



SEATIDE
Integration in Southeast Asia:
Trajectories of Inclusion, Dynamics of Exclusion

WP2 Deliverable 2.4: Online paper 2: Religious Integration

A glass ceiling for Islamists:
Some reflexions about the Indonesian exception

A glass ceiling for Islamists: Some reflexions about the Indonesian exception

Rémy Madinier (Centre Asie du Sud-Est, CNRS-EHESS)

Executive Summary

While in most Muslim countries, Islamist parties, particularly those affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood, are in power or constitute the main opposition force, their destiny in the world's largest Muslim country seems to face a glass ceiling that limits their political destiny to being a complementary force to secular parties.

Confirmed during the last parliamentary (April 2014) and presidential elections (July 2014) this limited influence of Indonesian political Islam is quite surprising. Concerning the political role of Islam, Indonesia has experienced since colonial times similar evolutions to Egypt, Tunisia, Turkey or even Iran. Muslim faith in these countries was firstly an inspiring source of mobilization and revolt against the progression of the colonial order, and, then a supporter of independence¹. In Indonesia, as elsewhere, the leaders of the Muslim community had to organize parties and cope with competition from secular political parties². Similar to Egypt, Syria, Tunisia or Algeria political Islam fell victim, in the 1960s, to the advent of authoritarian populist regimes that relied on the support of the army³. The repression of Islamists led to their radicalization: consequently the term Islamism became synonymous with extremism during the 1970s, a connotation that it did not have before⁴. As in the Arab world, the fall of authoritarian regimes and the return to representative democracy, which took place ten years earlier in Indonesia, constituted a great opportunity for Islamists. Like their Arab counterparts they had been able to supply to the shortcomings of the authoritarian state with important social work. But despite these similar circumstances Indonesian political parties did not experience the fate of AKP, Ennahdah, or The Freedom and Justice Party (FJP, Hizb Al-Ḥurriya Wal-'Adala).

This article proposes an analysis of this relative failure of Indonesian political Islam. It will pay particular attention to the case of PKS, a party linked to the Muslim Brotherhood movement, a current that dominates Islamism all over the world. I will suggest a series of reflections highlighting the deeper but also more immediate causes of this but also a more comprehensive analysis of the role of Islam in Indonesian society. The latter shows that the

¹ Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900-1942*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1973.

² B.J. Boland, *The struggle of Islam in modern Indonesia*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1982 ; Remy Madinier, *L'Indonésie, entre démocratie musulmane et Islam intégral. Histoire du parti Masjumi (1945-1960)*, éditions Karthala, 2012.

³ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2003. Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994. For Indonesia, see, Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000; Andrée Feillard et Remy Madinier, *The End of Innocence? Indonesian Islam and the Temptations of Radicalism*, NUS Press-KITLV-University of Hawaii Press, Singapore-Leiden-Hawaii, 2011

⁴ For a stimulating reflexion about this term see: François Burgat, *l'islamisme en face*, La Découverte, Paris, 2002.

classical dichotomy between the Islamic state and secular state can summarize the Indonesian situation and that the history of the largest Muslim country in the world encourages us to elaborate different concepts about the role of political Islam in countries aspiring to democracy.

1. Why can we speak of a relative failure of Indonesian Islamism?

1.1. The decline of Indonesian political Islam and its fragmentation

Parliamentary elections	Cumulative score of political Islam
1955	44%
1999	36,5%
2004	37,5%
2009	29,1%
2014	31%

The parliamentary elections of April 9 have confirmed the slow decline of political Islam since the return to democracy. In the four national elections held since the fall of the New Order, Muslim parties have performed comparatively poorly. They received 36.5% of the vote in 1999, 37.5% in 2004 and 29% in 2009. In April 2014 the five parties with a strong Islamic identity (PKB, PAN, PPP, PKS and PBB) gathered around 31% of the vote. A comparison with the first parliamentary elections of 1955 (the only free elections between 1945 and 1998) in which political Islam had obtained 44% of the vote, allows one to measure the decline of this political current in contemporary Indonesia.

The fact that during the 1955 elections, political Islam was represented by only two major parties (Masyumi and Nahdlatul Ulama, also allies within the same organization until 1952) shows that the first characteristic and the first handicap of this current is its fragmentation.

