Religion, Public Policy and Social Transformation in Southeast Asia

Managing Religious Diversity Vol.1

Editor: Dicky Sofjan

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Dicky Sofjan (Editor)

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book series is part of a nine-country collaborative research program entitled "Religion, Public Policy and Social Transformation in Southeast Asia" (2013-2016), which involves Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar and the United States of America. The three-year program was developed and led by the Yogyakarta-based Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS), and supported by the Henry Luce Foundation based in New York. The three-part book series deals with religion and its interface with the state and society in Southeast Asia. It examines the multidimensional facets of politics, public policy and social change in relation to contemporary faith-based communities and movements together with their complex religious thoughts, praxes and ethos.

The initial idea of the program begun when the ICRS Core Doctoral Faculty members, including myself, discussed in 2012 with the executives from the Henry Luce Foundation, namely Toby Volkman and Helena Kolenda. We agreed that gaps were prevalent in both knowledge and understanding between the U.S. and Southeast Asia, and among knowledge producers, policymakers and media reporters on the subject of religion and social transformation. These gaps became noticeably clear when the September 11, 2001 tragedy occurred and the then promising Arab Spring in the Middle East started to unfold. Religion henceforth came to dominate public, academic and media discourses. The discussion with the Henry Luce Foundation was then brought to the attention of officials from the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta and the State Department in Washington, D.C. The ICRS team also consulted with its long-time partners in the U.S. as well as those in Southeast Asia. From

our consultations with partners, all found the idea to be exciting, timely and highly strategic.

The conversation with the Henry Luce Foundation then progressed into an idea of convening a series of Planning Workshops with prospective program partners in both the U.S. and Southeast Asia. In the U.S., we contacted our colleagues at CURA (Institute on Culture, Religion and World Affairs), namely Robert W. Hefner, and the professors and officers at the Regional Office of the Asian Public Intellectuals (API) Fellowships Program based in Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand, namely Ajarn Surichai Wun'Gaeo and Ms. Michiko Yoshida. The plan was to get together in Yogyakarta, Boston and Bangkok with selected prospective partners and researchers to discuss the likelihood of a multinational collaborative research program that would seriously focus on the interplay between religion and public policy, and how it impacts society.

Upon completion of the Planning Workshops and after incorporating the inputs and feedback from prospective partners, the task at hand was to design and draft a proposal to be submitted to the Henry Luce Foundation, which fell upon my lap. After undergoing a review process by the Henry Luce Foundation, the proposal received an approval with minor modifications. I then slightly adjusted the proposal, and turned it into what I called the Framework Document, which served as a basis for collaboration between ICRS and its partners. The Framework Document detailed the rationale of the program, overarching theme and annual subthemes of the planned collaborative research. Furthermore, it contained the basic strategy in delivering the outputs and achieving the program outcome. One of the most important decisions agreed by ICRS and the Henry Luce Foundation was the number of participating countries, which increased from the previously seven to nine countries, including the U.S.

As outlined in the Framework Document, the intended outcome of the collaborative research program was to bring Southeast Asian and American religion experts, policy makers and analysts closer together in mutual understanding, partnership and engagement on issues pertaining to religion, public policy and social transformation. Thus, the program was meant to serve as an effective platform for greater intellectual engagement, mutual learning and collaboration in policy-relevant research, as well as advocacy through the media on issues pertaining religion in Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, the specific objectives of the program encompass the following: 1) To produce and enhance policy-relevant knowledge, understanding and expertise on the role of religion and its impact on public policy and social transformation in Southeast Asia; 2) To inform and educate policymakers, stakeholders and the public through the media on how religion can influence public policy and have a complex interplay with social change; 3) To build a platform for intellectual and policy engagement as well as inter-governmental collaboration, if and where possible, between the US and its Southeast Asian counterparts in the areas of religion, public policy and social transformation.

All articles in this book series are therefore a result of what one might call policy-relevant research, conducted by investigators from the nine countries. The issues under examination in this book series include: state management of diversity, multiculturalism, socio-religious change and activism, state-society relations, shifting notions of gender, identity and ethnicity, cyber religion and many more, all of which are contextualized within the contemporary society of Southeast Asia.

Being the Principal Investigator, I must confess that the task of managing a nine-country collaborative research program has been challenging, to say the least. The program planning, organizing, actuating and controlling alone proved to be a test for my managerial skills and competency throughout the three-year period. After all, the

participating partners in the program are mostly senior university-based academics, professors, socio-religious activists, who are passionate and wholeheartedly concerned with the various issues they are researching on. Thus, while most program participants are expert knowledge producers and seasoned researchers, others are actively involved in socio-religious organizations that persistently want to bring about change and social justice.

Taken together, all the participating contributors are ardent advocates of religion, and are committed to prove that religion—despite what many think—remains to be a good force to be reckoned with in society. However, the ultimate test and tribulation in the program came with managing the substance of the research with such a multitude of disciplines, unique perspectives and experiences, providing a rich and hopefully intellectually stimulating research ideas and findings.

The overarching title for the book series is consistent with the name of the program, which is "Religion, Public Policy and Social Transformation in Southeast Asia". The series will comprise three titles. The first book series will be entitled "Managing Religious Diversity", and the second on "Religion, Gender and Identity". The third book series will be "Religion and the Public Sphere". While the first two book series are expected to come out in 2016, the third one is scheduled to be in print in early 2017.

There are at least three unique features in all the three book series. First, the breadth and coverage of the research will cover eight countries of Southeast Asia, a respectable number out of the ten official countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which would fulfil the basic requirements in research on representativeness. Second, the divergent contributors from various disciplinary backgrounds ensure a wide scope in analysis and rigor, possibly offering inter-, if not trans-disciplinary methods of knowing. Third, the book series will expectedly shed light on how religion operates amid the often untidy process of

policy making, which has traditionally been thought of as occupying a secular and mundane realm, dictated by the politics of the day and far removed from Divine inspiration and spiritual intervention.

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Along with this, I would like to convey my sincere note of gratitude to the numerous people involved from various countries and institutions in making the program possible in the first place and also to those who have actively contributed to the hard labor throughout the period of the nine-country collaborative research program. From the Henry Luce Foundation, I would like to particularly thank President Michael Gilligan, Toby Volkman, Helena Kolenda and Bridget Talone, who have all seen the program through from its inception to its implementation. Their continuing support to ICRS has paved the way for us to see various possibilities in ways that we, as an inter-religious academic institution, had not imagined before. I am also indebted to the participating researchers who have shown commitment and resolve in the program, namely Bilveer Singh, K.S. Nathan, Reverend Maung Maung Yin, Mana Tun, Eleanor Dionysius, Nguyen Van Chinh, Nguyen Quang Hung, Farina So, Sreang Heng and Heng Monychenda.

Then, there is a whole host of Thailand-based partners and researchers who have contributed immensely to the program, namely Ajarns Surichai Wun'Gaeo, Suthipand Chirathivat, Nualnoi Treerat, Michiko Yoshida, Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai, Somboon Chungprampee, Imtiyaz Yusuf, Theodore Mayaor, Thitinan Pongsudhirak, Pratoom Angurarohita and Vira Somboon. In addition, our American partners deserve acknowledgement for their role as a catalyst and active proponent of the collaborative research program, namely Robert W. Hefner, Katherine Marshall, Thomas C. Bancoff, Nancy-Smith Hefner, Juliane Schober and Arlene Brennan.

From the ICRS team, I am grateful for the collegiality and leadership of Siti Syamsiyatun, Jenny Dhewayani, Bernard Adeney-Risakotta and Leonard C. Epafras, who are our Core Doctoral Faculty members, and had contributed enormously since the program's embryonic stage. Aside from them, I am thankful to Maufur, Sakdiyah Makruf, Elis Z. Anis, Benny Baskara, Yuyun Sunesti, Nur Widiyanto, Le Ngoc Bich Ly, and all the ICRS students, who have assisted the program in numerous ways. My deep appreciation goes to our Indonesian colleagues Muhammad Machasin and Ibnu Hasan from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the late Soegeng Sarjadi, Sukardi Rinakit and Ari Nur Cahyo of the former Soegeng Sarjadi Syndicated (SSS), Ahmad Qisai and Agung Djojosoekarto of the Partnership for Governance Reform in Indonesia (Kemitraan), Romo Magnis Suseno, Yudi Latif, Zuhairi Misrawi, Irman G. Lanti, and many others who participated in our conferences, workshops, Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) and research activities as both informants and experts.

Lastly, I would like to thank Christoph Stückelberger and Nina Mariani for their support and advice on getting this book series published and printed in a timely fashion. I hope our collaboration will continue to flourish, and that more publications can come out fairly soon.

January 10, 2016

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Transformation in Southeast Asia (2013-2016)

1

INTRODUCTION

Managing Religious Diversity
in a Multicultural Southeast Asia

Dicky Sofjan

Southeast Asia is arguably one of the most diverse regions of the world. The subregion's population of more than 500 million people maintain a variety of cultures originating from China, the Middle East (Arab, Persian and Turkish), the Indian subcontinent, Java, Melanesia and of late Western European/American influences in which the latter largely came to shores of the region through the vast and expansive project on colonialism. The passing of cultures and the influences of many great civilizations on the region have created a rich tapestry that not only impacts how the people live, think and feel, but also their faith, religion and worldview.

The amalgamation of these cultures and their derivative forms have in turn shaped contemporary Southeast Asian society, economy and politics; giving it a uniquely diverse and multicultural representation. In a *Pew Global Survey* held in 2012, it was said that Southeast Asia is "the most religiously diverse region in the world",[1] holding together an enormous number of adherents from different religions, faiths and forms

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[1] See http://www.pewglobal.org (accessed on November 3, 2013).

of spirituality. The region even has the most populous Muslim country, Indonesia, which holds together more Muslims than all the Arab countries in the Middle East combined. Yet, there are also nations in Southeast Asia that largely observe Theravada Buddhism such as Thailand and Myanmar as well as Mahayana Buddhism, namely Vietnam. Then, there are countries such as the Philippines, where Catholics comprise 90% of the population.

The great diversity of religions in Southeast Asia proves how open Southeast Asia has been throughout past centuries with the spread and development of world religions and their main strands, namely Buddhism (Theravada and Mahayana), Islam (Sunnism and Shiasm) and Christianity (Protestantism and Catholicism). Aside from the prevalence of these so-called "world religions", Southeast Asia is home to a multitude of 'local' or 'indigenous religions' and traditional belief systems. Such blending and diversity should surely be celebrated, and considered as a blessing for the region. However, the reality shows that the modern, post-colonial nation-states of Southeast Asia have had to contend with religion in ways that contradict the very fundamental and universal teaching of religion, which is to promote tolerance, mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and social justice.

Notwithstanding, the phrase "managing religious diversity" begs a rather practical set of questions. How does a state manage religious diversity? How do faith-based communities and religious groups or organizations engage the state? And how do they respond to constant political reconfiguration or state repression? No doubt, in Southeast Asia, these questions are both pertinent and urgent. They are pertinent because not many studies have been conducted to see the true correlation between religion and public policy, let alone empirically determine whether the former influences the latter or vice versa. Meanwhile, the urgency of responding to these questions and challenges will serve as an entry point to better understand the nature of religion in

contemporary Southeast Asia and its ability to adapt to socio-political changes. In answering the above queries, a mutual learning platform is inadvertently built to enable us to contrast and compare the different lived experiences of religion by faith-based communities and organizations throughout the region.

1.1 Thinking about Religion and Public Policy

The study of religion has rarely been analysed through the lens of public policy. Rather, contemporary research on religion tends to correlate it with social, political, cultural and even economic analyses. Such tendency has given rise to various relatively new sub-disciplines and scientific clustering on "history of religions", "sociology of religion", "religion and politics", "religion and cross-cultural studies" or "religion and the economy". One might claim that these latest scientific categories are too fluid, and in actual fact don't *do* religion. But one thing is certain, that religion or religious phenomena can no longer be understood well enough by concentrating solely on its theology, sacred texts or juridical stance on specific matters confronted by its congregations. Rather, religion has been—more than ever—exposed to the postmodern imperatives of multi-, inter, trans- and cross-disciplinary studies. In other words, to think about religion, being divorced from history or free from the constraints of socio-political, economic and cultural realities in any given context, would seem anachronistic, if not scientifically questionable.

Notwithstanding, the study of any religion today necessitates the engagement of tradition, text and context. Without the latter, religion becomes a mere set of outdated doctrines and dogmas that are well suited only to the context of the Medieval period. Even in the U.S. State Department, where the establishment clause of the Federal Constitution forbids any and all forms of subsidy to religious groups, organizations and houses of worships, found it imperative to initiate a working group

on "Religion and Foreign Policy" in late 2011. The shift in thinking about religion and its complex relationship with the process of policymaking may well be induced by the tragic event of September 11, 2001 or the rapid changing political constellation occurring in the Middle East with the forging of the so-called "Arab Spring".

Yet, the scientific community and policy circles have only realized today that religion remains to be a force to be reckoned with amid the proliferation of the modern, secular nation-states, following the 2nd World War. Hence, the notion of religion retreating to the backdoors of history was plainly wrong and that such wishful thinking came at the expense of the governments that were unable to deal intelligently, objectively and tactfully with the reality of religion. Furthermore, we have only fully realized now that no state territorial-based sovereignty could ever confine religion within national boundaries. Thus, transnationalism has become the name of the game for the religions of the world.

Despite these harsh realities and objective challenges confronting the world, it is admittedly difficult to conceive of a true correlation between religion and public policy. One difficulty lies in the fact that religion attaches its doctrines on cosmic reality, God, the divine or spiritual beings, both visible and invisible, and teaches how human beings should attempt to engage or emulate them. Religion also places much emphasis on what constitutes right or wrong, good or evil as well as Heaven and Hell. Due to these differing standards of beliefs and the assertive nature of religion, it is noticeable that the humankind is then split into innumerable religious communities worldwide, where each community almost exclusively perceive themselves to be most righteous and for that, they will attain redemption and ultimate salvation.

In stark contrast to religion, public policy occupies a seemingly secular and mundane realm, strictly confined within the limitations of politics and the constraints of bureaucratic wrangling. Public policy is

also perceived almost universally to be a rational process where the costs and benefits of its outcome are gauged against stringent measures such as effectiveness, efficiency, equity and fairness. Moreover, public policy frequently succumbs to the process of assessment, evaluation and constant revision, making it difficult to render a long term analysis due to the rather reflexive nature of state policies. In that sense, public policy is highly specific and perpetually dynamic, whereas religion is typically perceived to be universal, immutable and unchanging; hence the importance of "tradition" among almost all religious communities in the world.

Thinking about religion and public policy therefore requires an analytical framework that could accommodate the method of 'zooming in' and 'zooming out'. By zooming in, one must be able to delve into the finer details of public policy making, equipped with a comprehensive analysis on its costs, feasibility, fairness as well as its intended and unintended consequences. It also necessitates an inquiry into the formal logic and rationale behind the public policy in question. Zooming out necessitates an ability to analyse public policies within a certain framework or context, which could pave the way for appreciation and compassion toward religion and religious groups in society. In other words, while one must appreciate the grand scheme of things embedded in religious tradition, thought and praxis, it is imperative to think that public policies change every now and then, and that it requires constant reappraisal based on the unremitting changes in any given political system.

The utmost immediate problem relating to the issue of religion and public policy concerns its basic operating logic and underlying assumptions, which almost always advocates for all things secular. The underlying assumption is that secular public policies would supposedly bring about greater good in society, and promote social justice for all, including religious communities. In fact, it is a truism to think that

secular politics and policies necessarily produce fairer, gentler and ethical treatment toward the often precarious religious groups and minorities. However, evidence suggests otherwise. Secularism can be a major part of the problem, and not the solution for a balanced approach to managing religious diversity. The work of Saba Mahmood, for instance, examines Egypt's Orthodox Coptic Christians and Baha'is in the Middle East, and found that secular political systems and the policies they produce often result in increasing religious tension, and even generates inequalities in society.[2] Thus, Mahmood argues that that "modern secular governance has contributed to the exacerbation of religious tensions in postcolonial Egypt, hardening interfaith boundaries and polarizing religious differences".[3]

It may seem intuitive that the discriminatory effects of secular governance are invariably unintended consequences of public policies toward religion or certain religious groups in society. However, for the religious groups falling victims of state regulations and actions—or inactions, for that matter—they could well perceive such public policies as being a threat to their very existence, identity and religiosity. These groups may even perceive such policy framework as a vivid sign of injustice toward the meek, and a symbol of the state's ungodliness. Though it may be far from the truth in some given contexts, such a perception could easily force religious groups to go underground, and instigate rebellion against the state. Alternatively, fringe religious groups may turn to terrorism as a way to confront state repression, secularism and "market fundamentalism".[4]

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[2] For more, see Saba Mahmood, *Religious Difference in the Secular Age: A Minority Report*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015.

[3] Ibid., 1.

[4] The diametrically opposite forces of "religious terrorism" and "market fundamentalism" have been intensely discussed among political scientists following the fine work of Benjamin Barber entitled *Jihad versus McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism are Shaping the World*, Times Books, 1995. The earlier version took the form of an article in *The Atlantic*, published in 1992.

The Muslim rebellion in Southeast Asia is a case in point, where protracted conflicts have occurred in Southern Thailand, Mindanao in the Philippines and Aceh and a few other provinces in Indonesia. As proven in many cases, such rebellions are never easy to quell, as political and policy dialogs are intertwined with theological and religious discourses, which seem inherently irreconcilable, if not contradictory. The success of the Aceh peace accord, which culminated in the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement between the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement in August 2005, was caused partly by the preceding tsunami disaster that reached almost Biblical proportion,[5] forcing the government and the Acehnese Muslim rebels to side with reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation. Aceh now enjoys a special autonomy, which is guaranteed by a national law, that gives the province a much fairer distribution of economic resources from its vast and rich extractive industries than ever before.

1.2 Religious Othering

Another way of examining the problematic relationship between religion and public policy is to draw a fine line between secular governance and religiously neutral policies of the state in managing religious diversity, and promoting pluralism. By so doing, religious groups and communities may not necessarily have to feel disparaged by the implications of the 'dirty' notion of "secularism". As commonly acknowledged and previously alluded to earlier, Southeast Asia is inseparable from religion. The region has been a mixed "salad bowl",

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[5] The December 2004 earthquake and subsequent tsunami washed away around 230,000 people in 14 countries living along the Indian Ocean Rim. Indonesia suffered the highest number of victims with around 120,000 lives and 500,000 people displaced. Most of the Indonesian victims were Acehnese, who lived in the northern tip of the main Sumatra island, which is close by the epicentre of the undersea earthquake.

instead of the previous American ideal notion of "melting pot",[6] for all the existing major world religions, spiritual groups and local belief systems that have flourished in Southeast Asia for many centuries.

Unfortunately, the famed religious diversity, pluralism and multiculturalism of Southeast Asia continue to face the challenges posed by modernity, which brought along with it global tribalism and religious transnationalism, resulting in the widening of gaps in society and the reinforcement of social demarcations between and among religious groups. With the increasing assertion among the believers, sectarianism and communal conflicts appear to be escalating in countries that have traditionally been tolerant toward the ethnic and religious others. Myanmar is a case in point, where Buddhist monks and the ruling military junta have been complicit in the collective violence against the Muslim Rohingyas and their displacement in neighboring Bangladesh and throughout Southeast Asia, making them "the most persecuted refugees in the world", by Amnesty International standards.[7] Ironically, the Muslim Rohingyas in the Arakan state has a long history that goes back at least six centuries to the time when King Narameikhla (Min Saw Mun) ruled the troubled, war-inflicted western frontiers in the early part of the 15th century. Setting aside history, the plight of the Muslim Rohingyas was due in part to the policy of the ruling military junta that stopped short of conferring citizenship to the Muslim Rohingyas, which rendered them stateless and vulnerable to be persecuted by the state and

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[6] The term "melting pot" was derived from an American play written by Israel Zangwill in the early 20th century, which depicted the complete cultural mixing of ethnic, cultural and religious identities, namely Jewish, into the quintessential American identity. See *The Melting Pot*, New York: American Jewish Book Company, 1921 (copyrights 1909, 1914 by Macmillan).

[7] http://www.amnesty.org.au/refugees/comments/35290/ (accessed on February 11, 2016). According to Amnesty International reports, in 2012, around 140,000 Muslim Rohingyas were internally displaced mostly from the Arakan state, and another 86,000 made the arduous journey to neighbouring countries of the region such as Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, which were initially met with the governments' closed-door policy.

the increasingly assertive Buddhist establishment, while displaced by the poor circumstances of their existence.

Regarding the policy on citizenship, it would be reasonable to think that any state would apply a religiously- or ethnically-neutral policy to ensure a semblance of fairness or non-discriminatory treatment before the eyes of the law. But a state ruled by a military junta, which feeds on Burmese nationalism with the backing of an assertive religious establishment, would be the least expected to apply such a policy. Despite callings by the United Nations for Myanmar to confer full and equal citizenship to the Muslim Rohingyas, the military junta remains unmoved to reverse its stance, insisting that they are "Bengalis" and are "illegal immigrants". The harsh stance by the military junta in effect is quickly eroding the confidence of the international community on the country's sluggish transition to democracy.

Citizenship denotes not only access to welfare, education, employment and health care, but the right to vote, participate in politics and be actively engaged in civil society. Most of all, citizenship provides the subjective collective identity and sense of belonging. In many countries in Southeast Asia, state policies on citizenship, naturalization and immigration are tide to ethnicity and religious identity. It is both a tool and mechanism used by the state to define 'the others'.

With the increasing assertiveness on the part of the various religious establishments and the public's rising intolerance toward the religious others, it is no wonder that many governments in Southeast Asia are finding it difficult to counter the trend of "minoritization" of groups in society. Indonesian and Malaysia, both of which are Muslim majority countries, over the past decade have indicated a steady upsurge in the number cases involving persecution and criminalization of minority groups. The victimized groups in these cases have involved those that are both considered inside and outside the house of Islam. Two of the most persecuted Muslim groups in Indonesia and Malaysia are the

Ahmadis and Shias, wherein both teachings have been perceived largely as "deviant" or "blasphemous".[8] The non-Islamic groups include the Christians, Sikhs, Baha'is, Taos, Jehovah's Witness, and others.

Many of such minoritized religious groups have had their fair share of having their houses of worship burned to the ground or destroyed and had their leaders and congregation members intimidated or incarcerated for blasphemy and deviating from the established religious orthodoxy espoused by the government and the supposed majority. In many cases, these religious groups have also been denied access to basic social services due to non-recognition from the state. The role of religious authorities, in this case, the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) and Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (Jakim), also holds significance, as governments often take cues from their '*fatwas*' (legal opinions on religious matters) to make policies pertaining to them, at the expense of the minoritized groups. Without a doubt, this raises the question of how the professed monopoly of Truth by state sponsored religious authorities could negatively affect intra-religious harmony, and not to mention inter-religious relations.

In all these cases, minoritization usually involves the deployment of legal or policy instruments and narrow religious interpretation to curb the development or propagation of their religion and congregation. For instance, in the cases of Ahmadis and Shias in Indonesia, the legal instrument of choice is a draconian law on "the misuse of religion and religious blasphemy",[9] which was ratified by Parliament during the height of the purge of the ungodly Communists that subsequently

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[8] On the case involving the Shias, see Dicky Sofjan, "Minoritization and Criminalization of Shia Islam in Indonesia" in *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Villanova University, Philadelphia, 2016 (forthcoming). The paper was presented in presented in the 32nd American Council on the Study of Islamic Societies (ACSIS) held on April 17-18, 2015. The initial thoughts and ideas for this work were presented in a workshop at the State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, on "Religious Diversity and Cultural Identity", held on November 22, 2013.

[9] See Undang-Undang No.1/PNPS/1965.

dethroned Sukarno, and ultimately installed Suharto's New Order regime. Another source of contention, which has spurred many conflicts in various provinces in Indonesia, relates to an Inter-Ministerial Decree on the Building of Houses of Worship, which was a joint regulation established by the Ministry of Religion and Home Affairs, to essentially promote religious harmony. [10]

From the various problematic cases found in the above mentioned countries, it is evident that Southeast Asia has yet to find a way and consensus to deal with religious freedom and diversity. The diverse history of religion in the region and the pluralistic nature of its society have not provided any real lesson to ensure that the multicultural and multireligious feature of Southeast Asia could be maintained. As Will Kymlicka argues that state-minority relations can no longer be seen as a "domestic concern" of the regional states. [11]

1.3 Organization of Edited Volume

This first of three Book Series focuses on managing religious diversity in Southeast Asia. It highlights the complex reality confronting religion in Southeast Asia in terms of how governments deal with diversity and implement policies related to religious communities and issues. It also covers the way faith-based communities in these countries organize themselves, and operate within the context of a democratizing Southeast Asia. The organization of this book series begins with the work of Bilveer Singh, who highlighted the complexity of religion in a multicultural Singapore. He argues that despite the constant tension and challenges posed by religion, the multi-racial and multi-religious

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[10] See Peraturan Bersama Menteri Agama dan Menteri Dalam Negeri No.9/2006 dan No.8/2006.
[11] Will Kymlicka, "Liberal Multiculturalism: Western Models, Global Trends, and Asian Debates" in Will Kymlicka and Baogang He (editors), *Multiculturalism in Asia*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005: 22.

Singapore insists on a *laissez-faire* approach, as long as it does not undermine the security, stability and longevity of the city-state.

K.S. Nathan examines the ethnic and religious divide in contemporary Malaysia under the dwindling leadership of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and Barisan Nasional (BN), which brings together Malays, Chinese and Indian ethno-linguistic groups. The article discusses some of the sensitive religious issues that have been brewing for some time, which could potentially destabilize the *status quo*, and shift the political configuration against the interests and politics of the *Bumiputeras* ('sons of the soil'). Jeanny Dhewayani's piece looks into the discrepancy between policy and reality in the management of religious diversity in Indonesia. She maintains that Indonesia should remain faithful to its basic ideology and multicultural policies in spite of the onslaught of global political pressures and transnationalism that may pose a serious challenge to the geographically fragmented country.

Atiporn Lorthong takes a deep look at the secular strand in Theravada Buddhism by examining three religious groups in Thailand. She raises the question of how secular Buddhism could positively contribute to social change by not only liberating oneself from "senseless craving and addiction to worldly experience", but also enjoy the fruits of democracy by developing a more capitalistic and competitive society. Another aspect of Buddhist activism is represented by Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai's article on how the monks in Thailand engages in promoting and providing health services to the people. The Phramaha focuses, among other things, on AIDS (Anti Immune Deficiency Syndrome) prevention, which has progressed from epidemic to pandemic levels.

Meanwhile, Maung Maung Yin's article studies the role of religious organizations in the hope to attain an inkling of democracy in Myanmar with civil society as its main engine of political development. In light of

the rise in Buddhist ethno-nationalism, he observes some dynamic interaction between religious organizations and the military regime, which has paved the way, however narrow, to the expansion of the democratic space and aspirations. Nguyen Quang Hung assesses the religious policies of the Communist state of Vietnam since the 1990s. He explores the complex relationship between Buddhism, Confucianism and Communism, while highlighting the increasingly difficult relationship between the Communist state and the actively preaching Christians. Until now, Hung argues, "[T]he government has no theory, no clear strategic concept in its policy on religious affairs."

The work of Eleanor Dionisio analyzes the relationship between electoral politics among Catholics and how it could impact on the impeding barriers within mainstream politics in the Philippines. She points out that religious politics is not always incompatible to democratic pluralism, especially if it could offer a more or less universally accepted vision of what a good society is and is not. That, according to Dionisio, would most likely diminish the highly contentious politico-religious partisanship prevalent in the Philippines. Finally, Robert W. Hefner provides a viewpoint from Washington, D.C. on the constructive engagement of the United States of America toward religion and faith-based communities in general and Muslims in particular. His personal account and assessment suggest that the U.S. engagement in Southeast Asia, or any other regions for that matter, is based more on "global and theoretical models of world order and disorder" as opposed to any particular understanding, stance or bias toward any religion.

With these series of articles, readers will expectedly benefit from the rich insight and varied interpretation of events and assessments on state policies on religion in Southeast Asia. I sincerely hope this first book series will ignite greater interest in the two other upcoming series on Religion, Public Policy and Social Transformation in Southeast Asia.

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Amnesty International: http://amnesty.org

2

RELIGION, MULTICULTURALISM AND MANAGING DIVERSITY IN SINGAPORE

Bilveer Singh

The Government's policy since Independence has been to build a multiracial society in which everyone has full and equal opportunities, and minority communities can live their way of life as well as practice their faith to the maximum extent possible, and not be oppressed or marginalized by the majority. The fundamental and much broader issue underpinning the debate about whether women should be allowed to wear the Muslim headscarf in frontline public service roles is about what sort of society do we want to build in Singapore. It's a question, which we faced right from independence; in fact it's the reason why we became independent.

Lee Hsien Loong
Prime Minister of Singapore

January 25, 2014

There are deep fault lines in our society based on race and religion. The emergence of the Internet and social media such as blogging and Facebook frees some people to say what is really in their hearts.

K. Shanmugam

Singapore Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Law

October 9, 2012 [12]

2.1 Introduction

There are two key factors that have made the issue of religion, multiculturalism and management of diversity particularly important in Singapore in recent years: first, is the rise of ethnic and religious 'nationalism' worldwide, with people becoming increasingly conscious and proud of who they are, regardless of whether they are the majority or minority; and second, due to the sheer diversity of Singapore's demography and where the State adopted somewhat of a *laissez faire* approach to issues of race, religion, language and culture as long as these did not threaten the State and its policies. While these issues affect every State in one way or another, its importance and impact is particularly acute in Singapore due to its unique history, geography, demography and economic interdependence, in turn, which has and can impact upon the very survival of the essentially 'Chinese' island Republic that is located in what has been described as the 'Malay (hence, largely Islamic) Sea'.

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[12] "Racist Posting: Sacked less than 24 hours after offensive remarks", *Today*, October 9, 2012.

2.2 What Drives Policies on Religion and Multiculturalism?

The above statements by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and K. Shanmugam, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister of Law, were made in connection with the sacking of a senior National Trades Union Congress' (the national omnibus trades union in Singapore) official, Amy Cheong, for writing racist and disparaging remarks about the Malays and their wedding rituals in her personal Facebook, and the re-emergence of the *tudung* (Muslim headscarf) issue respectively. Additionally, three other senior politicians, the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister in the Prime Minister's Office (who is also the national labour chief) condemned Amy's remarks as something intolerable in Singapore's political context due to the multiracial and multi-religious character of the society and something the founding fathers have been delicately trying to keep at peace.

Just prior to the 'Amy Cheong Incident', the Singapore Government had to undertake 'damage control' with regard a letter of support given by Archbishop Nicholas Chia, head the Catholic Church in Singapore, to F8, a group that planned to organize an anti-Internal Security Act rally. The F8 is a civic action group, with many former detainees as its members. Following the Archbishop's meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs, Teo Chee Hean, the Archbishop withdrew the letter, arguing that if the letter was used wrongly, it could 'harm our social harmony". Explaining in Parliament his meeting with the Archbishop, Teo Chee Hean argued:

> *When we met, I explained my concerns to Archbishop Chia. The Archbishop stated very clearly that the Catholic Church has always maintained the position that it does not wish to be involved in political activities and that the Church wants to work closely with the Government and does not wish to set itself on a*

> *collision course with the Government. I was greatly reassured by the Archbishop's comments as they were consistent with his record of service throughout his 11-year tenure (…) He has consistently shown that he values religious harmony and appreciates the importance of separating religion from politics in our local context.* [13]

Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister also noted, "Once religious organizations get involved in politics, we then run the danger of having … many religious groups entering into the political arena or political groups seeking to use religious groups to further their own political agenda." [14] This followed an earlier incident in 1987 when 22 Catholics were arrested under the Internal Security Act (ISA), being accused of working with 'Marxists' to bring down the government.

Most recently, the *tudung* issue that is done by Muslim females—about when and whether these are can used—resurfaced in Singapore. The public debate re-emerged in September 2013 after a polytechnic lecturer had asked at a forum on race why nurses were barred from wearing the Muslim headscarf. [15] Prior to this, the *tudung* issue surfaced in the public sphere in 2002 over primary school girls not being allowed to wear the headscarf in school. Even though much progress had been made in this area, with many the State increasingly more relaxed in permitting 'frontline' Muslim females to don the headscarf, yet, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong noted that "this is not the sort of thing where you want to put all your attention on this item and measure the progress of either racial relations or the progress of the Muslim community based on this one item". [16]

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[13] See Amir Hussain, "DPM: Meeting with Archbishop was to help avoid misunderstanding", *Today*, October 16, 2012.
[14] Ibid.
[15] See *Today*, January 26, 2014.
[16] *"Govt's stance on tudung issue evolving, says PM Lee", Today, January 26, 2014.*

In Singapore, domestic and foreign policy is closely intertwined. While the dominance of the People's Action Party (PAP) of national politics since 1959 has enshrined a particular, some say, peculiar, mantra about national politics, a tight management of race and religion has clearly been the norm and accepted 'best practice'. Why is this so? This stems from what has been described as the 'fundamentals' of Singapore that shapes its conduct of domestic and foreign policy.[17] First, is its history of being closely linked with the Malay World, which surrounds her, Malaysia to the north and Indonesia to the south. Historically, Singapore was part of the Johore-Riau-Lingga Empire until Stamford Raffles, an official of the English East India Company, detached the island from the Malay-Muslim Empire for the British Crown.[18] Geography, with its attendant constant border pressure, is another factor that continuously shapes Singapore's politics. Linked to Johore, the southern state of West Malaysia, by two land bridges, it is separated by the Straits of Johor (also known as Tebrau Straits) by a mere one kilometers of waterway.

Of even greater significance is the racial composition of Singapore. As of June 2012, Singapore had a resident population of 3,818,200. Of this, the Chinese constituted 2,832,000 (74.17%), Malays 509,500 (13.34%), Indians 351,000 (9.20) and Others 125,700 (3.29%).[19] Flowing from this, 2010 Census of Population captured the religious profile of Singapore as follows: Buddhism/Taoism (44.2%), Christianity (18.3%), Islam (14.7%), Hinduism (5.1%), No Religion (17%) and Other Religions (0.7%).[20] In short, Singapore is essentially a 'Chinese State' but located in the heart of the Malay World. Also, while the

[17] Bilveer Singh, *Politics and Governance of Singapore: An Introduction*, 2nd Edition, Singapore: McGraw-Hill Education Asia, 2012: 8-19.
[18] See R.O. Winstedt, *A History of Johore, 1365–1895,* Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1992, *M.B.R.A.S. Reprint No.6:* 36.
[19] *Demographics*, Department of Statistics, Singapore: June 2012.
[20] *Census of Population 2010,* Singapore: Department of Statistics, 2010: 13.

majority of the region surrounding Singapore is largely Islamic in character, at the same time, Singapore has a strategic Islamic minority. All these have critical implications for domestic and foreign policy of the Republic.

Additionally, while a successful state from the perspective of economic development, yet, it is devoid of resources and heavily dependent on the outside world for vital resources, capital and markets. Even drinking and industrial water has to be piped from Malaysia. To this can be added difficult political experiences, including the limited war launched by Indonesia against Malaysia and Singapore (*Konfrontasi*) from 1963-1966, Singapore's expulsion from the Malaysian Federation in 1965 and the continuing difficult relations with both the largely Malay neighbours, especially Malaysia. All these have played an important part in shaping its domestic and foreign policy, with the largely dominant Chinese character of Singapore interspersed with the fact that it has to co-exist in a largely Muslim-Islamic world. These factors have had an important impact on Singapore's politics, including its foreign policy towards its immediate neighbours in ASEAN as well as the states extraneous to the region.

2.3 Managing Diversity through Multiculturalism, Tolerance and Understanding

For the purpose of this article, a number of policy elements are worth noting:

1. Race and religion have always been and remains critical factors in shaping Singapore's politics. This is because the political elite is always constrained by the need not to project Singapore as a 'Chinese entity' as well as to parlay pressures from Malay-Islamist nationalists from outside wanting to champion Malay-Islamic rights in Singapore.

2. Due to the delicate racial and religious balance, including three racial riots in Singapore in the past, race and religion will always be factors that need to be managed. This has led to a series of policies including Malay as the National Language, English as the lingua franca (four official languages), freedom to practice one's religions, culture and traditions, preventing ethnic enclaves in housing estates through quotas, bilingual education policies, ethnic presence in public service and national politics (group representation constituencies), minorities as head of state, and fair representation in key political institutions, especially the Cabinet, etc.

3. There are also strict and hard measures to ensure that race and religion are not used to divide the State, including the sedition act, internal security act and maintenance of racial harmony act, including tough policing of the on and off line media. The government's tough measures against Islamist radicals and terrorists also stem from the same concern.

