Religion and politics in Malaysia: A case for "Semi-Secularism"?

Muhammad Rashaad Bakashmar[*]

Abstract: This paper examines the dynamics of tension and accommodation at the interface between religion and politics in Malaysia. Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy and carries elements of both Islamic as well as liberal democratic governance. By focusing on the processes of Islamisation, institutionalisation and political communication, the analysis seeks to transcend static theoretical discussions that simply query the compatibility between Islam and democracy. It is suggested that strategic political decision-making by various political actors in the government and civil society in Malaysia has given rise to a hybrid democratic-Islamist political system that constantly equilibrates itself in response to internal and external systemic challenges.

Keywords: Religion, democracy, semi-secularim, Islamisation, Malaysia.

Introduction

"Semi-secularism" refers to the condition where conventional secular political institutions coexist with private and state-sponsored religious, educational, financial and legal institutions without disrupting the essentially secular constitutional framework of the state. This process leads to a complex amalgam of secular and religious institutions resembling a hybrid democratic-Islamist political system. The analysis in this paper is guided by two fundamental assumptions. First, that in order to have a meaningful discussion on democracy and democratisation in Muslim countries, academic discourse needs to go beyond the dichotomisation trap of "Islamic versus secular state". Instead analysts would need to examine the actual dynamics of co-adaptation between the two, paying equal attention to both, their points of harmonious intersection as well as the philosophical tensions and diversions underpinning the two models of governance. Second, that in order to have a better grasp of the politics of democratisation in non-Western and specifically Muslim majority countries, religion has to be viewed as a significant organising force that actively engages with modern democratic politics rather than a counterforce to it. As active participants inthe democratic process, religious actors in countries like Malaysia, Tunisia and Turkeycontribute to dynamically shape and reshape both the structure and outputs

[*] Muhammad Rashaad Bakashmar, *Ph.D*., is assistant professor, Department of Political Science, Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia. E-mail:mrashaad@iium.edu.my

of democratic institutionsgiving rise to evolving models of Islamic democratic political systems.

This studypresents Malaysia as a case study of an evolving model of a democraticIslamist state that strategically adapts itself to various systemic pressures with the participation by both Muslim and non-Muslim political decision makers. The process of embedding Islamic values into the secular political framework, founded on Common Law inherited from the British colonial administration, has had a two pronged effect. First, Islamic institutions and Islamisation programmes since the early seventies have gradually contributed to providing cultural legitimacy for a government that washistorically founded on a secular, constitutional framework. Second, the various Islamisationprogrammes since the 1980s facilitated the institutionalisation of religion within a modern governmental structure, a process that over time has helped to gradually redefine the nature of Malaysian democracy.

The ensuing analysis examines the interface between religion and democratic politics in Malaysia. Specific attention is paid to the efforts by the Malaysian authorities to balance conflicting public expectations within a multicultural and multi-religious political environment. The study begins with an outline of some basic theoretical positions as regards the relationship between Islam and democracy.

Islami and liberal democracy

In the past two decades, it has become increasingly common to see Islam being generally presented as a disruptive force that seeks to transform modern societies into theocratic polities. While there could be very little in common between the basic principles of liberal democracy and any extremist ideologybe itreligious or secular, it would be a gross injustice to suggest that all Islamists are undemocratic. Conceptions of Islam founded on the essential objectives (maqÉîid) of Shari'ah i.e. the protection of the rights to life, religion, property, intellect and progeny are congruent with the fundamental democratic ideals of freedom and human rights (Kamali, 1991; 1997). Prominent scholars of Islam see a viable space for the adoption of an Islamic framework in the process of governing a viable modern democratic state (See Anwar Ibrahim, 2006).

Such accommodating perspectives of Islam are often counterbalanced by an alternative view of mutual exclusivity between Islam and liberal democracy. These perspectives areusually characterised by a discourse that conflates and confuses termslike "Islamism", "extremism" and "fundamentalism". As John Esposito (1999) observes, the various meanings attributed to the term "fundamentlism" havecontributed to blurring the discussion on Islamism rather than clarify it.He warns, however, that the conception of fundamentalism needs to

be taken cautiously considering the fact that while some fundamentalists do engage in radical politics, most work within the established order (Esposito, 1999: 5-6).

A quick survey of Islamic political thought reveals a wide range of positions ranging from those who suggest that Islam and Western liberal democracy are essentially compatible with each other to those who argue exactly the opposite. In between these two extremes is a wide range of philosophical positions that selectively accommodate aspects of democracy within Islamic jurisprudence while rejecting others. Sheikh Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) denied the existence of a theocracy in Islam and was a defender of pluralism and the parliamentary system of government. Similarly, Sayyid Jam l al-D n al-Afgh n (1838-1897), in his article "Despotic Government" asserted that "those governed by a republican form of government, alone deserve to be called human…" (quoted in Quereshi, 2009: 83-84). However, the historical realities that led to the fall of the Ottoman empire, and the subsequent colonisation of Muslim lands by Western powers in the twentieth century gave rise to less accommodating explanations of Western democracy and secularism in general. Thus, Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949) and Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), for example, considered democracy as part of a secular package of political, social and economic ideas that were essentially antithetical to Islam (Lapidus, 1997, Qutb, 1978). In between these two strands are those like Sayiid Abul A'la Mawdudi (1903-1979) who critically engaged with various political ideas from the West and attempted to provide Islamic perspectives on different aspects of democratic governance. Mawdudi was one of the early Muslim scholars who saw the usefulness of political parties as viable institutions for political communication in an Islamic system (Moten, 2008). In more recent years, many other Muslimscholarshave emerged representing divergent opinionson the relationship between democracy and Islam (An-Na'im, 2002; Davari, 2005; Moghadam, A. 2007; Oliveti, 2002; Quereshi, 2009). These various theoretical positions do play an important role in shaping the platformsof various Islamic political organisations. To put it differently, in order to grasp the complexity of the political dynamics within Islamic organisations operating in modern democracies like Malaysia, one needs to appreciate the contending philosophical and theological positionsdefining such internal factionalism.