Parties	Origin	Orientation	Electoral score
PKS Prosperous Justice Party	Founded in 1998 by the Muslim Brother movement (<i>Tarbiyah</i> movement)	Ultra conservative at its foundation in 1998 (PK), then officially more open-minded	2009: 7,9 % 2014: 6,9%
PPP Unity and Development Party	Official Islamic party 1973	Ultra conservative	2009: 5,32% 2014: 6,64%
PAN National Mandate Party	Founded by Amien Rais, then Muhammadiyah President in 1998	Representative of the progressive and open-minded wing of Islamic reformism	2009: 6 % 2014: 7,5%
PKB National Awakening Party	Founded by Abdurahman Wahid, Nahdlatul Ulama main leader in 1998	Representative of Tradionnalist Islam, promotes an inclusive and located interpretation of Islamic doctrine	2009: 4,9% 2014: 9,2%
PBB Crescent Moon and	Founded by Yusril Irzha Mahendra (close to	Representative of the intransigent wing of Islamic	2009: 1,8%

Star Party	Dewan Dakwah Indonesia in 1998). Claims to be the Masyumi heir but has forgotten its open-minded dimension	reformism	2014: 1,5%
------------	--	-----------	------------

The above table shows the diversity of the trends in Indonesian political Islam⁵. It is hence impossible to qualify all of them as Islamists because of the rather restrictive definition now taken by this term. Indeed, only PBB, PPP and PKS correspond to the intransigence and the strict Islamization project of society and the state covered by this term. PAN and PKB are much more open parties, campaigning for an “Islam of values” rather than an “Islam of projects”.

1.2. The lost hopes of Muslim Brotherhood in Indonesia

Among these Islamic parties the case of the Prosperous Justice Party, PKS, deserves particular attention. The sole Indonesian political organization linked to the Muslim Brotherhood movement seemed destined for years to experiment a fate similar to the Turkish AKP and a great number of analysts predicted its rise to power in a short number of years⁶. The PKS was directly inspired by Ichwanul political parties in the Middle East: the founders of the party, Hilmi Aminuddin, Segaf Aljufri Salim Abdullah Said Baharmus, or Acep Abdul Syukur were educated in this region⁷. Like its Arabic counterparts, the PKS was born out of the semi-underground movements devoted to the propagation of the faith (dakwah) to which the state authoritarianism had confined the public expression of Islam. It was organized according to the concept of the *tarbiyah* movement (education), theorized by Hassan al-Banna, the founder in 1928 of the Egyptian organization; his Indonesian imitators endeavoured from the mid-1970s to reach a progressive re-Islamization of the country from the individual to the family, society and finally the government. From Morocco to Indonesia, through Tunisia, Egypt, Syria or Turkey, the Muslim Brotherhood movement was less characterized by a single body of doctrine than a shared project to reach power.

The Indonesian Muslim brotherhood movement spread in the 1980s, specifically targeting the student population, who were often cut off from their original religious roots and were a promising target in terms of future influence. Networks behind the PKS thus took advantage of the marginalization of political Islam organized by the New Order and of the ban on political activity on campuses in the mid-1970s: religious practice was the sole authorized

⁵ Platzdasch, Bernhard. (2009). *Islamism in Indonesia: Politics in the Emerging Democracy*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

⁶ See for instance: Kikue Hamayotsu, « The End of Political Islam? A Comparative Analysis of Religious Parties in the Muslim Democracy of Indonesia », *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 3/2011:133-159.

⁷ Ali Said Damanik, *Fenomena Partai Keadilan: Transformasi 20 Tahun Gerakan Tarbiyah di*, Jakarta: Teraju 2002, Ahmad Norma Permata (2008). ‘Islamist Party and Democratic Participation: Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia 1998-2006’, PhD dissertation, University of Münster, Dirk Tomsa, « Moderating Islamism in Indonesia: Tracing Patterns of Party Change in the Prosperous Justice Party », *Political Research Quarterly*, 65 (3), 486-498, 2012.

public activity among students, and university mosques, and so drew together much of the discontent against the regime.