4. The republic's racial and religious dynamics are also mirrored in its foreign policy, including maintaining close ties with its immediate Muslim neighbours, close relations with major powers such as China and India as well as projecting Singapore as a 'Southeast Asian' rather than 'Chinese' state, as demonstrated in establishing official ties with Beijing after Malaysia and Indonesia had done so.

5. Beyond the Southeast Asia, Singapore's foreign policy is sensitive to regions such as the Middle East, as it reflects the need to navigate delicately the Republic's national interests while being sensitive to issues relating to race and religion. Singapore's close but well-managed ties with Israel are a case in point. The same can be said of Singapore's close ties with the U.S., where in

addition to matured political and economic ties, there is also a quasi-alliance relationship in the military-security arena.

6. Singapore's current pre-occupation with the threat posed by Islamist radicals, in a way, brought together issues and challenges stemming from race and religion in the context of domestic, regional and international politics. The discovery of a small but dangerous *Jemaah Islamiyah* cell in Singapore in December 2001 came as a shock, especially the role of nearly 100 Singaporean Muslims being prepared to act as 'foot soldiers' to assist foreign *jihadists* to undertake acts of terrorism against Western, especially American, British, Australian and Israeli targets in the Republic.[21] This brought inter-racial and religious tensions to a new high, not just within Singapore but also harmed somewhat Singapore's ties with its immediate neighbours, especially Indonesia, with Singapore leaders describing Indonesia as a "terrorist nest". While relations have improved, especially following the killing of more than 80 violent terrorists in Indonesia with more than 800 others being imprisoned, it only goes to show, how easy race and religion can easily become issues in public affairs as well as in a state's foreign policy.

2.4 Policy Responses to Racial and Religious Harmony

In view of the sensitive nature of race and religion, its past exploitation by extremists and chauvinists, and its ability to harm intra- and inter-religious harmony as well as complicate ties with neighbouring states, at the very least, its management is highly complex, not linear, requiring constant reinforcements and even adjustments. One constant in this regard has been the repeated reiteration by the political elites of the

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[21] See *White Paper: The Jemaah Islamiyah Arrest and the Threat of Terrorism*, Singapore: Ministry of Home Affairs, 2003.

importance of Singapore's diversity even though more than three-quarters of the population is of Chinese stock, though this does not translate into a religious category or majority.

The official sanction and commitment to multiracialism was best manifested by the speech by President Yusuf Ishak on December 13, 1956 during the Opening of Singapore's First Parliament. He said:

> *The best guarantee of our future as a distinct and separate people in Southeast Asia is the creation of a tolerant multiracial society comprising the various indigenous and migrant groups who have come to settle here. It is the Government's declared intention that its policy of four equal and official languages with Malay as a common and national language shall remain. This was valid before and remains valid after Malaysia, for this policy was not arrived at out of expediency. In formulating it, the immutable factors of geography and the hard facts of demography were taken into account. Separation has not rendered invalid the major premise on which this policy was based. Needless to say, the more extreme any community is about one race, one language and one religion, the more likely it is to arouse counter-chauvinism against the other communities to the detriment of all.* [22]

In the immediate post-independence period, Othman Wok, the Minister for Social Affairs stated:

> *Multiracialism has taken firm roots in our Republic, serving as the Government's cornerstone in policies and legislations. It has proved remarkably effective, not only in racial and religious affairs but also in the economic and political spheres, for it is only with such equality that the communities that make up our nation can give off their best. Although the battle for racial*

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[22] See *The Straits Times*, December 14, 1965.

> *equality in Singapore has been won, it does not mean that we can*
> *afford to sit back and relax. It is our duty to be ever vigilant and*
> *to sustain and consolidate the good work we have built through*
> *united efforts, so that we can be a living testimony that a*
> *multiracial society can work without having one sector of the*
> *population imposing its will on the rest.* [23]

Since then, the Singapore's political leaders' commitment and reiteration of the importance of multiracialism has been something that has been consistently restated, as was indicated above in the speeches of K. Shanmugam and Teo Chee Hean. Since 1959 and especially since 1965, generations of Singaporeans have been imbued with 'accommodation-oriented' messages and narratives, best evident from the National Anthem and the National Pledge.

The approach adopted was to encourage and promote exclusivity, not exclusivity, notwithstanding the manifold challenges that confronted the highly fault-lined Republic. This was best evident in the adoption of a pragmatic approach to nation building, through the strategy of accommodation and not domination or assimilation. In view of this approach, the basic element of the national political ideology was to accept different cultural communities but as equal in status. It was to celebrate diversity and pluralism as positive forces. It defined nationhood in terms of accommodating different racial, religious, cultural and linguistic groups. It rejected monoculturalism as an option and applied this approach on a consistent basis. In this connection, Singapore's multicultural model adopted the concept of 'unity in diversity' with the aim of creating a 'Singaporean Singapore' where Singapore = Chinese + Malays + Indians + Others (CMIO).

The crux of Singapore's approach can be understood through the '4Ms' policy, namely, (a) Multiracialism, (b) Multilingualism, (c)

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[23] See *The Straits Times*, March 3, 1966.

Multiculturalism and (d) Multireligiosity. The stress on multiracialism was in part aimed at avoiding a Third China label, to promote racial tolerance, to promote the adoption of non-discrimination in national policies and to promote meritocracy. The policy of multilingualism was achieved through the adoption of four official languages, namely, English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil, the adoption of Malay as the National Language, the promotion of a bilingual education policy and the adoption of English as the administrative and working language of the Republic. The policy of multiculturalism permitted each group to promote its own culture, values and traditions as long as these did not threaten others or the State. Finally, the policy of multi-religiousity permitted each and every citizen to practice its own religion without discrimination, as long as it did not threaten others or the State. Most importantly, Singapore also enforced a strict separation of the 'Church and State'.

Singapore's approach to multiculturalism, including in the domain of religion, is best evident in the various policy arenas, especially political, social-cultural, economic, security and psychological.

Political

- Effective government that is seen to be favouring all citizens and where the populace benefits from government's policies.
- Politics, e.g. Group Representative Constituency Scheme that ensures representation of all ethnic and religious groups in parliament.
- Heads of State (Yusuf Ishak, Benjamin Sheares, Devan Nair) ensuring that key political positions are represented by all ethnic groups.
- Presidential Council for Minority Rights to ensure that minorities are not discriminated in an essentially Chinese majority State.

- Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act to pre-empt and prevent potential inter and intra-religious conflicts as well as issues between the State and various religious groups.
- Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles to build and reinforce inter-racial, inter-religious and inter-faith harmony.

Social-Cultural

- An education system that is fair to all and a source of social and economic mobility.
- Language policies that promote English (for economic purposes) and bilingualism to ensure the survival and entrenchment of 'mother tongues'.
- Religious freedoms that allow each group to practice their faith but without spurring conflicts, be it with the State or among each other.
- Mass/Grassroots organizations to promote interactions of all communities.
- Ethnic self-help groups that are backed by the State to promote the interests of various communities while addressing special issues and problems peculiar to a particular ethnic or religious group.
- Mass media that does not promote inter-racial or religious conflicts.
- Public housing that ensures harmonious living without developing ethnic or religious enclaves.
- National campaigns to promote values that the State believes will promote national unity and resilience.

Economic

- Promote and share economic growth and prosperity among its populace.

Security

- Physical security so that no citizen feels threatens or intimidated, in turn, emerging as a State-provided public good.
- National defence to promote national security and interests within which citizens feel safe and protected.
- National Service to promote national security and interactions among various communities.
- Internal Security Act to deter and if that fails, to act against individuals and groups that are deem to be a threat to national security, especially by mobilizing ethnic and religious issues, especially hatred towards other groups.

Psychological

- Building of a National 'heartware' as part of nation building.

2.5 Challenges

Even though Singapore has not experienced any major inter-racial or inter-religious conflicts or upheavals since 1965, this does not mean that the Republic is devoid of challenges and problems. There remain issues and challenges that have called into question the Government's approach to multiculturalism, especially when some groups, minorities in particular, feel that they are inadvertently discriminated against, especially with the Chinese majority being advantaged. Some of the issues include:

a. Discrimination in implementation of National Service for Singapore Malays where Malays in the past were not called up for National Service and if they were, not given key sensitive positions and higher ranks. Thus far, there has only been one Brigadier-General from the Indian Muslim community even

      though many Chinese and Indians have held key positions, with the last Chief of Army being a Sikh Major General.

b.   There has also been a tendency to profile Singapore Malays as being disloyal due to the State, mainly due to their religion.

c.   The apparent adoption of pro-ethnic Chinese policies in terms of Speak Mandarin Campaign, promotion of Confucianism, China-first Policy, allowing the establishment of Chinese Special Schools (called the SAP Schools) but denied to the Malays and Indians, and a 'open door policy with regard to migration of ethnic Chinese from abroad in the name of increasing Singapore's population but with a need to maintain the 'ethnic balance'.

In view of these policies, a Singapore social-political watcher, Carl A. Trocki noted:

> *As an excuse for the paternalistic management of society, the multiracial agenda justified the government's structuring of education, housing and the new identity to which all Singaporeans were expected to subscribe. At the same time, any attempts by members of a specific cultural community to gain consideration for themselves have been treated as expressions of chauvinism by the government. The possibility of racial violence or outside intervention, should the government's brand of multiracialism fail, was presented as a constant threat to Singapore's "survival" and thus became an unchallengeable article of faith.* [24]

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[24] Carl A. Trocki, *Singapore: Wealth, Power and the Culture of Control*, London: Routledge, 2006: 140-41.

2.6 Conclusion

Clearly, Singapore, like many other societies, exudes the manifold challenges of a highly plural, multiracial and multi-religious society. Unlike many modern, 21st century societies and states, Singapore is still, nevertheless, in a situation of a 'strong State' and which is in a position to impose its will, at times, its wrath, on its citizens, majority or minority. This has made so far, issues of racial and religious diversity and pluralism, issues of interfacing State's political, economic, educational, housing and other policies, more manageable despite the continued prevalence of problems and challenges (such as the *tudung* issue).

Also, the majority-minority divide is real and pervasive but this is yet to break out into any major serious problems thus far. The politics of domination and minoritization is not that serious though not non-existence. This is not to say that the Singapore Model is totally successful, will be successful and can be replicated elsewhere. It is also undergoing changes, both real and in nuances, and this is the key area to watch as far as future problems of Singapore are concerned, as these are likely to emanate more from within than within, and will stem more from how the Republic manages its ethnic and religious diversity.

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MANAGING ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN MALAYSIA

Implications for Public Policy and Social Transformation

K.S. Nathan

3.1 Introduction: Religion, Politics and Society in Post-9/11 Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia has been, is and will continue to be a venue for the confluence of world cultures and civilizations given its geopolitical location and strategic importance. The Indian presence in Southeast Asia can be traced back to at least the 5th century A.D., leaving Hindu-Buddhist cultural footprints in many parts of the region including Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Cambodia. During the era of European colonial expansion in Southeast Asia since the 16th century, the link between religion, politics, power, trade and commerce was best encapsulated in the dictum "God, Glory and Gold". Thus, imperial expansion—albeit cultural, political or economic—did invoke either directly or indirectly the use of religion to justify political and territorial conquest and demonstrate the benefits of civilization that can be enjoyed by hitherto primitive or uncivilized tribes. Since the Protestant Reformation in Europe in the early 16th century, the attempt to decouple

religion from politics i.e. to separate Church from State was strongly influenced by the desire to contain the corruptive influence on State and Society resulting from the misuse or abuse of religion.

The rise of the nation-state at the end of the religious wars in Europe was marked by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, and since then the dawn of the era of the national church or the nationalization of religion was no longer reversible. Nationalism also boosted the trend towards secularism with the aim of limiting the role of religion in the public sphere. The Westphalian State with its attributes of sovereignty, territoriality, and municipality also signalled the rise of rationalism with its roots in the European renaissance. The post-colonial leadership in Southeast Asia has essentially attempted to cope with often irrepressible religious impulses by grafting religious ideology onto the Westphalian-oriented but newly independent Nation-State.

Indonesia attempted to moderate religion in politics by creating the Pancasila state,[25] which emphasizes adherence to universalist principles of democracy and social justice. The Malaysian state, originally Malaya at independence in 1957, given its Muslim credentials, dealt with the issue by safeguarding in the Federal Constitution the role of Islam as the Official Religion of the country. However, with the entry of the largely Christian states of Sabah and Sarawak into the Malaysian Federation in 1963, the Federal Government has been increasingly challenged to manage this multi-cultural and multi-religious framework without compromising the predominant role of Islam in the country.

Major global transformations such as the end of the Cold War (1947-1991) and the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States (9/11), do impact on the role of religion in politics and society in the domestic, regional and international dimensions. If 9/11 was the result

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[25] Pancasila (Five Main Principles) is Indonesia's state ideology and regarded to be the glue of the nation. The main principles, considered by many to be Indonesia's "civil religion", comprise the belief in the oneness of God, humanity, unity, democracy by consensus and social justice (Editor).

of Muslim terrorism, the threat that it posed to the survival and power of the secular state had to be addressed by equally powerful global forces determined to crush the rise of theocracy in domestic and world politics. The secular nation-state, evidently threatened by Islamic revivalism since the 1979 Khomeini Revolution in Iran, found the needed pretext and opportunity to mount the anti-terrorist campaign while also failing to convince the Muslim World that the U.S.-led Global War on terror was not an anti-Muslim crusade. Indeed, the fight against Islamic terrorism was also a battle against transnational forces whose penetration into the physical, economic, social and psychological spheres of the nation-state has now been considerably accelerated by globalization.

The rise of the Internet furnished an additional tool to transnational forces disgruntled with the status quo, and who were ready to challenge if not undermine the very foundations of the territorial nation-state anchored in the Westphalian notion of preserving national security. Who then are the stakeholders in this new enterprise spawned by globalization? Are they only internal to the nation-state or are they external to it or transnational in nature? What options then are available to the territorial state challenged or threatened by transnational forces such as political Islam? This paper will therefore focus on how the interface of religion and politics is being managed by a political leadership that is predominantly Muslim but is in charge of a multicultural and multireligious state called "Malaysia". It will highlight how and why, in recent times, religion is increasingly becoming a source of public policy and social transformation in the country.

3.2 Multi-Religious and Multi-Cultural Context

Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy practicing parliamentary democracy since its independence in 1957. The Federal Constitution clearly has provisions for freedom of religion, although Islam is

recognized as the Official Religion of this multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious country of 29 million people. There was no problem in inter-religious harmony and mutual coexistence until more recent times—perhaps the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran could be used as a benchmark that divides the era of peaceful coexistence, harmony and the era after 1979 when Malaysia was also experiencing Islamic religious revival and a trend toward greater conservatism and lesser tolerance of non-Islamic faiths in the country.

In more recent times, especially after 9/11, domestic politics within this multi-racial society seems to be revealing a pattern of increased Malay/Muslim dominance and need to assert a specific Muslim identity through the Constitution, Law, administrative policies, social practices and behaviour in public, and lesser official tolerance of debate and dissent over the constitutional rights of freedom of religion for Malaysia's non-Muslims, who constitute nearly 40% of the total population.

Currently, there is a case before the courts regarding the right of a Malaysian citizen whose Identity Card bears a Muslim name although she has been a practicing Christian and would like her Muslim name to be deleted and replaced with her Christian name of "Lina Joy". How the High Court will finally decide can determine the extent to which religious freedom has been upheld or eroded—more correctly, the extent to which politics have entered the religious, legal, and private spheres of Malaysian society. Additionally, the issue of burial according to Muslim rites of those who have been presumed to have converted to Islam has also entered the public debate as the non-Muslim relatives of the deceased person have claimed ignorance of such conversion and insisted on burying the dead relative according to their own religious rites.

Fundamentalist Islam received a boost after the Iranian Revolution, taking shape in terms of the Dakwah Movement, which also received inspiration from neighbouring Indonesia's Darul Arqam. The main force

of this movement was led by none other than Anwar Ibrahim, formerly head of the Malaysian Muslim Youth Movement or ABIM, prior to his joining the Mahathir Government as a Cabinet Minister in the early 1980s. In short, fundamentalist Islam was being politically co-opted to create and strengthen Malay-Muslim identity, and to showcase Malaysia as an Islamic country that is moderate, and also practices democratic politics. Nevertheless, the prioritization of Islam in the public sphere has also propelled conservative *ulama* (Muslim religious scholar-teachers) and advocates of Wahabi austerity into the public domain, thereby marginalizing the more moderate elements that subscribe to the notion and value of religious pluralism in a multicultural context. In the process, radical Islam also found shelter in a more permissive environment for the propagation of Islam, leading ultimately to organized expressions in the form of: (a) Al-Ma'unah that carried out an arms heist in 2000 by overrunning several army posts in the state of Perak,[26] (b) Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM, or Malaysian Freedom Fighters Movement), inspired and trained in Afghanistan, with the aim of establishing a Pan-Islamic Nation (Jemaah Islamiyah or JI) comprising Malaysia, Philippines, Brunei, Indonesia, southern Thailand and southern Philippines.

In the area of political contestation between the dominant ruling Malay-Muslim party, United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and the opposition Malay-Muslim Islamist party, Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS), the politics of religion and ethnic identity are

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[26] The group's full name was Persaudaraan Ilmu Dalam Al-Ma'unah (Brotherhood of Al-Ma'unah Inner Power) or Al-Ma'unah in short. Al-Ma'unah, according to its website, was an organization "involved in the teaching of martial arts particularly the development of one's inner power and the practice of Islamic traditional medicine". The term "*Ma'unah*" supposedly means something extraordinary that happens to an ordinary Muslim individual (paranormal). For details on Al-Ma'unah and other Islamic revivalist groups in Malaysia, see Yukiko Ohashi, "The many Faces of Islam in Malaysia", *Asia Times*, July 9, 2004: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/FG09Ae04.html.

increasingly occupying centre stage. This narrowing of the political spectrum invariably polarizes almost every issue, and forces interpretation and evaluation not in terms of its own merits, but in terms of zero-sum games—an apparent loss for the Malays/Muslims is seen as a gain for the non-Muslims, and vice versa. In this sense, religion is becoming a substitute for politics. And because of the inseparability of race and religion for the dominant Malay majority, even economic issues relating to the distribution of the pie among the various communities are easily politicized.

The recent and on-going debate over whether the New Economic Policy (NEP), affording special privileges in government, education and the economy for the Malays and other indigenous groups, has been over-achieved, and therefore should be discontinued—has sparked off a heated debate along ethnic lines. The government claims that the figure of 45% Malay equity ownership stated in the Report released by the Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS) of the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (ASLI) was incorrect, and that the official figure of *Bumiputera* ownership of wealth was 18.9%.[27] Evidently, the Government's insistence on the accuracy of the lower figure by including the underdeveloped natives/indigenous peoples of Sabah and Sarawak under the *Bumiputera* category enables it to continue racially discriminatory policies in favour of the Malay-Muslim majority.

The whole issue of whether or not Malaysia is an Islamic State was triggered by former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in September 2001 when he declared that Malaysia was an "Islamic Country". He made a difference between "Islamic State" in which the *syariah* was the primary source of law (as in Iran and Saudi Arabia), and an "Islamic

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[27] "Retraction of Asli Report – victory of unreason over reason and major setback for National Mission to create 'first class mentality' raising fundamental question whether Vision 2020 to be a fully developed nation is condemned to failure". Media Statement by Lim Kt Siang, leader of the opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP). See http://www.limkitsiang.com/archive /2006/oct06/lks4071.htm (accessed on October 11, 2006).

Country" in which *Syariah* and the Common Law could coexist given the status of Islam as the official religion of the country according to the Constitution. [28] The significance of the declaration, largely due to pressure from Islamist PAS, was that it set a major and virtually irreversible benchmark for measuring Malaysia's progress toward full Islamization. A political, legal, and social mandate seems to have been provided to subsume all discussions and debates within an Islamic framework. It has also strengthened the intrusive role of the religious or moral police who have empowered themselves under *Syariah* to enter hotel rooms, bars, nightclubs, and other placers of public entertainment to ensure that they refrained from "un-Islamic" activities.

In the external sphere, the trend of political Islam in Malaysia could be discerned by Malay-Muslim reactions to U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, especially regarding Palestine, Iraq, and Iran. The Muslims in Malaysia share the sense of political disempowerment with other Muslims outside Malaysia vis-à-vis American power, and U.S. global power presence. This international disempowerment of the Muslim world as a whole is internalized and translated into the politics of Malay-Muslim identity and empowerment *within* Malaysia. In this sense, religion has become a substitute for politics. What is more, U.S. president George W. Bush himself unwittingly declared the war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq as a "crusade", thus invoking historical memories of the Crusades by Christian European Kings to regain control of the Holy Land (Palestine) from the Muslims during the Medieval era (11-13th centuries).

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[28] "*Syariah*", "*Syari'ah*" *or* "*Sharia*", an Arabic term, has been mostly defined as Islamic Law, although the Islamic technical word denotes wider applications in politics, economics, trade, social interaction, international relations, including religious observances such as fasting, personal ethics, intercourse, etc. The *Syariah* is largely derived from the *Quran* and *hadits* (Prophetic tradition of Muhammad)(Editor).

3.3 Religion and Race in Federal Constitution

The first factor informing and influencing public policy is the Malaysian Constitution, which recognizes ethnic and religious diversity but puts Islam in a special position. Article 3(1) states that "Islam is the religion of the Federation; but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation". However, in order to fully comprehend the growing influence of religion as a source of public policy, Article 3(1) has to be read together with Article 11(1): "Every person has the right to profess and practice his religion and, subject to Clause (4), to propagate it", and Article 11 (4): "State law and in respect of the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Labuan, federal law may control or restrict the propagation of any religious doctrine or belief among persons professing the religion of Islam", and Article 160, which defines a Malay person as a Malaysian citizen born to a Malaysian citizen who professes to be a Muslim, habitually speaks the Malay language, adheres to Malay customs, and is domiciled in Malaysia or Singapore.

As a result, Malay citizens who convert out of Islam are no longer considered Malay under the law. Hence, the *Bumiputera* (literally, 'Sons of the Soil') privileges afforded to Malays under Article 153 of the Constitution, the NEP, etc. are forfeit for such converts. Likewise, a non-Malay Malaysian who converts to Islam can lay claim to *Bumiputera* privileges, provided he meets the other conditions. If we add to this regime for the determination and protection of Malay race, identity and religion the effect of Article153, we acquire a fuller picture that race, religion, identity politics and public policy are all interwoven into a clearly identifiable fabric of promoting and sustaining Malay hegemony in multi-racial Malaysia. Article 153(1) states: "It shall be the responsibility of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to safeguard the special position of the Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and

Sarawak and the legitimate interests of other communities in accordance with the provisions of this Article."

3.4 The Challenge of Religious Pluralism

The multi-ethnic, multicultural and multireligious character of Malaysian society invariably requires "strategic management' as the most viable option of governance to ensure peace, harmony, stability and progress. With a changing demography, growing industrialization, trade, commerce and investment as well as rising political diversity, the Barisan Nasional (National Front Coalition) government led essentially by UMNO has found the task of governance much more difficult and complex compared to the era before the formation of Malaysia (1957-1963). The addition of Sabah and Sarawak meant that Malays in Peninsular Malaysia could no longer make exclusive claim to *Bumiputera* status.

The inclusion into the enlarged Federation of Malaysia of ethnic Sabahans and Sarawakians has obliged the BN Government in Kuala Lumpur to recognize that there are Muslim *Bumiputeras* as well as non-Muslim *Bumiputeras*. The more manageable arithmetic of dealing with Malays, Chinese and Indians in Peninsular Malaysia (Malaya) has now spawned a more complex ethno-religious mosaic in which Christians in East Malaysia account for a sizable portion of the 10% of the Malaysian population that adhere to Christianity. Thus, the seizure of Malay bibles by Muslim authorities attacks the core of Christian belief as felt by Christians in Sabah and Sarawak. East Malaysians claim a special status in terms of their entry into the Malaysian Federation in 1963, and do not wish to be treated like the other states of the Malayan Federation as it existed on gaining independence in 1957.

The country as a whole has made great progress in industrialization, economic growth, development of social, intellectual and technological infrastructure as well as poverty eradication. Until recently when

Islamization was on the rise, the strategic management of this ethnic and cultural diversity was taken as a given in effecting social transformation in Malaysia, from an agrarian society in the 1950s and 60s to a fast-developing industrialized society in the 1990s and also moving towards developed country status by 2020. In the earlier era, the issues confronting the government were related to inter-ethnic relations as evidenced by the system breakdown marked by the May 13,1969 racial riots precipitated by the results of General Elections in which the Alliance Party—comprising three race-based parties, UMNO, Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC)—fared poorly in some states. However, the situation seemed to have stabilized for nearly 40 years when Malaysia generally experienced stability and growth. However, it took another General Election, this time in 2008 to point out where the BN Government might have become too complacent, or according to the non-Malays, rather too insensitive to their rights and interests as Malaysians.

The subsequent loss of a two-thirds majority in Parliament could well have inaugurated a new phase in Malaysia's political, social and economic transformation. The UMNO-led government has found it increasingly necessary to use more of the religious card besides the racial card in shoring up Malay support for the ruling party And keeping the other Malay-Islamic party, PAS at bay. PAS' avowed declaration to create an Islamic State if it came to power under the post-2008 political framework of Pakatan Rakyat (People's Alliance)—comprising three major opposition parties: Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) or People's Justice Party, Democratic Action Party (DAP) and PAS—had put additional pressure on UMNO in maintaining its role as the custodian of Malay rights and privileges. In its eagerness to win the Malay heart and mind, UMNO seemed to be progressively relying on religion to maintain itself in power, because a Malay can only truly be Malay if he is also a Muslim.

Hence, public policy toward religion is clearly influenced by this convergence of what may be called inseparable identities engulfed in a singular identity, which is constitutionally defined and must be promoted by public policy geared toward Malay upward mobility and empowerment.[29] The evolution of the *Bumiputera* policy under the country's second premier, Tun Abdul Razak since 1970 was but a natural corollary of constitutional provisions affording special treatment for Malays especially in the public sector and in the economy under the New Economic Policy (NEP, 1970-1990). Although certain NEP targets may have been achieved or even over-achieved—for instance in the public sector, more than 95% of the employees are *Bumiputera*, essentially Malays by race—, the BN government has found it politically difficult to reverse this momentum in favour of reducing official discrimination against non-Malays.

As rapid industrialization and economic growth proceeded apace especially under the Mahathir era (1982-2003), interethnic socioeconomic differences also increased. Today, intraethnic income inequalities have widened for all races with more marked differences visible among the Indian community. Rising intra-religious differences in the Muslim community are becoming more evident and obliging the UMNO-led government to declare that only Sunni Islam may be legitimately professed in Malaysia while all other teachings such as Shia, Sufism and others are banned. Thus, the issue of managing religious diversity in Malaysia as part and parcel of its social transformation agenda imports as well the management of intrareligious diversity especially in Malaysian Islam.

In this present era of ever-expanding globalization, the struggle for power domestically and internationally in the realist sense is no longer

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[29] For a fuller account of the evolution of public policy incorporating ethnicity and religion in Malaysia, see Gordon P. Means, "Public Policy Toward Religion in Malaysia", *Pacific Affairs*, 51(3) Autumn 1978: 384-385.

the monopoly of the State. There are other stakeholders whose roles and influence are being defined by a new domestic and international environment increasingly marked by diversity, pluralism, regionalism, inter-regionalism in virtually all dimensions covering broadly the ideological, political, economic, cultural, social, ethnic and religious spheres of human activity. The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) revolution has created and expanded new spaces for communication especially via the Internet, which in turn has spawned a creature called "social media". Official media, both print and electronic, is obliged to compete with social media via the blogosphere, which has become a source of empowerment for civil society and marginalized groups. Indeed, the rise and expansion of new stakeholders such as national and international NGOs was well as militant and terrorist organizations in the post-Cold War and post-9/11 eras is challenging the power and supremacy of the state as the sole representative and communicator representing the interests of its citizenry in domestic and international affairs. In this context, religion has become an even more contested site than before especially when major power transformations occur at the global level and impacting in the process regional and domestic power configurations as well.

In Malaysia, the post-Cold War era of globalization has been marked by the rising role of religion in politics, economy and society. Islamic religious revivalism triggered reactions and responses in the other major religious groups including Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. The rise of this new religious fundamentalism in all religions is anxious to preserve their sovereignty and protect their faithful from conversions. While the Malaysian state has either openly or discreetly encouraged and condoned conversion of non-Muslims to the Islamic faith, it has acted strongly against any attempts or reported attempts to convert Malay/Muslims to Christianity given that both religions stem from the

same Abrahamic tradition, although each would claim that it has the "truth".

The issue of conversions out of Islam and into Islam is a sensitive one in Malaysia's multireligious mosaic thereby attracting various stakeholders to participate legally and otherwise in the religious discourse. For example, Sisters in Islam is an NGO concerned with the rights and liberties of Muslim women. It champions this struggle for legal reform and social equality for women and promotes human rights and civil liberties, both in Malaysia and worldwide. Another multireligious NGO, the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST), was formed in 1983 to promote interfaith dialogue among all religions. However, the Muslims preferred not to join on the basis that participation in this multi-religious forum would erode the supremacy of Islam, and therefore reduce its status to that of being equal with the other faiths.

In this regard, how the state responds to and manages religious pluralism can impact directly on inter-religious harmony, peace, security and public order. In the post-9/11 era, Malaysia's 5th prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (2003-2009) attempted to deal with the problem of "Islamophobia" by introducing "Islam Hadhari" or "civilizational Islam". Badawi conceptualized Islam Hadhari as a public policy instrument that could be used by the state to moderate the philosophy, practice and development of Malaysian Islam so that Muslims could project a positive image of themselves in the light of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the U.S. His three-fold strategy of Islamic governance:

a. advocates an inclusive framework that recognizes and respects religious tolerance and coexistence in a highly pluralistic society.

b. recognizes secularism to the extent that politics and religion are best kept separate, and

c. promotes socioeconomic progress in the context of modernization and globalization.[30]

Evidently, Badawi's style of managing religious pluralism was clearly non-confrontational and non-combative, in contrast to the manner by which his predecessor handled the fundamentalist/radical challenge from the opposition Islamist party, PAS, which was determined to convert Malaysia into an "Islamic state" with *syariah* as the primary source of law. While recognizing that Islam is the official religion according to the Malaysian Constitution, Badawi was keenly aware that Islamization for the sake of Islamization does not necessarily empower Muslims or project the religion as a peaceful, tolerant and progressive ideology in a multireligious environment. The path of Islamization under the 22-year Mahathir regime, undertaken essentially to contain or pre-empt PAS, had produced certain undesirable consequences such as empowering certain religious bodies and public authorities, whereby town councils and the police acted in ways that intruded upon the privacy, liberties and human rights of individual citizens—contrary to the letter and spirit of the Federal Constitution. The trend of Islamization including the introduction of new restrictions by state governments and local authorities on the building of churches, temples, and the allocation of burial grounds, as well as the demolition of Hindu temples on grounds that they were built without permits, are proving to be particularly worrisome to the non-Muslims who constitute nearly 40% of the population.

Arguably, Badawi's Islam Hadhari project took into account the legal and constitutional safeguards governing religious freedom in

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[30] K.S. Nathan, "Abdullah's Burdens of Victory" in *The Straits Times*, March 29, 2004: 12.

Malaysia, subject of course to restrictions governing the practice of Islam. Article 11 of the Malaysian Federal Constitution clearly stipulates that every person has the right to profess, practice and propagate his religion. Article 11 guaranteeing freedom of religion in this multireligious country, states clearly that every religious group has the right:

a. to manage its own religious affairs.
b. to establish and maintain institutions for religious or charitable purposes.
c. to acquire and own property and hold and administer it in accordance with law.

Nevertheless, from the perspective of "governance for harmony", this constitutional provision is qualified by Article 11, paragraph 4, which stipulates that state or federal law may "control or restrict the propagation of any religious doctrine or belief among persons professing the religion of Islam".[31] Additionally, Article 11(5) stipulates that freedom to practice one's religion "does not authorize any act contrary to any general law relating to public order, public health or morality".[32]

The restrictions to freedom of religion, as contained in Article 11(3) and (4) are indeed instructive for governance and public policy in Malaysia. There is obviously no absolute freedom of religion in Malaysia. First, the political need to conflate 'Malay' with 'Muslim' ensures that it is forbidden for Malay/Muslims to leave Islam, and second, it is forbidden for members of other faiths to proselytize and convert Muslims—although Muslim missionary (*dakwah)* groups seem to enjoy free reign in converting non-Muslims to the Islamic faith. And third, the government can use its discretion under the Internal Security (ISA) to interpret any act or acts by religious bodies or individuals as

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[31] *Federal Constitution* (as at March 10, 1997). Kuala Lumpur: International Law Book Services, 1997: 19.
[32] Ibid.

threatening public order and security, and can use police powers to detain arrestees without trial for a certain period, i.e. deny them the right of *habeas corpus*. Recent developments in the context of growing Islamization in Malaysia suggest that pro-Islamic groups in government and society have capitalized on this trend to erode the concept and practice of freedom of religion in Malaysia. The restrictions imposed can range from subtle requirements such as meeting the various conditions imposed by Local Authorities regarding the construction of places of worship, demolition of temples, to overt actions taken by the authorities under the pretext of "maintaining public order and security".

In one incident in 2006, about 50 Hindus protested in front of Kuala Lumpur City Hall condemning the demolition of temples by the authorities—a racially charged issue in Muslim-majority Malaysia. They claimed that hundreds of temples had been destroyed in the past 15 years and blamed it on growing Islamization of Malaysia.[33] The demolition of the 150-year-old Hindu temple in Kampong Jawa, Shah Alam, in the state of Selangor on October 30, 2007, just one week before the Hindu festival of Deepavali, was apparently the "last straw that broke the camel's back". On November 25, 2007, about 30,000 Indians assembled in Kuala Lumpur to protest against a spate of temple demolitions and their socioeconomic marginalization, with the intention of presenting a Memorandum to the British High Commission stating that the colonial government had exploited indentured labour from India, and the successor government after independence in 1957 has perpetuated policies of suppression and discrimination resulting in their marginalization.

The police responded to what the government termed as illegal rallies, and dispersed the demonstrators using teargas and chemical-

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[33] "Hindus Protest Against Demolition of Temples". *The Straits Times*, May 26, 2006: 26.

laced water cannons.[34] The subsequent arrest and detention of five of the leaders and advisors of the Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) under the ISA indicated the gnawing gap between government and the people regarding the realities on the ground.[35] Earlier, a Bersih (Coalition for Clean and Fair Elections) rally in Kuala Lumpur drew a crowd of 40,000 people to handover a petition to the Malaysian King (Yang di Pertuan Agong) for reforms to ensure free, fair and clean elections.[36]

Even where conversions by non-Muslims to Islam lack authentic proof, there is a predilection to act in favour of Islam even if such religious intervention has affected the religious sensitivities of non-Muslims—as in Moorthy's case, where burial according to Hindu Rights was disallowed as the dead mountaineer had allegedly converted to Islam. For the Hindus, this case represented substantial proof of state intervention presumably undertaken to protect Islam.[37] All the above developments appeared "to contradict Badawi's *Islam Hadhari* project, which aims to project the humane, progressive, tolerant, and peaceful

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[34] "30,000 Hindraf Protesters Rally in KL Streets", *Malaysiakini*, November 25, 2007: http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/75250, November 25, 2007.

[35] On 15 September 2011, Prime Minister NajibTunRazak announced the repeal of the ISA: *The Star Online*, September 15, 2011.

[36] Bersih Rally 2007: http://en.wikipedia.org/2007_Bersih_rally, November 10, 2007. The term "*bersih*" in Malay conveniently means clean (Editor).