Islam and Malaysian politics

Muslims account for around 65 percentof Malaysia's population of about 30 million. There are also significant Buddhist, Tao, Hindu and Christian minorities. While incidents of inter-religious provocations are not unheard of in this Southeast Asian state, by and large, Malaysia is a proud example of a peaceful "consociational democracy" (Lijphart, 2008). The backbone of Malaysian

democracy is the Malaysian Federal Constitution. The stability and survival of the Malaysian constitutional order mainly relies on the capacity of the government to ensure economic progress and inter-communal harmony.Political decision making takes place within a context of carefully crafted legal regimes and economic policies aimed at ensuring distributive justice and economic growth.

The degree of pragmatism employed in managing "sensitive" communal issues underscores skilful strategic decision-making among government officials. While from a populist point of view, it would have been easy for the Malaysian authorities to simply lean towards the appeasement of the Muslim majority, official decisions have tended to strategically shift from one end of the ideological scale (i.e. Islamic) to the other end (i.e. secular). This phenomenon defines the dynamism and flexibility of the Malaysian hybrid model. The following examples illustrate this point.

In 2015, there was an outcry by some members from minority (non-Muslim) communities in Malaysia regarding the enforcement of "decent" dress code in some Malaysian government offices. This was in response to attempts by some security guards and other civil servants to enforce "long skirts" and similar dress code for non-Muslims entering government offices—in the name of decency. Not surprisingly, some in the society perceived such moves as representing "moral policing" and labelled them as a form of "religious extremism" (Naidu, 2015). In response, some top level Muslim government officials came out in public with reconciliatory statements and clarified that such rules were not necessary and shouldnot be enforced in government offices (Palansamy, 2015). This episode highlightsthe importance of responsible governance where national leaders converted a potential inter-communal flashpoint into an opportunity for social harmony through their emphasis of (secularly defined) individual rights of every citizen as enshrined in the Federal Constitution.

At other times, government officials issued statements that shifted the scales in the opposite direction. For example, in reaction to a move by the Islamist party PAS to table a bill to establish Islamic criminal (ḥudūd) law in the state of Kelantan some federal government ministers issued statements thatindicated their supportfor the Islamist party's move. Responding to critics of PAS's ḥudūd bill, Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister clarified that the ḥudūd bill would only apply to Muslims in Kelantan and not the whole country, and that if adopted, non-Muslims would not be affected by the law (KoyKye Lee, 2016).The two episodes illustrate strategic decision making by Malaysian federal government officials in managing sensitive religious issues. Rather than being guided by populist

considerations, decisions are made in consideration to the degree of the sensitivity of each issue and in recognition tothe possible political and legal ramifications of the individual decisions.

This flexibility in governance hasbeen made possible by the skilful way in which government officials continually balance the two most important pillars of Malaysian politics i.e. Islam as the official religion of the state and the Federal Constitution. While one pillar facilitates the institutionalisation of Islam within the political, economic and legal spheres, the Federal Constitution draws from the secular elements of Common Law whichprovide democratic safeguards for all citizens. Thus, while the two main components of the system (i.e. religious and secular) may seem to function in parallel to one another, the institutional configuration of the system at the macro level resemble a truly hybrid model representing elements of both Islamic and secular governance.

With regard to legal institutions, a civil court system coexists with a well-establishedSyariah court system. In the financial sector, a conventional banking system functions quite efficiently but also in collaboration with Islamic banks and other Islamic financial institutions. The same can be said about the education system from elementary to tertiary level. Secular and religious political organisations also coexist as part of the civil society. The Pan Malayan Islamic party (or Parti Islam SeMalaysia - PAS) functions quite peacefully within anarguably "secularly" structured party system.

The Malaysian Head of State, the *Yang Di PertuanAgong,* occupies a position that rotates among the nine Sultans in Malaysia each of whom being also the head of Islamic religious affairs in his own state. Debates on whether the Islamic criminal law (or *hudud* law) could or should be legally implemented in any of Malaysia's thirteen states are held within the mainstream media, social media, in the state and federal parliaments, and in civil society. So too are discussions on issues such as LGBT rights, appropriate dress codes in public places, women rights, etc. That extremist views may sometimes find a platform in such an institutional environment is not unexpected. However, this does not dilute the fact that adequate space is provided for such discourse to take place in a fairly peaceful environment rather than condemning some of the "unpleasant" voices to the political underground.

"Semi-Secularism" in Malaysia is therefore, not only a reflection of a hybrid national political culture, but also a testament to a constitutional compromise that allows adequate space for the secular protection of the ethno-cultural rights of non-Muslim minorities who among other things, are legally permitted to establish and run their own vernacular schools using Mandarin and Tamil as mediums of instruction. Significantly, the survival of "semi-secularism" relies on the capacity of the political system toprovide avenues for grievances to

be aired and political organisations to be formed and reorganised to reflect the diverse and changing nature of the society and opinions as well as minimise the potential for alienation of religious and ethnic minorities in the country.

Between democracy and Islamisation

According to Ben-Israel (2011), democracy works best where the common culture provides conditions for mutual trust and interests. While Islam was instrumental in providing a common theme for Malay unity during the struggle against colonialism, the boundaries of ethnic and communal allegiances remained strong as the country obtained its independence from the British in 1957. Since then, government legitimacy has largely depended on its ability to carefully manage "sensitive" ethnic and religious issues. Malay rights and special privileges, the importance of Malay language as the national lingua franca, the autonomy of Malaysian ethnicChinese and ethnic Indian schools to use Mandarin and Tamil respectively as languages of instruction were among significant national issues during the sixties and seventies.

The global resurgence of Islamicmovements in the early seventies, particularly following the Arab-Israeli war in 1967, was echoed in Malaysia partly by the formation of several Islamic organisations such as the DarulArqam and the Malaysian Islamic youth movement, the *AngkatanBelia Islam Malaysia* (ABIM). These organisationsmostly aimed at enhancing religious awareness among the Muslim public as well as highlighting the Islamist agenda at the national level. The Islamic "reawakening" had elevated the importance of Islam as a legitimation philosophy. The Malaysian government was quick to realise this new reality and sought to harness the power of religion and Islamic activists rather than block them. In a study of Islamisation policies and the legal system in the 1980s and 1990s in Malaysia, Peletz (2002) found that several decisions in Islamic courtswere in line with the government's developmentalpolicies at the time.Rather than trying to maintain the status quo ante, the authorities adjusted to the new ideological atmosphere and re-equilibrated the policy making process and governing strategy to suit the new reality.