Initially illegal, this movement took advantage, from the beginning of 1990, of a much more favourable climate for Islamic militancy: facing growing discontent within the army, General Suharto had at that point made a timely return to religion. Informal networks of the Muslim brotherhood could now turn into officially recognized associations. In Jakarta for example, Nurul Fikri proposed a program for high school students preparing for their university entrance exams. At that time, Al-Hikmah, an Islamic boarding school, offering Arabic and theology courses, soon became the place to be for the future elite of the Tarbiyah movement. The formation of the Khairu Ummah association, responsible for organizing the sending of preachers throughout the archipelago gave the movement a national dimension. In the mid-1990s, the Tarbiyah movement was well established on all campuses: its excellent organization and the devotion of its members allowed it to easily win majorities in "student parliaments".

When the monetary crisis hit Indonesia in mid-1997, student demonstrations spread all over the country. All Tarbiyah networks then merged into a powerful organization, the Union of Indonesian Muslim Student Action (KAMMI, Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia) in March 1998. After extensive consultation with its members, KAMMI founded the Justice Party (Partai Keadilan, PK) along the lines of the Muslim Brotherhood movements.

Reflecting its clandestine past PK campaigned for a "moral Islamic reform" in relatively uncompromising terms that explained its modest score (1.4%) in the 1999 election. Although rather moderate compared to its counterparts in the Middle East, the PK appeared as rather radical on the Indonesian scene because of its frequent invocation of shari'a and its questioning of the Pancasila, the state ideology that recognizes six religions equally. Because it had not reached the minimum threshold of 2% to participate in the next election, the PK was then transformed into PKS (Prosperous Justice Party) and drew lessons from its electoral defeat by significantly moderating its political message. This pragmatic shift was characterized by official recognition of Pancasila and the abandonment of any immediate claim for an Islamic state applying shari'a. Inspired by the Turkish AKP, the PKS then developed an image of solidarity, efficiency and probity⁸ that allowed the party to attract large parts of the pious middle classes who were benefitting economically from the return of growth.

During the 2004 election the PKS obtained 7.3% of the vote in the parliamentary elections. After having opportunely rallied behind Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's coalition during the second round of the presidential election, it received three ministerial posts. Now confident of being on the road to power it deliberately chose to hold its 2008 convention on the Hindu island of Bali and officially opened its organization to non-Muslims, even appointing Christian candidates in some areas in preparation for the 2009 elections. But the 2009 ballot constituted a relative disappointment for PKS: it only secured 8% of the vote, well below the 20% announced. However, in a context of political Islam's steep decline, it became the first Muslim party in the country and a leading member of the governing coalition (four

⁸ Machmudi Nur Ismail, the only minister present in PKS in the government headed by Aburahman Wahid in 1999, in charge of forests, bravely attacked illegal deforestation in which many political clans were involved. That brought him to be removed from the government less than ten months after his appointment.

ministers) marked by the spectacular re-election of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, in the first round presidential election.

During the following years, most observers predicted a further rise of the PKS. They pointed to its excellent organizational capacity and the devotion of its militants, the number of which had increased from 30,000 in 1999 to 400,000 in 2004.

2. The reasons for this failure

2.1 No mobilization face to face against the secular state

Unlike its Muslim Brotherhood counterparts in the near and Middle East, the PKS never benefited from the bloc-against-bloc logic that has characterized the political history of Turkey, Egypt or Tunisia in recent decades. In these countries, post-independence disillusionment led to the seizure of power by coalitions of secularists and security forces that were opposed by malcontents rallying under the banner of Islam. Corruption, repression and growing inequality in these countries allowed a pious bourgeoisie to join an urban proletariat around the themes of justice and morality.

These political and socio-economic conditions in favour of the formation of a powerful unified Muslim alliance were certainly present in Indonesia in the early 1970s. Yet even at the height of the confrontation (between the beginning of the 1970s and the mid-1980s), the representatives of Islam remained divided: the traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama representing the mass of rural Indonesian Islam continued to provide Islamic endorsement for the Suharto regime, limiting the impact of the critics made up mostly of the reformist Muslim organizations (Muhamadiyah and DDII). It had some symbolic success with the passing of the Marriage Act of 1974, for example.