[37] *New Straits Times*, December 30, 2005: 1-2. In this case, M. Moorthy, an army commando died on December 20, 2005 after being paralyzed for over seven years. Following his death, the religious affairs department of the Federal Territory (JAWI) intervened to prevent Moorthy's widow from claiming his body from the hospital mortuary on the grounds that Moorthy had converted to Islam and assumed the name Mohammed Abdullah. The case was referred to the civil court where the High Court judge, Mohd. Raus Sharif decided that since Moorthy had converted to Islam, the matter fell within the jurisdiction of the Syariah Court to be decided according to Muslim law. However, Moorthy's widow claimed her husband never told her of his conversion to Islam, and that he was a practicing Hindu until his death. Her appeal to cremate his body according to Hindu rites was denied, and Moorthy was buried in a Muslim cemetery.

aspects of Islam in a multi-cultural environment"[38]—i.e. measures and policies of good governance for the maintenance of social harmony in the context of diversity. In an apparent admission that Islam Hadhari has made little or no headway after nearly four years since the project's inauguration, Mohamed Jawhar Hassan, the Chairman of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS Malaysia) categorically stated that the concept has suffered from confusion and politicization so that its true meaning and intent as a progressive, uniting and integrating and balancing force in a plural society has been blurred.[39] The form of progressive Islam that Malaysia needs to create, argues Farish Noor, "is one which engages in the realities of the times we live in; is cognizant of the plurality and complexity of the global age; is sensitive to the deep cleavages of power, race, gender and class that continue to divide humanity".[40] However, as Noor admits, this type of progressive Islam in Malaysia, which accords more with Confucian precepts of harmony, is still far from realization.[41]

In the light of these developments, Badawi attempted to re-assert his Islam Hadhari agenda by emphasizing tolerance and mutual respect as the cardinal principles of managing and governing a multi-cultural society. Reacting to disturbances caused by Muslims at a non-Muslim forum in Penang to discuss minority rights vis-à-vis Article 11, Badawi stressed that under the Federal Constitution such a gathering was legal. But he also warned that the umbrella group of 13 NGOs, which organized the forum could be charged under the Sedition Act if they made remarks that offended the feelings of Muslims.[42] The prime

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[38] K.S. Nathan, "Malaysia: The Challenge of Money Politics and Religious Activism" in Daljit Singh and Lorraine C. Salazar (eds.), *Southeast Asian Affairs 2006*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006: 161.
[39] "Make Islam Clear to All", *New Straits Times*, March 22, 2008: 10.
[40] Farish A. Noor, *The Other Malaysia: Writings on Malaysia's Subaltern History*, Kuala Lumpur: Silverfish Books, 2002: 330.
[41] Ibid., 331.
[42] "Minority Forum Legal, says Abdullah". *The Straits Times*, May 18, 2006: 15.

minister's comments, in the context of governance in a multi-religious country, evidently seemed to prioritize the maintenance of public order in favour of one religion, Islam, and the willingness of the government to interpret constitutional provisions in favour of the official religion. This willingness to use legal measures to ensure social peace and multi-religious harmony, led to Badawi's decision to disband the Interfaith Commission that was established in 2005 with the aim of promoting interreligious dialogue. The government "apparently took the view that interreligious harmony was being endangered in a country where Islam is the official religion, and that limiting or regulating pluralism was in the public interest". [43]

3.5 Religion and Public Policy: The "Allah" Controversy

Prior to his retirement from politics, Badawi had to deal with a lingering issue over the use of the term "*Allah*" by Christians, and the publication and circulation of Malay language bibles using this term to refer to God. The *Allah* row erupted in 2007 when the Home Ministry threatened to revoke the permit of a weekly newspaper (*Herald*) by the Catholic Church, prompting the titular Archbishop, Murphy Pakiam to sue the government for violating its Constitutional rights. The Catholic Church initiated proceedings in the High Court in 2008 claiming that it had the constitutional right to use the Arabic term "*Allah*" in the Malay section of its publication. When Badawi left office in March 2009, the matter was still being deliberated by the High Court, thus leaving the issue to be resolved by his successor, Malaysia's 6th Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak.

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[43] K.S. Nathan (ed.), *Religious Pluralism in Democratic Societies: Challenges and Prospects for Southeast Asia, Europe, and the United States in the New Millennium.* Singapore & Kuala Lumpur: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and Malaysian Association for American Studies, 2007: 289.

On December 31, 2009, the High Court in Kuala Lumpur ruled that the *Herald* had the constitutional right to use the Malay word "*Allah*" to refer to God in the Malay section. The presiding judge, Justice Lau Bee Lan, held that Christians have the "constitutional right to use *Allah*" and that the Ministry of Home Affairs is "not empowered" to impose the ban. In delivering her verdict, Justice Lau was relying on Article 3(1) of the Federal Constitution, which states that **"**Islam is the religion of the Federation; but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation". A member of the legal team for the *Herald*, said that the High Court decision was consistent with Article 11 (1) of the Federal Constitution which states that "Every person has the right to profess and practice his religion and, subject to Clause (4), to propagate it".[44] Clause (4) restricts non-Muslims from propagating to or converting Muslims out of their faith: "State law and in respect of the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Labuan, federal law may control or restrict the propagation of any religious doctrine or belief among persons professing the religion of Islam". The Home Ministry applied immediately for a stay of execution of the High Court order, and was granted, pending a decision by the Court of Appeal. Immediately after the December 31, 2009 judgment lifting the government ban on the use of the word "*Allah*", a number of churches were burned in Kuala Lumpur.

Over the past five years following the December 31, 2009 decision of the High Court in Kuala Lumpur that the term "*Allah*" is not exclusive to Muslims, and therefore could be used by Christians as well in any publication or otherwise, the issue has taken on a life of its own to the point where it is now being "securitized" by the state. The position taken by the Malaysian government on the "*Allah*" issue can only be better understood in a political context. While the legal basis for

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[44] *Herald: The Catholic Weekly*, 17(1) January 10, 2010: 9.

denying Christians the right to use "*Allah*" in their Malay language publications might be rather weak, the momentum of public policy toward religion (Islam) since premier Mahathir's 2001 proclamation has been one that has become virtually irreversible, i.e. the trend towards Islamization of public institutions, government, society and the economy ever since.

The Malays have over the past 57 years have become accustomed to enjoying special privileges under the rubric of *Bumiputera* vis-à-vis the other races (referred to as Non-*Bumiputera* by fiat of public policy). They therefore view the "*Allah*" issue in terms of a possible loss of Malay identity and capacity to harness Islam to perpetuate Malay hegemony in multi-ethnic Malaysia. In the event, the Court of Appeal on October 14, 2013 overturned the 2009 High Court decision that the Catholic Church has the right to use the word "*Allah*" in its weekly paper *Herald,* finding that the Home Ministry's ban of the word in the publication did not infringe on the Church's rights. In the judgment read out by Justice Mohamed Apandi Ali who headed a three-man panel (all Muslims), the Court of Appeal ruled that the use of the word "*Allah*" was not an integral part of the faith and practice of Christianity. He also added that the use of "*Allah*" by Christians and Non-Muslims would confuse Muslims on their commitment to their own faith besides also threatening public order and security. [45] The Malaysian Bar Association, in response to the Court of Appeal decision, expressed deep disappointment arguing that:

a. Only in Malaysia is a Christian not allowed to use the word "*Allah*".

b. To suggest that the word "*Allah*" is not part of the Christian faith is tantamount to telling us Christians how we should practice our faith, what words we should or should not use," noting that

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[45] "Lawyers: 'Allah' appeal opens door to oppression of religious minorities", *Malay Mail*, October 14, 2014.

almost 1.6 million Christians in Sabah and Sarawak have been using the word for centuries in their religious practice.

c. Judges are experts on the law and not experts on the Christian faith. Therefore to arrive at such a decision, it must be based on evidence.

d. The Federal Constitution clearly states that Islam is the country's religion but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony, with the country's supreme law also protecting citizens' freedom of religion.

Civil liberties lawyer Syahredzan Johan stressed that "this right to practice and profess religion cannot be restricted on the basis that it may cause confusion, especially when there is no evidential basis before the Court to come to this conclusion". The fear of confusion among the Muslim community should instead be countered by education, saying that Islamic scholars must do their job by explaining the different understanding attached to the word "*Allah*" in different religions. "Confusion is not stamped out by legislating prohibition. Confusion is stamped out by educating your community as to what Allah signifies for you," he said, saying that such a court decision would just make other religious communities feel uncomfortable. [46]

Nevertheless, Muslim activists and NGOs, apparently drawing overt or tacit support from the UMNO-led government, have threatened to hold further demonstrations and protests should Christians continue to insist on the right to use "*Allah*". [47] Among the Muslim NGOs in the coalition are Jalur Tiga Malaysia (JATI), Selangor Perkasa, Klang Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia (ISMA), and Pertubuhan Ikatan Kebajikan dan Dakwah Selangor (IKDAS). Newly-appointed Jabatan Agama Islam Selangor (JAIS) or Selangor Islamic Religious Department Director Ahmad Zaharin Mohd Saad said, in response to the editor of

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[46] *The Malay Mail*, October 14, 2014, op. cit.
[47] "Muslim NGOs stage protest at stadium", *The Star*, January 6, 2014.

Herald, Fr. Lawrence Andrew churches in Selangor will continue to use "*Allah*" in their worship, that letters will be sent to all churches in Selangor asking them to comply with the state ban on non-Muslims from using 35 Arabic words and phrases, including "*Allah*", which are listed under the Selangor Non-Islamic Religions (Control of Propagation Among Muslims) Enactment 1988. [48]

In addition to the ongoing religious tension, Malaysian Islamic authorities, on January 3, 2014, seized more than 300 copies of the Bible from the Bible Society of Malaysia (BSM), over the use of the word "*Allah*" in native translations. BSM was accused of violating the law by using the word "*Allah*" to refer to God in Bahasa and Iban language Bibles. JAIS officers, accompanied by two policemen, raided the Society's offices and carried away 321 copies of the Bible. Additionally, two members of the BSM council were detained and taken to a local police station, but released later on bail. All the above incidents point to the existence of deep-rooted ethno-religious sensitivities of the Muslim majority population even if the issue is being hijacked by a vocal minority. There is an underlying fear that the usage of "*Allah*" is an attempt to convert Malay-Muslims to Christianity. [49] According to Teo, a researcher at the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA) in the National University of Malaysia, the "*Allah*" debacle indicated "how the state operates to maintain its constructed national identity and does so by influencing and attempting to dictate religious and ethnic discourse". [50] Meanwhile, the standoff continues pending the *Herald*'s appeal to the Federal Court.

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[48] "Malay groups to protest at Klang church, threaten 'uprising' over 'Allah', *Malay Mail*, January 2, 2014.

[49] China Daily, "Malaysia Government to Fight Court Verdict on Allah Ban". See: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2010-01/04/content_9257961.htm

[50] Teo Lee Ken, "Law and Pluralism: A Discourse on Modernity, Religion and Ethnicity in Contemporary Malaysia", in Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan & Ong Puay Liu (eds.), *Pluralism in Malaysia and Singapore: Essays on Issues and Challenges*, Bangi, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2012: 47.

Prime Minister Najib, upon assuming office on April 3, 2009, attempted to influence public policy toward religion by formulating an international approach to the management of pluralism, especially ethnic and religious pluralism. He felt that context he has sought to project internationally Malaysia's internal capability in managing multiculturalism, stability and development via the "1 Malaysia" project.[51] In particular, he is keen that Malaysian Islam be projected as moderate, tolerant, progressive and highly adaptive to the changing trends and demands of globalization. At all costs, Najib wishes to refute the international negative image of Muslims as a backward people prone to terrorism and violence to achieve their goals. Malaysia as a Malay-Muslim majority country, he believes, can provide a beacon of hope for those wishing to advance materially and spiritually in this world—marked as it is by tremendous economic, political, cultural, ideological and social pluralism. Externally, his "1 Malaysia" project gives him a platform to market Malaysian foreign policy via the proposal to create "A Global Movement of the Moderates". Najib declared in his address before the United Nations General Assembly on September 28, 2010 that:

> *The real issue is not between Muslims and non-Muslims but between the moderates and extremists of all religions, be it Islam, Christianity or Judaism. Across all religions we have inadvertently allowed the ugly voices of the periphery to drown out the many voices of reason and common sense. I therefore urge us to embark on building a "Global Movement of the Moderates" from all faiths who are committed to work together to combat and marginalize extremists who have held the world hostage with their bigotry and bias.*

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[51] "1 Malaysia" is an ongoing program designed by Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak on September 16, 2010, calling for the cabinet, government agencies, and civil servants to more strongly emphasize ethnic harmony, national unity, and efficient governance.

It is time for moderates of all countries, of all religions to take back the centre, to reclaim the agenda for peace and pragmatism, and to marginalize the extremists ... This "Global Movement of the Moderates" will save us from sinking into the abyss of despair and depravation. This is an opportunity for us to provide the much needed leadership to bring hope and restore dignity for all. With greater will and collective determination, we will build a more peaceful, secure and equitable world. [52]

3.6 Way Forward – Challenges and Prospects

The management of ethnic and religious diversity in a rapidly transforming domestic and international context clearly poses a major challenge to leaderships everywhere in formulating policies and strategies that can harmonize the people's spiritual or religious demands and needs with the secular, material demands. Achieving the right balance can critically determine the success or failure of governance with attendant consequences for social, political and economic stability and security. In managing social transformation in Southeast Asia, the regional states created the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967 in the fervent hope that regional cooperation will produce reciprocal positive impacts on domestic and regional stability, security and development. Indeed, ASEAN was and is viewed as moderate vehicle to manage and promote social transformation in Southeast Asia in ways that could benefit the entire citizenry which today comprises 10 states and nearly 600 million people.

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[52] Cited in James Fallows, "A Global Movement of Moderates: Speech of a Muslim Prime Minister", *The Atlantic*, September 28, 2010: <http://www.theatlantic.com/ international/archive/2010/09/a-global-movement-of-moderates-speech-of-a-muslim-prime-minister/63689/> (accessed on June 5, 2011).

Malaysia is a very strong advocate of ASEAN, and the leadership believes that support for regional cooperation will encourage moderation at all levels, both in the domestic and external spheres. Malaysia would like to be perceived as a moderate Muslim-majority state that is capable of according religion its due importance, while at the same time being capable of managing its rich ethno-cultural and religious diversity within a moderate and inclusive political framework. Nevertheless, the more recent trend toward religious revivalism nationally and globally is imposing a heavier burden and responsibility on the multi-ethnic State to be inclusive in its public policies toward ethnicity and religion in order to ensure its viability, stability, security and progress under the pressure of the multifaceted forces of globalization. More recently, conservative and extreme right Malay Islamic groups such as Perkasa (an NGO promoting Malay supremacy, formed in the aftermath of the 2008 Malaysian general elections and is alleged to be strongly supported by UMNO) have been vociferous in defending what they claim to be Malay rights and religion under Article 153 of the Federal Constitution.

In short, that state of Malaysia is today under increasing pressure to contain exclusivist, conservative and extremist ethno-religious forces and elements inclined towards racial and religious hegemony that would push the country increasingly in the direction of an exclusivist "Malay Malaysia" rather than an inclusivist "Malaysian Malaysia". The Malaysian case is strongly indicative of the numerous challenges and complexities faced by the state as primary actor in an increasingly diverse environment marked by growing competition by civil society, regional and transnational forces also attempting to shape the national and regional narratives in pursuit of convergent as well as divergent interests. In any case, the way forward in managing diversity and social transformation is by adhering to the time-tested principle of moderation and inclusivity that has hitherto been instrumental in gaining recognition

for Malaysia as a respected national, regional and international actor in world affairs.

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MANAGING RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN INDONESIA: POLICY AND REALITY

Jeanny Dhewayani[53]

4.1 Introduction

The nature of Indonesian society is diverse. It is a demographic representation of many ethnicities, languages, values, worldviews, habits, practices, lifestyles and beliefs. As a consequence, this creates a pluralistic society in which conflicts become almost unavoidable. Social change and transformation, which include aspects such as politics, economics, knowledge, ideology and religion, are part of Indonesia's dynamic existence. Out of all these aspects, religion is perceived to be the most important in the transformation process of the nation as well as for each individual citizen. The influence of religion is so strong that it

inadvertently creates a dominant position of the majority over the minority that does not act in accordance with the objective of public policy, which aims to create a multicultural society. Instead, it holds out the spirit of togetherness among communities and the unity of the nation. The social capital, which is supposed to put the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) into practice, therefore cannot function well.[54]

Interreligious relations have become a glaring problem in the last few decades, which has witnessed the country face a number of religious conflicts. These conflicts have occurred despite the passing and implementation of various government regulations (*Peraturan Pemerintah*) and joint ministerial decrees (*Keputusan Bersama Menteri*), which attempt to manage religions, and simultaneously reduce conflicts among religious groups to maintain peaceful coexistence for all its citizens. However, recent spate of religious intolerance may suggest that efforts to create a multicultural society face serious challenges and that more creative approaches are needed compared than what has been done thus far. For instance, local government regulations are highly problematic because they some of them have been constructed based on narrow interpretations that do not always comply with the national government. Instead of curbing intolerance, these regulations have sparked further conflicts, and even segregated local communities. In part, this is due to the inherent geographic condition of the Indonesian archipelago, which is a homeland for hundreds of ethnic groups who speak their own native languages, and nurture the legacy of their worldviews.

After freeing itself from colonial domination, Indonesia was united under a pledge to have one state, one nation and one language to sustain

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[54] *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* is the national motto for the Indonesian state, which is almost equivalent to the U.S.' Latin version of *E Pluribus Unum* (Out of Many, One). The importance attached to the Sanskrit phrase cannot be overstated, as it is carried by the Garuda, which is Indonesia's national symbol (Editor).

its freedom. The founding fathers fully realized that a big challenge awaits them in managing the diversity of the newly established nation, which would in theory be prone to social and cultural conflicts. Referring to Geertz, Hefner argues that the freedom of Indonesia had nationally created ethno-religious sensitivity as early as it was introduced to 'a valuable prize', a new value that could be taken as their identity. [55] Freedom opens up many alternatives, including separation. Being free from oppression gives a certain sense of ability to manage one's own affairs that, in certain situations, could provide the power for one group to repress the others.

If one were to trace back Indonesian history, there is great amount of evidence to suggest that the country has experienced bad times and good times in overcoming conflicts among groups, especially when one group desired to overcome the others through various means. Such cases, involving social and cultural conflicts based on religious identity, serve as a good example, which often causes unavoidable death tolls. So interreligious relations remains to be an ongoing challenge that should be addressed by both the government and society at large.

4.2 Interreligious Relation in Practice

Interreligious interaction was indeed a common practice for people in Indonesian long before the republic was born. Historically, the big transitions between the dominant religions that took place in the archipelago from the prehistoric religions to the Hindu period, to Buddhism, Islam and then Christianity went quite smoothly, albeit some conflicts along the way. However, it seems that the present conflict is more significant than those in the past to the point that it threatens the unity of the nation. The worst case ever for interreligious relations

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[55] Robert W. Hefner, *Politics of Multiculturalism*, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2001.

occurred in the 1960s, after the communist coup was successfully subdued by the military, which then over powered the civilian government administration. Following that horrific episode, many strategies were put forward to normalize the state situation. One of those strategies was the enactment of a state regulation, which required every Indonesian citizen to have a religion that complies with one of six religions recognized by the state. Since that time, religion came to be a highly sensitive issue, notably when it comes to the understanding of religious rights, because religion-based conflicts do not only pervade in exclusively religious realms, but also others.

For that reason, the government took measures to manage conflict at various scales and that emerging religious problems would primarily be met through the creation of new policies, which may not always be responded positively. Instead of promoting peace, government policies often times increase tension, and even provoke more conflicts among religious communities than if the policies were not enacted. Such a situation is correlated with the democratization process where new policies are enacted to accommodate minority groups in supporting the local government autonomy.[56] Thus, policies could be applied to a certain group, but may well tend to be regarded as oppressive, simply because it came from the government.[57]

In managing religious diversity, the Indonesian government has put forward a concept of 'harmony among religious communities' (*kerukunan antar umat beragama*), which assumes that the diverse religious believers are co-existing harmoniously. It may formally mean the managing of harmonious relations between and among religious believers, and not the religious diversity itself.[58] By so doing, it

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[56] Will Kymlicka and Baogang He (Editors), *Multiculturalism in Asia*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

[57] Robert Bellah, *Habits of the Heart,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

[58] The discourse more often than not distinguishes between *kerukunan antar umat beragama* (harmony among religious communities) and *kerukunan agama*

becomes imperative that the government formulates public policies in the form of decrees and legislations on religious matters. After the fall of the New Order regime in 1998, the discourse on governance became increasingly complicated, as it was influenced by the dynamics of the global constellation. The government, which traditionally holds power by laying down layers of bureaucracy as policy implementers, faced a new challenge: the shift of power perception from hierarchical to cooperational structures. The caretaker was no longer only the government, but also civil society, the market and various networks. Among other things, democratization, decentralization, regional autonomy and transnationalism were the primary impacts of this development.

4.3 Regulation and Legislation

Keeping a harmonious life in a pluralistic society is a grave challenge for the society itself because interreligious relations also affect political issues. The plurality of the Indonesian society is marked by a diverse population comprising various ethnicities, cultures and religious beliefs, enshrined in the national motto of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. On the one hand, such diversity displays cultural richness in Indonesia's civic life. On the other hand, the challenge to manage such diversity is daunting. A specific kind of governance is required to prevent diversity from becoming a serious threat to national unity and the unitary nature of the state. [59]

(harmony of religions), where the latter is often assumed to mean that 'all religions are principally the same' (Editor).

[59] The unitary nature of the Indonesian state (*negara kesatuan*) has for a long time been juxtaposed with the idea of the federal state (*negara federal*), whereby the latter posits on the full autonomy of the provinces spread throughout the geographically fragmented archipelago. With the ongoing decentralization, regional autonomy and direct local elections, the debate between the two have been somewhat tamed with the constant negotiation between the central and local governments (Editor).

Table 1: Population according to areas and religious affiliations[60]

Religion							
Region	Islam	Protestantism	Catholicism	Hinduism	Buddhism	Confucianism	Other
Sumatera	44.111.873	4.622.311	788.017	175.698	707.937	50.815	9.728
Java	130.651.037	3.077.646	1.387.907	182.916	659.611	32.609	27.994
Bali and Nusa Tenggara	5.285.453	1.705.473	2.576.228	3.370.576	36.099	657	81.451
Kalimantan	10.786.584	1.238.961	1.221.321	37.578	268.073	31.467	158.640
Sulawesi	14.051.853	2.762.724	271.385	236.200	29.132	1.113	15.230
Moluccas and Papua	2.289.362	3.157.398	663.051	9.148	2.402	430	6.574
Indonesia	**207.176.162**	**16.528.513**	**6.907.873**	**4.012.116**	**1.703.254**	**117.091**	**299.617**

In the last 30 years, many interreligious conflicts have caused people to believe that Indonesia's seemingly peaceful social life essentially hides a time bomb, hence the reason *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* has been used persistently by the government as a main reference point for managing the country's complex reality of diversity. Meanwhile, Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution are used as the primary source in formulating public policy related to diversity.[61] Besides those two references, there are other two additional references namely Presidential Decree on the Prevention of Abuse and Religious Defamation and the issuance of Law No.1/PNPS/1965 on Abuse Prevention and or Blasphemy. This Act, particular on Article 4, mentions the addition of a new article in the Criminal Code, namely Article 156a. The addition on the article is written as the following:

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[60] Adopted from BPS, Sensus Penduduk 2010. See Agus Indiyanto, 2013. *Agama di Indonesia dalam Angka: Dinamika Demografis Berdasarkan Sensus Penduduk Tahun 2000 dan 2010* [Religion in Indonesia in Figures: The Dynamics of Demography based on Census of 200 and 2010], Yogyakarta: CRCS-UGM, 2013.

[61] See Footnote No.15 (Editor).

> *Were sentenced to five years imprisonment at the longest to whomever that publicly expresses feelings or acts: (a) that in essence is hostility, abuse or desecration to one religion embraced in Indonesia, and (b) with intention for a person not to embrace any religion which rested on Belief in One God.*

In its enactment it was followed by the appearance of two policies in the later years, first the Joint Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of Home Affairs No. 01/BER/mdn-mag/1969. Secondly, it was followed later on by its revised version entitled the Joint Regulation of Religious Minister and Minister of Home Affairs No.9 and No.8/2006. (Peraturan Bersama Menteri Agama dan Menteri Dalam Negeri No.9 dan No. 8/ 2006) on the formation of Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB), an interreligious forum for religious leaders, which is expected to initiate interreligious activities in the local levels for any religious adherents, and the procedure on establishment of worship place.

These two policies generate controversies. First, the formation of the FKUB at the provincial and district/town levels, with its main tasks being to cultivate harmonious relations among religious adherents and giving recommendations for religious building construction, is said to be too elitist and will be unable to play its role effectively since members of the forum are mostly religious figures or leaders that, in general, do not represent all religious adherents. Second, the later policy on the construction of places of worship cannot accommodate the aspirations of religious minority groups and raised controversy and caused ethno-religious conflicts in some places in Indonesia. These conflicts usually started with disputes about building permits that must be obtained from the local government by gaining approval from a certain number of people from the surrounding community who unfortunately are of different religious affiliations. These two cases are examples of problematic policies that are still in use up to the present.

Other challenges concerning the effort to sustain harmonious relations among religious adherents include the big number of religious-based violence that occur in this country. Based on annual 2008-2012 reports written and published by CRCS on religious life in Indonesia, there are more than 50 occurrences of religious-based violence per year. The report also mentions that the two most prominent motives that spark violence are related to disputes over the establishment of places of worship and religious blasphemy. [62]

Table 2: Conflicts and Violence in Religious Life (2009-2011) [63]

Year	No. of Cases	Evidence
2009	54	18 Houses of worship 25 Religion defamation 11 Prosecutions Ahmadiyah adherents
2010	59	39 Houses of worship 20 Religion defamation
Early 2011	22	Religious defamation, including the prosecution of Ahmadiyah adherents in some places and displacement of Shia community in Sampang, Madura.

The case evidence of religious conflicts and violence were quite prominent in number and this is alarming for the interreligious relations among religious adherents and also for social cohesion in general in this country. However, the above examples are not the only ones that are disturbing to many people; there is also a tendency towards religious radicalization in the field of education, especially on religious education. It is thought to be a particular threat towards interreligious harmony, especially to the national integrity. Some research findings surprisingly

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[62] See *Laporan Tahunan Kehidupan Beragama di Indonesia* [Annual Report on Religious Life in Indonesia] *(2009, 2010, 2011)*, Yogyakarta: CRCS-UGM.
[63] Ibid.

show that religious radicalization happens at primary schools. It is found in the way religion is taught by teachers of religion courses (*pelajaran agama*). Therefore the state government and other institutions must carry out major changes in religious education to prevent this kind of radicalization.

The growing phenomenon of radicalism is, some experts have said, related to poverty. Religious based conflicts and violence tend to occur in deprived regions, although this is not always the case. This is due not only to the poor economic conditions of the people in the region but also to limited access to and inadequate facilities for education for both children and adults. However the government seems to give more attention to economic development than to education, while education is actually one way to produce human capital that is expected to become the social capital for a nation. These unfavourable conditions, as a result, create shortage in terms of social capital. As Joseph E. Stiglitz explained, an economy with more "social capital" is more productive, just like an economy with more human or physical capital.[64] This means, consequently, an economy without social capital will tend to be destructive. It is therefore likely that poverty contributes to the establishment of radicalism when there is not enough education.

In the context of existing conflict, violence and radicalism, the existence of multiple religions in a single public space can be problematic for the relations between religious communities and the state or between religious communities themselves. The major source of recent 'religious issues' in general is related to the increasing expressions of religious identity in the public space.[65] However, according to Zainal Abidin Bagir, public analyses on this issue are often

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[64] Joseph E. Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality: How today's divided society endangers our future,* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2013.

[65] See Zainal Abidin Bagir, "Memetakan Masalah dan Advokasi untuk Keragaman Agama" in *Mengelola Keragaman dan Kebebasan Beragama* [Managing Diversity and Religious Freedom] (editors), Zainal Abidin Bagir, Robert W. Hefner and Ihsan Ali-Fauzi, Yogyakarta: CRCS-UGM, 2014.

one-dimensional and regard it merely as a problem of intolerance in the society rather than thinking there is something wrong with the legal structure, which is the responsibility of the state rather than of civil society. Alternatively, there are problems that should not be dealt with by the state in the first place. Rather, it could be tackled by the state by developing a consensus mechanism in society, which nurtures in-group tolerance. Furthermore, this thinking has led to various problems concerning laws and public policies implemented by the government after 1998 such as the national education system, anti-pornography, establishment of houses of worship and Ahmadiyah adherents in Indonesia and others. In terms of policy, those regulations, notably the last one, caused the emergence of local regulations that prohibited the worship and religious activities of some religious adherents.

The question then is: how could the local government and other specific groups respond to such policies? Could the state and its apparatus be relied upon to think more cogently about pluralism and multiculturalism? These questions are pertinent because they have been lingering in the public for so long and do have direct consequences and impact on social integration.

4.4 Response to State Policy on Religious Diversity

The interpretation and practice of state policy regarding the management of diversity in society show discrepancies. For this research responses to state public policy in relation to managing religious diversity were gathered through two Focus Group Discussions in Makassar and Yogyakarta and a workshop in Jakarta. The participants in both the discussions and the workshop were representatives from both private and state institutions who actively participate directly in religious, educational, state administrators and NGOs in their jobs. They are people who presumably give voice to society in general on the legal products generated by the government in controlling the religious life in

this country. Both Makassar and Yogyakarta were chosen because of the character of their people whose social lives are very dynamic, and demographically their populations also represent diversity in terms of religion, ethnicity, tradition, and language. According to the participants, there are several problems that appear to be the results of both the expected and unexpected consequences of public policies and government decrees on religious issues, namely policies that cause multiple-interpretations (*multi tafsir*), and the increasing number of cases of intolerance and nation disintegration.

4.4.1 Multiple Interpretations

Some people believe that the problem with state policy is that it opens to many interpretations. However, others said that this terminology is incorrect, since it does not have any clear reference. This is actually a reaction towards a legal product that cannot meet the needs of the society, especially a policy that is supposed to control the religious affairs of many religions at once. On the other hand, people also points out that there are problems in the implementation of the policy in the field by *caretakers* (*pelaku kebijakan*) at the local level. These situations result, to some extent, from unresolved conflicts in communities or it took a long time for the government to resolve it. People interpreted these situations as the result of negligence (*pembiaran*), since they see that there is a desire from some groups to defend their religion. They argue that the nation state needs to be defended together rather than one's own religion alone.

In relation to such situations, people also observe that the government is not strict enough in dealing with the practice of the policy, which results in multiple interpretations called 'rubber articles' (*pasal karet*) in legislation. People actually agree that the legislation is good; however, the proprietor and the administrators at the local level do not fully understand the best way to implement it. In many cases, when people have problems with a regulation and look for a solution from the

government institution, the usual response would be, "Sorry, we cannot do anything, it is already mandated from above (i.e. central government)." Sadly, such a situation has become rampant in government discourse and the practice of governance in Indonesia, demonstrating both the bureaucracy's ineffectiveness and unresponsiveness. The administrators at the local level are merely compliant to regulations rather than trying to understand the problems that people have with the policies. This situation is in opposition to the governmental theory, [66] which states that the government bureaucracy is assumed to take control over knowledge impartially that is supposed to be used as a basic condition to go beyond social factionalism, populism, and the excess of political parties' agendas.

On the other hand there is an opinion that in maintaining public order," religious problems are very much controlled by laws and not by the logic of nationality politics (*logika politik kebangsaan*), which in turn drive the discourse on diversity. This problem is acknowledged by one officer from a provincial social office who said, "When we accept the legislation law (*ketentuan hukum*), which is hegemonic and dividing, we are actually 'collecting victims' from the social conflicts since we do not have any rights to interfere with the essence of the religious understanding." This situation created anxiety and caused counter-productive actions towards the policy.

4.4.2 Increasing Intolerance and National Disintegration

Some say that there is an increasing level of intolerance in the daily lives of people, which is threatening to social harmony. According to this understanding, the cause of the escalating religious intolerance in most cases is not religious groups the efforts of political or military groups to secure their agendas. The dubious situation unfortunately is often inflated by the media in the way they use verbal and visual

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[66] See Mark Bevir, *Governance: A Very Short Introduction*, England: Oxford University Press, 2012.

messages to deliver ambiguous news to the public that unfortunately can be accessed instantly through hi-tech communication tools. Many people agree that for the media 'bad news is good news'. The evidence of interreligious intolerant behaviour is often found in discourses that are composed of hate speech that can easily arouse emotional reactions from audiences, especially of religious adherents. Therefore the media is also taking part in the delivery of 'hate speech' in the public arena. This becomes a problematic issue, as most people believe that there is no religion that intentionally means to spread hatred. In fact, most believe that religions are always trying to create peaceful lives for their adherents. Based on that understanding they expect that there will be more forums created, like the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (*Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia*), with the function of monitoring and evaluating broadcasted material and that the role in public governance to deal with this issue with be strengthened.

The evidence for greater intolerance is also generated by the rise of issues concerning heresy, which are shown by the increasing popularity of the words '*sesat*' (deviant) and '*menyesatkan*' (heretical) in the public discourse. A participant in the FDG said that many people are not "sincere" (*ikhlas*) in embracing and managing their religion, since they think that their religion is the correct one", If this is so, it leads to discrimination issues when it comes to the questions of who then has the right to decide who is faithful and who is not. Is it the state or the religious institution or someone else? It is even worse if this issue is manipulated to gain power to reach a particular objective outside the common interest of all people and when this kind of issue is brought to the state level.

According to Friedman, it seems that Indonesia still has problems with constructing legal structure, because its legal affairs is still highly

dependent upon the political outlook embraced by the state authority.[67] As an example, many religion-inspired local government regulations (*Peraturan Daerah*) are composed in order to, among other things, sustain the power of the authorities so that the goal of that regulation itself is vague and can be questioned. One Muslim woman who wears *jilbab* (Muslim head cover) shared an interesting experience she had when she wanted to get her ID card from a local office in a district area. The officer asked her, "Are you Muslim or Christian?" The strange question was the result of an instruction in that office saying that every woman who wants to obtain any letter from the office should wear *jilbab*. That kind of issue is perceived as destroying the values of diversity, which are supposed to be maintained in that area. If a local government office can apply such a regulation to any woman visiting their office, it goes without saying that higher levels of the legal structure could enforce anything according to their preference.

The Civil Administration Law, which sets the background for the above-mentioned experience, is thus highly problematic. One of the problems concerns the legal acknowledgement of the marriage status of many people whose religion or belief is something besides the religions recognized by the state. As an example, a deputy officer of the Sub-Agency for Traditional Beliefs (*Sub-Dinas Kelembagaan Kepercayaan*) mentioned that indigenous religious believers had to wait for decades to receive legal status for their marriage before the passing of a 2007 government regulation. Prior to 2007, their statuses were termed "*kumpul kebo*" (cohabitation).[68] For Indonesian society this is a disgraceful status and should be avoided by any individual who does not want to be morally questioned. However, since the implementation of the regulation, indigenous religious believers often still face some

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[67] See Lawrence M. Friedman, *The Legal System: A Social Science Perspective*, New York: Russel Sage Foundations, 1975.
[68] "*Kumpul kebo*" is a derogatory term that literally means 'the coming together of water buffalos' (Editor).

obstacles at the local level because most people continue to look down on them, not only on the term but also because of their beliefs. This explanation is supported by a Wahid Institute researcher, who has been doing research on this issue for at least ten years. Her research finds that there is a process of 'discrimination mainstreaming' and intolerance in state regulations. One indicator is the terminology of "formal" and "non-formal" religions, "recognized" and "not recognized" religions that were used for the first time in the Civil Administration Law in 2006. The existence of those terms as wording in the text came about as the result of a continuous voicing by the administrators during the formation process of that law. For society, the implication of discrimination mainstreaming can never be understated. As an illustration, children whose parents' religion is not acknowledged or not written on their identification card will tend to be discriminated against in terms of education. The indication that follows after the mainstreaming process is the emergence of regulations that discriminate against minorities. A researcher from Wahid Institution clarifies that in regulating the religious affairs in Indonesia, the law is supposed to be a mediator for the minority groups to seek justice. Otherwise it is unfair and reduces their trust of the government. In other words, public policy should be able to act as a social contract for every citizen and bind people together.

4.5 Radicalization and Discrimination in Education

Religious radicalization and discrimination are not supposed to happen in general education. They should create, instead, a way to improve one's perception and behaviour about religion. The problem with adopting the education system or the national curriculum in religious life is very important in education, since directly or indirectly it will influence society in responding to a policy. There are opinions saying that religious radicalization comes about as a result of decisions made by authorities on education policy. It is said that Indonesia has

adopted or borrowed an educational curriculum, which comes from a different cultural context than this nation and that they only seek sophisticated technology. As a result there is a notion that religious education at present is teaching students to be religious experts and not to deliver them with excellent religious morals. People are also aware that moral education for children is not only the responsibility of their religious teachers but also the responsibility of all teachers and the whole school system. In addition, the majority-minority approach that the government takes tends to influence public logic (*logika publik*), since it is a power-democracy term that tends to create its own problem.

