed to in the s, is the foundation for the solid unity of the highly pluralistic Indonesian state. Even more astounding was how Indonesia weathered the dangerous turbulence after the fall of Suharto in , compared for example to what took place 13 years later in Egypt. At the time, Indonesians with the best Islamic credentials took matters in hand. His successor, Abdurrahman Wahid, head of the NU for 15 years, further anchored democratisation in the country. The Catholic theologian and social philosopher Franz Magnis-Suseno has lived in Indonesia since Vice-chancellor of "Driyarkara" Philosophy University in Jakarta for many years, Suseno received wide recognition for his dedication to interfaith dialogue Above all, it is thanks to the Islamic mainstream that the brutal civil war that raged from to between Christians and Muslims in two regions of East Indonesia " with some 8, deaths and multiple massacres on both sides " did not spill over to the main islands of Java and Sumatra. Contrary to widely held stereotypes that Islam and democracy do not go together, it was the large Islamic "Masyumi Party" that joined forces with the two Christian parties and the "Social Democratic Party"

PSI to prevail against Sukarno and push through a democratic Indonesia. Wahhabism regarded as heresy Will the brand of Islam practised here "moderate" be able to hold up against radicalisation? Both groups regard Islamic extremists rather than Christians or Balinese Hindus as their opponents. Their right to exist is rejected across the entire Islamic spectrum. They accuse the state of not fulfilling its duty to protect all citizens from opportunism and adaptation to popular demands made by extremist groups. On the other hand, both organisations have open, committed democratic youth groups that support freedom of religion. Taking a forward-looking approach, "Nahdlatul Ulama" and "Muhammadiyah", but also Muslim intellectuals, often invite representatives of other officially recognised religions Christians, Hindus, Buddhists and Confucians to their events. If the majority of Indonesians within the existing democracy are able to hope for a better future for their children, the extremists will not prevail. Islam-oriented politicians were after all the ones who took up the demands of the students and democratised post-Suharto Indonesia.

Chapter 9 : Two Sides of Islam in Indonesian Politics - SPIEGEL ONLINE

General Political Outline of Indonesia This section concerns Indonesia's current political system. It discusses the role that religion (in particular Islam) plays in political decision-making and provides a brief outline of Indonesia's separation of powers (*trias politica*), namely the executive, legislative and judicial branches.

Yet, almost two decades later, we are witnessing a significant political crisis that suggests there is a widening gulf between those who support constitutional government, and those who use Islam as a basis to challenge the pluralist assumptions behind contemporary democratic politics. Thousands rally against blasphemy in Jakarta. Indeed, the now-regular appeals to Indonesians to promote their identity as members of the ummah as a priority over being members of the voting public, means that religious identity threatens to displace citizenship as a key organising principle. The raising of a charge of blasphemy against the Chinese Christian governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, known as Ahok, is presenting a major challenge for President Joko Widodo also known as Jokowi. FPI accused Ahok of insulting the Quran when he encouraged a small audience, during his work visit, not to be deceived by those who sought to use Quranic verse of Al-Maidah 51 to prevent voters selecting a non-Muslim leader. This quasi-government institution was created under the authoritarian government of Suharto in the early s, and it regularly seeks to express authoritative rulings on issues of public interest. The meaning and application Al-Maidah 51 was subject to debate in the weeks leading up to the rally. Opinion among everyone, from noted Islamic scholars to ordinary members of the public, ranged across fundamental questions, including the importance of both the Quran and "ulama" to Muslim identity and citizenship, to the meaning of the verse itself, and methods of Quranic interpretation. Despite this open and public debate, those attacking Ahok are adamant that the faith had been insulted. Moreover, the candidate and all others not sharing their view have been labelled "liberal" or "kafir" unbeliever. Even respected scholars including Professor Syafii Maarif, the former Chairman of the leading modernist Muslim group Muhammadiyah is not exempt from attack and criticism. Identity politics For moderate Muslims, however, the case is primarily political and represents driven a classic, multilayered Jakarta political drama. More controversially, former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is suspected to be behind the rally, since he is assisting his son, Agus Yudhoyono, in his bid for the governorship. The crisis engages significant issues beyond these merely political dimensions. Long applauded as a moderate and pluralist Muslim nation the home of "smiling Islam", Indonesia has regularly resolved political debates about religion and the state by settling upon constitutional and democratic mechanisms. This current challenge is particularly dramatic, involving as it does, political elites, radical conservatives and the most high profile subject to date of the blasphemy regime. It is also troubling, due to the confluence of racial and religious themes, which are being exploited for electoral gain. The legal provisions in the blasphemy regime are ambiguous, at best, and the various legal institutions including the courts can be subject to political influence. Further, both conviction or acquittal are likely to attract a negative response from different factions. Assuming he remains able to contest the election, the public, appropriately, will have the most important contribution to make through casting their ballots. Success for Ahok will likely be read as vindication by the few who have sought to defend constitutional governance over populist, religiously inspired protests. Failure may prove harder to interpret. It could be seen either as a reward for radical brinkmanship, as a legitimate critique of the candidates, or as morally inspired condemnation. One thing seems clear, and that is, that the intensity and scale of the actions by the anti-Ahok coalition has, arguably, taken to a new level the deployment of Islam as a tool in Indonesian politics.