From the mid-1980s, the rapprochement of Suharto with these reformist organizations (to overcome the growing criticism of his regime within the army) prevented the new pious middle classes and the proletariat from joining forces. As in Malaysia (where Mahathir skilfully co-opted the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood oriented ABIM, Anwar Ibrahim) New Order managed to enlist political Islam in its authoritarian developmentalist project. With the establishment of ICMI (Association of Muslim intellectuals, founded in 1990), the Suharto regime acquired, at little cost, a new religious endorsement in exchange for a few stipends and a symbolic recognition of the modernizing role of Islam⁹. This clever manipulation allowed him to redirect popular Islamic discontent towards non-strategic targets for him: namely Christians and the Sino-Indonesian minority. After the fall of Suharto in 1998, political Islam remained deeply fragmented.

2.2. The impossible union between Muslim parties

Apart from a short-lived coalition to oppose the accession of Megawati as President of the Republic in 1999 (the so-called Poros Tengah, central axis), calls for unity among Muslim parties have always remained unheeded.

⁹ Robert W. Hefner « Islam, State and Civil Society: ICMI and the Struggle for the Indonesian Middle Class », *Indonesia*, 56, 1993, 1-35.

The first reason is related to the ideological specificities of each party. The Muslim Brotherhood has faced strong competition within political Islam. On the right of the PKS, PBB (Party of the crescent moon and star, claiming the most conservative part of the Masjumi inheritance through DDII) and PPP (Unity and Development Party, the former official Muslim party of the New Order) campaign for Islamization of law and the imposition of a strict moral code consistent with their literal reading of the sources of Islam. On its left, the PKS's efforts to moderate their discourse since 2000 faced two rivals benefiting in this domain from a much stronger legitimacy: the PAN (Party of Mandate) brings together the progressive elements of the great modernist organization Muhammadiyah and the PPP (Party of national awakening) defends inclusive Islam inherited from Abdurrahman Wahid, the leading light of the traditionalist organization Nahdlatul Ulama.

The good performance of PKB in the elections of April 2014 (9.2% against 4.9% in 2009) was hence very bad news for the PKS and is explained by several factors. The first is the renewal of its relationship with Nahdlatul Ulama with which relations had soured greatly in recent years. KH Said Agil Siraj, the chairman of the powerful organization (tens of millions of supporters) and other leaders who were quite distant towards the PKB during the precedent elections, have supported and authorized the use of their image in this campaign. The absence of corruption scandals and internal conflicts characterizing previous elections have also allowed the return of many local influential clerics to the bosom of the party. Java Central and East Java, traditional bastions of the NU, whose voters PKB had failed to win over in the 2004 election, this time overwhelmingly voted for its candidates. The second element that may have facilitated the mobilization of voters was the skilful use by the party of a few celebrities: Rhoma Irama, a dangdut star (a very popular type of music in the archipelago) and the rock star Ahmad Dani drew large crowds at rallies. But the most interesting (and interested!) recruit for PKB was Rusdi Kirana, the founder and owner of Lion Air, the leading (low-cost) airline company in Indonesia¹⁰. This Sino-Indonesian justified his choice by his admiration for former President Abdurrahman Wahid, the personification of a very inclusive vision of Indonesian Islam. His rivalry with the media mogul Hary Tanoesoebidibjo who had joined the Hanura Party of General Wiranto sometime before, and his desire to use his political influence to secure the opening of new air routes for his company certainly played a role in his decision. The financial and symbolic support Rusdi Kirana brought to the PKB emphasizes more cruelly the inability of the PKS to develop networks of influence with the great business bourgeoisie. PAN (which increased from 6 to 7.5% of the vote) probably also benefited from a renewed link with its "parent organization", the Muhammadiyah. And, like PKB, it managed to attract Muslim voters disappointed with the corruption of the ruling party.

These ideological differences between parties with a clear Islamic identity is very important to explain the collective failure of these parties. First, because this fragmentation invalidates the central idea of Islamism that Islam is THE solution: Indonesian voters understand that in dealing with political matters there is no unambiguous interpretation of religious texts. Therefore Islamic proposals lose their sacredness because they clearly appear as being simply human and, as such can be compared with those of other Indonesian parties.

¹⁰ c.f. Greg Fealy, "The puzzle of Rusdi Kirana and Islamic politics", <http://inside.org.au>, 06 April 2014

Moreover, the harsh competition that oppose after each election the various parties claiming to represent Islam to join leading coalitions and to obtain ministerial offices shows that Islam does not inspire particular moral practices. During the last elections this year, four Islamic parties, having all showed favourable to the candidacy of Jokowi (favourite among their members) finally accepted to join Prabowo, a candidate symbolizing the return to the New Order and its nepotism.