In implementing government policy and responding to the case of religious radicalization, Social Welfare officers said that at one point their office had identified schools that were inclined toward radicalization. However, based on their experience, it was easier to persuade public figures than teachers, simply because teachers have vast knowledge about religion, and that they have significant power over their students in class. This kind of power can be stronger when the outline of the instruction for religious education that the teacher received from the Ministry of Education, as stipulated in the main and basic competencies for the subject, suggests intolerance and ignorance toward other religions, instead of prioritizing on spiritual matters. Thus, theological and epistemological collision occur in religious education at schools, which impacts a person's efforts in building his or her religious 'sense of space' that in turn could create intolerant behaviour, which may ultimate lead to religious inspired violence.

Other than radicalization, discrimination also pervades the educational sector. This is due to the policy that schools cannot accommodate pupils or students who come from families of indigenous religious believers since their beliefs are not recognized by the state. As one of the senior representatives from the Ministry of Education said, "Believers in indigenous religions (*penghayat murni*) actually aspires

for religious education that could accommodate their beliefs, because the Legislation of the National Education System only provides support to the state recognized religions. As a result, students with this background are compelled to choose a religion that is provided by the school among, if any, other religions taught." This situation is problematic for such communities from the point of view of the equal education rights that should be provided by the government for all citizens.

4.6 Religion and Social Transformation

There are several divergent opinions on religion and social transformation. According to Emile Durkheim, the course of social transformation of a society generally transitions from traditional to modern. The characteristics of a traditional society are usually collective and mechanic, while modern society is more individualistic and organic than the former. When a society moves toward modernity, along with a tight division of labour and professionalization in the society, members of society get busier with their work, which makes them highly individualistic. Durkheim argues that this shift results in the deterioration of social norms that control society's behaviour, and it causes deviant behaviour or anomie, which in turn urges society to begin to ask about the meaning of life.[69] In a religious society, religion is the source of social norms as well as a standard for any conduct moves away from it.

Meanwhile, Max Weber maintains that the course of social transformation is determined by the needs and desires of that given society, which are constructed by inspirations or ideas. Those ideas or inspirations can sometimes be rational or irrational, and in between these

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[69] Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, The Free Press, 1893 (reprint 1997).

two, religions have to rationalize those ideas and become an agent that transforms the irrational into the rational in words. Weber gives an example of how the rational desire of a society to pursue economic benefits can be matched in religious teaching to determine their destiny, as in the case of the Protestant ethics (Calvinism) and the Spirit of Capitalism.[70]

Karl Marx offered another proposition on social transformation. Marx's model of social transformation goes in the direction of society without class. As a result of the capitalism process, society is divided into two classes: the bourgeois—the capital owners—and the proletariat, the working class. Religion, in this instance, is utilized by the bourgeoisies as 'opium' to pacify the proletariat class with false consciousness. It is used by the bourgeoisies to deter the transformation process by preventing the proletariat from revolting against them.

The global wave also takes part in the course of social transformation in terms of religious life. As Peter Beyer said, there are two possibilities for religion that appear to be under the influence of globalization. First, religion will be marginalized and become an private, individual affair. It will be isolated and lose its social relevance. Second, the globalization process will open up a door to public influence over religion, resulting in what he termed as "performative religion", where expressions are performed publicly to get political, social, cultural and economic support from the public. For that purpose, religion interferes in global culture by performing more frequently for bigger audiences.

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[70] See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958 and *The Sociology of Religion*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1963.

4.7 Religion and Social Transformation in Indonesia

Referring to the existing religious phenomena in Indonesia, the influence of globalization, as indicated by Beyer, seems to have occurred here. The increasing evidence of performative religion in the media as shown by the *dakwahtainment* phenomenon on television indicates that religion and piety should be performed in front of the public to gain broader social, political, and economic power.[71] On the other hand, religiosity, which is not performed publicly, will be marginalized and left behind. The latter usually stresses on inner spirituality and does not have any interest in performing it physically before the public. This type of religiousness usually belongs to the spiritual groups or religious sects that are not legally recognized or accommodated by the government largely due to them being classified as deviant (*sesat*) and heretical (*menyesatkan*).

Based on the above explication and from the Marxian point of view, society is seeking a kind of alternative 'fulfilment', the new opium, on cults and sects when formal religions can no longer accommodate their true spiritual needs. The followers of these religious cults and sects are small in number, localized and cannot be compared to the total number of Indonesian citizens. Hence, the idea of majority-minority features prominently in the religious life of Indonesians. Religions with small numbers of adherents will feel like minorities whose rights are threatened by the majority, and should therefore be protected. Referring to Weber's conclusion that ideas or inspirations will set the course for social transformation, it seems that the logic of majority-minority should be assessed, since part of the Indonesian society considers that such a dichotomy is false and unmistakably unconstitutional.

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[71] For more reading on this issue, see Dicky Sofjan (with Mega Hidayati), *Religion and Television in Indonesia: Ethics Surrounding Dakwahtainment*, Focus No.15, Geneva: Globethics, 2013 (Editor).

The 1945 Constitution never dichotomizes majority and minority. In actual fact, the most worrisome does not concern the problem of majority-minority, but the 'minoritization' that will create marginalization and discrimination. In turn, those processes will result in religious radicalization when a group of religious adherents feel threatened, and claim to defend themselves and their community. Such forms of radicalization, if unchecked, could end up in the form of terrorism, making violence and threats of violence to become the pattern of relationship between and among religious adherents. To prevent such a predicament, the government, through its National Agency for Counter Terrorism (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme), is working together with other elements in society to ward off such forms of radicalism with its "deradicalization" program.

Research findings suggest that one of the primary seeds of radicalization originate from the religious teachers in schools. The emergence of religious radicalism, one way or another, relates to the legal practice and regulations in the present day. Law enforcement, notably during the Suharto's New Order (1966-1998), was harsh in the past when potential conflicts could be resolved fairly swiftly. Nowadays, in the Reformation Era, people tend to discuss and debate on how to overcome conflict for fear of not complying with human rights laws or the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). On the one hand, it is obviously good that policies or government actions are measured against these principles. On the other hand, the sluggish approach to confronting the challenges of religious radicalism could pose a serious challenge to the society at large.

The question then is whether or not religiosity or religiousness in the case of Indonesian society is truly a reflection of the shift in social values, as was suggested by Durkheim, Weber and Marx. Is it thus valid to say that the Indonesian society is moving toward or has reached the level of a true modern society? Have religion and tradition as sources of

social values been substituted with logic and economic rationality that only focus on the development of the market mechanism and transforming religious adherents to merely consumers?

4.8 Problem Formulation

What Weber called "rational legal" norms can be widely applied to all levels of bureaucratic administration.[72] In Indonesia, they have been initiated by the state bureaucracy through the policies and formation of formal forums such as FKUB and the Coordinating Agency for the Monitoring of Traditional Beliefs and Religions (Badan Koordinasi Pengawasan Aliran Kepercayaan Masyarakat dan Keagamaan) in managing religious diversity and multiculturalism. Such a practice indicates heavy involvement in social activities and engagement in the centralization of power at the hands of the Indonesian state. However, according to Anthony Giddens, people are "knowledgeable agents", who do not always take the pressure that they cannot resist for granted as power, which is usually "a focus of active struggle". This means that the powerless are unnecessarily losers.[73] This is the problem with managing religious diversity and multiculturalism in Indonesia, particularly when the state is concomitantly promoting democracy.

Indonesian experts approach the problem in managing religious diversity from different angles. Two appealing concepts were presented by Yudi Latif and Magnis Suseno in a national workshop entitled on "Managing Religious Diversity in Indonesia: Policy and Reality", conducted in January 2014 in Jakarta.[74] Latif is a scholar of Islam and a sociopolitical analyst in Paramadina University, who has done extensive

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[72] See Anthony Giddens, *Sociology: A Brief but Critical Introduction*, London: McMillan, 1986.
[73] Ibid.
[74] The national workshop was part of the Indonesian component within the framework of the nine-country collaborative research program.

research and publication on Pancasila. He believes Pancasila should be the only source for all laws in Indonesia. However, in view of its important position in law, Pancasila has yet to be regarded by many to be a set of public ethics. Since the beginning, divergent interpretations of Pancasila have emerged as people live in a pluralistic society with different communities having their own moral codes. In such a situation, people realize that they live next to 'the others', yet they do not realize that they simultaneously live in one political unit.

The implementation of policies at times encounters many difficulties because government representatives find it hard to position their status as state apparatus. Many state caretakers indicate uncertainty about their tasks, whether it is in the domain of public ethics or private morality such as when they have to prosecute so-called heretical religions. As a state regulation, the Law on Religion Defamation only recognizes six religions in Indonesia, officially. So any other religions or belief systems are somehow considered illegal. The caretakers have been holding on to this basic consideration to validate their action.

Latif argues that the Indonesian constitutional basis for managing religious diversity, Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution, stipulates that the state guarantees each and every citizen the freedom of religion and of worship in accordance with his or her religion and belief system. It is a well-built foundation that guarantees "religious freedom and belief" (*kebebasan beragama dan berkeyakinan*) for the Indonesian people to rely on. Pancasila, according to Latif, is supposed to be understood as a civic religion, which is different from the conventional religions, even though the term "God" is mentioned in Pancasila as "Belief in One God" (*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*). It is not, Latif argues, supposed to refer to the exclusive understanding of God, as it is understood by each religion.

This means that as public morality, Pancasila still provides space for the operation of religious communities and private morality. So in the

private or community domain, people can develop programs according to their own orientations. The best practice of religious policy that complies with Pancasila, in view of civil religion, is the religious public holiday calendar, which is regulated by the government for all religious adherents. Its orientation as both 'familial state' (*negara kekeluargaan*) and 'justice state' (*negara berkeadilan*) can act as guarantor of religious harmony. However, in many conflicts, the state is in a position that does not develop legitimate foundations to protect its citizens from violent acts, raising the level of intolerance in society.

Magnis-Suseno, an expert on political ethics, who teaches philosophy at Driyarkara School of Philosophy in Jakarta, provided his own take on the issue. His idea on the transformation process of the nation relates to the problem of managing diversity. In terms of policy, he said, problems with interreligious relations are not supposed to be perceived inherently. In other words, it is better to perceive them practically as a concrete problem because regulations should be based on concrete matters not inherent ones. Magnis-Suseno said:

> *In relation to interreligious relations, the issue of harmonization no longer complies with the problem of interreligious relations, given that it could be manipulated in accordance with what is perceived as harmony. It is therefore better for the society to move in one direction, and learn from each other, and accept their identities reciprocally. Intolerance is something that always potentially exists in society. So the ability to accept each other in diversity should be revived. Plurality will only work if we acknowledge our identity to each other.[75]*

Sociologically speaking, as Magnis-Suseno also maintains, there is a big difference between traditional society, which is static, and the

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[75] The statement was made during the national workshop in January 2014 (Editor).

modern one in which we are currently living in and highly developed. He said:

> *In traditional societies, conflict or disturbance happens if something moves away from its function and has to be brought back into the system. The present modern society is always moving forward, for better or worse, and continuously confronts problems that cannot be resolved with harmony and tolerance. Instead, they should be solved with negotiation and conflict resolution. For that purpose, people are required to have the ability to dialog, and discuss problems openly with equal privilege, which is called democracy. Thus, harmony is different from democracy, and each should be treated differently. Unfortunately this nation is not yet ready to answer the demands of democracy.*[76]

In terms of religion, this means that the key and emphasis should be put on freedom of religion, where each community is guaranteed its rights to live and worship safely and, if possible, to spread their religious teaching, though it does not comply entirely with the Constitution, notably Article 18 on human rights. For that matter, there are three stakeholders, which should learn to follow and practice the law: society, religious figures, and the state. In sum, Magnis-Suseno affirms the following: first, society should live a civilized life, seeking to resolve conflicts without violence and restore attitude of tolerance. Second, religious figures or leaders should provide an example of humbleness and give respect to each other's freedom, for example, by avoiding hate speeches. Third, the state must be able to uphold the operating law, reject violence, and educate society.

The state, in Magnis-Suseno's view, does not have enough courage to play the role that it should play in enforcing the law. Thus, in terms of

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[76] Ibid.

rights and responsibility, it is also difficult for people and for the government institution itself to differentiate between the role of civil society such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah and state-related organization such as Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) or the Indonesian Council of Ulama. In such a situation where conflict emerges, religious identity will be at stake. In other words, to support religious freedom and belief, there should be no monopoly over absolute truth. Diversity is the reality of life and it is not an ideology. Religious conflict is largely caused by the fear of the unknown, and in the context of Indonesia, people's awareness and understanding of the variety of religious streams is generally still limited. The emergence of religious-based violence is one outgrowth of this lack of understanding about the others. As one participant in the workshop asserted, it is not enough for us only to develop values that have already been lived by society. What is needed is public policy that could explicitly give liberty for each religion, both for Islam and the other beliefs, including the traditional beliefs and sects, which exist in society today.

4.9 Concluding Remarks

Indonesians may or may not agree with how the government manages diversity thus far, because there are those who support and are against diversity. Their opinions on the issue of diversity can be as diverse as Indonesia's multitude of languages. However, their opinions might well be represented by the responses to a late evening *TVRI* nation-wide program with the same title as the national workshop, "Managing Religious Diversity: Between Policy and Reality" hosted by Soegeng Saryadi Syndicated (SSS) Forum. Apparently, the host received many comments through Short Messaging Service (SMS), no less than 177 from across the archipelago. Out of these 177 comments, 42 showed strong support for religious diversity, while 24 were less supportive or not supportive at all. The rest, 111 messages, were

relevant but rather impartial. The remaining 111 responses were rather ambivalent sentiments, which at best represent the situation of social transformation that is going on at the present moment in Indonesia.

Most people during the national workshop agree that religion and social transformation should seriously be observed, whether they tend to move toward the progressive or retrogressive side. According to Robert W. Hefner, the problem of building up pluralistic religious freedom in Indonesia is a hard challenge if it is not supported by aptitude and willingness from the state authority to uphold the law and constitutionally assured the religious freedom consistently.[77] This attitude reflects different perceptions of the elites, which is problematic in creating balance between religious freedom and social cohesion. However, referring to Stiglitz, "The legal system enforces certain aspects of 'good behaviour', but most good behaviour is voluntary. [And] our system could not function otherwise. … [When] people can feel confident that they will be treated well, with dignity, fairly, they reciprocate."[78] Such behaviour can only be obtained when there is trust. For that purpose, fair acts or regulations are becoming a major requirement in the good governance of society. If this does not happen, societies will not function well.

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[77] See Robert W. Hefner, "Negara Mengelola Keragaman di Indonesia: Kajian Mengenai Kebebasan Beragama sejak Masa Kemerdekaan" [The State Manages Diversity in Indonesia: A Study of Religious Freedom since Independence] in *Mengelola Keragaman dan Kebebasan Beragama, Sejarah, Teori dan Advokasi* (ed. Zainal Abidin Bagir), Yogyakarta: CRCS, UGM, 2014: 23-45.
[78] Joseph E. Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality: How today's divided society endangers our future,* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2013.

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5

INTRODUCTION TO SECULAR BUDDHISM

Atiporn Lorthong

5.1 Introduction

If one were to ask: 'what makes Buddhism secular*?'* The answers vary from the rationale behind the four noble truths found in human experience to the insidious and transformative experience of mindfulness, which has gained interest in psychology and neuroscience. For some home meditators, which in this context refers to Thai born Buddhists, the term secular Buddhism causes confusion. Mainly because the idea that Buddhism can be void of superstition or mythical aspects is unimaginable. The thought of living without rebirth is demoralizing for merit makers working hard on improving their morals for a chance to be reborn as human. Some meditators may also feel the concept is imported out of context since progress in one's meditation can only be measured in one's ability to see past and future life during deep concentration and to read other people's minds.

Intellectual and modern Buddhists have also expressed a worrying concern when asked about secular Buddhism. To them, it is not the essence of Buddhism, which is to end habitual craving for sensually orientated experience, through training of one's mind, behaving in an ethical fashion toward all beings, and cultivating a holistic wisdom to

engage with craving structurally. To embrace a secularized version of Buddhism where ethical conduct and appropriate wisdom are taking the back seat and meditation is too much of a focus is a misrepresentation of Buddhism.

According to intellectual Buddhists, to meditate in order to improve personal experience of the world without tackling other areas does not permit liberation from craving. Also understanding of craving gained from mindfulness or meditation cannot be measured externally by looking at the intensity of meditation or studying of scriptures that help to inform the practice. Liberation from craving can only be personally evaluated and investigated.

If one were to look back into the history of Thailand where formal meditation and studying of scriptures were emphasized and secularized uncritically their worries make perfect sense. Since the fourth reign of King Mongut monastic education and meditation were drastically transformed scientifically to improve intellectual capability and standards of conduct among monks, however the aftermath, when coupled with other social factors, was it gradually raised the status of formal education above other required factors needed for liberation from craving.

According to this approach, lay Buddhists without a highly secularized monastic education would have found it difficult rather than possible to liberate from senseless craving and addiction to worldly experience. The focus on formal education among monks gradually shifted the focus of liberation from understanding the conditions underlying all cravings, which according to Buddha greatly depended on a personal capacity to formally train one's mind and conduct so that daily experiences could no longer influence further craving, to attainment of formal monastic qualifications that in return signified progress to liberation. In short, intellectual capacity was most vital for relinquishment from craving.

Though the Dhammayhut sect, set up by the fourth reign, also emphasized meditation. Perfecting one's Pali and attaining qualifications through universities among monks quickly out shadowed meditation especially once monastic education and administration were further systematized and highly centralized during the fifth reign of King Chulalongkorn. Thus, for some Thai Buddhist meditators, Stephen Batchelor's concept of a highly secular Buddhist informed spiritual approach, which is meant to make Buddhism more accessible to westerners happened to take to the practice of mindfulness, represents a total misrepresentation and misinterpretation of Buddhism.[79] To Thai Buddhists, such an approach focuses too much on meditation or personal liberation without encouraging meditators to adopt a holistic view of craving that in return change their daily behaviour to be more compassionate. I will show later on in the paper that Batchelor's approach is not based 'entirely' on meditation.

Though secular Buddhism was formulated in Europe and the term could carry a negative connotation, I argue the approach is still useful and applicable for looking at rapid modernization of Thai Buddhism in relation to the establishment of civil society. Batchelor's secular Buddhism may not map neatly onto Thai historical context that involves modernization of monastic education, Thai identity as well as nationalism, but this framework allows one to 'articulate' changes, in particular a highly rationalized interpretation initiated by Buddhadasabhikku, that in return influence, development of civil society.

It should be noted, I am not suggesting that Buddhadasa was a secular Buddhist. He wore a robe, did not touch money, chanted twice a day and practiced other Buddhist rituals. He was the embodiment of a serious Thai forest monk however his interpretation of the scriptures at a

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[79] See Stephen Batchelor, *Buddhism Without Beliefs: A Contemporary Guide to Awakening.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1998.

time when Buddhism needed a different voice, bares striking similarities to a '*farang*' Batchelor, who also wanted to arrive at Buddhism in a different era without interference of sects, traditions and schism.

In this article, secular Buddhism is used to examine interpretation of Buddhism rather than as a tool to strictly perform political analysis on a structural level. For example, how religion is politicized or separated from the state through analysis of policies. A focus on understanding the social impact or transformation of Buddhadasa interpretation on a small sample is preferable as it allows one to qualitatively answer: What role does secular Buddhist informed approach play in the development of civil society in Thailand outside the official bureaucracy or mechanism of the state? And how does a secular Buddhist influenced organizations and civil society actors engage with the development of civil society in Thailand? Here, secular Buddhism is thus used to frame the sample and partly employed to assist with the analysis of the interviews.

5.2 Methodology

Three sites have been selected on the basis that most aspects of their movements fall into what could be considered as a secular Buddhist approach by most western and eastern secular minded Buddhists. Some movements are more political than others. Though civil society has a strong political dimension, the samples are drawn using secular Buddhism's characteristics as a guideline. The reason being is one of the questions we aim to answer is to understand the role of secular Buddhist informed organization in the development of civil society. Khun Mae Siri group is chosen for this reason. All of the chosen movements do not promote supernatural and focus on self-transformation.

The first group is *Santi Asoke,* which as mentioned is an environmental friendly Buddhist commune in Bangkok. The second group is *Khun Mae Siri*, which is a well-known meditation movement started by a Thai woman. The third choice is an interview with Sulak

Sivaraksa (Buddhadasa follower) who is considered the founder of Engaged Buddhism in Thailand and activists influenced by his practical philosophy. The idea is to understand secular Buddhism through a qualitative comparison. Active participant observation method is employed as the researcher intends to join these groups for a short retreat. To understand various perspectives and motivations behind selected movements, in-depth interviews with influential figures and other participants will be conducted. In addition, key publications on secular Buddhism by chosen organizations and relevant books on modernization of Buddhism by Buddhist scholars will be consulted for the analysis of the data.

5.3 Characteristics of Secular Buddhism

Batchelor was a monk in Tibet before he became a teacher of meditation. After having left the monastic fence, Batchelor's spiritual approach emerges from years of teaching meditation to mostly non-Buddhists, semi-committed Buddhists, and agonistic meditators. What makes Batchelor's style appealing to western meditators coming to Buddhism mostly through the mindfulness context associated with psychology, is he advocates doubt rather than asking for blind faith in the process of meditation. The foundation of his spiritual approach is built almost solely upon personal investigation, which could remedy doubt or work with doubt rather than strengthening faith through contact with good monasteries or well behaved ordained individuals.

Such welcoming of doubt also includes disbelief in rebirth and different realms. He tactfully encourages meditators to go beyond the topic by shifting the focus to investigating causes of craving in the present moment. According to Batchelor, "Dharma practice requires the courage to confront what it means to be human. All the pictures we entertain of heaven and hell or cycles or rebirth serve to replace the

unknown with an image of what is already known. To cling to the idea of rebirth could lead to the deadening of the inquisitive mind."[80]

Rebirth is not the centre of investigation, but having a willingness to investigate daily experience is what is important. The main incentive for him is after having studied complicated scriptures academically in Tibet and Korea, Batchelor wishes to get back to the basics of Buddha's teaching without social interferences of cultural conditioning, supernatural, clergies and political influence from religious institutions. In Thai context, the mentioned factors seems to have worked as a supporting condition for redirection, since they have shaped Thai Buddhism in such a way that it ends up resembling westernized secular Buddhism.

Batchelor indicated four key characteristics to the secular approach to Buddhism. People who identify themselves as secular Buddhists approach conceive Buddhism with the characteristics below in mind. [81]

5.4 Conditioned Arising

Conditioned arising refers to an understanding that there are webs of causes, conditions and consequences that give rise to dissatisfaction. This study employs the term "craving" rather than "dissatisfaction", as it is easier for readers to understand without misrepresenting what Batchelor is trying to imply. The key idea is the existence of webs of causes, conditions and consequences that will always act as a platform facilitating the shaping of craving for experience among people. What is meant by craving is habitual and unchecked desiring, while sensual experience is social experience defined by factors, not recognized as contributing toward liberation from habitual desiring as commonly understood in Buddhism. An example would be a desire for delicious

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[80] Ibid., 38.
[81] See Mark Knickelbine in http://secularbuddhism.org/2011/07/12/the-four-foundations-of-secular-buddhism/ (accessed on December 12, 2013).

food that once satisfied, in return stimulates another habitual yearning for another experience of eating delicious food, rather than contemplating on meanings and contents of what is personally understood as delicious. Such habitual desiring is motivated by sensual pleasure, rather than Buddhist values, which promote contemplation of habits and social experiences.

5.4.1 The Four Noble Truths

The first truth is based on identification of craving. One has to be able to acknowledge the unsatisfactory nature of one's own habitual craving for continual streams of sensual experience and identities. The second truth states craving ought to be understood by looking at the origin. Such origin indicates habitual craving is underlined by attachments or strong psychological clinging to three kinds of wanting, 'wanting of sensual experience', which means wanting to experience a continual stream of sensual occurrences, 'wanting to become' or, to put plainly, wanting to personally materialize and construct sensual experiences that in return reconfirm one's identities in some ways or another. 'Wanting to get rid of the process of becoming' refers to wanting to do away with the causes, conditions and consequences for unchecked, habitually motivated and socially fabricated sensual occurrences and identities. Such wanting often takes place after the 'wanting to become' is recognized and includes the wanting behind the wanting to get rid of the process of becoming itself.

The third truth asks people to realize that craving and attachments for sensually orientated experiences can be overcome. The fourth truth offers a direct path, which people can dutifully practice to end habitual craving for sensually orientated experience permanently. Such a path is referred to as the Noble Eightfold Path including having appropriate view, appropriate intention, appropriate speech, appropriate action, appropriate livelihood, appropriate effort, appropriate mindfulness and appropriate concentration.

5.4.2 Mindfulness

The practice of formal meditation or mindfulness practice especially *anapanasati* (contemplation of breathing) is promoted as a way to relinquish one's habitual craving. It is also conceived as a tool to help one understand the nature of craving in relation to other mundane experiences, unchecked actions, deep-rooted habits, and other various external social factors.

5.4.3 Self-Reliance

This is based on an understanding that one has the ability to end craving sooner rather than later through meditation, which as mentioned above helps one to better grasp the complicated relationships between all of the four truths.

All of the above characteristics promote introspection, but are void of supernatural elements, traditional rituals as well as devotion to ordained *Saṅgha*. This approach places a strong emphasis on experiential enquiry—wise contemplation of experience through meditation—and the four truths, which favours the possibility for personal liberation knowingly in this life time or, if one wants to be direct, in the present moment through immediate knowing of craving as soon as it arises. Peter Harvey once puts it, "The human realm is the middle realm. There is enough suffering to motivate humans to seek to transcend it by spiritual development and enough freedom to be able to act on this aspiration. It is the most favourable realm for spiritual development." [82]

I hope to illustrate in the section below these westernized characteristics, which are based on reasons, meditation, empowerment rather than the divine, belief of different realms and rebirth in the next life time could also be found in Thai Buddhism as it had to be modified at various points to suit, and some other time to survive and oppose a

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[82] Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990: 30.

farang inspired development progress that seemed democratic in tone, but was found to be rooted in capitalism and sustained by militaristic influenced nationalism.

5.4.4 Secular Buddhism and Modernization of Buddhism

This section focuses on some key political changes after 1932 and during 1939, when Thais experienced constitutional monarchy for the first time, and when the country changed their name from Siam to Thailand. This period was chosen because it was the time when many social transformations took place, but yet still influencing Buddhism until today. It is beyond the scope of this article to trace the history of Thailand since the fourth reign, where Siam was introduced as the name of the country and when transformation of monastic education during the establishment of Dhammayhut branch to when democracy and capitalism were introduced and shaped nationalism during 1930s. This section does not focus on exact historical details, but instead offers an overall context into how Buddhism was modified and filtered into national identity during that period.

After the fourth reign when foreign trade was given the green light, contact with the west among Thai influential figures was gradually intensified. It should be noted, during the fourth and the fifth reign, western countries began to make contacts as part of an attempt to build a colony. The idea that one could learn from the west started to influence the influential circle, as the fifth king was the first monarch who sent the royal family's children to be educated in the west. Since the fifth reign, all future kings have been educated in the west.

A Cultural Revolution, which took place in 1932, was the result of such westernized education among elites who, after having experienced life outside of Thailand, wanted to introduce democracy and capitalism to the country. In the very same year Gandhi was trying to peacefully reverse the consequences of colonization in India, Thailand announced a western inspired Cultural Revolution, whereby constitutional monarchy

was introduced. Though Thailand was never colonized, these elites felt the country could move quickly and abruptly forward to democracy where the rigid class system that sustained the king as the official governor of the country could be immediately weakened. One could therefore say it was the first time Thailand or Siam, as it was known during that period, made a recognized and significant step toward a westernized version of democracy.

Sivaraksa points out that 1932 was a breeding ground for the crisis in national identity since the state, instead of prioritizing and updating Buddhist moral to suit progress, developed and supported a conservative, diluted, somewhat dogmatic and authoritarian version of the religion that had always contributed significantly to Thai culture.[83] In other words, after having reconstructed the monarchy successfully, Buddhism was used as a tool to legitimize and gain support for westernized elites in building democracy and capitalism further. One can identify the three key social and political institutions working together and sometimes against each other in shaping Thailand through the national flag, which consists of red, white and blue, which in itself represents the nation, Buddhism and the monarchy.

Generally speaking prior to the Cultural Revolution of 1932, the role of senior monks was to support the king, who had to be seen to govern according to Buddha's teaching. All Thai kings who had gone through a brief ordination, were understood to be a trusted source for moral conduct and were seen as moral authorities almost on the same level as monks. After the revolution, the king and monks roles have changed to supporting the state in building democracy and introducing capitalism. Sivaraksa argues the failure to abolish all ecclesiastical titles awarded to *Saṅgha* after the revolution was one of the biggest mistakes that took

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[83] Sulak Sivaraksa, "The Crisis of Siamese Identity" in *National Identity and Its Defenders: Thailand Today*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm, 2002: 33-47.

place.[84] Awarding of titles was undemocratic in nature, and instigated competition and craving for social status rather than spiritual development. Such diversion from spiritual development was useful for the state attempting to make Thailand suitable for materialism alongside democracy.

In order to support the state efficiently in building a materialistic culture the administration of the *Saṅgha* had to be proficient. The new government, headed by general Phelk, wanted to have the administration of the *Saṅgha* follow the model of national government. They brought in the Saṅgha Act BE 2484 to replace the Characteristics of *Saṅgha* Administration Act RE 121 which stressed that the administration of the *Saṅgha* had to follow the nation's system of government.[85]

Though *Saṅgha* administration became more organized so that monks could work and teach, they played a minor role in educating the society since the idea that fulfilment could be gained from good morality and caring for others rather than satisfying personal craving did not fit with consumerism. During this period, it would not be wrong to say many monks were deliberately pulled toward education, titles and administration rather than the training of the mind and spreading of Buddhist values, which were to be awakened to craving, greed, profit and success. To make matters worse for Buddhism at the time monks were separated into two groups Manikaya and Dhammayhut throughout Thailand. Various failed attempts were made by the government to consolidate the two.

In 1939 the country changed the name from Siam to Thailand. In essence the name means freedom, however it has been used to refer to groupings of individuals who were able to maintain their independence

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[84] Sulak Sivaraksa, *Conflict, Culture, Change: Engaged Buddhism in a Globalizing World*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005.
[85] Sunthorn Na-rangsi, "Administration of the Thai *Saṅgha*: Past, Present and Future" in *Chulalongkorn Journal of Buddhist Studies*, Bangkok, 2002.

over other groups.[86] Whilst the monks were busy trying to attain qualifications, the Thai government, on the other hand was occupied with promotion of Thainess built upon the western models that suppressed local traditions such as the Loa of the northeast and Chinese people.[87]

The period of social restructuring, which the state was run by organized military was the time when Thai officials followed American advice that Buddhism instigated communist sentiments. This delayed development of a much needed capitalism guided by profit that brought about prosperity. Between 1939 and 1942, a series of twelve cultural mandates and national conventions were issued. These cultural mandates greatly shaped Thailand even after they had ended.[88] The first was the diet of Thailand that was low in protein and high in fiber had changed to a diet rich in meat. The second was the staging of beauty competition that strictly imposed western beauty ideal on Thai women. Thainess identity was also filled purposely with nationalism as national anthem had to be honoured twice a day by standing still.

Buddhism supported Thainess by supporting the military state's advice in becoming diluted. The *Saṅgha* Council as a whole depended on the state for direction. Altogether monks were also separated into two sects, though some were highly educated and aware of what was happening, they did not put up an organized fight as a group to protest when the council slowly lost its power and monasteries also lost its traditional role in communities. Buddhism or Buddhist values were no longer relevant to most people's lives as craving was normalized through Thainess.

A passage from Sivaraksa captures how monasteries had slowly lost its close relationship with people and local communities during this period:

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[86] Esterik Van Penny, *Materialising Thailand*. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2000.
[87] Sivaraksa 2005.
[88] Penny 2000.

Before Siam entered the modern age, the temple was an important centre of education for children. The temple even offered courses in worldly knowledge, such as music, medicine, painting, sculpture, architecture, etc. Monks thus often stood at the heart of every community, rural as well as urban. Even royal and noble children were ordained as novices or monks and were educated at the temple alongside their 'lowly' or 'ordinary' compatriots. [89]

5.5 Garden of Liberation

During this period Suan Moak monastery, which did not follow the highly intellectualized and systematized attitude to Buddhism at the time established itself in 1932 when Thailand experienced a cultural revolution. Suan Moak, which translated garden of liberation was born out of frustration of a young *bhikku* who did not see how liberation from imposed craving for sensually orientated experience, orchestrated by the development of capitalism could be gained from studying scriptures and working toward monastic titles without seriously involving people or society. Buddhadasa, the abbot whose name translated as the 'slave of the Buddha', became one of the most important monastic figures in Thai Buddhism. What made him unique was:

1. He reintroduced the importance of meditation to monks, while not neglecting the studying of scripture.
2. Similar to the fourth reign, he reinterpreted the scripture to void of myths and supernatural but did not place *Saṅgha* above lay people. According to his view, lay people too could realize liberation from habitual craving and understand the nature of craving.

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[89] Sivaraksa 2005: 42.

3. By holding a holistic view, he incorporated the importance of understanding how craving could be constructed on and by a structural level.

I would like to focus on the second point stemming from Buddhadasa's interpretation of *dhamma*, which shares many characteristics to Batchelor's down to earth secular Buddhist approach. The *bhikku's* unique interpretation, which is similar to Batchelor, incorporated only human realm and highlighted people's capacity to digest and practice Buddha's teaching on the same level as ordained individuals.

Such a modern interpretation that is rooted in self-reliance—one's own ability to digest Buddhism and practice advance meditation—strongly empowered people. After having seen the attitude of studious monks in Bangkok, for Buddhadasa Bhikku it was important to suggest that individuals had the ability to understand related causes, conditions and consequences of craving that were not based on inherited, highly disruptive and unchangeable bad *kharma* from past life. Lay could let go of craving for sensually orientated experience at the moment of arising through insight of dependent origination, a trained mind from meditation and keeping ethical conduct. The first was based on a holistic view of how all beings were by nature interdependent. The latter two were based on a determination and willingness to discharge from craving for sensually orientated experience that, once satisfied, birth another set of craving.[90]

5.6 Empowering Interpretation

Buddhadasa purposely wanted to avoid the study of Abbidhamma that was greatly popular and promoted in Bangkok. Such focus on the

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[90] Peter Jackson, *Buddhadasa: Theravada Buddhism and Modernist Reform in Thailand.* Chiangmai: Silkworm, 2003.

complicated process of mind's conception he felt was plagued with cosmological views and stretched the distance between ordained and lay even further. Buddhadasa's brother was studying at a prestigious university in Bangkok at the time and regularly exchanged letters with him. Thus he was exposed to various intellectual approaches and was clearly influenced by western rationalism as he felt *dhamma* could be approached scientifically with reasons. The *Bhikku* focused on what was known as dependent origination or dependent co-arising in some interpretations.[91]

Dependent origination as an interdependent and holistic framework was built upon the idea that one's habitual craving for tangible and intangible sensually orientated results such as nice food, a good car or finding true love emerged from webs of related causes, conditions and consequences of un-reflected actions not guided by moral and good intentions. This included actions built upon unwholesome desires, motivated by sensual pleasure and a distorted view of reality fully embedded in certainties and self-absorbed context rather than an understanding that life was always subjected to impermanence and ultimately death. Also when actions based on the negative characteristics mentioned, were repeated craving tended to get worse or stabilized rather than being understood. When left unchecked, satisfying habitually orientated craving for sensually orientated experience became confused with success and happiness. Dependent origination is in fact what Batcherlor refers to as conditioned arising earlier.

However, unlike Batchelor who tends to write for mostly lay meditators, Buddhadasa set up two hermeneutic levels for Buddha's words when interpreting scriptures. *Pasakoan* (worldly language) and *Pasatham* (*dhamma* language that was used to explain the intangible world) to accommodate different levels of understandings of *dhamma*,

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[91] Tannisaro Bhikku, http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.002. than.html (accessed on February 20, 2014).

for example the nature and vicious cycle of craving on a much deeper level could be understood through five *khandas* under *dhamma* language rather than worldly language.[92] Epistemologically one could approach craving through an understanding that it stemmed from mental habits of constantly identifying and habitually craving for sensually orientated experience.

Under *dhamma* language, craving came from after having seen the forms/*rupa*—body or tangible objects such as food, cars or houses—, we then identified with them through feeling/*vadana* of like and dislike, and such feelings originated from past memories/*sanya* or past identifications with these forms—past experience with food or people—, after identification one then started to build stories around like and dislike/*sanhara*—such as why you like certain things and not others and how much you like them—if not careful the whole identification process in return had the ability to permanently shape one's consciousness/*vinyana* or one's sense of self.