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad'sadministration (1981-2003) was geared towards the achievement of *Wawasan* 2020 (or Vision 2020) with the aim of making Malaysia a developed nation by the year 2020. Islam was seen as essential for providing legitimacy to many new development policies that could potentially disrupt the traditional social and economic arrangements particularly in the Malay rural areas (Osman Bakar, 2003). Mahathir's view was that while Islam could not be secularised, it was also not incompatible with modernity (Schottmann, 2011). Efforts were made to harmonise understandings of Islamic texts to suit Malaysia's aspirations for political, social and economic development

or, as Mahathir termed it, "the jihad of development" (Schottmann, 2011: 358, 361).

The employment of religious jargon to define and justify political positions and progressive economic policies has been a perennial feature of Malaysian politics ever since the 1970s. FollowingMahathir's retirement in 2003, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (2003-2009) continued with the efforts to "Islamise" the system. In the 2004 general elections, Badawi received a strong mandate from the Malaysian public, both the Malays and non-Malays. The ruling National Front (*Barisan Nasional*) won over ninety per cent of the seats in the federal parliament. The Badawi administration reinvigorated the religious discourse in Malaysian politics with the announcement of *Islam hadhari* (loosely translated as civilizational Islam). In essence, *Islam hadhari* spelled out the role of Islam in Malaysia's progress towards achieving its vision of becoming a developed nation by the year 2020 (Chong, 2006). It fused "progressive" components such as "comprehensive economic development" with spiritual and symbolic categories such as the "faith and piety in Allah", "a good quality of life" and "cultural and moral integrity." Such efforts by the country's leadership to construct the dominant political discourse around Islam were largely prompted by the realisation that Islam in Malaysia is not just a religion confined within the individuals' personal domain, but also a cultural, political and social force that defines the very identity of Southeast Asian Muslim communities and their cultural heritage (Means, 2009). It is therefore extremely important for any government in Malaysia that it beperceived to be operating in accordance with, or at the very least, not in contradiction to the basic tenets of Islam. Viewed from this angle, Islamisation in the Malaysian context represents a genuine effort by the authorities to conform to the nation's historical, religious and cultural DNA.

However, despite the promotion of moderate religious values, public perceptions ofadministrative weaknessesespecially in economic management eroded the support for Prime MinisterBadawiand his administration. During the 2008 general elections, the ruling coalition (BarisanNasional) lost its much cherished two thirds majority in the federal parliament. Prime Minister Badawiretired from politics the following year.

While Malay support for the government had somewhat declined, it was arguably the drastic drop in support from the Malaysian ethnic Chinese that tilted the scales against the ruling coalition. "*Islam hadhari*" was gradually replaced by a new idea of "1 Malaysia" which emphasised inter-ethnic harmony and national unity. The argument being made here is not whether civic nationality is superior to religio-ethnic nationalism. Instead, it is the fact that one could see the change of emphasis from "*Islam hadhari*" to "1 Malaysia" as a form of strategic re-

equilibrationas authorities grappled with the various systemic tensions that affected government legitimacy and political stability.

While "*Islam hadhari*" leaned towards the religious end of the spectrum, the re-equilibration to "1Malaysia"shifted the emphasis towards a relatively more secular concept of "citizenship"as enshrined in the Malaysian Federal Constitution.It would be erroneous, however, to suggest that this shift in emphasis meant the authorities had abandoned Islam as an important component in the national philosophy, its institutions or the legal system. Rather, it was more an indication of the change in the government's emphasis in its efforts to deal with periodic systemic tensions and for maintaining stability within the "semi-Islamic" framework.

One must note, however, that this delicate balancing between the various philosophical positions has by no means been easy or straight forward. Politics have often gotten in the way. Unsurprisingly, some opposition politicians have occasionally sought to politicise questions such as whether Malaysia is an "Islamic state" in order to gain public attention and support. Maintaining stability in such a delicate situation has therefore remained an important aspect of Malaysian politics. Two questions become pertinent in this regard. First, what factors help to sustain this Islamist-democratic equilibrium? And second, what are the risks that the Islamist-democratic paradigm could allow a discursive space through which religious populists could exploit leading into a divisive public discourse?

Islam, modernisation and system maintenance

In a book chapter entitled "Democratisation in Indonesia and Malaysia", Syed Farid Alatas identifies three conditions crucial for the survival of democracy in countries like Indonesia and Malaysia. These, he notes, are the absence of armed resistance against the state, the presence of an internally strong state and a high degree of elite cohesion (Syed FaridAlatas, 2006: 101). He suggests that the absence of armed resistance is mainly a function of elite cohesion, a variable which he uses to explain why Malaysia managed to sustain democratic governance during the period after independence more successfully than Indonesia.

Syed Farid'sobservations on Malaysian democracy arerepresentative of anelite-centredparadigm that has for so long dominated academic discourse on politics and governance in Muslim countries (Lenczowski, 1975). While there is no denyingthat elite cohesion is significant for the survival of any regime, such elite centred perspectives tend to sometimes underrate significant changes taking place in the current age of globalisation, social media, and mass based movementsand which are drastically diminishing the power of political elites to

control their "followers" and maintain order through "elite cohesion". Social media for instance have significantly contributed to the atomisation of information consumption as well as redefining the contours of political loyalty in the public space.

In such a situation, the survival of a democratic regime would greatly depend on the capacity of the state to entice popular support by reaching the voters directly. Enticingelite loyalty and cohesion through the distribution of political rentsand the use of repressive laws and policing to manage public dissent may still be useful instruments of control (Wintrobe 2000). However, the effectiveness of such approaches is increasingly being diminishedas public consent remains not only relevant but also increasingly atomised.

On the other hand, the definition of political "rents" in materialistic terms common in secular analytic paradigms often misses the role of spiritual and cultural variables in strengthening publicloyalty in religiously oriented Muslim countries like Malaysia. In such contexts, public perceptions of the extent of the authorities' religious conformity are crucial for system maintenance.Islam has playeda central role as a unifying force for the various ethnic and racial communities in the Southeast Asian region. It also helps to define the contours of nationalism and national identities amongwhat Anderson refers to as the "imagined communities" of Southeast Asia (Anderson, 2006; Ariffin Omar, 1993; Bakti, 2000).