2.3. A corrupted normalization of Islamism

Among the reasons that allowed the rise to power of the Islamists, elsewhere in the Muslim world, the issue of corruption has always been on the top. By developing this theme the PKS had its first success in Indonesia, a country where the political class is notoriously corrupt. And it is because of the image of the party as "clean and responsible" (Bersih dan Peduli, to use one of his recent slogans) that it was predicted to play a great role in Indonesian politics.

Long exemplified for their cleverly staged manifestations of probity - refusal of official cars or luxury hotels when they joined the government - the leaders of PKS were affected in months leading up to the elections by several major corruption scandals. In December 2013, the party chairman, Lutfi Hasan Ishaq was sentenced to 16 years in prison for having solicited (in exchange for a large sum of money) the PKS Minister of Agriculture to obtain an increase in import quotas for meat beef for a company run - ironically - by a Christian. Despite the denials of other PKS leaders the trial hearings revealed the existence of corrupt practices at the highest levels of the party.

Apart from these practices, sadly representative of the role of money in Indonesian politics, voters discovered with astonishment the impressive lifestyle of some of the party leaders, in sharp contrast to their declared income and with the image of honesty and simplicity the party had conveyed for several years. The involvement of the PKS in these corruption scandals and the exposure of their leaders' luxurious lifestyles led to a "normalization" of its role in politics and put an end (temporarily perhaps?) to its image of an anti-System party.

Consequently deep rifts have appeared within the PKS between the small core of ideologues who remained faithful to the intransigence of the Tarbiyah movement (Abu Ridho, Mashadi, Daud Rasyid, Yusuf Supendi) grouped under the name the "faction of justice", and the current leadership of the PKS ironically designated as the "faction of prosperity"¹¹. It was the latter (Anis Matta, Fachry Hamzah, Hilmi Aminuddin) that led the move towards more pragmatism and openness in the early 2000s.

2.4 The depletion of social criticism...

The "corrupting normalization" of the PKS also demonstrates another explanation for the failure of Indonesian Islamism, namely premature abandonment of a real social critique of power.

¹¹ See for instance the interview of Yusuf Supendi, Tempo, February 11th, 2013

Political marginalization of Islam in the early 1970s was certainly accompanied by economic marginalization of traditional pious classes (small business owners, landowners, etc.). But this phenomenon never occurred to the same extent as it did in the Middle East and it has gradually diminished in the 1980s with the emergence of new middle classes (workers, middle managers, university teachers, officers, etc.) who became the main actors of the Islamic revival. Therefore, unlike Algeria, Egypt, Turkey and even Iran, Islamic conservatives in Indonesia failed to channel a global and popular resentment against the New Order regime¹². No Islamic mass movement launched an assault on the secular state and Islamism in Indonesia never had to endure the consequent repression. After 1996, the manipulation of the most radical fringes of Islam (DDII, KISDI FPI) by the regime discredited the whole Islamist movement. As for the new pious middle classes, co-opted by the New Order in the early 1990s, they had lost most of their dimension as providers of social and political criticism and dragged with them part of the Tarbiyah movement in defence of some Islamic concessions made by Suharto. After his fall in May 1998, the Muslim Brotherhood movement has thus been drawn into defending President Habibie (Suharto's former Vice-President), while a powerful student movement dominated by nationalists drew all the political advantage of the struggle against the dictatorship.

2.5 ...without rallying the big bourgeoisie

When comparing Indonesia to Turkey - and to a lesser extent Egypt - another key element is that the Islamist movement in Indonesia failed to penetrate the highest levels of economic power. The alliance between the Sino-Indonesian bourgeoisie and the heirs of the state corporatism born under the New Order has largely persisted since 1998, prohibiting the emergence of a new entrepreneurial bourgeoisie closer to political Islam¹³. While in Turkey the alliance between the AKP and the powerful Anatolian companies have allowed the party to benefit from strong financial networks, the PKS could count only on middle-class employees or small merchants. Once inside the government and converted to the "pragmatism" of the system of party financing, the PKS failed to develop its entrepreneurial relationships in comparison with the effectiveness of the KPK, the anti-corruption commission, that makes this type of networking much riskier.