Similar to Batchelor, by using mostly Pasakoan (worldly language), his approach was easy to understand. Similar to Batchelor, Buddhadasa's interpretation stressed that meditation was the most sufficient tool or a form of experiential enquiry to understand the essence and nature of craving and in the long term had the power to lessen it. *Anapanasati*, a meditation technique that focused on breathing could calm the mind so that one could be awakened to dependent origination in life. Once properly and appropriately understood more liberation of the mind from dependent origination was possible.

Just like Batchelor who did not greatly prioritize deep engagement with ordained individuals as a way to strengthen spiritual development, according to Buddhadasa, lay and monk are mental states rather than social states.[93] Monk's state of mind that perhaps in some cases no

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[92] Jackson 2003.
[93] Ibid.

longer had a strong affinity towards craving did not necessarily imply the ability to liberate from craving faster, deeper or even better. Similar to Batchelor who stressed self-reliance, to Buddhadasa lay people too could liberate through practicing of meditation and by holding five precepts on the same level as monks to pursue liberation. Such erosion of boundaries between monks and lays made Buddhism more relevant and appealing to many people who were at the time becoming disillusioned with highly educated monks lacking Buddhist wisdom or the ability to teach and a westernized version of Thainess imposed upon them by the government.

5.7 Dhammic Socialism

In this section, I will focus on the third point, which is the importance of understanding how craving could be constructed on and by a structural level. What is meant by structure is society rather than individuals in this paper. In the 1960s, Buddhadasa coined the term *Dhammic* socialism. Such terminology was not based on popular political ideologies such as socialism or communism but stemmed from other related concepts such as *Dhammic* natural law and the four noble truths. He taught people to understand that *Dhammic* socialism was to understand the natural law of actions always had consequences on other people, animals and the environment. A society that was informed by this understanding was a society that offered peace, harmony, and sustainability.

To Buddhadasa and Batchelor, a realized habitual craving was recognized as the first truth in the noble truths. I would like to use the term realized craving rather than dissatisfaction, so far craving has been employed thus it makes it easier for readers to grasp the concept. To employ such a term is not misleading since habitual craving for sensually orientated experience is classified as the core cause of dissatisfaction in the teaching, for example craving for a new house

causes financial dissatisfaction and in some cases jealousy of people who earn more money.

Natural law, mentioned above, in this sense implied the law of interdependence. In other words, the idea of dependent origination, interconnectedness or conditioned arising was further conceptualized and grouped together under the main framework of this naturalistic and interdependent law. Realized craving that represented the first noble truth arose from natural dependent originated causes, consequences and conditions from various directions, most importantly including society.

Dhammic and holistic socialism perspective took society as central to one's being as whatever one did, wholesome or unwholesome, had consequences on all levels. Thus it is important to take responsibility toward one's action and toward the society that one is living in. Buddhadasa's focus on linking a non-dogmatic version of Buddhism to society and nature rather than the needs of individuals paved the way for a suitable climate for a development of civil society. In Dhammic Society five precepts are employed to nurture moral encouragement among citizens.

I will not dwell on identifying the list of precepts but would like to point out ultimately precepts placed citizens on a noble eightfold paths or ten paths in the case of Buddhadasa, with appropriate insight/wisdom and appropriate liberation included. As previously mentioned at the beginning of the paper such noble eightfold paths were classified under the fourth truth as a way out of habitual craving.

Altogether *Dhammic* socialism steered citizens toward renunciation from habitual craving, instilled moral encouragement in people and established a holistic view around people's actions. With a sense of connection and moral courage it was easy for people to prioritize the wellbeing of society prior to oneself. Secondly having a holistic view around actions made it easier for people to fully understand how one's habitual craving for sensually orientated experience is shaped and

constructed by imposing structure that is capitalism. Such understanding in return paved the way and strengthened the development of civil society.

5.8 Buddhism and Development of Civil Society

Buddhadasa's interpretation is empowering and strengthening people's capacity to create a civil society. The responsibility and willingness for founding and developing civil society is placed on citizens rather than sound monasteries or good state. In some ways civil society is by nature a part of Dhammic Society because it promotes the wellbeing of society rather individuals. The term civil society in this paper translates a public space between the state, the market and ordinary household in which people can debate and take action. Such a definition could include any voluntary collective activity in which people combine to achieve change on a particular issue.

According to Visalo Bhikku, who has been heavily influenced by Buddhadasa, there are three overlapping aspects where Buddhism initiated by Buddhadasa nurtures, sustains and encourages the development of civil society space. [94]

1. On a behaviour level, Buddhism encourages unselfish conduct needed for an establishment of civil society where wellbeing of society is a concern. Buddhism stresses personal happiness and wellbeing ought and could be cultivated through realizing of peace within oneself and continual practice of compassion toward others. Buddhist happiness is not influenced by accumulation of wealth but stems from having an interdependent perspective of dependent origination whereby unselfish and

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[94] Visalo Bhikku, *Buddhism in the Future: Prospect and Solution*, Bangkok: Santhirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, 2009.

compassionate actions and behaviours always matter not only to one's happiness, but also society's.

2. On an inner level, Buddhism nurtures a quality of mind needed to materialize unselfish behaviour. In a snapshot the training of the mind in Buddhist meditation gives the mind the agency, or disciplining power, needed to realize unselfish behaviour. By focusing on taming the mind through mindfulness of breathing and educating the mind through insight into dependent origination, Buddhism helps to prepare an ethical being holding a well-trained mind full of clarity, compassion, and wisdom rather than a mind that could be persuaded by laziness, selfishness and short gained profit under capitalism. A trained mind that can comprehend the holistic nature of things finds it easier to avoid acting on impulses brought on by selfish craving that in turn is not constructive for civil society.

3. As a whole Buddhist values make it easier for people to materialize, plant or show a sense of moral courage. The term moral courage translates as a willingness to practice harmless actions that address social injustice in society. On a practical level, Buddhist values built upon an interdependent view, precepts and compassion make grouping of individuals wanting to prioritize wellbeing of society easier than if they do not hold Buddhist values. Individuals holding mentioned values would want to collaborate rather than to compete with each other to realize goals. They have a tendency to prioritize group harmony, as they understand that teamwork is important if one were to bargain for and in society. Secondly by holding Buddhist values, people are encouraged or inspired to stimulate and influence others in society to show moral courage. Visalo Bhikku gives various successful examples of community projects, whereby members chose to use five precepts, which promote group

integrity to set criteria and standards rather than following developmental guidelines set by the government.[95]

On a conceptual level, Buddhist values defined by a willingness to put society first and an interdependent view encourages people to reinterpret and reconceptualise concepts to suit wider and more holistic needs rather than to continue to following a dogmatic view of moral integrity whereby anything that does not fit their approach or interpretation is seen as a threat and not worth pursuing.

Visalo Bhikku argues the western notion of human rights can be reinterpreted under Buddhism whereby right is a moral and compassionate obligation for all interdependent beings rather than a legal description defined by a need for recognition of immoral and violent activities that have happened to a particular group or an individual.[96]

5.9 Buddhist Organizations in Thai Civil Society

Three different Buddhist organizations are examined to understand their complex role in the development of civil society. The first is Santi Asoke, an alternative Buddhist community with branches throughout Thailand, the second is Khun Mae Siri, a lay Buddhist organization that teaches a specific contemplative type of meditation throughout Thailand. The third is a group of engaged Buddhists, composed mainly of intellectualized activists. All of these groups are influenced by Buddhadasa at varying degrees, and fall under Batchelor's notion of secular Buddhism.

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[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.

5.9.1 Selfless and Sectarian: what is the Moral Authority?

Santi Asoke led by Bodhirak Bhikku or 'Phor Tan', which translates as *Venerable Father* in Thai, is a well-known and successful Buddhist community with several branches throughout Thailand. As it stands, the abbot and the monastery are not recognized by the Thai Saṅgha Council, this is mainly because in the past Santi Asoke was seen as against the state. Due to the community's close relationship with Jhamrong Srimuang, a radical Thai politician who led the anti-military uprising in May 1992, Santi Asoke's version of Buddhism was considered as dangerous, anti-peace, too nationalistic and radical.

As a whole, they are highly engaged in Thai politics, for example, at present they actively participate in the anti Thaksin movement. Phor Tan is known to speak frequently on stage at their acquired spot in Bangkok as the protest continues. The difference between Santi Asoke and Buddhadasa lies in the fact that the former is a Buddhist commune where *Saṅgha* live alongside lay supporters who mostly work or participate in farming to support the community. Though Buddhadasa was influential, he did not realize Dhammic Society, and one could say that Santi Asoke represented a version of it.

Similar to Buddhadasa, Santi Asoke is also anti consumerism, and understands the law of interdependency including human and nature. Organic farming is practiced and herbal medicines are produced with only 10% maximum of profit on all products. However, unlike Buddhadasa, who promoted meditation to liberate from craving, work in in harmony with others as a tool for liberation and also as a way to improve one's moral courage, as the process can involve challenges and people holding dissimilar views.

As a whole, the entire community works tirelessly for free in an unselfish manner to sustain the commune financially and politically. If and when conflicts arise, monks settle the disputes and in some cases relocate people into a different section to resolve the problem. Most

members clearly see themselves as contributing to wider society for justice and arguments in the community do not often occur. People avoid confrontations. At the protest site, they dutifully clean toilets, take sleeping turn in uncomfortable tents, collect rubbish in the area and cook for non Santi Asoke protestors on a regular basis.

To employ Visalo's criteria, on a behavioural level, they maintain an unselfish attitude by staging a protest, demanding an end to corruption for the sake of society. On a personal level, they also put their community first through working long hours for free. On an inner level, work is meditation though sitting meditation is practiced twice a day work is described as the only ultimate meditation. Work instead of meditation gives the mind agency it needs for liberation. Such understanding not only promotes unselfish attitude and group harmony, but also sustains the productivity of the community.

In terms of moral courage, with guidance from Buddhist values, the community works together in harmony to realize and strengthen their moral courage. This is done by constantly encouraging each other to regularly attend the protest, caring for one another's wellbeing and stimulating friends to keep up with politics. If a longstanding member is unwell, a member is assigned to look after that person until he or she passes away and all members attend the funeral as a sign of respect. Many *Saṅgha* members also participate in political debates, and express very strong views against corruption. Most evenings some members watch together Santi Asoke's television channel, which airs the protest live.

When asked about feelings around political duty and responsibility, they see themselves as planting the seeds for moral courage in Thai society. They saw giving away food and cleaning toilets as a compassionate act enhancing society's wellbeing more than as a way of making personal merit to sustain Buddhism. As Julianna Essen argues that the community's model is about attaining and spreading of right

livelihood, which is one of the eightfold paths as much as personal spiritual advancement. Altogether, they aspire for society's moral standard to be improved.[97] Such moral courage in return sustains the civil society space used for bargaining.

Santi Asoke's ethos against capitalism, corruption and greed is successfully realized. However Phor Tan's reinterpretation of *dhamma*, which strongly denies supernatural and the cosmos carries a tone of fundamentalism. Though Batchelor denies such elements, he does it on the basis that he does not know and encourages people to meditate and find out for themselves. Phor Than, on the other hand, insists that *arahant*, who are able to understand dependent origination and let go of craving, are not real on the basis that sitting meditation cannot deliver that sort of realization.

One needs to understand craving. To him only by working wholeheartedly can one understand it. Members of the community also express a similar disapproving opinion of all existing formal meditations found in other traditions. The community altogether looks down on other Buddhist traditions. Thus, there is a strong attachment to Phor Tan's reinterpretation of the scripture among members.

On a conceptual level, Phor Tan, having been influenced by a Buddhist holistic perspective, has prioritized the longevity and sustainability of his Dhammic Society inspired commune with a desire to change Thailand in mind. Selfless work is promoted to serve society and other people to keep the community going steadily. However, he does not truly liberate them from craving for authenticity in scripture or superiority in scriptural interpretation that is a root of schism.

5.9.2 Khun Mae Siri

Khun Mae Siri was a middle class woman, who after having completed a retreat with a nun she started to teach meditation informally

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[97] Julianna Essen, *Right Development: The Santi Asoke Buddhist Reform Movement of Thailand*, Idaho: Lexington Books, 2005.

at home. Now her meditation course, which lasts seven nights and eight days is hugely popular. The style of meditation is based on *Satipathana*, where body, mind, feeling and *dhamma* are contemplated wisely. She was not political, while she was alive and all the lay teachers do not formally engage with politics. Some of them do not pay much attention to the state of Buddhism in Thailand or what is going on politically.

On a behavioural level, it is not clear how her style of meditation clearly makes the majority of meditators less selfish or behaves in an unselfish manner. However teachers, who were once meditators on a retreat, have started a youth project teaching kids in juvenile detention without a salary. Youth, who were mostly caught selling drugs or using drugs, that have been through the training provided by active meditation teachers show improvement in self-esteem and a desire to stop selling or using drugs.

On an inner level, meditation is explained as a tool to curb craving, as a way of accumulating merit for a better rebirth and as a way to cultivate compassion rather than selfishness. As a whole Buddhist meditation is framed as promoting liberation from habitual craving. The rigorous training of the mind gives the mind the agency or disciplining power it needs to realize unselfish behaviour. However, more evidence on unselfish behaviour is needed if one were to make a strong connection between the two. Also, the training of the mind alone without an introduction to structural influence does not indicate that meditators can make a connection between craving and capitalism.

Moral encouragement among members is experienced as meditation teachers grouped together willingly to start a youth project, which is now spreading throughout the country. All of Khun Mae Siri's teachers were taught this style of meditation, developed trust in this way of cultivation and now spend time teaching on various courses, some part time and some full time with no financial reward. Teachers have a lot

communication among one another when there is a course that requires instructors.

For lay meditators attending the course, moral encouragement is encouraged individually by linking behaviours to good and bad *kharma* and by *athitharn* that translates as a formal prayer with a goal that is realized by the prayer and not supernatural. Though teachers explain that they do not promote supernatural or superstition, past life, rebirth and different realms are discussed all the way through. Thus one can never know if people *athitarn* for help from devas or angles rather than for a strength to realize the moral courage and goals.

Altogether it is not clear how much this style of meditation or Khun Mae Siri's approach influence meditators 'rather than' teachers to 'practice' or 'influence' moral courage in society. On a conceptual level, *dhamma* is not reinterpreted drastically from traditional Buddhism. The Royal Family is revered twice a day after the morning and evening puja during the retreat. Thus one could say Buddhism and nationalism whereby the king is seen as the moral authority as much as Buddha are promoted alongside one another rather than separately from one another.

5.10 Incorporating Structure and Engaged Buddhism

Sulak Suviraksa is a well-known engaged Buddhist activist and intellectualist who has influenced younger generations of international activists, known meditation teachers and monks in Thailand. Similar to Phor Tan, Sulak and other civil society actors who were interviewed was highly influenced by Buddhadasa and his vision for Dhammic Society.

On a behaviour level Suviraksa and followers including ordained individuals work tirelessly in a different way to engage and improve the wellbeing of society. Personally he has set up a commune Ashram Wongsanit for activists and socially minded actors to work and learn together. However unlike Santi Asoke there are no *Saṅgha* members living alongside people inside the commune. At an international level,

he has set up the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) to promote development and strengthen capacities building for development of civil society in Asia.

As a whole, all civil society actors who were interviewed share a holistic view of society, whereby they clearly articulated how political, social, spiritual and economic needs are seen as interrelated. Such holistic view allows for an understanding of how one's craving is shaped and constructed by imposing structure that is capitalism.

On a practical level, they are all involved with encouraging others in Thai society to show and practice moral courage through mainly publishing. Visalo Bhikku, whom I have quoted in this paper, was influenced by Sivaraksa's vision for a better society since he was a young boy. Inspired by activism he was quick to point out that Buddhism had two angles one was spiritual development in relation to consumerism and another was social development in relation to capitalism. As a leading monk in the country, he stimulates others to practice moral courage through his extensive publications covering topics such as the existing protest, unhappiness stemmed from habitual craving, to the nature of Thai *Saṅgha*. On a practical level, he is deeply involved with community projects especially working against deforestation in Chaiyhapum province and acts as advisor to younger generation of monks pursuing developmental related projects.

Khun Pracha Hutanuwatr, a known activist, also shares a strong vision for Dhammic Society whereby selfishness and capitalism ought to be eliminated. He also works on various projects to improve the capabilities of people to realize their version of civil society. Vijak Panich, a meditation teacher, also engages in a similar vein as Sivaraksa by publishing articles around existing political issues in Thailand. On an inner level all of the interviewees meditate formally and credit the practice in keeping the mind agile and ready for conceptual thinking as well as letting go of what is not necessary.

In terms of group moral courage, there is an indication that they encourage each other to collabourate as a group when possible. Though each individual carries a publishing role in nurturing moral courage in society some have also formulated an organization, some work as a freelance and some promote meditation more than others. They are highly aware of each other's work and seem genuinely supportive.

On a conceptual level, *dhamma* is reinterpreted by Sivaraksa to suit existing globalized society where consumerism is promoted. Five precepts according to Sivaraksa has to be modernized and understood in relation capitalism, for example owing a car, which creates global warming is considered as breaking precepts since a rise in temperature kills animals in a different part of the world. Visalo Bhikku has also published widely on how Buddhism ought to be reinterpreted in such a way that defilements, which stimulate habitual craving for sensually experience, can be eliminated by looking at imposing capitalism.

5.11 Conclusion

So far I have been at pains to provide a brief historical context for Suan Moak monastery and to show how Buddhadasa's approach to Buddhism is similar to Batchelor since it is secular in nature and reduces, if not eliminates the difference in the lay *Saṅgha* status. Buddhism led by Buddhadasa Bhikku has influenced development of civil society without involvement of state mechanism by: first, firmly establishing an interdependent and empowering view on citizens whereby their actions have impacts on society on varying levels. Second, the holistic view above also permits an understanding how one's craving is shaped and constructed by imposing structure that is capitalism. Such understanding in return paves the way and strengthens the development of civil society in particular among younger generation of activists.

In terms of the question what role does secular Buddhist informed approach play in the development of civil society in Thailand outside the official bureaucracy/mechanism of the state?

1. On a behaviour level, Buddhism encourages unselfish conduct needed for the development of civil society where wellbeing of society is a concern.

2. On an inner level, Buddhism nurtures a quality of mind needed to materialize unselfish behaviour above. In a snapshot the training of the mind in formal meditation gives the mind the agency it is needed to realize unselfish behaviour.

3. On a practical level, Buddhist values built upon an interdependent view, precepts and compassion make grouping of individuals wanting to prioritize wellbeing of society easier than if they do not hold Buddhist values. Also Buddhist values influence established civil society actors and some meditators who might not be politically engaged without Buddhism, to encourage others in society to show moral courage. On a conceptual level Buddhist values defined by a willingness to put society first and an interdependent view encourage people to reinterpret and recontextualise concepts to suit wider and more holistic needs rather than following a dogmatic view of moral integrity.

In terms of the question what role does Buddhist informed organizations and civil society actors play in the development of civil society, this is answered by using the framework above to analyse the findings below:

As explained above, out of the three groups the last group consisting of educated civil society actors has the most moral courage to interpret Buddhism on a conceptual level to suit existing society without being limited by schism. In addition all of the civil society actors are able to

identify and publicly establish the link between habitual craving and imposing capitalism mostly in their publications. As a whole, they tend to stimulate moral courage through publishing. The second group so far displays the least courage when it comes to encouraging others in society to show the moral courage.

However, mind training in traditional form is promoted the most to curb habitual craving for sensually orientated experience and to nurture unselfish behaviour but mind training is not framed as related to structural injustice or capitalism. Thus the training of the mind alone without an introduction to structural influence does not indicate that meditators can make a connection between craving and capitalism.

Loyalty toward the royal family is also heavily promoted alongside spiritual development and a belief toward rebirth and different realms is found to be cultivated. The first group displays the most unselfish behaviour and shows moral encouragement within group and toward society. However the tone of the teaching leans toward fundamentalism as the leader insists his interpretation of *dhamma* is absolute.

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6

BUDDHIST MONKS AND PUBLIC HEALTH PROMOTION IN THAILAND

Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai

6.1 Introduction

Thailand became an upper-middle income economy in 2011. Notwithstanding political uncertainty and volatility, Thailand has made great progress in social and economic development. As such, Thailand has been one of the great development success stories, with sustained strong growth and impressive poverty reduction.

Thailand's high economic growth at 8-9% per annum during the late 1980s and early 1990s was interrupted by the so-called "Asian Crisis" of 1997-1998. Robust growth at around 5% from 2002 to 2007 was again slowed down by the global financial crisis of 2008-2009. The economy of Thailand was further affected in 2009 due to global economic conditions and political uncertainty and again, in 2011, because of the devastating floods. Currently, Thailand's economic activity is gradually returning to normal with positive growth projection in the coming years.

Thailand continues to make progress toward meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). [98] The country is likely to meet most of the

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[98] According to the United Nations, the targets of MDGs were supposed to have been reached worldwide by 2015. The MDGs framework has now shifted to SDGs or Sustainable Development Goals (Editor).

MDGs on an aggregate basis. The maternal mortality and under-five mortality rates have been greatly reduced and more than 97% of the population, both in the urban and rural areas, now have access to clean water and sanitation. At the same time, there are concerns about environmental sustainability.

Poverty in Thailand is primarily a rural phenomenon, with 88% of the country's 5.4 million poor living in rural areas. Some regions, particularly the North and Northeast, and specific ethnic groups lag greatly behind others, and the benefits of economic success have not been shared equally, especially between Bangkok, Thailand's largest urban area, and the rest of the country. Income inequality and lack of equal opportunities have persisted. Income inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, has fallen in recent years, but stays consistently high above 0.45.[99]

The National Statistical Office (NSO)[100] conducted the 2011 Survey on Status of Society and Culture by collecting data in October 2011 from 27,000 sampled households. The aims of this survey were to obtain the present information of social status such as behaviour, values and culture of the Thai population that can be used to monitor and evaluate on the status and direction of social transition in the future and to solve the present social problems. More than 90% of Thai population were Buddhist (94.6%), the rest were Islam (4.6%), Christianity (0.7%) and others, including population with no religion (0.1%).

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[99] See http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/thailand/overview

[100]

http://web.nso.go.th/en/survey/data_survey/570703_Survey_%20on_%20Status_%20of_%20Societ_11.pdf

Figure 1: Population aged 13 years and over by religion, 2011
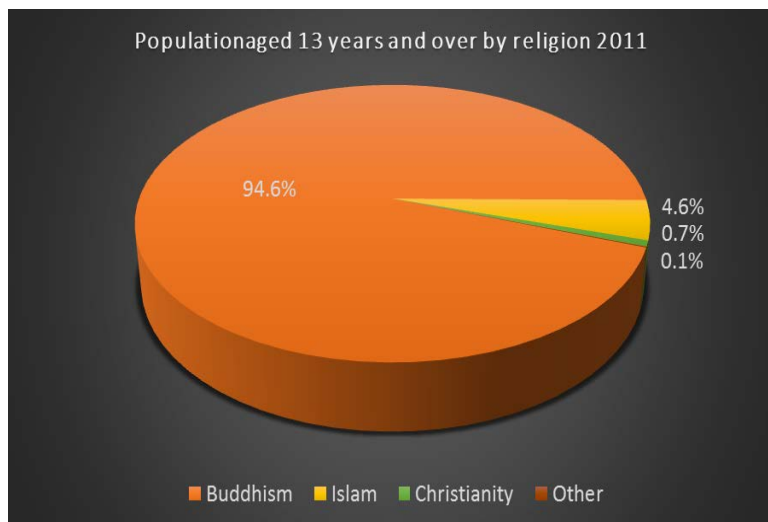
By region, it was found that most population in every region were Buddhist (more than 90%), except the Southern provinces, where there were mostly Muslim with higher proportion than other regions (24.5%).

Table 1: Population aged 13 years and over by religion, area and region, 2011

Region	Religion				
	Total	Buddhism	Islam	Christianity	Others
Whole Kingdom	100.0	94.6	4.6	0.7	0.1
Urban	100.0	95.0	3.9	1.1	*
Rural	100.0	94.6	4.9	0.5	*
Bangkok Metropolis	100.0	93.2	5.5	1.3	*
Central	100.0	97.1	2.5	0.4	-
North	100.0	97.4	0.2	1.8	0.6
Northeast	100.0	99.4	0.2	0.4	-

| South | 100.0 | 75.2 | 24.5 | 0.3 | - |

* Less than 0.1%

When comparing religious activities between 2008 and 2011, there were similar proportions of the Buddhist in offering food to the monk and praying in 2011 and 2008. The proportion of the Buddhist in practicing primary basic doctrines and meditation, obviously, increased from 35.6% in 2008 to 40.5% in 2011. For the Muslim, the proportions of *Shalah* (prayers) and pilgrimage to Makkah were similar in 2008 and 2011. It was noted that the proportion of the Christian going to the church and praying slightly decreased from 95.4% and 95.3% in 2008 to 93.8% and 92.7% in 2011 respectively.

Figure 2: Percentage of population age 13 years and over by religion and religious activity (2008 and 2011)
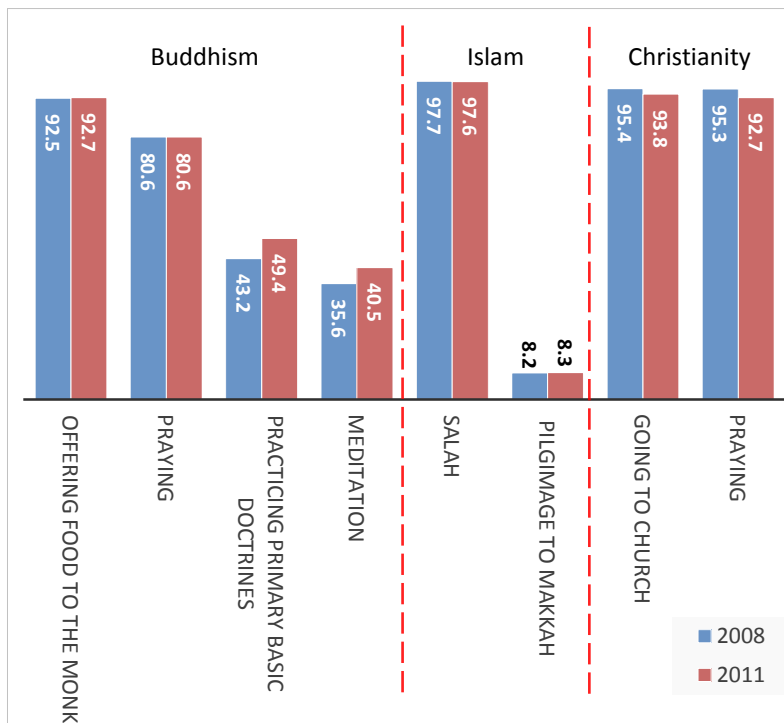
6.2 Thailand Health Profile

The National Statistical Office (NSO)[101] conducted the first Survey on Health and Welfare in 1974. The survey in 2013 was the 18th round; data were collected from 27,960 sampled households located in urban and rural area of every province, in March 2013. The aims of this survey were to obtain the information of health insurance, illness, getting the health services and other related health information. The results of the survey showed that the population receiving health insurance increased continuously from 96.0% in 2006 to 98.3% in 2013. The Universal Coverage Card (UC) was the highest health insurance that people received (74.4%), 15.4% with the Social Security Scheme (SSS)/Workmen Compensation Fund (WCF) and 8.6% with the Civil Servant Medical Benefits Scheme (CSMBS). The private health insurance increased by 2.3 times from the previously 2.3% in 2006 to 5.3% in 2013.

Figure 3: Percentage of population, having health insurance by type of health insurance

Types of Health Insurance*	2006	2007	2009	2011	2013
Having health insurance	96.0	96.3	97.4	98.0	98.3
Universal coverage Scheme (UC)	77.8	76.6	78.6	79.2	74.4
Social Security Scheme (SSS)/Workers Compensation Fund (WCF)	12.2	12.7	12.9	11.6	15.4
Civil Servant Medical Benefits Scheme (CSMBS)	9.5	9.5	8.2	8.8	8.6
Private health insurance	2.3	2.3	3.7	4.1	5.3
Health insurance covered by the employers	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.7
Others	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5

[101]http://web.nso.go.th/en/survey/data_survey/570718_The%202013%20Survey%20on%20Health%20and%20Welfare.pdf

*Note: Multi responses

   The results showed that during the past month prior to the date of interview in 2013, there were 29.1% of out-patients, of these 21.0% was sick or not feeling well, 17.4% was chronic disease and 2.4% was accident or physical violence. For the past 12 months before date of interview, there were 5.0% of in-patients. In comparing to the previous survey's results, it was found that out-patients in the past month before the date of interview slightly increased from 28.2% in 2006 to 29.3% in 2011 and dropped to 29.1% in 2013. In considering by type of illness, it showed the trends of a small increase of sickness or not feeling well and chronic diseases from 16.3% and 15.6% in 2009 to 21.0% and 17.4% in 2013 respectively, while the proportion of accident or physical violence slightly dropped from 2.5% in 2011 to 2.4% in 2013. For the in-patients in health centre in the past 12 months prior to the date of interview, the results indicated a decrease in proportion from 6.4% in 2006 to 5.0% in 2011.

Figure 4: Percentage of patients by type of illness
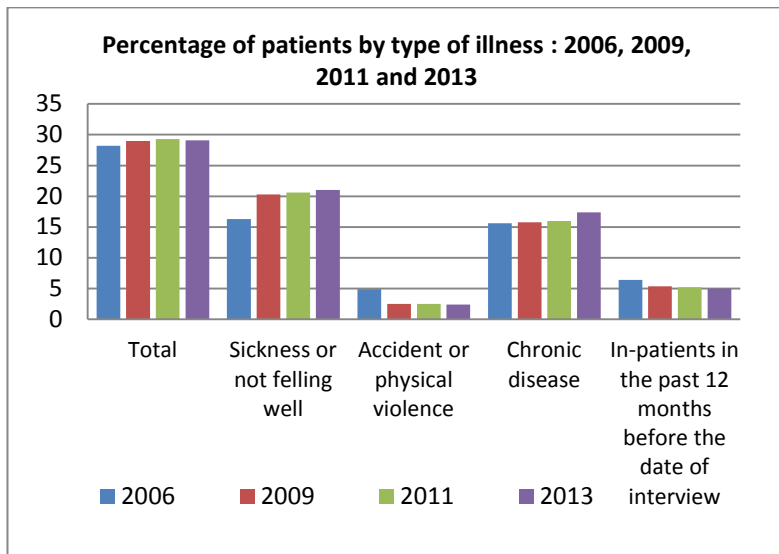
A study conducted in 2004 by Mahidol University's Faculty of Public Health showed 91% of monks across country supported a prohibition on monk smoking, while 80% agreed to ban devotees from giving cigarettes to monks. "We have seen that over the past few years, most monks suffered from smoking or exposure to second-hand smoke," said the Mekong river monk network's secretary general, Abbot Maha Worawuth Panyawuttho. He said many studies had revealed the social problems caused by gambling, smoking and drinking alcohol. Such behaviour could also lead to drug addiction in children. In the Northeastern region, over 35 million people were smokers. In a bid to fight smoking in temples, the foundation has collaborated with the Mekong river's monk network in a pilot program creating smoke free zones in 180 temples in five provinces in the northern part of the country. "The campaign to ban smoking in temples will be a good model for communities to give up smoking, as the temple is the community centre for practicing religious activities," he said. "Giving cigarettes to monks is a bad value for Buddhist society," he added.

According to the smoking and drinking behaviour survey, 2011, by National Statistical Office, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, the survey found that from a total of 53.9 million people, over 15 years old, in Thailand, 11.5 million were current smokers (21.4%), and out of those 9.9 million (21.4%) were regular smokers, the rest 1.6 million (2.9%) were temporary smokers. However, male smoker were 20 times more than female. Number of those smokers who live in rural area is 1.4 times higher than in urban area i.e. 23.5% and 17.3% respectively (see table 3).

Figure 5: Percentage of population over 15 years smoking[102]

Gender & Settlement	Population over 15 years old	Smokers			% of Smoking
		Total	Regular	Temporary	
Gender					
Male	26,192.1	10,919.0	9,458.5	1,560.5	41.7
Female	27,704.1	592.6	478.6	114.0	2.1
Settlement					
Urban	18,585.6	3,219.0	2,276.5	492.5	17.3
Rural	35,310.6	8,292.6	7,210.6	1,082.0	23.5
Total	53,896.2 (100.0)	11,511.6	9,937.1 (18.4)	1,574.5 (2.9)	21.4

While the survey found that from a total of 53.9 million people, over 15 years old, in Thailand, 17.0 million were alcohol consumers for 12 months before interviewing (31.5%), with the figure of male consumer of 5 times more than female consumers. Those who are at the age of 25-59 are in highest rate of 37.3%. It is to be noted that the elderly people in Thailand, 16.6 are alcohol consumers, which is considered a high rate. Average age of alcohol consuming is 20.3 years old in which male consumers started at the age of 19.4, while females at the age of 24.9 (see Figure 6).

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[102] Data from National Statistical Office, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, Thailand.

Figure 6: Percentage of population over 15 years of age alcohol consumption[103]

Gender & Age	Population over 15 years old	Alcohol consumer	% of Alcohol consumer	Average age of starting consumption
Gender				
Male	26,192.0	13,979.4	53.4	19.4
Female	27,704.2	3,012.6	10.9	24.9
Age				
15 – 24	10,405.1	2,462.7	23.7	17.2
25 – 59	35,272.3	13,166.3	37.3	20.6
60 and over	8,218.8	1,363.0	16.6	23.5
Total	53,896.2	16,992.0	31.5	20.3

The reports and surveys above give very clear evidences on the health condition of Buddhist monks and the risk behaviour of Thai people. In recent years, news reporting on television program showed that almost half of Thai monks suffer overweight problems.[104] In more detail, a research study indicated that almost half of Thai monks are having overweight problems or are affected by congenital diseases. The study was conducted mainly by three researchers, Pinij Larpthananon from Chulalongkorn University's Social Research Institute, Jongjit Angkatavanich from Faculty of Allied Health Sciences and Suthit Aphakaro, director of the Buddhist Research Institute, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

The study focused on the health concerns of Thai monks and how to offer them food during the upcoming Buddhist Lent. The survey's

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[103] Data from National Statistical Office, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, Thailand.
[104] Thursday, August 2, 2012 by MCOT.

participants included 246 monks from the Dhammayuttika Nikaya and Mahanikaya movements in 11 provinces. Forty-five percent of the monks experience obesity, while 40% of them face congenital diseases, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and allergies, partly due to the rich, oily and sugar-laded foods offered to them by the Buddhist faithful. The average monk's only sport activities are walking in the morning while on rounds seeking alms, and sweeping temple courtyards. Only around 21% have annual health check-ups.

According to the study, some monks have more than three evening drinks each day, because they must abstain from eating food. However, some of the drinks offered to monks are not healthy, for they are soft drinks with sugar, leading to diabetes. A dual-tracked campaign is being prepared to teach monks to select healthy drinks, and also to inform food donors about healthy food when offering alms to monks.

According to demographic characteristics and smoking prevalence, monks in Thailand were sampled in proportion to their distribution by region (Bangkok, Central, East, West, North, Northeast, and South), as reported by the Monks Association of Thailand. From a total of 365,140 monks/novices from 31,044 *wats* in 76 provinces in Thailand, a sample of 6,213 monks/novices from 528 *wats* in 59 provinces completed surveys. The highest concentration of monks was sampled from the North and Northeast regions comprising 60% of the participants. Of the sample, 24.4% of monks/novices were current smokers (95% confidence interval [24.453, 24.464]), with smoking rates ranging from 14.6% in the North, 20.4% in the Northeast, 22.8% in the West, 29.7% in Bangkok, 33.5% in the South, 40.2% in the Central, and 40.5% in the East region.

However, according to Phrakru Amornchaikhun (Luang Ta Chae),[105] a Buddhist monk, who is a member of National Health Commission, the monks in Thailand are in inconvenience condition of getting health care

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service under Universal Health Coverage (UHC) scheme. As monks are, generally, to travel to learn and please devotees, registration to the specific hospital may cause lack of opportunity to get necessary health care, if needed. Moreover, those who suffered with Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) have to depend on their own relatives to give care and support. There is no mechanism under the *Saṅgha* administration to provide health service directly to them. Some of them have to disrobe, and come back to their family to get good care from their relatives.