In Malaysia, Islam hasalso played an important role in the country'seconomic development by helping to embed capitalist forms of organisation and management in the local industrial practices. The need for cultural relevance necessitated that the atomistic values underpinning Western formulations of Capitalist *Gesellschaft* and the implementation of policies aimed at achieving rapid economic growth be adapted within Malaysia'sAsian collectivist *Gemeinschaft*. As Wee Wan-Ling observes,

… the encounter between Western capitalism and non-Western cultures in Asia demonstrates that capitalism is a cultural form with practices and demands, to which the ways of life of the society that desires it will need to adapt... [that] Even though the logic of capitalism can be outlined, local conditions will dictate that capitalism will spread in ways that will proceed but not be entirely consonant with its various Western origins (Wee, 2002: 2-3).

Thus, arguably, Islamisationin Malaysia served as an important medium through which the gradualadaptation and legitimation of Western Capitalist values and practices into an Islamic socio-cultural and religious environment was enabled. For instance, the continuous expansion of Islamic banking and insurance services, and the introduction of the "ÍÉIÉI hub" initiative have added to the

system's capacity to respond to increasing public demand for such services. These new Islamisation initiatives add to previous Islamisationefforts whichled among other things to the introduction of Islamic (*Syariah*) courtsfor the enforcement of Islamic law;the establishment of Islamic educational institutionsto provide new trained recruits to be absorbed into the administrative system and civil society;the establishment of Islamic media outletsthat run religious programmes which help to communicate moderate religious messages to the public; and the establishment of religious departments in several government officesto perform administrative and policy making functions.In this sense, Islamic institutions in the Malaysian "semi-Secular"democratic system are not simply a set of parallel institutions. Rather, they are carefully integrated with the rest of the system to collectively perform various functions that helpto support and maintain the overall political system.

Itmust be emphasised, however, that the observations made here arenot meant to simplistically gloss over the complexities involved in sustaining such a delicate balance within a generally secular constitutional framework. The challenges encountered in this process are many as will be further elaborated in the paragraphs below. However, dwelling on such hiccups often takes away one's appreciation of the successes thathave been achieved thus far.

By effectively harnessing the strength of Islamic principles rooted within conceptions of moderation (*Waȋaȉiyyah*) as emphasised by the Prime Minister NajibTunRazak and his administration, the Malaysian experiencepresents a strong case that debunks the argumentsof those who insist onthe mutual exclusivity between Islam and democracy or between Islam and modernisation (Malaymail Online, 25 October, 2014).

While Islam provides the ideological framework forpolitical accommodation and economic transformation, the secular legal framework provides a platform for the formulation of policies and enactment of rules for the management of the capitalist market economy. To use Spengler's terminology, in Malaysia, Islam provides the 'logic of direction' i.e. the "organic logic, an instinctive, dream-sure logic of all existence". On the other hand, democracy and capitalism help to furnish the system with its capacity to plan, organise, and implement or in Spengler's words, provide the system with its 'logic of extension', the "logic of the inorganic... of understanding and of things understood" (Spengler, 1922: 69-70).

The embedding of democracy within an Islamic *weltanschauung* can also be explicated using the argument of moral restraint. That religion not only provides the "logic of direction" but also defines the scope and limits of adaptation for the implementation of the positive law of democracy and capitalism.According to Jürgen Habermas, religiously grounded natural law

provides a moral check to the "whirlpool of temporality enveloping positive law". However, while Habermas postulated that this check provided by the "morality of conscience" from religious law is due to its contradiction with the positive law, the Malaysian case suggests otherwise (Habermas, 1995: 13-14). Instead of being an impediment or a contradiction to democracy and modernisation, Islamisation in Malaysia represents a relationship where religion supports the modernisation process while at the same time providing a moral yardstick to filter incongruent aspects of the underlying liberal philosophy that may be contradictory to local values. In other terms, Islamisation in the Malaysian political experience has also served to "check and balance" the embedding of liberal democracy within the local context rather than oppose it.

However, as noted earlier, this embedding process has by no means been smooth. Recent cases related to disagreements on the role of Syariah courts in the handling of religious conversion cases (especially those of Malay Muslims converting to other religions)indicate the potential of religious institutionalisation to contribute to systemic tensions (Aliran, 2005; Fernando, 2006).It is in the adjudication of such cases where the delicate space between the religious and the secular has sometimes led to a juridical void or *iustitium* highlighting the complex nature of the embedding process within the legal domain.

Generally, the conflicts of jurisdiction between Syariah courts and civil courts in Malaysia have mainly arisen due to the apparent protection of the Syaria courts by the 1988 amendment of Article 121 of the Federal Constitution. The amendment provides that High Courts and inferior courts shall have no jurisdiction over the Syaria courts (Ahmad Ibrahim, 1994). One would therefore hope that more efforts will be invested to provide more clarity in questions pertaining to the jurisdictions of the various courtsso as to minimise such confusion. The need for such clarification may become even more important in the future especially if proposals by the Islamist party PAS to enact the Islamic criminal code (*hudud* law) at the state level become law.

The Islamist political party PAS remains the most important religious political party in the country. In 2008, following a relatively strong showing by opposition parties in the general election, PAS managed to win enough votes to lead the state governments in Kelantan and Kedah. PAS runs on a platform of establishing an Islamic state in the country as well as the implementation of *ÍudËd* i.e. Islamic criminal law at the state and federal levels. The presence of PAS in the mainstream within a Muslim majority country raises the stakes for winning the Malay Muslim support and brings religion to the centre of public discourse. Consequently, the rhetoric of Islamism has gradually found its way into the "secular" democratic discourse where all parties strive to couch their policy

proposals with religious jargon. However, unlike PAS, UMNO has so far not supported the implementation of ʃudĒd law at the federal level.