Conclusion

As Merle Ricklefs brilliantly demonstrated the "mystic synthesis" adopted in Java around the 17th century has been contested via a "santri-abangan" dichotomy which has existed since the end of the 19th century¹⁴. The process is still on-going through a continued Islamization that has taken the form of a greater demand for orthodoxy, which, though overwhelmingly peaceful, has at times become violent. It is, however, a process limited to the confines of the Muslim community. By accepting the Indonesian nation-state, Islamic organizations have

¹² Vedi R. Hadiz: 'No Turkish Delight': The Impasse of Indonesian Islamic Party Politics', *Indonesia*, 92, October 2011: 1-18.

¹³ Vedi R. Hadiz & Richard Robison : Political Economy and Islamic Politics: Insights from the Indonesian Case, *New Political Economy*, 2012, 17:2, 137-15

¹⁴ M.C. Ricklefs, *Polarising Javanese society. Islamic and other visions (c.1830-1930)* Leiden, KITLV Press, 2007 and *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java. A Political, Social, Cultural and Religious History, c. 1930 to Present*, Singapore, NUS Press, 2012.

endorsed the defence of a multi-religious country which includes some religious minorities not recognized in the Quran (Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism) but protected by the state. Consequently, opportunities for Islamic proselytism have been limited: 70 years after independence, Indonesia still has the same proportion of Muslims (88%). Islamic revival was restricted to the Muslim community itself through a process of orthodoxification that affects primarily Islamic minorities like Javanese *abangans*, Ahmadis or Shias. This orthodoxification of Indonesian Islam has been encouraged or at least tolerated by the state since colonial times: the first official closing of an Ahmadiyah mosque in Indonesia was by order of the Regent of Batavia in 1936¹⁵ and the current leniency of the Indonesian authorities towards perpetrators of attacks against these minorities is striking.

This shows that despite its relatively limited success in politics, Indonesian Islamism has succeeded to some extent in imposing a project that had previously been officially abandoned, namely the Jakarta Charter (June 1945) that stipulated “the obligation for adherents of the Muslim faith to carry out the obligations of their religion”.

¹⁵ Jeremy Menchik: Productive Intolerance: Godly Nationalism in Indonesia, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2014; 56(3):591–621

A response to ‘A glass ceiling for Islamists: Some reflections about the Indonesian exception’

Sumit Mandal (independent scholar and from January 2015 will be Associate Professor at the School of Politics, History and International Relations at the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus)

Rémy Madinier’s essay offers an opportunity to reconsider the explanatory value of political Islam as a global category, and thereby strengthen our understanding of politics in a Muslim-majority state such as Indonesia. His essay examines the reasons for the declining electoral performance of political parties with an Islamic platform, in particular the Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS or Prosperous Justice Party). He is interested in PKS because of its link with the Muslim Brotherhood, the political organisation with a transnational influence that was founded in Egypt. Whereas organisations inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood have done well politically in a number of countries, Madinier is curious about why PKS has not achieved similar success in Indonesia.

He believes that Islamic parties on the whole have performed poorly in Indonesia because they are fragmented. PKS is particularly weak as it does not have the mass support of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Partai Amanat Rakyat (PAN) the leading Islamic parties that respectively draw on the membership of two major Islamic organisations. In addition, PKS does not enjoy alliances with economic elites that can be decisive in determining the electoral success of parties. The intense inter-party competition makes PKS and other Islamic parties behave no differently from any other political party; this can also make voters wonder what might be Islamic about them.

Madinier wishes to comment about the broader question of Islamic politics and society through his analysis of Islamic parties in Indonesian electoral politics. From the Indonesian case, he proposes to ‘elaborate different concepts of the role of political Islam in countries aspiring to democracy’. He suggests that the current and narrowly defined notion of ‘Islamism’ as a conservative and exclusionary political force is insufficient when it comes to Indonesia given the country’s diverse Islamic political arena. The following response takes as its point of departure this broader scope by turning to the value of political Islam as a global category.