Recently, when Phrakru Amornchaikhun (Luang Ta Chae) get sick, he was hospitalized for more than a month, and realizes that to get good care, especially, at the period of recovery is very difficult. He has to get help from his own family that live very close to the temple. Phra Amornmit Gambhiradhammo adds, "There should be some mechanism in the *Saṅgha* administration similar to the Village Health Volunteer (VHV) of the Ministry of Public Health to provide health care service for Buddhist monks who need good care."[106]

6.3 Civil Society and Public Health

Civil society and non-state organizations have been contributing to public health for centuries. In more recent years, however, they have grown in scale and influence and are having profound impacts on health. People, as part of the civil society, form the core of health systems. They use health services, contribute finances, are caregivers and have a role in developing health policies and in shaping health systems. In all these respects, there is growing pressure for public accountability and increased response to inputs from civil society. The manner in which the state responds to these changes, and the extent to which civil society actors are recognized and included in health policies and program, are

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[106] Interview Phra Amornmit Gambhiradhammo, December 27, 2013.

some of the critical factors determining the course of public health today.

Health reforms in the 1990s, however, de-emphasized the welfare state and community participation and gave greater profile to the market. Social values were given less attention than the technical, economic and management factors in health systems. The state's role was 'downsized', either by deliberate policy measures such as Structural Adjustment Programs, by reduced public spending or by the declining quality of public services. In low-income countries, coverage of the lowest income social groups fell, leaving many people cut off from effective services and dependent on self-help. These trends motivated many CSOs to new actions including health service delivery and renewed advocacy for basic health rights and access to health resources.

As the attainment of health goals has become more evidently influenced by political, legal, investment, trade, employment, and social factors, civil society involvement in health has also widened to include organizations whose main mandate lies outside the health sector. Hence, for example, youth organizations not specifically set up to deal with health issues have been an important contributor to adolescent reproductive health promotion, or groups dealing with economic and trade issues like trade unions have played an important role in essential drug lobbies.

CSOs play a major role in the delivery of health services. Religious organizations have had a long history of service provision, while others have become more involved in recent years. In Asia and Latin America, CSOs have been involved in mobilizing effective demand for services, building awareness of community needs and experimenting in innovative approaches to service delivery that were later replicated by the state sector. In Africa, among other tasks, CSOs have assisted in working with the state to integrate evidence led health planning and community preferences.

These CSO health services may or may not be contracted by the state. In many cases, CSOs provide cover to groups otherwise disadvantaged in health service access or assist governments in major treatment campaigns and disease control programs, in drug distribution, in reaching vulnerable communities, and in fostering innovative approaches to disease control.

CSOs contribute to enhanced health care by providing services in response to community needs and adapted to local conditions; they lobby for equity and pro-poor health policies, often acting as an intermediary between communities and government; reach remote areas poorly served by government facilities; and provide services that may be less expensive and more efficient. CSOs also provide technical skills on a range of issues from planning to delivery to services. They innovate and disseminate good practices to other NGOs or the state sector. CSOs contribute to public understanding and enhance public information. This can build more effective interaction between services and clients, and enhancing community control over health interventions.

There is, however, significant variability in the quality and scope of non-state services. Some CSOs may not be responsive to the population they serve and may in fact be more accountable to the international agencies that fund them. Many national CSOs struggle with issues of how to access their own national public resources; their capacities to manage and sustain programs; negative attitudes and non-participation of health workers; poverty and other social problems; and how to build strong and active links with their own members.

Analysts have pointed out that CSOs have a long-term and sustained comparative advantage when they can access resources not available to government, or where they can meet a need not currently met such as in improving coverage.

In Thailand, in the year 2000,107 the Ministry of Prime Minister Affair's order pronounced the setting up of and the Health Systems Reform (HSRO). The decree proposed a National Health System Reform Committee (NHSRC) to oversee the reform process with the HSRO as its secretary. The NHSRC and HSRO were established contemporaneously and were initially tasked with promulgating the national health act within three years, while an ordinary process of drafting a bill would take on average somewhere between a few months to a year. The idea behind the prolonged process of drafting the national health act was that it was not the outcome of passing the bill through the national legislative body, but the process of deliberation that was the most important part of the reform process. To encourage participation and deliberation, not only was the timeframe extended, but the scope of the conceptual framework was also broadened. The framework set up at the outset of the reform defined health and health systems in a very broad sense. Health was defined as "a dynamic state of physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being". Health system, according to the decree, was defined as "a whole range of systems relative and integral to the health of the nation including all factors related to health, be they individual, environmental, economic, social, physical, or biological as well as internal factors from health service systems."

With Professor Dr. Prawase Wasi's strategic triangulation known as "the Triangle that Moves the Mountain", a set of three-pronged strategies of knowledge creation, social mobilization, and political engagement is devised to bring about changes in difficult social issues.

To encourage broader participation of civil society in the health systems reform movement, various mechanisms and measures were developed. The highlight in the second year of implementation was the National Health Assembly which was organized on August 8-9, 2002 at

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[107] Komatra Chuengsatiansup, *Deliberative Action: Civil Society and Health Systems Reform in Thailand*, Health Systems Reform Office, Thailand, 2005.

the Bangkok International Trade and Exhibition Centre and the nationwide campaign to gather five million signatures of supporters for the new national health act. In working towards these two highlights, a series of civic forums, workshops, conventions, and district/provincial assemblies were organized. In addition, the "Reform Forum", a newsletter aimed at connecting various movements towards the health systems reform, was published by the HSRO. The meetings at various levels as well as the newsletters served to engage the greater public and to build consensus on the desirable health systems among various people.

District forums were organized by various civic groups in collaboration with local health agencies to encourage participation of grassroots organizations. Five hundred and fifty forums took place at the district level during the second year of implementation. These forums provided a space where local health issues were discussed, information exchanged, and suggestions made to assure that the new health systems would be relevant to the local agenda. At the next administrative level, all provinces organized forums for provincial residents and civic groups to discuss and voice their opinions as well as to deliberate on the proposed legal framework for the new health systems. The district and provincial forums drew more than 50,000 people from 3,300 organizations around the country. The process of consultation and civic participation created a unique broad-based civil society mobilization. These district and provincial forums culminated in the National Health Assembly on August 8-9, 2002 when almost 4,000 participants gathered and expressed their support for the reform.

Public forums have become not only a process of consultation and debate over health problems, but also a process of collective learning among communities, civil society organizations, and health agencies. Civic initiatives and deliberative action in tackling health problems were enthusiastically exchanged between participants in public forums.

Through these forums, a new form of public life emerged. People from different organizations who shared similar concerns came to know each other and started building networks of cooperation. In a sense, the forums have become civic infrastructure within which deliberative action and collaboration among civil society organizations became possible.

The analysis of the reform process suggests that the most important aspect of mobilizing civil society in health system reform was the creation of civic deliberation process. Various forums, meetings, conventions, and conferences at different levels created much needed venues for the public to deliberate on how health and existing medical predicaments should be understood and the most important changes needed to achieve the desirable health system. In order to engage the broadest range of social actors and civil society organizations to participate in the reform process, it was realized that the concept of health itself need to be expanded from a biomedical defined concept toward a more holistic, inclusive, and multidimensional definition. Health in the reform process has been redefined to emphasize not only biological and psychological aspects but, more importantly, social and spiritual aspects of wellbeing and wellness. The broadened concept of health enabled the involvement of a wider range of stakeholders into the deliberation process.

A landmark in health promotion in Thailand came in 2001 [108] with the establishment of the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (Thai Health) as a health promotion funding mechanism that draws upon a 2% surcharge levied on alcohol and tobacco excise tax, approximately US\$50-60 million a year. In 2001, the Cabinet issued Thai Health Promotion Foundation Act, B.E. 2544 to establish a progressive financial mechanism for health promotion. This foundation works as a catalytic funding agency for civil movements that lead to the

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[108] http://www.searo.who.int/entity/tobacco/news_events/thaihealth/en/

improvement in wellbeing of Thai citizen. The organization collaborates with all sectors of the society, from the national to the grassroots level, and is the most notable organization for health promotion in Thailand. Thai Health funds programs on health risks or issues such as alcohol, tobacco, accidents, exercise, as well as area or setting based programs, for example, school, work place, community, and programs that target specific population groups such as the youth, the elderly, Muslim community.

Thai Health was designed to be the financial support mechanism for health promotion activities, particularly in hard-to-reach area for conventional bureaucratic system. Its missions are based on broaden, but integrated, definition of health and the core concept of Ottawa charter. With its supporting role rather than replacing the existing bodies, Thai Health has incorporated extensive strategic partners from various sectors into networks to work synchronically.

6.4 FBOs and Public Health Promotion

Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) are potentially among the most powerful and influential social forces in most countries. They play a significant role in influencing the values of most societies. FBOs can be powerful allies or significant obstacles to the implementation of HIV programs. Some FBOs also have political influence, and many are active in public policy advocacy. In many countries religious beliefs are explicitly endorsed in constitutions and other legal instruments. FBOs often mobilize their membership in political movements.

The influence of FBOs is felt at both the institutional level and through individual leaders. In some countries, like Thailand membership in various decision-making bodies is reserved for FBOs, and government departments exist that regulate or support religious activity. FBOs are often key service providers in social sectors that have a key role in health programming. They employ significant numbers of staff.

According to the National Health Commission Office of Thailand, [109] there are some FBOs on the list of the health promotion networks such as Budnet for Buddhism and Society, Santi Asoke network, Foundation of Pali scholar Association of Thailand, The Buddhist Association of Thailand under The Royal Patronage, Buddha-dhamma Foundation, The Young Buddhists Association of Thailand under The Royal Patronage, Sathira Dhammasathan, Dhammkaya Foundation, Church of Christ in Thailand, Catholic Association of Thailand, Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand, Asian Muslim Network, Thai Muslim Health Promotion Network, The Foundation of Islamic Centre of Thailand, The Foundation of Islam for Society and Economics of Thailand, the Young Muslim Association of Thailand. These networks are very active in the process of National Health Assembly to consider the agenda items discussed in the NHA on behalf of FBOs.

Under the support of Thai Health, Budnet for Buddhism and Society implements the Project entitled "Wisdom Health Promotion", which is the knowledge and understanding distinguish what is good and bad, useful and harmful, which leads to have good and generous heart. The project is to generate a change in attitude four things, which are fundamental to the intellectual health.

1. Considering others more than oneself
2. Not depend on only materialistic happiness
3. Confidence in their effort not waiting for fortune
4. Think rationally and beneficially

The principles of operation of the project are:

1. Creating the learning process activities through actual experience.
2. Focusing on the process both before and after action (for self-reflection if they change after the activity is done).

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[109] http://nha2011.samatcha.org/content/

3. Using group work to make it fun, happy and change of attitude.

4. Using various kinds of media to disseminate information, content guidelines to promote wisdom health attitudes and behaviours.

The project objectives are:

1. To provide social recognition and a variety of new channels of access to the wisdom health.

2. To encourage the youth and people with understanding and learning through experience in activities contributing to the happiness of others than their own thinking.

3. Do not rely solely on only materialistic happiness, but confidence in their effort and think rationally.

4. To encourage and develop partnership networks in campaigning to have concrete examples and more actively working areas of wisdom health promotion.

5. To develop the body of knowledge, tools, and new processes in wisdom health promotion.

Similarly, Thai Muslim Health Promotion Network also implements the "Thai Muslim Health Promotion Plan" under the support of Thai Health.[110] The philosophy of the plan is "Using the religious knowledge that encourage the Thai Muslim participate part in the operation and work cover various issues and areas. The objectives of the Thai Muslim health promotion plan are as follows:

1. Gather knowledge about health in Islam and knowledge about the health issues of Muslim communities in Thailand.

2. Push for social measures to control the consumption of cigarettes and other drugs among the Muslim in Thailand.

3. Build a network of communication Islamic knowledge and health that convince Thai Muslim modifying lifestyle leading to health problems.

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[110] http://www.familynetwork.or.th/node/254

4. Build a network of leaders in Health Promotion.

The main target groups of the plan are Imams, other religious leaders, religious teachers, community leaders, women leaders and leaders of organizations especially religious teachers, who have an important role of communication in Muslim community, community leaders and leaders of organizations who selflessly and continually work on social development.

After some years of operation of the plan, the proud outcome has come up such as six series of academic document on health, the decision to consider cigarette and drugs as forbidden things according to Islamic principles, establishment of four Health Care Communities in Nakorn Si Thammarat, Songkhla, Pattani and Nong Chok, Bangkok, pushing circumcision in Islam into the universal coverage scheme of the National Health Security program.

A major progress of the FBOs involvement on health promotion may begin when there is a formation of Interfaith Network on HIV/AIDS in Thailand (INHAT).[111] Prior to the 15th International AIDS Conference, Bangkok 2004, faith-based group namely Muslim, Christian and Buddhist have gathered in July 2003 and came up with the statement of commitment by the religious leaders. To keep on the commitment, in 2004 the INHAT was set up among the participated FBOs to share their resources, fund, knowledge and work together for more effective responses.

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) in association with the Interfaith Network on AIDS in Thailand (INAT) has been implementing the project entitled "FBO Involvement in HIV/AIDS Care and Support" since October 2005. After the three-year period of intervention (October 2005 to September 2008) under the GFATM support, the program brought significant results to target groups and communities. Sixty local

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[111] Interfaith Network on HIV/AIDS in Thailand (INHAT), printed document: 1-2.

FBO centres, which were implementing units joining the program, namely composed of 30 Buddhist temples; 15 Muslim mosques; and 15 Christian churches, located mostly in the northern region of Thailand. These FBO centres focused on providing care and support services such as home visits, counselling, and alternative health care for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and their families in order to improve their quality of life. Significantly, their dignity, rights and respect have been gradually realized by people in target communities. Additionally, stigma, discrimination and alienation aspects are gradually reduced among PLWHA, faith-based leaders, and people in target communities. Key quantitative indicators included:

1. Sixty FBO centres joined the program (targets exactly reached).
2. 5,758 PLWHA have been received home-based care and support (over expected 958 persons).
3. 4,416 Orphans and Children made Vulnerable by HIV/AIDS (OVC) received services and care (over expected 1,416 persons).
4. 2,706 volunteers and affected family members gained more skills and support through vocational skill building process and scholarships (over expected 306 persons).
5. 8,395 HIV/AIDS infected and affected people and families received care and support from FBO centres (over expected 3,595 persons).
6. Guidelines for faith-based intervention on home-based care and counselling were developed and will be published in early quarters of RCC.

The program also attempted to improve managerial capacity of INAT, FBO centres and community in order to achieve the ultimate goal of the program. Expectedly, INAT and FBO centres can efficiently, effectively and sustainably run activities during the program implementation period and after the program phases out. Furthermore,

INAT and FBO centres initially have linked with other community-based alliances to collectively working on societal environmental development in order to enable facilitation of care and support activities. Moreover, the FBO training package on care and counselling was developed and utilized as a training manual for volunteers and the vast network of community-based alliances.

6.5 Buddhist Monks and Public Health Promotion

In Thailand, many Buddhist monks engage themselves in improving the quality of lives of lay people throughout Thailand. Some monks construct roads, dig wells, build rice banks or buffalo banks, join villagers' meetings, visit patients at their home, and so on. Some monks build rehabilitation centres for drug addicts or terminal care hospices for AIDS patients within the temple's compound, and instruct the way of meditation or provide counselling services to them. Such monks have been called as "*phra nak phatthana*" or development monks for about 30 years in Thailand.

If one listens to the narratives of so-called *phra nak phatthana*, one often encounters this kind of narratives as follows: "Buddhist monks can't stay at temples if only eating and sleeping" or "Buddhist monks should repay lay people, because monks can't survive without lay peoples' supports." These narratives let us see that *phra nak phatthana* have high sense of purpose to overcome existing images towards the monks. Thus *phra nak phatthana* as a research topic raise not only the issues on the role of monks in community development as NGO workers or intellectuals have emphasized, but also the issues on identity politics of monks under rapid social changes. [112]

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[112] Mayumi OKABE. Community Development and Network Construction among the Buddhist Monks in Contemporary Thailand: A Case of "Community Development Monks' Network in Northern Thailand". p 1 (http://swhcu.net/km/mk-articles/sw-km/92-community-development-and-

In 2011, which is the year to commemorate 2600 year of getting enlightenment of the Buddha, *phra nak phatthana* around the country forms the network of Buddhist monk and nun named "Buddha Jyanti-Monk Network for Society". These monks are very active in working on community development, and trying to propose to National Health Assembly on "Buddhist Monks and Building Well Being" in the following year.

As in Thailand, the Act states that the National Health Assembly (NHA) is designed as an instrument as well as a learning process to develop participatory public policies on health and pushing for practicability. No matter the neither state agencies nor civil societies implement the said public policies, the benefit dwells in people. [113]

The NHA is an attempt at participatory policy making, [114] as opposed to the more common rationalist (expert) or stakeholder model. The NHA's approach derives from the concept of the 'triangle that moves the mountain' and aims to bring together the vertices of the triangle to effect change and combine 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches to achieve progress toward improved health and health equity. The approach of the NHA has been adapted to the Thai context from the annual World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization (WHO), although aiming for less bureaucracy, more flexibility and greater inclusiveness.

During the 5th National Health Assembly, held on December 18-20, 2012, at BITEC, Bangkok, Thailand, [115] nine agenda items were discussed. "Monks and Building Well Being" was the third agenda item discussed in the NHA. The resolution of the agenda was as follows:

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network-construction-among-the-buddhist-monks-in-contemporary-thailand.html).

[113] http://en.nationalhealth.or.th/Health_Assembly.

[114] Kumanan Rasanathan, Innovation and participation for healthy public policy: the first National Health Assembly in Thailand. Blackwell Publishing Ltd Health Expectations. 2011: 3-5.

[115] http://en.nationalhealth.or.th/nha2012.

"The 5th National Health Assembly[116] … Having considered the report on Buddhist monks and development of monks' well-being … Recognizing that 95% of Thai people are Buddhists, for whom the teachings of the Buddha serve as a way of life and become the foundation of rituals and culture that are identity and heritage of the Thai nation. Monks play a highly important role in inherit Buddhism, developing knowledge of virtue and ethics, and in the development of local community societies, serving as positive role models for communities in taking care of their own health, temple environment, and expanding those results into developing well-being of the community."

Concerned that monks have health problems, especially chronic diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension, ischemic heart disease, and hyperlipidemia, for which one important contributing factor is the food offered to them by householders who lack knowledge, understanding and awareness of the drawbacks to illness among monks. In addition, some monks engage in risk behaviours, which cause various illnesses, such as smoking tobacco, drinking coffee, drinking energy drinks, and lacking proper exercise, and that if these matters are not addressed, more monks are likely to become ill.

Acknowledging that monks' health problems are being addressed by various agencies, but those agencies only do it on an ad hoc basis and lack mechanisms of operation, integration with various sectors, and operate only in certain areas. Although monks have health insurance, they still have problems on access to medical and health services, including continuous and comprehensive care when they are sick.

Concerned that if there is no process development of promoting and caring for monks' health, this will cause the mechanism of inherit Buddhism and righteous development of virtue and ethics that is important to Thailand to be weakened, Appreciating that many

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[116] http://en.nationalhealth.or.th/sites/default/files/NHA-26-resolution11_HAprocess_Eng.pdf.

operations have been implemented, such as the Health Promoting Temple Project, the Monks' Network for Health Promotion Project of the Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health, the Monks' health management in Si-khio district by the Health Assembly of Nakhon Ratchasima along with the Saṅgha Pathana Network of Khorat, the successful project addressing the problem of unplanned teen pregnancy of the abbot of Wat Sirattnaram, Chonsombun sub-district, Nong Muang district, Lopburi, the 5-S Temple project by monks in Saraburi, and Serene Temple, Healthy Monks by Community Means project in Singburi.

Deeming that it is necessary to address importance of healthcare for monks so they have a good quality of life, and well-being physically, emotionally, intellectually, and socially, as well as to arrange an environment that promotes health, by building connections between the temple and the community, making monks healthy, temples stable, and the community resilient, Has, therefore, passed the following resolution:

1. Requesting Office of National Buddhism (an agency responsible for monk affairs) to serve as the lead agency in coordinating with the Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Ministry of Culture, academic institutes, local administration, community organizations, related public and private networks as follows:

    1.1. Develop guidelines for monks compatible with both the Pra Dhamma-Vinaya and health situation.

    1.2. Work together with network of development monks to prepare strategic plans for implementing health promotion temples in order to facilitate participation on health care for monks and community.

    1.3. Implement and develop a registry and set up a nationwide information database for monks to ensure that they enjoy

the rights and benefits they are entitled to within the appropriate bounds of monkhood.

1.4. Promote, encourage, and develop monk organizations and networks of development monks by monk leaders in taking care of their health and other monks in the areas of responsibility, as well as participating in building community well-being, taking into consideration on spiritual health development, such as meditation and walking meditation, and providing support for monks who want to study Thai traditional medicine, alternative medicine, and first-aid.

1.5. Collaborate with community organizations in providing health care to all monks in the local areas in a comprehensive and proper manner.

1.6. Collaborate with monks, Ministry of Education, Buddhist Universities, and Thai Health Promotion Foundation in promoting and supporting the inclusion of materials related to "Buddhist Monks and Development of Monks' Well Being" in various educational curriculums for monks, such as the Sankhathikarn administrative training curriculum, Buddhist university curriculums, the Dhammacharik wandering spiritual monk curriculum, and curriculum for development monks.

2. Requesting the Ministry of Public Health to take action, coordinate and cooperate with agencies/networks that provide health care including public and private organizations, local administration, monks, communities, and civil society in the implementation areas:

2.1 Develop systems and models of health services, basic physical examination, and screening for chronic diseases,

follow-up visits and care for monks with chronic diseases or disabilities in a comprehensive and continuous manner.

2.2 Campaign to promote public awareness about making offering with healthy food and drink and avoiding or stopping giving things that are detrimental to health, especially tobacco that could lead to chronic diseases.

3. Requesting the National Health Security Office to improve the service criteria of health facilities to enable monks to get better access to and make use of health services in every health facility, both public and private, that is part of the service network of the local health security office.

4. Requesting the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Health to promote and support all Buddhist universities and other education institutions in setting up regular research studies and innovations on health care for monks as well as developing appropriate forms of exercise for monks.

5. Requesting local administration at all levels to allow monks the opportunity to participate in working groups or committees on the development of community health care;

6. Requesting monks and networks of development monks

6.1 To develop models, guidelines and processes of learning to promote and support the development of wellbeing for monks and communities with monks as leaders.

6.2 To work together with the Ministry of Public Health to develop and ensure more temples to meet the standards of health promoting temple according to plans that will be worked out.

7. Requesting members of the National Health Assembly to continue to promote, support and keep the issue of "Buddhist Monks and Development of Monks' Wellbeing" active at the ground level.

8. Requesting the Secretary General of the National Health Commission to report progress to the 7th National Health Assembly.

After the consensus of resolution on Buddhist Monks and Development of Monks' Well Being, NHA submitted to the National Health Committee for approval. Then the approved resolution was summited to the cabinet in order to forward to related organization for implementation. Buddhist monk network met with staffs of the office of National Health Commission twice, in Nakornratchasima and Chonburi to follow up and develop action plan of this resolution.

Apart from attempting to make a proposal and participate in policymaking, Buddhist monk, in Thailand, also involve in health promotion. Several programs have been implementing in the temple area as well as in the community. Here are some examples of the projects under the support of Thai Health Promotion Foundation and selected as outstanding performances.

6.6 Alcohol and Tobacco Free Temples [117]

Thai Health and the Stop Drinking Network initiated a campaign for alcohol-free and tobacco-free temples with its' *Choomchon-Khemkhaeng-Kadkarn-Ton-aeng-Dai* ('a-healthy-community-can-manage-itself') strategy by involving every member of the community in the education and participation processes, to achieve the goal. They also seek cooperation from the authorities that have the responsibility for religious activities at the national level including Religious Affairs

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[117] 60 Outstanding Performances 2001-2009, Thai Health Promotion Foundation: 8-11.

Department, Office of National Buddhism and Saṅgha Supreme Council. This so the campaign could take place at both the central and local levels, which can later develop policies, measures, and a model for alcohol-free and tobacco-free temples.

The campaign had carried on for a period of time before the government eventually realized its' importance. Regulations of alcohol sales in temple compounds were later enacted in 2005, followed by the Act of Alcohol Control in 2008. In the first year of the "Alcohol-free temple" operation, 1,648 temples applied for participation in this project, which was above the anticipated number of 1,000 temples. The project included various activities such as an opening ceremony, an official meeting of participants and observers, public relations via community radio, documents and magazines as well as a meeting of ecclesiastical district officers to acknowledge the project and policies. Other activities included a seminar and training for district level monks coordinators as each district has three coordinators, a one-day temple and community visit in each district led by an ecclesiastical provincial governor and his followers, and a project orientation for the abbots as well as other related activities.

According to data collected on drinking at temples prior to the project, 83.7% of all abbots from the sample said that drinking appeared at various events, while 55% of the abbots said persons related to the temples drank alcohol in the temple compounds, and only 16.3% insisted that no drinking takes place in their compounds. Information collected after the project commenced showed that 73.6% of the abbots are aware of the alcohol-free temples project and 25% said that drinking happened less, which 16.3% of them had stated previously. Furthermore, 81% of the abbots said that persons related to the temples did not drink at all in the compound since the project started. Only 8.3% of them said that drinking among persons related to the temple connected to the temples decreased in the compound after the project started.

In 2006, the Smoking Free Foundation and Thai Health in cooperation with Mahachulalongkornrajavidyayala University and Wat Mahathat Yuwaraj Rangsarit, organized a press conference concerning the tobacco-free temples campaign. A number of "*Saṅgha* Schools are Tobacco-free Zones" signs were provided to *Saṅgha* schools for campaigning among the students who will later graduate and travel to various communities around the country. In 2007, the Saṅgha Supreme Council informed all ecclesiastical provincial governors about the Public Health Ministry's announcement (17th issue) from 2006 and asked for their cooperation on disseminating its' message to temples under their authority to create tobacco-free temples. According to item number 2 of the announcement, any religious venues, especially the areas used for religious activities and ceremonies are mandated to be smoking-free zones and violators of this law will be fined no more than 20,000 baht. Thus, development of policies and social campaigns for alcohol-free and tobacco-free zones is seen as a significant "reform" of the Buddhist communities in Thailand, and reflects another aspect of the growing health promotion trend in Thailand.

6.7 Festivals without Alcoholic Beverages[118]

Social and cultural values for consumerism in Thai society become more evident during festivals such as the Songkran festival, traditional Thai New Year and at weddings. At these festive events people have luxuriously celebrated with food and alcoholic beverages. Even at funerals there is always a lot of alcohol and food.

One of the initial prototypes developed in 2002 by Mr. Innkaew Ruenpanand, a key leader from Baan Dong, Nayang District, Sobprab, Lampang province with Mr. Nopporn Nilnarong, a local coordinator in Lampang province along with a few more coordinators and religious organizations to help tackle the problematic social values. As the key force behind the project, they started by conducting research with local villagers who jointly helped search resolutions for their own community. What the villagers see, after collecting the data, as the largest expense at funerals, which needs to be reduced, is the cost of supplying alcohol. This is because the funeral has other various kinds of expenses and the reduction can help lessen the other burdens. The record of expenses from a funeral at which no alcohol was served and where liquor was served, has shown how much expenses can be reduced and how much they can save for something more useful. Having realized the huge amount of expense saved at the funeral, the villagers then agree that they should take serious action on this issue.

As for the monks, they also pushed for it in several forms to help the villagers stop drinking. For example, the monks have asked for merit makers not to drink at funerals and told them they would not go to funerals where alcohol was being served as a means to encourage the villagers to stop drinking. Since then, drinking alcohol at funerals has become unpopular with the villagers and has become a good example for other communities to follow.

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[118] 60 Outstanding Performances 2001-2009, Thai Health Promotion Foundation: 42-46.

From funerals without alcohol, the public start became more interested in campaigns for other merit-related traditions such as Thod Kathin, Thod Pa Pah, welcome home, ordination, and other events organized at the temple. The campaign has targeted the following merit-making events:

1. Family-related events
2. Religious events held in the community
3. Ancestor-related events
4. Religious events with festivities and
5. National festivals

The latest data on social conditions in Thailand from The National Economic and Social Development Board shows that expenses on alcohol consumption for the year 2009 has declined from that of 2008

by 7.8% with a total sale quantity of liquor and beer at an amount of 2,519 million liters. The figures are a decrease from 2008 by about 358 million liters.

6.8 Conclusion

As Thailand had experienced the time when its government was forcing its people through the process of 'Thai-ization', people sharing different cultures were discouraged from their own cultural practices following the harsh treatment. Through formal school system and all forms of government propaganda, the nationalist attitude of being Thai has been instilled in the mind of Thai people. The perception of Thailand as a homogeneous society is still active among the people of the present generation. Therefore, it is expected that the younger and the following generations would realize the historical fact of the whole region including Thailand as the areas endowed with multicultural richness. That is why Thai people are expected to perceive Thailand as one of the heterogeneous societies as it has actually been for time immemorial. To begin with, it requires Thai people to learn how to tolerate the ethnic differences, to learn from each other through the process of cultural contact, to understand the differences, and to show respect to other cultures from their own.

Accommodation of different cultures can be found in various parts of Thailand through integrative process. Working on health promotion of many religious organizations in a mid of growing consumerism, secularization, environmental degradation, social problems, and health issues would help in bringing mutual understanding and closed relationship of all existing religions in the country. In case of HIV/AIDS issue, FBOs work hand in hand, and learn from one another to combat the virus. Buddhist monks in Thailand and elsewhere increasingly view social, political and public health activism as appropriate practice aimed at ameliorating the conditions that produce suffering.

The Vinaya, as laid down by the Buddha, in its many practical rules defines the status of a monk as being that of a mendicant. Having no personal means of support is a very practical means of understanding the instinct to seek security; furthermore, the need to seek alms gives a

monk a source of contemplation on what things are really necessary. The four requisites, food, clothing, shelter and medicines, are what lay people can offer as a practical way of expressing generosity and appreciation of their faith in belonging to the Buddhist Community. Returning to this way of practice, Buddhist monks in Thailand try their best to support and participate in public policy making process of proposing the proposal regarding public health as well as health promotion activities. Still, there are much more to do in Thai society.

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RELIGION AND CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT IN MYANMAR

Maung Maung Yin

Those of us who decided to work for democracy in Burma made our choice in the conviction that the danger of standing up for basic human rights in a respective society was preferable to the safety of a quiescent life in servitude.

Aung San Suu Kyi

At a glance, Myanmar's transition is fascinating, and the art of transition being undertaken by the current Myanmar quasi-democratic government, seemingly promising, is also really beautiful, if not perfect, for those who want to work with and in Myanmar. It is however naïve to assert that this transition would go so smooth a process because what it has encountered and currently facing is certainly a kind of pebble that keep it uncomfortable walking along the journey of democracy. Not just for the transition but also for the flare-ups of violence constantly erupting lately these days, another glittering thing that has caught the world's eyes, Myanmar is right now have both positive and negative appraisals.

Having looked a little more than a skin-deep glance, religion is highly involved in the violence allegedly instigated by the government

according to some conspiracy speculators. Nevertheless, these violent incidents were somehow religiously motivated and ignited. This is a very ugly thing for especially a Buddhist country as its government claimed it is. Such atrocities in a peaceful Buddhist country! It is true that when people of faiths can become so terrifying and appalling when their beliefs are insulted. Then, what religious adherents call tolerance slips away. And it is also true that there seem always people who try to get political benefits from communal violence.

No matter how far violence can go, there is a point where it has to cease. It is again religion that somehow started violence, but could also provide the antidote to violence. It is the religions in Myanmar that keep building it even under the iron fist rule of successive military regimes over the last several decades. Even though Myanmar was ranked as one of failed or rogue states, the country did not totally collapse because religions took obligations of nursing the country when the sense of civil society was murdered back in 1962. And still religions' contribution is constantly great in building Myanmar toward a democratic country.

The Burmese traditions, especially Buddhism, recognize five enemies in this world people hardly can avoid: fire, water (i.e. floods and storms), thieves, malevolent people and government. Unfortunately, the people of Myanmar have double tragedy: ruled by the government comprised of malevolent people. The government is included as one of the enemies that entrenched within the history of Burma. It particularly refers to the era of monarchy or the times before the British conquered Burma in the early and mid-19th century. The kings in Burma were referred as *thet-oo-san-pine*, meaning that the kings were absolute in power. The power of kings was absolute that they could remove or execute both officials and citizens at any time, even for the slightest offence.

This legacy of the kings has been largely adopted by the successive military regimes of Myanmar in the 20th century and it is being used

both covertly and overtly. Nevertheless, also in the Burmese traditions, there are ten ethical rules for kings, which are based on Buddhist concepts of loving kindness, tolerance and self-control, derived from Buddhist scriptures: generosity, morality, self-sacrifice, integrity, kindness, austerity, non-anger, non-violence, patience and harmony. None of these rules can be attributed to the military juntas of Myanmar who, ironically, claim themselves as devout Buddhists and patrons of Buddhism yet fail to comply with the demands of Buddhist scriptures.

7.1 A Brief Modern History of Myanmar

> *Here is a society important in itself, strategically situated, possessing rich and varied cultural traditions over a millennium, with extensive natural resources, one from which important lessons may be learned, and yet it is one of the least known of significantly sized states in the contemporary world.*

David I. Steinberg [119]

The population of Burma comprises different ethnic groups of people, speaking different languages, wearing different kinds of costumes, and celebrating different cultural activities. It is, in fact, a rainbow society, and this is, of course, one among many of the country's rich features. The largest ethnic group is Burmese, comprising 65% of the population and living on the plains of the middle and lower regions of Burma. Other ethnic groups such as Shan, Chin, Kachin, Kayin, Kayah, Mon, Lahu, Lisu, Wa and others live on the highlands. Although each ethnic group has its own tongue Burmese is the common language in Burma. Buddhism is the predominant religion, but Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism are also prominent religions in Burma although they are

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[119] David I. Steinberg, *Burma: The State of Myanmar,* Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2001: xxv-xxvi.

comprised of only single digit percentages of the population. During the British rule, from late 18th century to 1948, all ethnic groups, except the Burmese were administered separately as excluded zones, a type of administration later termed in Burmese history as the divide and rule policy.

7.2 Struggling Young Nation

After years of fighting and struggles against the British rule under the leadership of General Aung San—who was later assassinated several months before independence—, independence was granted by the British on January 4, 1948. After gaining its independence from British rule, decided to sever all ties with Britain, with the exception of normal diplomatic relations, through its decision not to join the British Commonwealth of Nations. U Nu, the leader of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) became the first prime minister and the Shan chief, Sao Shwe Thaik, became president of the Union of Burma. Throughout the twelve years of U Nu's government, the main problem was the unification of all of the ethnic groups into a nation, a Union of Burma.

The decade following independence, however, revealed the weaknesses of this new state. In fact, the state was far too weak to implement any ambitious economic plans, and even a limited degree of state intervention resulted in stagnation and unlimited opportunities for corruption. U Nu's principle solution to the tendencies toward fragmentation that afflicted Burma during this period was to try to bring Buddhism into the heart of the state ideology and identity. Buddhist scholarship and education were expanded and enhanced under state patronage, and U Nu planned to make Buddhism the official state religion. In 1948 and 1949, the largely Christian Kayins, incited by some foreign missionaries to fight against Burma and demand an independent state, fiercely battled against the government. The rebellion

was subdued by military action under the command of General Ne Win, but animosity and prejudice came to exist between the Burmese and the Kayins and remain for decades.

In addition to Communist uprisings and secessionist movements of different ethnic groups, threatened the integrity and security of the nation. At this point, in 1958, under the "emergency" clauses, the military was called in by the government to assume temporary control of the country. Although the army had always been subordinate to the civilian government, which, I believe, is the right thing, it had a national reputation for its efficiency, integrity, honesty, and sacrificial attitude for the country and its people. Therefore, as the people admired the army, its intervention was much appreciated. Law and order was quickly restored. The problem, sadly, was that once the army tasted power, it became very difficult to return that power to its original custodian—the civilians. Thus, the military continued to stay in power beyond the statutory period of six months, a decision, which brought strong public disapproval.

In 1960, General Ne Win ordered national elections leading to the formation of a representative government, and civilian rule was restored. However, the army was no longer apolitical since it had tasted the power and authority. Additionally, the army also gained some administrative skills while it was a caretaker government for two years. As such, the military continued to manipulate the political scene and exert its influence. Hence, General Ne Win seized the government on March 2, 1962. The army justified its action in the name of ensuring the continued unity of the nation. In a bloodless *coup d'état*, the legislature was dissolved and large numbers of dissenting politicians, including prime minister U Nu, were interned. The freedom of speech, assembly, and press were allowed on condition that they were not directed against the military government. The seventeen-member Revolutionary Council, composed of Ne Win's closest aides within the army, was formed.