Between democracy and populist Islam

The debate on "Islamic state" between UMNO and PAS could be viewed as mainly a contestation between two models of Islamic governance. The firstone, the UMNO version, is based on the concept of a modern nation-state that is conceived around Western versions of rationalism and operationalized through a constitutional framework. The religion-culture nexus in that context represents the syncretic amalgamation of traditional symbols and understandings of power and authority. The second model i.e. the PAS version, is formulated around a vision of "returning" to the basics i.e. the ways of the first community of believers as understood within the traditional jurisprudential perspective. This model draws from largely imported understandings of the role of Islam mainly from the Middle East (Shamsul, 2005).

The prominence of the ʃudĒd issue in Malaysian politics is in some waysa reflection of a growing religious undercurrent within sections of the Muslim population in the country. This could be discernible through the increasing support for a more comprehensive implementation of religious laws in some parts of the country (Syed Azhar, 2015). Such an environment may open doors for some political actors to recklessly indulge in the risky endeavour of tapping in the increasing popular support for religious causes. For instance, a few PAS officials have been reported to make populist statements attempting to question the existence of radical organizations such as the Indonesian based Jemaah Islamiah group. In one such case in June 2011, PAS' mouthpiece Harakahdaily reported one of prominent youth leader from the Islamist party questioning the very existence of Jemaah Islamiah as part of his criticism against the government's use of emergency laws such as the Internal Security Act (ISA) that allowed indefinite detention without trial. In his words, "Suspiciously, those detained under ISA on charges of being part of the Jemaah Islamiah and Al-Qaeda network have yet to be proven guilty, although they have spent years in jail. Even the existence of JI is frot[h] with doubts" (Harakahdaily, 20 June, 2011).

Such populism, if unchecked,could risk the very survival of democracy in the country. While the accommodation of the religious discourse in the Malaysian political mainstream has arguably helped to provide the system with its cultural legitimacy, statements such as these by religious leaders in civil society highlight the potential for populist abuse of such discursive space. In illustration of this point, a day earlier,another local daily *Utusan Malaysia* had published a report claiming that "religious extremists" have been carrying out "radicalisation"

activities in some religious schools in Malaysia. The report noted thata private religious school in the country was acting as a recruitment ground for Malaysian Muslim youth to be trained in camps run by al-Qaeda and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front also known as MILF (Farabi Sheikh and Wan Noor Hayati, *Utusan Malaysia*,19 June, 2011).Such incidents underscore the difficulty of disentagling mainstream religious populism by opportunistic politicians from real attempts by unscrupulous operators to radicalise innocent members of society.

Another issue that has been open to exploitation by populist political actors relates to the implementation of *ÍudËd* law. Given that one third of the Malaysian population is made up of non-Muslims, resistance to PAS' commitment to implement Islamic criminal law in Malaysia has been a common feature of Malaysian politics. In addition to fuelling communal tensions, thisissue often complicatedPAS's relationship with other political parties in the opposition coalition formerly known locally as *Pakatan Rakyat*or PR (Moten, 2011). It is particularly disputes relating to this ideological fault line that led to the PR breakup in 2015. The official launching of the new opposition coalition in January 2016 known as *PakatanHarapan* (PH) to replace the PR marked another important re-equilibration in Malaysian opposition politics. The PH mainly consists of the same political parties that formed the PR before with the exception of PAS. Instead, PAS was replaced by a new political party named *PartiAmanah Rakyat* which is essentially a splinter from PAS composed mainly of a faction commonly referred to as "progressives" but who had earlier lost in PASinternal elections to the "*Ulama* faction". The shift from PR to PH was thus arguably yet another example ofre-equilibration of national opposition politics moving away from religious to relatively more secular positions. It is important to note, however, that while as a political party PAS was ejected from the opposition coalition, sections of the new opposition coalition maintained working relations with the Islamist partyin running the state government in Selangor.

Towards the end of 2015, there were some suggestions that leaders within PAS would like to have closer relations with UMNO which is the dominant party within the ruling coalition known as the BarisanNasional. However, partially due to some internal objections from within PAS there have been no official suggestions by PAS at the time of writing of any plans by the Islamist party plans to officially join the UMNO-led ruling coalition. It is in situations such as these that PAS' true commitment to its Islamist platform (read *ÍudËd* law) could be tested.

Apparently, UMNO and PAS espouse different interpretations of what an "Islamic state" means. While UMNO politicians have gone to the extent of

arguing that Malaysia is already an "Islamic State" PAS denies such claims and insists on the implementation of the full range of Islamic Sharia laws including the ĺudËd law at the federal level (Schottmann, 2011). Given periodic pressures from the electorate, some UMNO politicians have been noted to arguably indulge in some veiled Islamist populism. The confusion on how to exactly define the hybrid Malaysian political system has only served to complicate the matter. A few examples help illustrate this point.

In 2002, the CNN quoted Prime Minister Mahathir saying that "his country is an Islamic 'fundamentalist' state and can be proud of the fact" (CNN, 2002; Osman Bakar, 2003).Ten years later, in response to demands for clarification of his assertion, Mahathiropted to dilute his earlier statement by declaring that Malaysia, "is neither an Islamic nor a secular state, but an 'ordinary state' with Islam as the official religion" (Malay MailOnline, 2014).

On 17July 2007, the then Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia Najib Tun Razak while officiating an International Conference on "the Role of Islamic States in a Globalised World" reiterated that, "Islam is the official religion [of Malaysia] and we are an Islamic state. But as an Islamic state, it does not mean that we don't respect the non-Muslims. The Muslims and the non-Muslims have their own rights". He then emphasised that as a country, Malaysia "had never been affiliated to secularism but was always driven by the fundamentals of Islam as it is clearly stated in the constitution that Islam is the official religion". Najib added, "We have never been secular, because being secular by Western definition means separation of the Islamic principles in the way we govern the country" (Bernama, 2007).

Notwithstanding the reconciliatory tone of the remarks, these statementswere not well received by some members of the public especially segments of Malaysian non-Muslim minorities. In response to this feedback, the then Prime Minister Abdullah Badawidecided to clarify the issue as follows:

Malaysia is neither a secular nor a theocratic state but a country that practices parliamentary democracy… It is a government that is made up of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Christians, who work together and discuss together development policies for the nation…We are not a secular state. We are also not a theocratic state like Iran and Pakistan which [the Islamist party] PAS wants us to be, but we are a government that is based on parliamentary democracy (Vinesh, 2007; Melayuonline.com, 2007).