Party Politics versus Social and Historical Analysis

One of the challenges running through the research on Islam as a political force is the tension between analyses that emphasise the significance of party politics versus social and historical factors. This tension exists on multiple scales. Let us take, for instance, Islamic politics on a global scale. There are evidently countless and diverse political expressions of Islam throughout the world today. However, what drives them is certainly neither shared nor simple. Considerable writing on the subject however tends to reify political Islam as a phenomenon. John Sidel is critical of how “terrorism experts” have identified transnational Islamic networks, with regional variants in Southeast Asia, ready to commit acts of political violence. He believes that the reasons for the rise of a more aggressive and violent Islamic

politics has to do with the weakening influence of Islamic groups within the national politics of the Philippines and Indonesia respectively, the two countries he examines (Sidel 2009). It would appear that Madinier is also keen on interrogating assumptions about global 'Islamism' by locating it within a national context. From the data he provides, we can deduce that Islamic parties won a total of over thirty per cent of the vote in the Indonesian national elections of 2014. This significant share is divided, however, between parties of different political orientations. Thus, there is no singular 'Islamic vote'. This fragmentation is one of a number of reasons that we have already noted for the declining role of Islamic party politics. What is of interest here is how 'Islamism' is neither self-evident on the national nor the transnational scale.

What would be the outcome if we abandoned the term 'Islamism' or 'political Islam' in analysing Indonesian party politics? Might we then pay particular attention to Islamic parties as political or ideological rather than religiously-oriented entities? From Madinier's essay, it could be argued that PKS faces a greater struggle than NU in garnering electoral support because the former, like other reformist groups, champions a platform that is ideological in orientation and not widely embraced. PKS has pursued strategies that have been largely driven by students and educators and focussed on building educational programmes. NU, on the other hand, tends to rely on its well-established authority in society rather than ideological persuasion. PKS tries to advance an ideology and social consciousness while NU tends to affirm existing beliefs.

Madinier's analysis rests on political leanings, strategies, and networks. He focuses on the politics rather than the Islamic 'content' of the parties in question. The religious content, if one could call it that, is in the relatively different *political* positions taken with regard to morality and difference – the degree of inclusiveness for instance. The purpose here is not to call for an end to analyses of Islamic politics but to caution against assuming that an Islamic party is in the first instance concerned with morality in the conduct of its politics. It is helpful rather to ask how important really is Islam in Islamic politics.

The politics of Islam is nevertheless not only about ideology or political parties. Social change, more gradual in pace and driven by broadly defined and diverse groups, also has a role to play. Madinier acknowledges that the Islamic element of the parties under study is what draws millions of Indonesians to them. He relates the rise and fall of parties to their ability to draw particular constituencies such as Muslim authorities and teachers, for instance. He also suggests a longer historical and social argument at play when he highlights in his conclusion a burgeoning process of Islamisation underway that encourages shari'a-oriented practice despite the weakened position of Islamic parties.

Closing Comment

Madinier's essay tries to do the difficult job of keeping in balance the necessary tension between party political versus social and historical analysis in studying Islamic politics in Indonesia. Local and national level organisations, political parties, and transnational initiatives shape the Islam in political Islam in different ways. The state plays no small role.

The Indonesian government, Madinier notes, has allowed the growing policing of Muslim behaviour by organisations espousing a shari'a-minded faith and practice by encouraging or tolerating their actions. It is worth noting that in neighbouring Malaysia the state has been directly involved in expanding the scope of shari'a-mindedness. Norani Othman (2003: 124) notes that 'the Islamization project carried out in Malaysia, particularly from the 1980s, tended to focus on the area of laws or enactments and on the surveillance and compulsion of individual piety or its ritualized public expression'. The Malaysian state, she argues, has assumed this role in order to legitimise itself in the face of the challenge posed by a longstanding Islamic political party. Shari'a-oriented faith and practice thus expands in scope in both Indonesia and Malaysia even though Islamic parties neither rule the country nor are all-powerful entities. In this sense, Islamic politics, broadly-defined, may not be driven by Islamic political parties.

References

- Norani Othman. 2003. 'Islamization and democratization in Malaysia in regional and global contexts', in A. Heryanto and S. K. Mandal, eds., *Challenging Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia: Comparing Indonesia and Malaysia* (London: RoutledgeCurzon), pp. 117-113.
- Sidel, J.T. 2009. 'Jihad and the Specter of Transnational Islam in Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Comparative Historical Perspective', in E. Tagliacozzo, ed., *Southeast Asia and the Middle East: Islam, Movement, and the 'Longue Durée'* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press), pp. 275-318.