Although the old constitution was theoretically operative, the Revolutionary Council authorized General Ne Win to exercise all legislative, executive, and judicial powers. That was the beginning of the lost of the role of civil society, gradually the sense of it altogether.

7.2.1 The Era of Socialism and Totalitarianism

The Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) was born under Ne Win's leadership in July 1962. Extreme coercion was used in recruiting its members from all over Burma. Peasants and Workers Councils, based on the Soviet model, were formed. Ironically, the party's policies were officially entitled the Burmese Way to Socialism. In 1964, all enterprises, including high schools, colleges, and hospitals, run by foreigners or nationals, were nationalized. All foreign entrepreneurs and agencies, including the missionaries, were expelled in a matter of one week and their property confiscated. Sar Desai states the aftermath of this situation vividly:

> *The paucity of business and management skills among the Burmese made replacements impossible. There were shortages all around, including of rice, which was rationed in a country known in the previous century for being a leading exporter of rice to the rest of the world. The scandalous inability of the public sector to manage the distribution of consumer goods through the 'people's stores' created a vicious and lucrative black market with articles of common use smuggled from East Pakistan [sic] and India. The policy of isolation from the rest of the world cost Burma heavily as the import-export trade and foreign investment virtually ground to a halt.[120]*

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[120] D.R. SarDesai, *Southeast Asia, Past and Present* (2nd edition), Boulder: Westview Press, 1989: 217.

At the same time, the state was distancing itself from social and religious issues, which in its frame of reference were too politically threatening for the state to attempt to control that had in the past led to dissatisfaction among followers of different religious faiths.

Though the Revolutionary Council did not initially phrase its seizure of power in the name of state reassertion, it did so twelve years later when formally passing power to the new legislative body, the *Pyithu Hluttaw* or People's Assembly, formed under the Constitution inaugurated on March 2, 1974. All legislative, judicial and executive powers of state were placed in the hands of the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council. As both head of state and of government, Chairman Ne Win in theory possessed all state power and thus achieved a position of formal dominance within the state. He decided to leave the Non-Aligned Movement in 1979 made more obvious its tendency towards general disengagement from the world. After a quarter of a century, Ne Win's socialistic measures eventually dragged down the country's status to become a least developed country as recognized by the United Nations. Burma was considered one of the poorest nations in the world. It is better to quote Sar Desai's description of Burma under Ne Win's iron-fist rule demonstrates how the country's life, in all aspects, deteriorated:

> *The party's policies, officially entitled `The Burmese Way to Socialism,' were an assortment of ill-conceived and ill-implemented programs, which led the country down the road to bankruptcy by the end of the 1960s. Because the intelligentsia refused to cooperate with the blatantly militaristic regime, the BSPP came increasingly under the influence of left wing or Communist army commanders and Marxist theoreticians. They advocated an economy geared to the welfare of the peasants and workers by eliminating the profit motive and the alien (Indian*

> *and Chinese) middlemen and establishing state-controlled cooperatives in all sectors of the economy.*[121]

Since the press and media were absolutely controlled and censored by the government, the public hardly ever knew what was happening within the governing body or the exact situation of the country itself in terms of finance, domestic and foreign policies. But the things that the people obviously experienced were shortages of food and commodities; a fast growing black-market, which had become a necessary evil; increasing corruption at every corner of the public's daily life; and a frightening inflation that skyrocketed. A struggle to survive for the masses became extremely hard. Crime rates soared, and dropouts among school children alongside child labour rapidly increased. In addition, drug trafficking and prostitution became serious problems in the country People were bewildered, desperate and bitterly resentful towards the government and its ruling system. However, because the role of civil society was totally lost, there was no public sector to check the power, to counter authoritarianism and to help each other and to enable self-help among the peoples. Quietism derived from fear had developed and continued to exist.

Nonetheless, in June 1988, large-scale demonstrations occurred in the big cities and towns throughout Burma. Again, these protests were violently put down by the military forces, under the command of Ne Win's right-hand man, Sein Lwin, who was nicknamed "the butcher" by the people. Ne Win assumed blame for the public resentment, suddenly and dramatically offered his resignation and suggested a national referendum for the people to decide whether the country should have a multiparty system. His stunned colleagues accepted his resignation, but rejected his proposal for a national referendum. It was obvious the military junta feared that a national referendum could eliminate their

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[121] Ibid., 216.

privileged and lucrative political, military, and economic positions built over a quarter century.

7.3 State Law and Order Restoration Council

Within a matter of weeks, the absolute ruling power was handed over to three persons, respectively Sein Lwin, Maung Maung, [122] and General Saw Maung who, one after another, desperately tried to gain control over the country's chaotic situation. With firm determination, these three dictators used an overwhelming military force to stop the people's uprising by providing a rationale of "safeguarding law and order". The junta declared itself the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and heightened the use of military power to suppress the people's movement for democracy. Again, all of the educational institutions were closed. The elementary, middle and high schools were reopened after a year, but all other higher educational institutions ceased operation for three years.

In accordance with the promise given by the military rulers when they assumed power after Ne Win's resignation, and with a realization of the obvious opinion of the people's desire for a multi-party system, the military junta announced a national election to be held in May 1990. Some NGOs, diplomats, and United Nations personnel closely watching the event considered the election amazingly free and fair. The result was a landslide victory for the opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), which was led by Aung San Suu Kyi, with 85% of the votes. According to some sources, the NLD party even won the majority votes in the military zones where families of the military men and women lived.

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[122] A Chief Justice and a Yale graduate, who was the one and only intellectual in Ne Win's handpicked government. He also was known as a pro-Communist and was later condemned by the intelligentsia of Burma as an "intellectual fool".

Stunned by this unexpected result, the military junta refused to honour the election results. They arrested more political dissidents, ridiculously defended themselves against international criticism, and threatened people to stop discussing the electoral results and the issue of handing over power to the winning party to form a new government. Instead, they convened a National Convention, with a majority of the delegates handpicked by them and began drafting a new constitution. No one knew how long it would take, but everybody knew that this constitution, once it was drafted and agreed upon, would definitely accommodate the military junta as the governing body and exclude any individual whom they deemed to be a threat (And it was proved when the present day constitution is done and being exercised). In the meantime, in the manner of saving face domestically and internationally, the junta decided to exercise a so-called open-market economy and began extending invitations for foreign investments, an enterprise in which they have had moderate success due to ASEAN's non-interference policy to its member states, and China taking advantage of Myanmar being isolated and disguised themselves to be a "friend" to overwhelm Myanmar with economic influence through corrupt military personnel.

What is actually happening in Myanmar, famously known as the Golden Land, is sadly something mischievous. Under this die-hard, on-going totalitarian dictatorship for almost five decades, the people of Myanmar have lived in poverty amidst the plenty. The country, once well known as the rice bowl of Asia, is now a nation whose people are starving. The country that used to be known as the Golden Land is now grim and gruesome. Known once as the "Land of smiles", the country has now become the "Land of cries". One can still see people wearing smiles in Myanmar, but these smiles are no longer smiles of joy and contentment, but indeed, the smiles of fear and contempt with a sense of resistance.

Tragically, the army, which once was loved, admired, and respected by the people for its outstanding reputation is now disgusted, despised, and alienated. In spite of all of this atrocity and animosity, the people of Myanmar never give up. The desire of the people to be free from fear and to attain a lasting peace will never be eliminated. As Myanmar people continue to strive to achieve genuine democracy, not the military-guided democracy, we are convinced that the revival of civil society is one of the most important components to reach the goal.

7.4 Religion and Civil Society

The idea of *civil society* refers to associations or groupings and institutions whose social norms, practices or activities are not directly related to or different from government institutions. An essential characteristic of civil society, therefore, is autonomy from government's direct control. Yet, the operations and efforts of civil society are essential to develop and establish a democratic government and nation. In this relation, Steinberg, a political analyst of Myanmar, rightly comments on civil society as "an essential element of political pluralism—the diffusion of power that is the hallmark of modern democracies."[123] As a result of electoral politics, Myanmar has turned out as one of the latest modern democracies in the world since 2011. Yet, democracy or democratic governance is not merely about electoral politics, but its real challenge lies in local institutions and practices under local self-governance that brings the government closer to the people.[124] To respond this challenge, civil society as autonomous and

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[123] David I. Steinberg, "A Void in Myanmar: Civil Society in Burma" in *Strengthening Civil Society in Burma: Possibilities and Dilemmas for International NGOs,* Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1999: 2.

[124] See Rajesh Tandon, "Local Governance, Democratic Transition and Voluntary Development Organizations: Some Lessons from South Asia" in Andrew Clayton (editor), *NGOs, Civil Society and the State: Building*

self-governed local association or institution has important role to address, advocate and contribute for the sake of both the government and the people. Thus, the need to develop and strengthen civil society in Myanmar, a country transitioning towards democracy, is urgent and challenging.

To start developing and strengthening civil society in Myanmar, one should first look into its historical existence or records. Unfortunately, there is no Burmese vocabulary or term, which is equivalent to the western usage of "civil society". This lack of direct and historical reference made historical overview or study about civil society in Myanmar difficult. In fact, there were activities and associations, though they were not systematically or formally organized, in small villages and also in urban towns, in which the sense of western idea of civil society could be identified. To try to identify the sense of civil society, its repression and also its development in Myanmar, it is helpful to divide the political context of Myanmar into three periods: *before*, *under/during* and *after* military regime.

Before Military Regime: Monarchy, British colonial rule (1885-1948) and democratic government amidst civil wars (1948-1958/62) were political contexts of Myanmar. In traditional kingdoms (monarchies) located in plains and river valleys of present day, there were traditional records that people organized themselves for a common purpose, for social events and initiatives beyond the family life and outside of the state structure, which were led mostly by Buddhist religious organizations. [125] Such social events and activities, as long as they were politically engaged, were not banned during British colonial rule, and formal religious and indigenous associations (e.g. Burma Baptist Missionary Convention {now MBC} in 1865, Young Men's

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Democracy in Transitional Societies, Wiltshire, UK: INTRAC Publication, 1996: 114.
[125] Tom Kramer, *Civil Society Gaining Ground: Opportunities for Change and Development in Burma*, Amsterdam: Drukkerij Primavera Quint, 2011: 6.

Buddhist Association (YMBA) in 1906, and the General Council of Burmese Associations (GCBA) in 1920) were even growing in the first half of the twentieth century.[126] And, after the independence in 1948, independent and autonomous organizations became strong and new ones proliferated especially in urban areas such as Yangon and Mandalay. For example, pre-established *Myoneh Athins* (township-associations) came to operate more freely and numerous library clubs, student and professional organizations came to exist and operate.[127] These examples show that there had been sense of civil society in Myanmar's historical contexts before military regime took political power in March 1962.

Under/During Military Regime: The dictator Ne Win alone came to exercise full executive, legislative and judicial authorities and along with the Parliament, Supreme Court and Constitution other small and big organizations/associations were dissolved, and some were replaced by government-controlled association and put under the leadership of military men. Businesses, industries, private and missionary schools, hospitals, libraries, etc. were nationalized. And, New Win continued his dictatorship in the form of one-party rule from 1974-1988. In fact, civil society in Myanmar then was purposefully destroyed as Steinberg argued, "Civil society died under the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP); perhaps, more accurately, it was murdered."[128] After 1988, following a bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protesters, somewhat ironic change took place in the leadership of military regime, e.g. the government office changed into the State, Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) which later became the State, Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Since then, under military regime's control and investigation, many types of NGOs were allowed.[129] Those

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[126] Ibid., 7.
[127] Ibid., 7-8. See also "Myanmar: The Role of Civil Society" in *International Crisis Group (ICG) Asia Report,* Bangkok/Brussels, December 6, 2001: 3-4.
[128] Steinberg 1999.

allowed I/NGOs were service-giving organizations and there were almost none that served by advocating the rights of the oppressed peoples within the country. Thus, civil society actors are required in Myanmar to work with military leaders. Tom Kramer termed such kind of government-controlled civil society in Myanmar as "the Burmese way to civil society". And, Marc Purcell paradoxically contends, "An essential problem facing INGOS in Burma is the lack of civil society."[130] Therefore, it could be concluded that civil society in Myanmar had continued disappearing in the manner of "the Burmese way to civil society" until recent political transition from military regime to parliamentary government.

After Military Regime: Political transitioning period has already been more than three years since 2011. There are problems and prospects in this period. Whereas such political problems of this period as reducing military influence in Parliaments, amending or changing the Constitution and civil wars and violence between Buddhists and Muslims especially in Rakhine state, are challenging and urgent, some prospects could be identified, among others, in the proliferations of civil societies as autonomous and independent associations and organizations. Though there are certain restrictions and insufficiencies, there are some civil societies that could advocate for the rights and responsibilities of the people.

During the time of "the Burmese way to civil society", one survey in 2003 estimated that there were 214,000 community-based organizations in Myanmar, including those that service a local need such as parent-teachers' associations, day care centres, and so on. It is hope that these numbers would have turned into more independent and autonomous than before. Therefore, this period of transition is a good time to develop and strengthen civil society in Myanmar. The role of religions, which has

been an integral part in the story of civil society throughout its historical overview, needs to be focused and highlighted more than ever before.

Religion and Civil Society in Myanmar: To study civil society in Myanmar context, one needs to look into the roles of religions and religious organizations because they were the ones that have involved and sustained in civil society activities since its inception and throughout decades under military dictatorships. Since strengthening civil society requires improving intellectual, material and organizational bases of the actors of the civil society, religious organizations in Myanmar, e.g. Buddhist monasteries and Christian churches, have taken roles in educating, healing and providing material needs while military regime was failing to take those responsibilities. In this relation, Brian Heidel writes, "Possibly the single largest driving force for civil society initiatives around the country has been religion. Religious NGOs are not only more numerous than any other type of NGO, they are also much older."[131] And, Myanmar is deeply religious, and religions have served as cornerstone for people to organize themselves or join networks of like-minded people for religious as well as social purposes.

7.5 Effective Roles by Religions and Religious Organizations

David Steinberg, internationally known a Burma scholar from Georgetown University in Washington D.C., stated, "the quintessential examples of civil society throughout Burmese history have been religious organizations at the local level."[132] It was true in the past, and also under the successive regimes when the adherents of religions have taken initiatives, of course not without risks, to revive the civil society in Myanmar until this moment.

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[131] See Heidel, Brian, *The Growth of Civil Society in Myanmar,* Bangalore: Books for Change, 2006.
[132] Steinberg 1999.

7.6 Myanmar Institute of Theology (MIT)

MIT was first established in 1927 with three students as the English Department of the Karen Baptist Theological Seminary for students who wanted to have the seminary education through the medium of English language. As the years passed by, it has become an independent seminary, namely Burma Divinity School (BDS) and then became MIT, a premier seminary in the country that offers theological degrees, accredited by the Association of Theological Education in Southeast Asian (ATESEA). The latter has recently been renamed as Association of Theological Union (ATU of ATESEA). MIT now has more than 1000 students in both Liberal Arts and Theology programs.

Accordingly, MIT started its educational enterprise solely as a seminary for theological education to train Christian pastors and ministers for the churches in Myanmar and other related Christian organizations. It remained as it was until the year 2000, when the Liberal Arts program was established. The reason behind this was because the decline of secular education gradually became serious and the achievement of quality education for the students, especially in the secondary level education was non-existence. Sadly, corruption crept into the country's educational enterprise, and it became outrageously expensive to get quality education for ordinary people, let alone for the poor.

In the time of such a crisis, MIT decided and determined to take a risk to establish the Liberal Arts program with the intention to give quality education for future generations of Burmese with affordable costs. This would mean that MIT would subsidize some costs so that those who are eligible, regardless of race and religion, could get into the program through entrance exam (only for English language proficiency test). Since MIT's capacity in terms of space is limited, between 150 and 200 of its students have been admitted annually in six majors i.e. English, Social Studies, Religion, Business, Computer Science and

Music. Fortunately, it seems that what we have been doing was not deemed as a threat by the military regime. It seems that MIT has been spared, and has not bothered until the present time. Thus, MIT has become the one and only private institutions that has been considered as a university in the region, and has nurtured more than a thousand Liberal Arts graduates, where 60% of them are employed, while some had gone abroad for further studies. Currently, MIT envisions to become a Christian University in the not-too-distant future.

Another establishment that MIT dared to have under the control of the regimes is the establishment of a Peace Studies Centre at the time when peace was considered a "dirty" word. Although the gap of understanding of peace between the military junta and MIT was quite wide, the Peace Studies Centre was nonetheless founded in 2006. The main objective was to disseminate the true understanding of peace among the people, and empower the grassroots by conducting peace workshops with them. From 2008 to the present, the Peace Centre has convened more than 20 workshops on topics such as conflict transformation, domestic violence, human trafficking, trauma awareness and healing, and also by Integrating Peace Studies in the existing seminary curricula for ethnic groups in the remote regions of Myanmar. Giving public awareness and, at the same time, empowerment to the oppressed, these workshops in light of the understanding of peace have been greatly appreciated by the stakeholders.

As an illustration, when the "Conflict Transformation" workshop was conducted for the Wa people, one of the participants lamented, "Why did such knowledge of peace come to us so late?" When the "Domestic Violence" workshop was participated among certain ethnic groups living in the remote, mountainous region, the faculties were shocked to hear how frequent young women were sexually exploited by men under the name of culture and tradition. In the "Human Trafficking" workshop, which was convened in a town near the China

border where human trafficking is so prevalent, a mother recounted a story how she went to China to rescue her daughter when she discovered that the latter was trafficked. Another story involved a woman Christian minister who was just released from imprisonment after being accused of human trafficking. She described her naiveté by explaining how she had thought that she was helping her fellow women to secure well-paid jobs in China.

Many such stories abound, and had convinced MIT that awareness building and empowerment could only be effectively executed by religious organizations, NGOS and INGOs that have a strong sense of responsibility as part of civil society, and be committed to expanding their roles to enhance its influence in the country.

7.7 Ywama Baptist Church

Founded in 1904, the Ywama Baptist Church—one of the largest Burmese-speaking congregations in Yangon—has set its missions and ministries to tackle sensitive social issues. It has been involved in many socially oriented missions for the disenfranchised throughout the period of militarism. In fact, during those years, the country's health system almost totally collapsed due to the shortage of medicines and medical equipment in public hospitals. Patients had to purchase almost everything for medical treatment and corruption was rampant among the health personnel. For such circumstances, many lives had been lost unnecessarily, while numerous others suffered from various kinds of diseases without proper treatment.

This was where Ywama Baptist Church came in to help the sick by opening a charity clinic where all patients could come to the clinic for treatment without discrimination, free of charge. The Church lowered the costs of treatment, and many well-wishers, both local and overseas, donated to lessen the burden of the people, including the German Embassy, which had extended its help to build medical facilities.

Doctors, nurses and other health and logistic workers are from YBC, and offer their time, energy and expertise twice a week with their motto being: "We treat, God heals". The YBC has helped many to resolve their health issues, and the mission has ever since grown, and continue to operate without any proselytization activities.

About five years ago, a few, young-adult women who were self-motivated to help the street children who earn their living by picking plastic materials from one garbage can to another. As they told about the plight of these children to the Church Council, after deliberations, the church has decided to help these children to regain their childhood and human dignity in some ways. A group of youths and young adults from YBC volunteered to participate in this program, called "Sharing Love" as they gathered nearly 200 children, average age ranges from like six to 13, once a week in the church's community hall. These children have lost their childhood, as they have to live and earn for their living, and also became aggressively quarrelsome because of the life they live. Lack of human dignity and poverty push their lives into misery and despair.

As they came to the church voluntarily once per week in the morning just a maximum of two hours, the volunteers teach them hygiene, bathe them, give them clean used clothes sometime, feed them with nutritious food, play and dance with them, tell stories with moral lessons and sing along with them. They also hug them, hold their hands, and try their best to provide warmth, affection and security. They enjoy experiencing a decent life for a moment, but the volunteers hope that they will gradually change into strong characters with good decency. Those who would like to go to school, with their parents' permission, the "Sharing Love Program" provide them with scholarships in which the community appreciates highly. Church members have also come to support this program with money and materials. Being a religious organization, the Church come to work as a civil society for those who cannot help

themselves through self-motivation, self-help and free from government intervention. This has proven that non-profit organizations can also work effectively and efficiently.

7.8 Wailu Wun Monastery

This monastery is one of the well-known, which has been engaged in social work under the leadership of the chief abbot, Sayadaw Ashin Pyinyaw Batha. With great compassion and enthusiasm, he established an elementary school for children in the surrounding villages whose parents are so poor that they just couldn't afford to pay for their children's needs to send them to school. Although elementary education is free, as it is fully supported by the government, some expenses such as school uniforms, books and stationary and snacks are not provided. Such additional costs for the whole year is simply not possible for the poor families living in the countryside whose survival is dependent on day to day earning.

This is where the Monastery came in, and fills the gap for children's education by supporting all the basic needs for the poor in the surrounding villages so that they would at least get elementary education for free. In addition, they also have to learn civic lessons, moral lessons of Buddhism and character forming disciplines. Based on our observation and interviews, both students and teachers enjoyed their daily schedule at school and other routines in the morning and evening. However, they also teach and learn with joy because of the absence of coercion. They feel that the sense of voluntarism is necessary for the sake of the common good for each individual and the community.

The abbot also extended free health service to the sick on Saturdays, and frequently organize blood donors for emergency need of the patients. Pyinyaw Batha is so considerate that he even built, with the help of the well-wishers, a crematorium for the dead, which lessens the

anxieties of the people to bury their loved ones with low costs and also with convenience and comfort. [133]

7.9 Thandar Mye Monastery in Rakhine State

Sayadaw Ashin Therananda, the chief abbot of Thandar Mye Monastery in Kyauk Phyu, Rakhine state designated himself as superintendent of the Dharma Centre and Monastery Education, which he has operated for some years. He is considerably young in terms of age, but courageous to engage in the social issues since he took care of the aged and orphans or children from very poor family with one parent. In a poor Southeast Asian country like Myanmar, it was a tragedy to see the aged people, those who "lost the shade" when they get older because there is no one to look after them when they no longer can help themselves. Those aged people became desperate and feel discarded as if they are disposable when they are no longer able to live a life like before. Social welfare in this sector, like many others sectors in the country, is so feeble and is hardly any help. A monastery like this, which is self-motivated, self-help, self-governed, noted the risks, yet determined to help these unfortunate people.

With the same kind of attitude and manner, Ashin Therananda run the Monastery education for elementary school children free of charge, and support the students' needs for schooling. Then send the graduates of the elementary schools to continue to middle and high schools, and provide their basic needs. Both the aged people and the orphans receive simple meals three times a day, a place to worship and meditate, housing, albeit in poor condition, but safe enough to study and rest at night.

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[133] Interview with Sayadaw Ashin Pyinyaw Batha on March 14, 2014.

7.10 Free Funeral Service Society in Yangon

Dying with dignity is questionable for poverty stricken people in crowded cities and towns. It is an unnecessary burden for the families who mourn for their loved ones. They must confront various anxieties and uncertainties because burying the dead has become increasingly expensive. People have to borrow money with not small interest to bury the dead, which only burdens them with debt. Hence, necessary evil takes advantage of it. People who have money make contract with the bereaved family that they would take care of all the expenditures for the funeral if the family gives permission to run the gambling (card-playing) business in their house for seven days. Thus, a mourning house turned to a rigorous gambling place for day and night, more serious during the night, for seven days. The bereaved family will then be helped by money from gambling, but their neighbours and relatives will suffer great losses through the activity. In fact, it has nowadays gradually become a lucrative business in many cities, towns and villages in the countryside where people become impoverished because of the economic burden of burying the dead. It has raised serious ethical issue, if not corruption, and the silence on part of government officials only make it worse.

At one point, about a little more than a decade ago, one famous movie actor Kyaw Thu and his wife motivated to help poor people die with dignity when the time had come. They helped bereaved families from despair, because they did not have enough money to bury their dead relatives. They were self-motivated, self-help and self-funded in the beginning of this service with government military officials seriously frowning upon them. It came to a point when Kyaw Thu had to flee, and hide because of the threat of arbitrary arrest. However, he and his wife gained tremendous support not only from their friends but also from the people. Many came to donate money to extend and expand this kind of service in different townships in Yangon.

Gradually, it spread to other parts of the country as the public became aware of the merit of such a service. Because of this, gambling significantly declined, and in some places eliminated. YFFS renders service with compassion, patience and understanding to everyone who asks for their service regardless of race and religion. The enterprise has now grown, and flourished in cities, towns and villages. Such social service has helped crystalized the sense of civil society, and in effect made people convinced of the power of civil society. It has also inspired the public to work hard to sustain the existence of civil society in the public sphere.

These are merely examples of the fruitful and effective activities of religious organizations, which work toward developing a stronger civil society in Myanmar. [134] I believe that such services are still scarce due to lack of funding, human resources and commitment of organizations and people, who remain confined in fear and ignorance.

7.11 Appendix

The ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People's Public Forum was held in Myanmar Convention Centre in Yangon, Myanmar on March 21-23, 2014 under the theme "Advancing Asean People's Solidarity toward Sustainable Peace, Development, Justice and Democratization". The first of its kind in decades since Myanmar and "ASEAN governments have been moving into areas where civil society organizations have been active for decades. Moving beyond attitudes that used to range from animosity to indifference on the part of states, and mostly anti-government sentiment among activists, both sides have learned to embrace and manage the relationship," said *Bangkok Post* on

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[134] It is unfortunate that due to limited resource and circumstances, the author was unable to explore the work of Muslim communities.

March 17, 2014. We do hope that this would be the sign of the times that the development of Civil Society takes an initiating momentum.

Another promising episode regarding civil society took place in Yangon. Sponsored by Yadana Myitta Nyunt (Local NGO working for children's development) and UNICEF held a conference under the theme "Faith for Children" in Chatrium Hotel, Yangon Myanmar on April 2 and 3, 2014. Leaders of different faith organizations, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Hindu, attended the meeting and eventually signed an agreement to work together to end oppression of children on the basis of religion. The religious leaders announced that they agreed to protect children from violence, neglect, ill-acts and exploitation and further the cause through consultations and cooperation. Again, this is the first of its kind and makes those who are working to promote the roles of religions and religious organizations for the development of civil society very much encouraged (*Daily Eleven Newspaper*, April 4, 2014).

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8

VIETNAM'S POLICY ON RELIGIOUS
AFFAIRS SINCE 1990

A Cultural-Religious Viewpoint

Nguyen Quang Hung

8.1 Historical Context Prior 1990

As some other countries in the region, Vietnam has a thousand-year-long history. According to the legends about kings of Hung as a successor of dragon the first Vietnamese kingdom named *Van Lang* was founded in 2880 BC.[135] The worship of the Hung's Kings (March 10, according to Chinese moon calendar) becomes popular now in Vietnam.[136] In reality, the first state of Vietnam might be founded only in the first millennium B.C. From 257 to 207 B.C., the Kingdom of Au Lac had existed with the king of An Duong Vuong. Its citadel was in Co Loa, about 20 km far from Hanoi centre. After the fall of the kingdom of Au Lac from 207 B.C. to 938 A.D. there was the so-called "a thousand years of Chinese occupation".

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[135] Other countries in the East Asian region had various legends on their origins, such as that Korean people had their origin from a bear.

[136] According to those legends the kings of Hung existed for hundred of years and there were their eighteen generations. Since last years the worship of the Hung kings becomes a national festival and holiday.

Since then beside of indigenous religions and beliefs, mainly shamanism and animism, the 'three teachings', also Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, were widespread during the first centuries of the Christian era. In the year of 938, Vietnam gained its independence. From 938 to 1009 under the Ngo and the pre-Le dynasties Buddhism had played a very important role. Furthermore, from eleven to fourteen centuries Buddhism was a state religion of Dai Viet under the Ly and Tran dynasties. King Tran Nhan Tong became a founder of a Vietnamese Zen Buddhism, which is so called as Zen Buddhism of the *Truc Lam Yen Tu*. That was a golden time of Vietnamese Buddhism. From the 15th to 19th centuries under the leadership of Le and Nguyen dynasties, Confucianism took on the role as the state religion. The King was considered as a Son of Heaven (*Thien tu*). According to Confucian historian, a court is in triumph or in decline period depended on whether it has or lost Heaven's mandate.

Generally, the syncretism of the three teachings, also Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism serves as a spiritual basis for most traditional Vietnamese. However, there are regional differences in Vietnam. In North Vietnam, Mahayana Buddhism is widespread. Meanwhile, Theravada Buddhism is the main religion in South Vietnam. North Vietnam is more influenced and swayed by the Chinese culture (Confucianism, Mahayana Buddhism and Taoism) than of Indian culture, which is prevalent in South Vietnam. Similarly, the Champa culture is dominant in the central coast area, while Khmer in the Mekong delta region. From a cultural-religious point of view, Vietnamese are secular and polytheistic. In any case, Vietnam is a Confucian and Buddhist country. Religion plays a very important role in Vietnamese spiritual life. Tran Trong Kim once wrote, "Vietnamese are

oft not deep in their heart. They believe in ghosts, and are active in worshipping, but no devotion to any religion." [137]

The Christian mission began in 1533 and together with that Christian cultural values and the Western philosophical ideas became widespread in Vietnam. From the beginning, there was a gap between Christian and non-Christian communities due to so-called 'question of ritual'. There are also stark differences between Christian and traditional Vietnamese cultural-religious outlook, values and rituals. Unfortunately, before the second Vatican Council, the Christians were not allowed to carry out ancestral worship, a symbol for piety according to Confucian doctrine. For this reason, there were not unlikely from their home people. The situation escalated when Christian mission, carried out by French Mission Etrangères de Paris and Spain Dominicans, had close ties with colonialism at the end of the 18th century. As a consequence, the Christians experienced harsh persecution under the Nguyen dynasty in the 19th century. The Christians were considered as adherents of "false religion" (*ta dao*). Main Christian persecutions were carried out very hard by the Kings Minh Mang and Tu Duc in 1833, 1835, 1847, 1851, 1854, 1857, 1859 and especially in 1861.

From 1858 to 1945, Vietnam became a French colony. A contrast between Confucian and Christian world outlooks and values, on the one side, and the close association between Christian mission and colonialism, on the other side, are the main reasons for the Christian persecution and the long-held distrust between Christian and non-Christian communities. The conflicts between Christians and non-Christians did not subside during the colonial period, especially during the *Can Vuong* (Help the King) movement under leadership of Confucians. The slogan of this movement was "Killing Frenchmen as well Catholics" (*Binh Tay Sat Ta*), despite the fact that the Nguyen

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[137] Tran Trong Kim, *Viet Nam su luoc* (Vietnam: A Short History), Publishing House of Da Nang, Da Nang, 2003: 15

dynasty allowed freedom of worship in the Nham Tuat Agreement in 1862 between Nguyen court and Spain-French alliance. Under French colonial authorities in 1874, the Christians were allowed to participate in court exams and to be Mandarins. The massacre of Christians also occurred at the end of the 19th century. Hundreds of Christian and non-Christian villages were burned especially in the central provinces of Nghe An, Ha Tinh and Quang Binh. An estimated 100,000-130,000 Christians became victims of persecution by the Nguyen dynasty and the Can Vuong movement. The Catholic Church in Vietnam today is proud to have 117 saint-martyrs (11 French, 10 Spanish missionaries and ninety six Vietnamese), among them some bishops and priests. [138]

The Protestant mission began in Vietnam with the arrival of the Christian Missionary Alliance (CMA) from the United States only in 1911, more than three centuries after the Catholic missionaries. There are currently Protestant branches such as Methodists, Presbyterian, Adventists, etc. Only recently, the Vietnam government recognizes social legal status of some of them, including Jehovah's Witness, although this sect has no or little social legitimacy in some of the countries of the region, such as in South Korea.

Seen from a cultural-religious viewpoint, Vietnam is more of an East Asian country than a Southeast Asian one. At first, Vietnam is a Confucian country. Although Buddhists consist just a little over ten million, one could say that most Vietnamese people are heavily influenced by Buddhism. It is not an exaggeration to state that Vietnam is a Buddhist country, just like others in the region, such as Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar, albeit in the post-colonial period until the collapse of the Communist bloc, Vietnam became a secular, if not an atheist, state. Apart from Buddhism, Vietnam also has a significant number of Christians i.e. Catholics and Protestants. The state

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[138] Patrick J. N. Tuck, *French Catholic Missionaries and the Politics of Imperialism in Vietnam 1857-1914: A documentary survey*, England: Liverpool University Press, 1987.

of affairs in Vietnam today has become somewhat more complex than before with the current population of over ninety million on November 1, 2013. [139]

Table 1: Religions in Vietnam today[140]

Religions	Adherents (in millions)
Buddhists	around 12
Catholics	more than 6
Cao Dai (mostly in Mekong delta region)	2,5
Hoa Hao (mostly in Mekong delta region)	1,5
Protestants	about 1
Others	about 2
Total	25

With just less than 10% of Christians in Vietnam, the country comes second after the Philippines in terms of the number of Christians in the region. Regarding the development of Buddhism, Buddhist Temples claim to have around fifty million adherents, while the authorities admit only twelve million. There is a small number of Muslims in Vietnam too, mainly among the Cham ethnic group, occupying the central coastal region. The number of Muslims has increased in the past decade or so because of improving relations between Vietnam and Middle Eastern countries. Today, they constitute less than one hundred thousand.

Given the demographics, what is the most popular religion or faith in Vietnam? Aside from the above religious adherents, three fourth of Vietnamese population are in fact not atheists, despite the fact that they classify themselves as being 'the nones' in their curriculum vitae. It should be emphasized here that the authorities approved the curriculum

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[139] Ban ton giao chinh phu, *Sach trang ve ton giao va chinh sach ton giao cua Viet Nam* [White Book on Religion and Government Policy Regarding Religious Affairs in Vietnam], Hanoi, 2007.
[140] White Book 2007: 29.

vitae formula during the Cold War period, when religion was denied any role in social development in Vietnam. Currently, most Vietnamese engage in ancestral worship, a traditional faith that has existed for quite some time in this country. With the mixture of Confucianism, Taoism and Mahayana Buddhism, most Vietnamese are secular yet polytheists in their spiritual life. With the exception of Christians, the majority of Vietnamese are not devout followers of any religion. While it is true that the Vietnamese frequently pray, but they mostly pray for health, success or happiness in this world, hence neither for *nirvana* nor salvation. So, one can also argue the Vietnamese are not atheists or irreligious at all.

In pre-colonial period, the situation in Vietnam was very similar with some countries in East Asia such as China, Korea and Japan. In a traditional Confucian society the emperor ruled the country with heaven's mandate. There were no conflicts between native authorities and religions, even when Buddhism was a state religion from 11th to 14th centuries and Confucianism was a state religion in 15th-19th centuries. The main reason was the fact that Buddhism and Confucianism in Vietnam were not "pure", but took a syncretic form from each other. They are tolerant with other faiths and teachings. Even the Temple of Literature in Hanoi, the first ever university in Vietnam, was established in the 11th century at the time when Buddhism was a state religion.

The situation changed with the arrival of Christian missionaries. Due to its monotheistic nature and the fact that the Catholic Church is relatively independent from state administration, the question of church-state relations, which has been a historical feature of many Western countries, has also arisen in Vietnam. Most European countries treated Christianity as a state religion during the medieval period. Following the French revolution, some countries followed a model of a secular nation-state and separation between church and state through incremental steps.

The model of secular nation-state and the clear church-state separation became highly problematic when it became widespread in

East Asia. A Confucian court could not accept any socio-religious institution, which is relatively independent from state authorities or administration and vehemently oppose the policies of the court. A Confucian emperor lost his legitimacy whenever Vietnam became a Christian country as European missionaries had dreamed of. The conflict between the church and state was unavoidable even from a purely cultural-religious perspective. There were Christian persecutions in China, Korea and Japan. In Vietnam, due to some special native historical and cultural conditions, the French colonial authorities in Indochina did not carry out the church-state separation law, as it has been applied in France since 1905.

A transformation in the relationship between state and religious institutions occurred in 1945 when the Communists came to power, and the Democratic Republic Vietnam (DRV, now SRV) was founded. Interestingly, Ho Chi Minh cited a fragment of the United States Declaration of Independence, which reads: "All men are created equal; they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." This immortal statement was derived from the 1776 U.S. Declaration of Independence. In a broader sense, this means: "All the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free." [141]

Shortly after the Declaration, the situation changed. Following faithfully the Marxist doctrine on religion, the Vietnamese Communists wanted to build an atheist state, and had dreamed on the so-called "Communist Society" as a substitute for paradise on earth. At the end of 1940s, a discussion at a Communist newspaper, *Su that* (The Truth), ensued on the contrast between atheist and religious world outlooks. Any role of religion for the development of society was denied, which caused sharp conflict between the state authorities and churches, even

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[141] Ho Chi Minh, *Tuyen ngon doc lap*. Dang cong san Viet Nam, *Van kien Dang, Toan tap* [Ho Chi Minh, Independence Declaration. In: Communist Party of Vietnam, Documents], Vol.7: 434.

that of the Buddhists. Despite Ho Chi Minh's calling for the solidarity among all political parties and religious organizations in struggle for national independence, some Buddhist monks had taken part in the Inter-Religious Front against Communists (*Mat tran Lien ton chong cong*) during the First Indochina War. In fact, the DRV did not mobilize all adherents for its struggle against French colonial troops.