On the other side of the spectrum, some politicians especially those from non-Malay dominated politicalparties such as the Democratic Action Party (DAP) deliberately downplay the Islamic aspects of the political system by insisting that

constitutionally speaking Malaysia is purely a secular state (Rajanthiran and Sivaperengasam, 2010). Unable to resolve this "confusion", some local lawyers and members of parliament from the opposition have gone to the length of making public appeals for the Malaysian King (The *Yang Di PertuanAgong*) to help resolve the matter "once and for all" as it is, in their words, "a matter of public importance" (Meikeng, 2014).

More recently, Malaysian authorities have embarked in an effort to counterthe strengthening extremist undercurrent. Some of the measures taken have includedengaging several "freelance preachers" and prominent local religious scholars to help provide counter narratives to radical interpretations of Islam by fringe elements. In addition, the power of social media such as Youtube and facebookis being increasingly harnessed as a popular medium for the dissemination of religious sermons and teachings. The religious department in the Prime Minister's office as well as friendly members from the religious and academic intelligentsia continue to play a crucial role as stabilising and supportive actors to disseminate balanced religious messages to the public in the wider effort to counter extremist teachings in the public sphere.

That said, it would be a mistake to assume that political actors in Malaysia including those from the Islamist sections of society are dogmatic in their positions.One may observe, for example, that the pressure to win public support at the national level has periodically prompted PAS leaders toredefine their ĺudĔd focused Islamist platform and moderate their stance towards more inclusive positions away from strict interpretations of Islamic law. As a case in point, in 2011, PAS leaders strategically shifted their Islamist stance arguing that their party was not just for establishing an Islamic state, but essentially it was for establishing a "benevolent" or "welfare" state (Harakah Daily, 13 June 2011; The Star Online 13 December, 2011). Such episodes once again underscore the dynamism within Malaysia's "semi-Islamist"system. Political actors from both sides of Malaysian politics have been noted to periodically shift their political strategies reflecting what might seem like "shifting ideological positions" as they attempt to dynamically align themselves with the changing expectations of the electorate.

Conclusion

That Islam has coexisted sometimes harmoniously and on other occasions tensely with democratic regimes in various parts of the world is a well-established historical fact. This paper was not aimed at simply restating this fact. Rather the aim was to use the Malaysian case to demonstrate the variousprocesses, issues,

tensions and actors involved in the continuous process of adaptingIslamic values and institutional forms within a modern democratic political system. As earlier stated, in Malaysia, this hybridisation extends from shaping inclusive state led discourses on national identity, to the adoption of parallel legal, educational and financial institutions, to political engagement at the national level.

An important point highlighted in thisdiscussion refers to the strategic engagement between secular and religious political parties in forming coalitions that are ideologically diverse while at the same time culturally inclusive. This strategic engagement reflects a dynamism through which political organisations adapt to new realities and realign with new partners enhancing the durability of Malaysia's democratic-Islamist system.

With reference to the specific case of Malaysia, the paper highlighted that the relationship between religion and democracy is a complex one. The attempt by the Malaysian government to legitimate itself within the "semi-secularist"framework afforded the government the capacity to accommodate elements of Islamic governance and institutions while at the same time maintaining its substantive secular constitutional foundation. In this sense, "semi-secularism" in Malaysiahas arguably contributed to the gradual transformation of the country into an Islamic hybrid of an Asian democratic state.

The employment by some observers of the terminology of "pseudo-democracy" to encapsulate the "paradox" observed in the Malaysian case (Case, 2001) sums up the dilemma among Western political commentators in describing political systems such as that of Malaysia. It also underscoresthe need for refining the classificatory nomenclature outside the existing heuristic toolbox to possibly include terms such as "semi-secularism" that aim to sensitise the discourse on Islamism with dynamics of hybridisation between Western models of democracy and Islam as well as move away from the undefined terminology of "paradoxes".

In the end, one's judgement on whether Malaysia is an "Islamic state" or not would depend on the definition of Islamism the particular observer subscribes to. For purposesof this study, the examination of Islamismin Malaysia based on the actual institutional changesand political communication helps to elevate the debate on religion and democracy from a reductionist theoretical premise that insists on the mutual exclusivity between religion and secular governance to one where religion is recognised as an integral component in the democratic process.

References

Ahmad Ibrahim, & Ahilema Joned. (1995). *The Malaysian Legal System* (2nd ed.). Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

Aliran. (2005). "The Moorthy Maniam Case: Compassion and Justice Missing - Conflicting Legal Systems are Undermining Constitutional Safeguards and Ethnoreligious Understanding", *Aliranmonthly*. 25(11).http://aliran.com/archives/monthly/2005b/11b.html

Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. (2006). *Imagined communities : reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Rev. Ed.). London ; New York: Verso.

An-Na'im, Abdullahi A. (2002). "Upholding International Legality against Islamic and American Jihad." In *Worlds in Collision: Terror and the Future of Global Order*, edited by K. Booth and T. Dunne. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002.

Antlöv, H. and Ngo, T. (2000). "Politics, Culture, and Democracy in Asia". In Hans Antlöv & Tak-Wing Ngo (Eds.), *The cultural construction of politics in Asia* (Vol. Democracy in Asia ; no. 2., Pp. Viii, 263). Richmond, Surrey: Curzon.

Anwar Ibrahim. (2006). Universal Values and Muslim Democracy. *Journal of Democracy,* 17(3).

Ariffin Omar. (1993). *Bangsa Melayu : Malay concepts of democracy and community, 1945-1950*. Kuala Lumpur ; New York: Oxford University Press.

Ayoob, Mohammed. (2005). The Future of Political Islam: the Importance of External variables. *International Affairs, 81*(5), 951-961.

Bakashmar, M. (2010). *Rule of Law in Malaysia.* Berlin: Lambert Academic Publishing.

Bakti, Andi Faisal. (2000). *Islam and Nation Formation in Indonesia: From Communitarian to Organizational Communications*. Jakarta: Logos Wacana Ilmu.

Ben-Israel, H. (2011). "The Nation-State: Durability through Change."*International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 24, no. 1 & 2, Pp. 65-74.

Bernama. (2007). "Malaysia not Secular State, Says Najib". July 17. http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v3/printable.php?id=273699

"Razali: Don't Question Dress Code in Government Offices - Razali".July 5. http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v8/ge/newsgeneral.php?id=1150154

Butko, T. J. (2004). Revelation or Revolution: A Gramscian Approach to the Rise of Political Islam. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, 31*(1), 41-62.

Butko, T. (2007). Unity Through Opposition: Islam as an Instrument of Radical Political Change. In Barry Rubin (Ed.), *Political Islam* (Pp. 25-44). Oxon and New York: Routledge.

Case, William. (2001). Malaysia's Resilient Pseudodemocracy. *Journal of Democracy, 12*(1), 43-57.

Cheek, K. S. et al. (1992). "Malaysia's Islamic Movements." In *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*, edited by Joel S. Kahn and Francis Loh Kok Wah. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Chong, Terence (2006). The Emerging Politics of Islam hadhari. In Saw Swee-Hock and K. Kesavapany (Ed.), *Malaysia: Recent Trends and Challenges* (Pp. 26-46). Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

CNN. (2002, 18 June). Mahathir Interview (0657 GMT), available at: http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/southeast/06/18/malaysia.mahathir/

Damaška, Mirjan R. (1986). *The Faces of Justice and State Authority: A Comparative Approach to the Legal Process*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Davari, M. T. (2005). *The Political Thought of AyatullahMurtazaMutahhari: An Iranian Theoretician of the Islamic State*. London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon.

Esposito, J. L. (1999). *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* New York: Oxford University Press.

Farabi Sheikh SaidAl-Jabri and Wan Noor Hayati Wan Alia. (2011). "Maahad, Sekolah Agama Terlibat". Utusan Malaysia (19 June).

Federal Constitution. (2010). Selangor: International Law Book Services.

Fernando, Joseph M. (2006). The Position of Islam in the Constitution of Malaysia. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, 37*(2), 249-266.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Gilroy, P. (1993). *Small acts*. London: Serpents tail.

Gramsci, Antonio. (1994). *Pre-Prison Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Habermas, J. (1995). "On the Internal Relation between the Rule of Law and Democracy." *European Journal of Philosophy*, 3(1), 12-20.

Hafez, M. and Wiktorowicz, Q. (2004). "Violence as Contention in the Egyptian Islamic Movement" in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Harakah Daily (Ed.) (13 June 2011). http://www.malaysia-today.net/hadi-on-the-difference-of-our-welfare-state-and-bns/

Harakahdaily. (2011). PAS slams Utusan's 'hazy' report over 'terror in Islamic schools'. 20 June. http://www.en.harakahdaily.net/index.php/berita-utama/2990-pas-slams-utusans-hazy-report-over-terror-in-islamic-schools.html.

Hassall, Graham, & Saunders, Cheryl. (2002). *Asia-Pacific constitutional systems*. Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

Hobsbawm, E. J., & Ranger, T. O. (1983). *The Invention of tradition*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Holub, R. (1992). *Antonio Gramsci: Beyond Marxism and Postmodernism*. London and New York: Routledge.

Jomo, K. S., & Ahmad Shabery Cheek. (1992). Malaysia's Islamic Movements. In Joel S. Kahn and Francis Loh Kok Wah (Ed.), *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Juergensmeyer, M. (1993). *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism confronts the secular state*: University of California Press.

Kamali, M. H. (1991). *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence.*Kuala Lumpur: The Islamic text Society.

Kamali, M. H. (1997). Freedom of Expression in Islam. Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society.

Kaur, M. (2015). "No Dress Code, Just Suitable to Our Culture: Azalina." New Starits Times Online.

Lapidus, I. M. (1997). "Islamic Revival and Modernity: The Contemporary Movements and the Historical Paradigms". Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, Vol. 40, No. 4, (1997), Pp. 444-460.

Lee, KoyKye. (2016). "Hudud Law Will Only Apply to Muslims in Kelantan, Says Zahid. *New Straits Times,* 26 May 2016. http://www.nst.com.my/news/2016/05/147996/hudud-law-will-only-apply-muslims-kelantan-says-zahid

Lenczowski, G. (1975). *Political Elites in the Middle East.* Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Policy Research.

Lijphart, A. (2008). *Thinking about democracy: power sharing and majority rule in theory and practice.* New York: Routledge.

Mahathir Mohamad. (1970). *The Malay Dilemma*. Singapore,: D. Moore for Asia Pacific Press.

Malay Mail Online. (2014). "PM credits 'Wasatiyyah' approach for country's rise as modern, progressive Islamic nation", 25 October. http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/pm-credits-wasatiyyah-approach-for-countrys-rise-as-modern-progressive-isla#sthash.l8M8yNuH.dpuf

Malay Mail Online. (2014). "Secular or Islamic State? Neither, says Dr M", 19 June. http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/secular-or-islamic-state-neither-says-dr-m

Malaysia. (1990). *Federal Constitution*. Kuala Lumpur: MDC. Sdn. Bhd.

Martinez, Patricia. (2003). Mahathir, Islam and the New Malay dilemma. In H. K. Leong & James Chin (Eds.), *Mahathir's administration: Performances and crisis in governance* (Pp. 215-251). Singapore: Times Editions.

Means, G. P. (2009). *Political Islam in Southeast Asia*. Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Resarch Development Centre-SIRD and Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

Melayuonline.com. (2007). "Reports: Muslim Malaysia is not a secular or an Islamic state,   PM says". 10 August. http://m.melayuonline.com/eng/news/read/987/   reports-muslim-malaysia-is-not-a-secular-or-an-islamic-state-pm-says

Malaysia. (1990). *The Federal Constitution*. Kuala Lumpur: MDC. Sdn. Bhd., 1990.

Meikeng, Y. (2014). "DAP Requests Clarification Over Secular State Issue". *The Star Online.* 16 June. http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2014/06/16/parliment-dap-requests-secular-state-confirmation/

Melissa Chi. (8 November, 2010). Syariah court used for political agenda, claims Anwar. *The   Malaysian   Insider*.   From http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/syariah-court-used-for-political-agenda-claims-anwar/

Milner, A. (1991). *Inventing Politics: the Case of Malaysia*: Oxford University Press.

Milner, A. C. (1982). *Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule*. Arizona: The University of Arizona Press.

Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman. (2010). Reviving the Caliphate in Malaysia *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 32*(7), 646-663.

Moten, A. (2008) . "Islamic Thought in Contemporary Pakistan: The Legacy of 'All ma Mawd d ". In Abu Rabi', I. (ed). *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought,*John Wiley & Sons, p. 175.

Moten. A. (2011). Changing Political Culture and Electoral Behaviour in Malaysia, *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, 38: 39-56.

Moghadam, A. (2007). "Mayhem, Myths, and Martyrdom: The Shi'a Conception of Jih d "*Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 1. Pp. 125-43.

Mutalib, Hussin (1993). *Islam in Malaysia: From Revivalism to Islamic State?* Singapore: Singapore University Press.

Naidu, S. (2015). "Concerns of Rising Conservatism in malaysia as Dresscode Debate Continues",   *Channelnewsasia,*   30,   Jun,   2015. http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/concerns-of-rising/1951292.html

Norhashimah Mohd. Yasin, *Islamisation or Malaynisation: a Study on the Role of Islamic Law in the Economic Development of Malaysia 1969-1993*, Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noorden Publications, 1996.

Oliveti, V. (2002). *Terror's Source: The Ideology of Wahhabi-Salafism and its Consequences*. Birmingham: Amadeus Books.

Osman Bakar. (2003). Islam and Political legitimacy in Malaysia. In Shahram Akbarzadeh and Abdullah Saeed (Ed.), *Islam and Political Legitimacy*. London and New York: Routledge Curzon.

Osman Bakar. (April 2005). The Impact of the American War on Terror on Malaysian Islam. *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations, 16*(2), 107-127.

Osman, Mohd. Taib. (1985). *Malaysian world-view*. Pasir Panjang, Singapore: Southeast Asian Studies Program Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Palansamy, Y. (2015). "Azalina: No Dresscode for Public at All Government Offices", *Malaymailonline*, 5 November, 2015. http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/azalina-no-dress-code-for-public-at-all-government-offices

Peletz, M. G. (2002). *Islamic Modern Religious Courts and Cultural Politics in Malaysia*, Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Quereshi, P. (2009). Islamic Democracy. New Delhi: M.D.Publications.

Qutb, S. (1978). *Milestones*. Beirut: The Holy Koran Publishing House.

Rajanthiran, P. & Sivaperengasam, R. (2010). DAP's Opposition of Malaysia as an Islamic State.

Saeed, Abdullah. (2003). Jih d and Violence: Changing Understandings of Jih d Among Muslims. In Tony Coates & Michael O'Keefe (Eds.), *Terrorism and Justice: Moral Argument in a Threatened World* (Pp. 72-86). Melbourne Melbourne University Press.

Saeed, Shahram Akbarzadeh and Abdullah. (2003). Islam and Politics. In Shahram Akbarzadeh and Abdullah Saeed (Ed.), *Islam and Political Legitimacy* (Pp. 1-13). London and New York: Routledge Curzon.

Schottmann, Sven. (2011). The Pillars of ''Mahathir's Islam'': Mahathir Mohamad on Being-Muslim in the Modern World. *Asian Studies Review, 35*(3), 355-372.

Shamsul, A. B. (1998). Debating About Identity in Malaysia: A Discourse Analysis. In Ibrahim Zawawi (Ed.), *Cultural Contestations: Mediating Identities in a Changing Malaysian Society* (Pp. 17-50). London: ASEAN Academic Press.

Shamsul, A. B. (2005). Islam Embedded: 'Moderate' Political Islam and Governance in the Malay World. In K. S. Nathan & Mohammad Hashim Kamali (Eds.), *Islam in*

Southeast Asia: Political, Social and Strategic Challenges (Pp. 103-120). Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Shannahan, C. (2011). Negotiating faith on the Coventry Road: British-Muslim youth identities in the 'third space'. *Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 12*(3), 237-257.

Spengler, O. (1922). *The Decline of the West: Form and Actuality*, London: George Alen and Unwin Ltd.

Syed Azhar. (2015). "Kelantan's Hudud Bill Amendemens Passed". *The Star Online,* 19 March.

Syed Farid Alatas. (2006). "Democrartisation in Indonesia and Malaysia" in Masatoshi Kisaichi (ed.) *Popular Movements and Democratisation in the Islamic World*, USA and Canada: Routledge, Pp. 100-125.

Teong, Khoo Boo. (1999). Law and Legal Culture in Malaysia from the Perspective of Public Law. In Alice Tay (Ed.), *East Asia – Human Rights, Nation Building, Trade* (Pp. 70-107). Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft.

The Guardian. (2014). "Malaysia's Highest Court Backs a Ban on Allah in Christian Bibles".

The Star Online. (2011). Tee Yong: PAS Welfare State Agenda a Façade for Hudud. 13 December.

Tommy Thong-Bee Koh. (1993). Does East Asia Stand for Any Positive Values? *International Herald Tribune,* 6 May.

Wee, C. J. Wan-ling. (2002). "Introduction: Local Cultures, Economic Development, and Southeast Asia." In *Local Cultures and the "New Asia": The State, Culture, and Capitalism in Southeast Asia*, C. J. Wan-ling Wee (ed.), Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Pp. 1-27.

Wintrobe, R. (2000). *The Political Economy of Dictatorship*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vinesh, D. (2007). PM: Malaysia is Neither a Secular nor a Theocratic State. *The Star Online.*5   August.   http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2007/08/05/pm-malaysia-is-neither-a-secular-nor-theocratic-state/

Vivekanandan, N. (2015). "Dap Assemblyman Pokes Fun at Dress Code Issue."*Free Malaysia Today*.

Yoshiko Kurita, (2006). 'The Development of Secularism and Non-Sectarianism in the Middle East'. In Masatoshi Kisaichi (ed.) *Popular Movements and Democratisation in the Islamic World* (Pp.143-160), USA and Canada: Routledge.