The situation did not improve after Geneva Convention of 1954 when the communists tried to build a so call socialist society in North Vietnam and after Vietnamese unification in 1975. DRV had liquidated and confiscated land and property, including that was under ownership by Catholic Church or pagodas, temples. Hundred Buddhist pagodas, village common houses and temples were destroyed by different ways. They were transformed into classrooms, shops, department stores or something like that.

Under this context all traditional religions and faiths were considered as superstitious and in consequences of that they were limited by different ways. Not only shamanists, geomancer or fortune tellers but also Buddhist monks, nuns, clergy lost their social legal status simply because they were not direct producers. On the other side, the materialistic and atheist propaganda was carried out intensive in all socialist education system beginning from primary and secondary schools to the universities. Religious worships were allowed limited only in churches or pagodas and usually with approval of bureaucratic authorities.

8.2 State and Religious Organizations

Now first time since colonial period Vietnam government recognizes private property ownership in Vietnam although it is not yet dealt with as a human right in the Constitution of 1992. On the one side, the living standard is improved. Before 1990 Vietnam had to import even rice from Thailand. Now Vietnam exports rice and coffee products in many

countries. But on the other side, the market economy development in Vietnam is now only in its beginning phase. This is a weakened law system and corruption. Under circumstance many people look for faith and religious worshipping as necessary cultural and spiritual needs.

The religious boom in Vietnam is significant. If during the 1960-1970s, hundreds of temples and pagodas were destroyed by the collective movements (*phong trao hop tac xa*), one can see a totally different view now. The temples and pagodas have now been newly renovated. Exclusive churches, in some places the local authorities make collection of their budget for pagodas and temples renovation and building. In 1990, there was an estimate of about 300,000-350,000 Protestants in Vietnam. Today, there are about 1,500,000 adherents of those Christian branches. A similar situation can be seen in other religions, albeit less, such as Buddhism, Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, etc.

Along with religious development, a boom in traditional folklore festivals occurred, proving how the abundance of faith and vibrancy of religious life in Vietnam. Before 1990, around 90% of the Vietnamese population were peasants. Villages celebrate festivals to respect the village's tutelary genie. Most of them have either direct or indirect relationship with the traditional religious worships. In the 1960-1970s, with the exception of some festivals such as festival of Perfume Pagoda (*le hoi chua Huong*), festival of Fire cracker in Dong Ky village, festival of fighting of water buffalo in Do Son (Hai Phong) and something like that, most festivals were prohibited or curbed. Today, the rebirth of thousands of folklore festivals is celebrated in almost every village along the Red River delta.

Form the author's point of view, the boom of worship in Vietnam occurring in past two decades is a special phenomenon that could only be found in Southeast Asia. These religious developments can be attributed to a number of reasons. First, the development of a market economy in last decades in Vietnam has increased the spiritual needs of

all strata, especially the government officials and the business community. Between the period of 1945 and 1986, the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) attempted to develop a so-called 'socialist economy', which bases only on state and collective property ownership to overcome the socio-economic crisis. "The people's common ownership" (*so huu toan dan*) was a political slogan, where any private ownership was considered simply as a product of old class societies based on the exploitation of man by man. The situation, however, changed since 1986, when the CPV carried out reform (*Doi moi*) to develop the market economy. This is first step to depart from a Marxist doctrine. Despite unfair state policies and a weakened legal system, the private sector in Vietnam has played an increasingly important role in the economy now. In the context of a cutthroat competition in business, worship plays a significant role in reducing stress in daily life.

Second, Vietnam is a multi-religious country. Most religions in this country, such as Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, came from outside. Those religions are in sync with native religions and belief systems. A so-called "spiritual vacuum" exists. Harry Benda remarked:

> *Interestingly enough, rural Vietnam thus came to exhibit a religious vacuum which in subsequent centuries, and well into modern times, allowed the mushrooming of a plethora of religious beliefs and practices and, with them, of a wide range of ecclesiastic personnel.* [142]

That is why most Vietnamese are not devoted to any religion and faith. This so-called "spiritual vacuum" is very clear when the state ideology as a 'great tradition' comes to a deep crisis and as a

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[142] Harry Benda, *The Structure of Southeast Asian History: Some Preliminary Observations. Continuity and Change in Southeast Asia*. Collected Journal Articles of Harry Benda, Yale University Southeast Asia Studies. Monograph Series. No.18, New Heaven, 1972: 132

consequence of that it usually stimulates to develop the 'small traditions', including the village or regional cultural-religious rituals. [143]

In Vietnamese history we saw there was a lot of Buddhist temples building during the Trinh-Nguyen period from 16th to 18th centuries when Confucian state ideology was seriously weak. Among them there are some famous Buddhist pagoda and temples such as Perfume Pagoda (*Chua Huong*), Pagoda of Heaven Mother (*Chua Thien Mu*) in Hue. That was the period when Vietnamese society had fallen into a social-political and cultural-spiritual crisis. The central authorities were powerless, and overall there were many peasant rebellions.

A relative similar situation we see in Vietnamese society in last two decades. Before 1989 Marxist ideology was as the art of 'state religion' and model of a 'socialist society' as an art of paradise on this, which Communist leaders try to build, was a good idea. However, all things had changed after the collapse of the Communist bloc. The Vietnamese are now disappointed with the socialist utopia. Together with the market economy development, the renaissance of nationalism and boom of religious activities are the three main factors to weak the Marxist-Leninist ideology (theory of class struggle, socialist ideas on equality and common property ownership and proletariat internationalism) in all strata in Vietnamese society. Due to the decline of Marxism as the state ideology, a "vacuum" exists for the development of religions and faiths. Government officials and businessmen, among them high ranking members of the CPV, follow Marxist doctrines in words, but in reality take part in worship activities.

Third, the boom of religious activities in Vietnam is not beside of the context of the globalization. We would like to emphasize that Vietnam had contacts mostly only with communist block during the cold war and became a relative closed society. Some social evils such as prostitution,

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[143] See Alexander B. Woodside, *Vietnam and the Chinese Model, A Comparative Study of Vietnamese and Chinese Government in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988.

AIDS and drugs were rare and usually had been considered as 'products of the pure Western civilization'. Since the last decade, the Vietnamese society has fallen into social ethical crisis. Corruption is rampant at all levels of society, notably among government and local officials.

In those circumstances it is understandable that many people look at religious activities as a spiritual need. Together with that we should emphasize another factor. Since the end of 1980s Vietnam is welcome to foreign investment. Together with economic business activities as well as cultural exchange some foreign businessmen, including Koreans, carry out missionary works in a different way, which contributed to an important factor in the booming of Protestantism in Vietnam. In addition, there are now some 'new religions' in Vietnam such as Jehovah's Witness, and some Buddhist sects such as Lord Supreme Maitreya with Long Hoa (*metteyya*), etc.

Lastly, it should emphasize a more open state policy since 1990 as an important factor for the religious boom. During the cold war Vietnam's policy was under pressure of communist parties, especially that of Former Soviet Union and People's Republic China. Only since 1990s Vietnam carries out its relative independent policy on domestic and international issues. In 1991 there was normalization in relationship between Vietnam and China (after the war in 1979). In 1994, U.S. President Bill Clinton had announcement to abrogate the embargo on trade and next year had a diplomatic relationship with Vietnam. In 1995 Vietnam became the member of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In 2000, U.S. president Bill Clinton came to Vietnam, and became the first president to ever visit Vietnam since unification. Vietnam also became in 2008 a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Vietnam policy on religious affairs should be analysed in this context. At the first sight if one could analyse all four Constitutions in Vietnamese history there is even a back step concerned to religious

freedom. The 1946 Constitution was best, wherein all fundamental human rights were respected, including worship freedom and private property ownership. It is possible that Ho Chi Minh at that time had trust on believers, both Christians and non-Christians. He called on Christian and non-Christian solidarity for the struggle against the French. He himself wrote a lot of letters, speeches to the Christian community on the occasion of Christmas. Among Vietnamese national holidays, Buddhist Vaisakh, Christmas and Easter were observed.

Change started to occur when the Communist position in the Ho Chi Minh government late became stronger. In the following three Constitutions, the authorities respect freedom for religion as well as 'no religiosity' in society. In other words, both believers and unbelievers are welcomed. This could only imply that, from the theoretical point of view, state authorities have a neutral policy on religion and religious organizations. In reality, religious activities were constricted. Prior to 1990, clear influences of the 1936 Constitution of the former Soviet Union were prevalent in Vietnam's policy on religious affairs.

One could see differences in the way religious life was managed in Vietnam between the periods before and after the 1990s. In November 1990, the CPV came out with a resolution, stating:

> *Religion is a longtime issue of socialism. Religion and worship are the spiritual needs of the Vietnamese people. There are many elements of religious ethics, which are suitable for the new [socialist] society. The CPV and the government have carried out a consistent policy to respect faith and religious freedom with the purpose to improve Christian and non-Christian solidarity, and to mobilize all people for national defence and nation building.[144]*

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[144] In: Ban ton giao chinh phu. *Cac van ban phap luat ve tin nguong ton giao* [Documents Concerning Religions and Faiths], Hanoi, 2000.

For the very first time, the government recognized the lifelong existence of religion as a *de facto* reality and acknowledged positive aspects of religious culture and ethical values. This was indeed a turning point for CPV in its attitude toward religion.

On July 2, 1998, the Polit Bureau of CPV promulgated Resolution 37-CT/TW on the administration of religious affairs and believers (*cong tac quan ly ton giao*) in light of the new context and situation. The resolution emphasizes the role of cultural-religious and religious-ethical values for social development. It stated:

> *Good cultural-religious and religious-ethical values should be preserved and developed. The Communist cells and local authorities as well as the National Fatherland Front and other social and religious organizations are responsible for the mass mobilization among the believers following the governmental policies on religious and faith issues.*[145]

In 2003, the Central Committee of CPV produced yet another Resolution No.25 on government administration over religious organizations.[146] All believers are considered as a part of Vietnamese unified community. It stated that the CPV would ensure and pay any price for solidarity among the people and religious organizations. The most significant government policy on religious affairs came out in 2004, when it promulgated the Ordinance Concerning Religions and Faiths (*Phap lenh ve ton giao tin nguong*), in which the government guarantees respect for religious freedom and the realization that religion and faith can fulfill the spiritual needs of the people. Some of the details of the Ordinance are detailed in the following articles below:

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[145] Ibid.
[146] Dang cong san Viet Nam, *Nghi quyet Hoi nghi lan thu bay Ban chap hanh Trung uong Khoa IX ve cong tac ton giao*. Trong: Van kien Hoi nghi lan thu bay Ban chap hanh Trung uong Khoa IX, NXB Chinh tri Quoc gia, Ha Noi, 2003: 48 [Resolution of the 7th Meeting of Central Committee, 9th Session on Religious Affairs], Hanoi, 2003: 48.

Article 4 – Pagoda, church, temple, village common house and other worship places as well as religious educational institutions, Bible, Buddhist texts, religious paintings, etc. are guaranteed by the law.

Article 5 – State supports faith and religious worships accordingly to its legal system. The values of religious culture as well as religious ethics should be respected, including the positive values of traditional ancestral worship, the celebration and high appreciation of all people toward the sacred fatherland and for national solidarity as well as spiritual needs of people. [147]

[On the flip side of things, state authorities emphasize punishment for using religious worship for the purpose of challenging the leadership position of the CPV in society as we usually see in all CPV documents].

Article 8 – Any using or abusing (*loi dung*) of religious worships for the purposes of creating superstition and other unlawful activities are strictly prohibited.

Article 10 – Believers should respect and follow all regulations of worship places, festivals as well as village and community regulations (*huong uoc*).

Article 14 – Religious worship should satisfy or meet all security conditions (request) and economy and suit all traditional and national identities preservation as well as environmental protection. [148]

The Ordinance deals with some other issues such as pagoda, temple and church land, publication of cultural-religious products, etc. But this

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[147] Uy ban Thuong vu Quoc hoi, *Phap lenh ve ton giao tin nguong* [The Ordinance Concerned to Religions and Faiths], Ha Noi, 2004: 5
[148] Ibid., 6.

document does not deal with many issues as consequences in relationship between government and churches before 1990. That means the government tries to 'forget' all its scandals and mistakes in the past when hundred pagodas and temples were destroyed during the collective movements. Following those guidelines, in the document of 10th Congress of CPV in 2006, it is said: "The cultural and ethical values from religions should be developed. CPV tries to mobilize all believers and clergy to have both lawful spiritual and secular life (*tot doi dep dao*)."[149]

It should be emphasized that till now Vietnam government does not consider a private property ownership as a fundamental human right. "Private property ownership causes capitalism every day and every hour"—V.I. Lenin once said. According to the Constitution of 1992, all land belongs to common people ownership (*so huu toan dan*) and contemporary state as a legal representative for all people. Based on those policies the authorities confiscate all land with the cheapest compensation—what is usually very unequal and unreasonable—that causes land fighting of peasants against local authorities.

Despite the fact that the authorities hold some favour with the Vietnamese Buddhist church, the situation of the United Buddhist church did not improved. During the Vietnam war, the country was divided and there were United Buddhist churches in South and North Vietnam. After Vietnamese unification, only one Vietnamese Buddhist church remained with the maxim of "Dharma, Nation and Socialism". Buddhist monks in southern Vietnam did not accept this maxim, which is political in nature. They did not take part in Vietnamese Buddhist church, which is under state control, among them Thich Nhat Hanh, a world renown Buudhist monk, only second after Dalai Lama in Tibet. Some leaders of Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects are in a similar situation.

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[149] See: *Báo cáo Chính trị của Ban chấp hành Trung ương khóa IX tại Đại hội đại biểu toàn quốc lần thứ X của Đảng*, Hà Nội, ngày 10 tháng 4 năm 2006 [Political line of CPV. 10th Congress of CPV, April 10, 2006, Hanoi].

Generally, it is not surprising that the relationship between state authorities with non-Christian churches is more amicable than those with Christian churches. Seen from cultural-religious viewpoint most officials, including CPV members, are not atheists in their spiritual life, but they follow traditional non-Christian religions and faiths. All non-Christian religions are not monotheists, but either polytheist or middle way between monotheism and polytheism, and that is why they are relatively tolerant with other religions and faiths.

8.3 Christian Churches and the State

The relationship between Communists and the Catholic Church became a focus in government policy on religious affairs in Vietnam. And the relationship goes back a long time. After the Russian revolution in 1917, especially after the CPV establishment in 1930, the colonial authorities together with the Christian church in Vietnam have reiterated the dangers of Communism and the atheist materialism it preaches. 'The prime antidote to Communism in Vietnam, however, was to be the rapid expansion of the Catholic Church—after all, had not history demonstrated that in times of trouble, "Only one nation, the Christian nation, only one official, the Pope, only one organization, the worldwide Catholic Church, was able to maintain discipline and stand firm forever".' [150] Since then, there was a close cooperation between the Catholic Church in Vietnam and the colonial authorities in the struggle against nationalist movements, which since the 1930s was dominated by the Communists. Christian media such as *Vi Chua* (For God), *Da Minh* (Dominican) and others propagated on the dangers of Communism.

After the August Revolution in 1945 DRV, a secular Communist state following the Soviet model, was founded. Ho Chi Minh was

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[150] J.M. Thich, *Van de cong san* [The Question of Communism], Quy Nhon, 1927: 36. Cited in: David Marr, *Vietnamese tradition on trial, 1920-1945*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981: 86

actively calling for solidarity of Christians and non-Christians for national independence. Ho Chi Minh's government officially carried out the policy in support for religious freedom. In the first months following the August revolution, Vietnamese Christians welcomed the independence of their country and spelled the end for the colonial period. All four Vietnamese bishops at that time had written a common letter to the Holy See to call for the support of Vietnam's independence.

The 'sweet moment', however, between the Catholics and DRV was short lived. On October 28, 1945 in Phat Diem Bishop Le Huu Tu had received information about the Communist position in Ho Chi Minh's government. Distrust started to boil between the two sides, although the Bishop had accepted to be a supreme adviser of Ho Chi Minh's government. French troops occupied Cochinchina, and wanted to re-establish colonialism in Vietnam. Because of the fear of Communism in the People's Republic of China since 1950, the Holy See openly began to support Charles de Gaulle's war escalation efforts in Indochina. Since then, the first Indochina War had an international character: the U.S., Britain and other Western countries supported France, while the former Soviet Union and China cooperated with Ho Chi Minh. In this situation, the Vietnamese Catholics had openly cooperated with French troops in their struggle against Ho Chi Minh's resistance, which were dominated by the Communists. Bishops Conference of Indochina in November 1951 then sent a common letter to prohibit any cooperation between Catholics and Communists.

There was also already a gap between Vietnamese Communists and Catholics during the first Indochina War. Because of fear of Communism, the Catholic Church in Vietnam changed its position from cooperation to struggle against Ho Chi Minh. According to the Geneva agreement in 1954, Vietnam would be divided. North Vietnam (DRV) was under a Communist regime, following Stalin and Mao Zedong's

models, meanwhile South Vietnam (Republic of Vietnam) followed the U.S. model. According to the Geneva agreement, in Article 14 (d):

> *From the date of entry into force of the present Agreement until the movement of troops is completed, any civilians residing in a district controlled by one party who wish to go and live in the zone assigned to the other party shall be permitted and helped to do so by the authorities in that district.* [151]

But it was rather unusual. While the DRV called on the solidarity of all people for the building a new nation, within just 300 days, over 860,000 North Vietnamese escaped to the south. As a comparison, the Vietnamese population in 1954 was only about 25 million, among them fourteen million in North Vietnam and eleven million more in the South. At the time, the DRV talked about its policy on religious freedom. But the Christians comprise two third of the refugees. Nearly half of Christians in comparison with less than 2% of non-Christian of the population in North Vietnam escaped to the South.

In September 1954, Ho Chi Minh visited Bishop Trinh Nhu Khue in the Hanoi diocese and ordered to carry out a policy in support for solidarity of Christians and non-Christians. On the other side, the DRV leaders had grown to distrust the motivations of the U.S., France and Ngo Dinh Diem regimes, which facilitated the exodus, at all price. The Catholic peasants were especially under strongly influences of the propaganda that "God had gone to the South" or that "The Virgin had gone to the South". The initiative of such propaganda could be the work of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which sent a special group to South Vietnam and other groups to North Vietnam to facilitate the exodus.

In any case, the exodus was not the initiative of the Catholic Church in Vietnam. In fact, the Geneva agreement came as a shock to the church

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[151] Allan W. Cameron, *Viet Nam Crisis, A documentary history*, Vol. I: 1940-1956, Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1971: 293.

leaders. Vietnamese Catholic peasants were caught in the middle of a antagonistic power struggle between the national and international political forces. Conflicts between Catholics and Communist militia thus became unavoidable. There were many incidents such as Ba Lang, of Tra Ly, Tam Toa and some others. Thousand became victimized by hunger, epidemic, traffic accidents as they carried out the exodus. By this time, six among eight bishops and 809 among 1,127 priests had gone to the south. In reality, the DRV was unsuccessful to prevent the exodus.

There are two things to state about the reasons for the exodus. Most Catholics fear the Communist regime due to a psychological warfare carried out by the CIA (i.e. Communist revenge against people cooperated with the colonial authorities, 'God and the Virgin had gone to the South' propaganda, the dropping of the U.S. atomic bomb, etc.).

Another dark chapter in the relationship between the state authorities and Catholic Church concerned land reform. Land reform in North Vietnam is more of a political than an economic issue. After all, to build a new society—or the so-called "paradise on earth"—the Communist regime needed to eliminate landlords and all political opponents in the countryside. Discussions and debates abound on the events that led to the land reform. In the 1960-1970s, some authors lamented about the blood bath that occurred during the land reform in North Vietnam in 1955-1957.[152] However, more recent research, for instance by E. Moise, Christine White and Pham Quang Minh argued that that the total number of people killed stood between 14,000 and 16,000, including those from the Catholic community.[153] It was estimated that about 2,500-3,000

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[152] See Hoang Van Chi, *From Colonialism to Communism: A Case History of North Vietnam*, New York: Praeger, 1964; Joseph Buttinger, *Vietnam: A political history*, New York/Washington: Preager, 1969 and Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, New York, 1978.

[153] See: E. Moise, *Land reform in China and North Vietnam, Consolidating the Revolution at the Village Level*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983; Christine White, *Agrarian reform and national liberation in the*

Catholics were killed during the land reform movement, among them priests. The victims of the event in Quynh Luu in 1956 alone were estimated to be around one thousand. Concerning the dispute between the Catholics and the Communists at that time, E. Moise wrote:

> *DRV had an official policy of freedom of worship. However, even when local officials obeyed this policy (which they often did not), there was conflict. Catholicism was not simply a religious institution; it was system of political, economic, and paramilitary power. The Communists were not willing to let the Catholic Church retain large amounts of land or any strong influence over local administration, much less local militias.* [154]

In any case, gaps occurred between the central and local authorities, between the CPV policies toward land reform and religious affairs in both theory and practice. Due to social, regional and cultural-religious reasons, the Vietnamese traditional villages are relatively close and they share relative independence from the central authorities. This follows a motto that "The king's rule of behaviour derives from the village customs" (*Phep vua thua le lang*). At the central level (land reform in theory), the Central Committee of CPV likes to carry out different policies on patriotic, 'normal' and anti-government landlords as well as land confiscation and liquidation. However, some allowance was given to churches or temples to own sufficient amount of land to engage in religious activities. At the height of the land reform, there were never any formal classifications for priests or landlords. Neither were there public denouncements against them. Any priest's arrest or killing could be done through consultation and approval of the Central Committee.

Vietnamese revolution: 1920-1957, Thesis at Cornell University, 1981; Pham Quang Minh, *Zwischen Theorie und Praxis. Agrapolitik in Vietnam seit 1945*, Berline: Verlag Logos, 2002.
[154] E. Moise 1983: 193.

At the periphery level (land reform in practice), the local authorities in many cases did not obey the demands of Land Reform Central committee (*Uy ban cai cach ruong dat trung uong*). Chaos broke out during the land reform due to false classification of landlords in many cases. These occurred as a direct implication by the Chinese advisers, who carried out the land reform. As a result, thousands of Communists were falsely classified as landlords, and were killed or arrested without ever considering their role in the struggle for national independence. In fact, the Communists had overestimated the property belonging to the Catholic Church, which was also a reason for the complete failure of land reform in many Catholic areas.

There are two main reasons for the failure of land reform. One being that the land reform movement was an attempt at applying the radical Marxist class struggle theory. The other concerns the Communists' exaggeration in estimating the properties owned by the religious organizations, notably the Catholic Church. That means before land reform only about 1.5% of cultivated land in North Vietnam belonged to the Catholic Church (see table below). Since the beginning of the 20th century, many nationalists, among them Ho Chi Minh, regarded the Catholic Church as landlord, and exaggerated its land and property ownership.

Table 2: Ownership of Cultivated Land in 1945 in 3,653 ha in North Vietnam where Land Reform Occurred[155]

	Percentage of Population (%)	Land ownership (ha)	Land ownership (%)	Land ownership/ per person (ha)
Colonial authorities		15,952	1	
Catholic Church		23,928	1.5	
Landlord	3.2	390,825	24.5	1.136
Rich peasant		113,259	7.1	0.468
Middle peasant	31	462,609	29	0.169
Poor peasant		159,520	10	0.068
Land worker		17,547	1.1	0.025
Others		12,761	0.8	0.028
Communal and partly collective ownership		398,801	25	
Total		**1,595,202**		

In consequence of land reform there was a peasant rebellion in Quynh Luu (Nghe An province), among them Catholics. Bernard Fall compares the incident in Quynh Luu of 1956 with that in Hungary in the same year. On my opinion, however, this comparison might be exaggerated. Land reform in North Vietnam is no blood bad, although it causes very serious heavy consequences in relationship between Catholic Church and communist regime in Hanoi as well as in building a so called 'new socialist society'. In any case, the exodus and land reform were un-proud events in Vietnamese history in 20th century.

There is a gap between authorities and Catholic Church in both central and local levels. At central level the communist regime was sure to respect a religious freedom and it was fixed by the constitution of 1959. But in reality it was a back step in comparison with that of 1946. After land reform there was no contact between Catholic Church in North Vietnam with the regime in Hanoi. Prime Minister Pham Van

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[155] See Tran Phuong (Editor), *Cach mang ruong dat o Viet Nam* [Land Revolution in Vietnam], NXB Khoa hoc Xa hoi, Ha Noi, 1968: 14.

Dong was un-success of to organize a meeting with the bishops in 1958 to look for a so called 'co-operation' between authorities and Catholic Church. Until the end of 1950s, all foreign missionaries and clergymen, including Apostolic delegate John Dooley, had to leave North Vietnam. Almost all priest seminaries were closed. Any contact between Catholic Church in North Vietnam and outside world, even with the Holy See was not allowed.

General speaking, tension between communist government and Catholic Church in Vietnam persisted during the First Indochina war and Vietnam War. Both sides were under pressure of the cold war between Western and Communist blocs. After the collapse of the Communist bloc in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, one could develop some perspectives and context on the relationship between the Vietnam government and the Catholic Church. The state authorities are apparently stepping away from the Marxist doctrine, and slowly coming to terms with the model on the rule of law. Yet, they remain in the middle path. Coming back to the *Ordinance Concerned to Religions and Faiths* (*Phap lenh ve ton giao tin nguong*), the authorities promise to improve relationship with Christian churches.

> *Article 27:* The pagodas, churches, temples, monasteries and clergy lands are allowed to be used for long periods of time. Land cultivation by pagodas, churches, temples, etc., having legal status, can be used for the long periods of time.

> *Article 29:* Faith and religious worships in churches, pagodas, temples, considered to be part of national cultural-historical heritage, could be carried out as in other places of worship. Building, administration, repairing of all places of worship, which are considered as national or historical heritage, should

follow the regulations of Ministry for Culture, Sports and Tourism.[156]

Article 30: Pagoda, church, temple building and repairing must follow state building laws. Any changes in the use and purpose of faith places of worship could only be done with the approval of the district level People's Committee. Any changes in the use and purpose of religious places of worship could only be done with the approval of the provincial level People's Committee.

Article 32: Printing and publication of the Bible, Buddhist texts, theological books, journals and other cultural products, their export, import and exchange as well as their purchase and selling should strictly follow state laws.[157]

Since 1990, Vietnam has had more contacts with the Holy See. A delegation of the Holy See makes annual trips to the country. There is consultation between the Holy See and the Vietnam government concerning to bishop appointments. Of course, both the government and the Catholic Church in Vietnam have to resolve many 'historical baggage', among them compensation or giving back land and property to the Catholic Church. In 2007, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung visited the Vatican for the first time. In 2009, the Pope Benedict XVI met President Nguyen Minh Triet. In 2012, Secretary General Nguyen Phu Trong also visited the Holy See. Despite the deep distrust between the government and the Catholic Church in Vietnam, the current relationship has been at its highest since 1946. The Holy See has since 2012 established an Impermanent Representative in Hanoi, hoping that

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[156] Uy ban Thuong vu Quoc hoi, *Phap lenh ve ton giao tin nguong* [The Ordinance Concerned to Religions and Faiths], Ha Noi, 2004: 8

[157] Uy ban Thuong vu Quoc hoi, *Phap lenh ve ton giao tin nguong* [The Ordinance Concerned to Religions and Faiths], Ha Noi, 2004: 8-9.

the diplomatic relations between the two sides can be amended in the near future.

Concerning the other branch of Christianity, until the end of 1980s, Protestantism has played no noticeable role in Vietnamese social and political life. The situation, however, has changed since 1990. Government authorities are wary of the fast and increasing converts to this religion, especially among the ethnic groups such as the Hmong, Yaos in North West provinces (Lao Cai, Yen Bai, Dien Bien, Son La, Hoa Binh and Lai Chau), Ba Na and Gia Rai, Ede in the central highland provinces. Furthermore, Protestantism is rapidly developing in the hugely populated urban centres such as Hanoi, Hai Phong, Da Nang, Ho Chi Minh cities.

Because the Protestantism in Vietnam follows Calvinism more than Lutheranism, it ignores traditional rituals, including ancestral worship, and does not accept traditional cultural-religious values of the Hmong people. This has caused sociopolitical problems, as conflicts have sparked between the old, traditional Hmong families and villages and those who have converted to Christianity. The conflict was then used to justify crackdowns by authorities to curb the development of Protestantism by way of bureaucratic administrative formality and at times even violence.

In practice, the authorities have been unsuccessful in stopping the development of Protestantism, and even bestowed legal status to some of the Protestant branches. In 2005, the prime minister promulgated a special Resolution on Protestantism, which contained five stipulations. First, the government attends to socioeconomic and cultural development in local regions, where there are many religious adherents. Together with local authorities, the government tries to mobilize all adherents to obey state laws and government policies. Second, the government provides advice and direction to religious activities of the Protestant branches, which have legal status, for purposes of monitoring

and controlling these organizations. Third, the Protestant missionaries have been operating in Vietnam since before 1975, and have had no problems with the authorities. However, till now, Protestants have yet to gain formal status in society, and should therefore contact the authorities to make a formal request to obtain it. Fourth, the authorities should help the believers of ethnic minorities to build churches, temples and carry out 'pure worshiping' as well as to appoint their church hierarchy and all clergies in accordance with state laws. Fifth, and perhaps the most crucial for the government, state authorities struggle against all 'reactionaries' forces among the clergies and believers intent on using religious activities for the purpose of undermining the CPV leadership.[158]

Since then, some of the Protestant branches such as Presbyterians, Methodists and Adventists have obtained their legal social status, and the government has formally eliminated all prohibitions and hindrances against them. In the past few years, it has been apparent that the central authorities have attempted to build peaceful coexistence with Protestantism, and that they have been much more flexible these days compared to the local officials, who remain bent on curbing the Protestant development. There are in fact real issues in the relationship between state authorities and religious organizations. First, the government has no clear conception on religion and its role for social development. The authorities continue to consider Marxism-Leninism officially as a state ideology. The CPV is not ready to share its power with other forces in society, and continues to control all sociopolitical and cultural-religious spiritual fields. By the looks of it, the CPV is eager to gain absolute power, which had been the case in the Vietnamese

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[158] See: Nguyen Thanh Xuan, *Chi thi cua Thu tuong chinh phu ve dao Tin Lanh: mot dau moc trong chinh sach ton giao cua Nha nuoc Viet Nam* [The Resolution of Prime minister on Protestantism: A new significance for Vietnam government policy on religions]. Nhan Dan Newspaper, published on February 4, 2005. Website of Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

traditional Confucian society. Second, there is a lot of historical baggage embedded in the relationship between the authorities and religious organizations. Currently, there are many petitions signed and legal fighting over the land and property ownership, maintaining the ongoing deep distrust between the state and religious organizations.

The deep distrust is actually understandable, as authorities are worried about instability in the Protestant community among ethnic groups in the northwest and central highland provinces, especially that of the Hmong tribe. In 2001 and 2004, rebellions broke out in the central highland provinces. In April 2012, the government forces quelled a short-lived rebellion of a thousand Hmong tribe people in the district of Muong Nhe, Dien Bien province. Corruption, poverty and land disputes had generated those rebellions, but admittedly they were either directly or indirectly related to the Protestant activism among these ethnic groups.

In comparison to non-Christian religions and faiths in Vietnam, Christianity has historically met more hindrances from the side of the authorities. Relations between the Communist state and Christian churches have some resemblance to that under the Nguyen dynasty in the 19th century, when cultural-religious factors go hand-in-hand with politics. The Christian community clearly could not accept Marxism, as the CPV's state ideology. Most officials are non-Christians, who follow Buddhism and traditional faiths. The question of ritual is also an issue. The difference between the Christians and the non-Christians and the faiths in world outlooks, cultural-religious values and rituals are bigger than those between Buddhists and traditional faith believers.

8.4 Conclusion

The collapse of Communist bloc and the rise of an international community in the post-Cold War period have provided Vietnam with good opportunity to carry out its policy on religious affairs. At this

present moment, no real tension and antagonism exist between the government and religious organizations, especially compared to the period before the 1990s. However, the distrust runs deep in the relationship between the authorities and religious organizations in Vietnam. While the government has no clear policy on religious affairs, the model on the rule of law remains questionable for the future, making the CPV to have to confront a constant dilemma. On the one hand, the authorities are attempting to slowly part with the Marxist conception of religion and escape from the 'ghost' of the former Soviet Union to resolve religious issues. On the other hand, the CPV still aspires to control all social organizations and forces, which is one of the reasons why it could not sometimes find a suitable way to integrate into the international community.

In other words, the government has neither theory nor clear strategic concept in its policy on religious affairs, and the fact that the rule of law has yet been successfully applied in the country, authoritarianism remains to be the name of the game. From the viewpoint of its counterpart, religious organizations, especially Christian churches, could not yet escape from their old and traditional perspective on the 'evils of Communism'.

While it is true that religious life in Vietnam today is more open than before 1990 and freer compared to China, it is also a fact that the government wants to intervene in the activities of all religious organizations, thus violating a fundamental human right, among them being freedom of religion. The cultural-religious aspects play an important factor in Vietnam state policy on religious affairs, both in the past and present times, although at times the cultural-political characters emerged to dominate the scene as it was under the Nguyen dynasty in the 19th century or during the amicable relations between the Communist state and Christian churches after 1945.

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CATHOLIC ELECTORAL PARTISANSHIP IN THE PHILIPPINES

A Threat to Religious Pluralism?

Eleanor R. Dionisio

9.1 Introduction

In the 2013 elections in the Philippines, elements of the Roman Catholic Church (hereafter "the Church") engaged in vigorous electoral partisanship against advocates and for opponents of Republic Act No.10354, the Reproductive Health (RH) Law. The RH Law, enacted in December 2012, makes it an obligation of the state to provide broad access to and information on modern, safe, and effective contraceptive methods short of abortion.

Catholic opponents of the RH Law have sometimes invoked the majoritarian argument that Catholic reproductive ethics, which forbids the use of artificial contraception, should shape legislation and policy because most Filipinos—about eighty-one per cent—are Catholic. [159]

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[159] National Statistics Office (NSO), *Philippines in Figures 2014*, Quezon City: NSO, 2014: 27. This is fairly consistent with the percentage of self-identified Roman Catholics in a Social Weather Stations (hereafter cited as SWS) survey conducted about four months before the 2013 elections, 81%. Mahar Mangahas

This assertion ignores the perspectives of minority religions and growing ethical plurality among Catholics. Aggressive Catholic partisanship against the RH Law has generated apprehension and anger among those, including Catholics, who do not share the Church's official convictions on this issue. Some Catholics who do share those convictions worry that anti-RH partisans, by insisting that Catholics vote only for legislators and executives who craft laws and policies consistent with Church teaching on contraception, may be violating another Church teaching: the imperative to honour freedom of conscience. Thus, Catholic partisanship has sometimes been seen as potentially dangerous to religious freedom and religious pluralism.

This paper examines the validity of that perception vis-à-vis one form of Catholic partisanship in the 2013 elections: the endorsement and blacklisting of senatorial candidates based on Catholic ethical principles. It distinguishes two levels of partisan electoral engagement of the Church: (1) that of the hierarchical Church, consisting of bishops, clergy, and non-ordained religious; and (2) that of the unconsecrated laity.[160] It uses empirical evidence to show that this form of Catholic

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and Iremae D. Labucay, "9% of Catholics Sometimes Think of Leaving the Church", in *SWS Special Report*, April 2013 <http://www.sws.org.ph/ pr20130407.htm>.

[160] The term "clergy" refers to the ordained priesthood who preside over the Church's sacraments. The term "religious" refers to members of Catholic religious orders who are consecrated to celibacy, who live together in communities, and who work full-time for the Church. Most male religious in the Philippines are ordained to the priesthood. The non-ordained religious— including all female religious, since women cannot be ordained in the Catholic Church—are technically members of the laity. However, for purposes of this study, I include non-ordained religious with bishops and clergy under the label "hierarchical Church" rather than with the unconsecrated laity, because Catholic canon law imposes upon the non-ordained religious the same restrictions on electoral partisanship as they are imposed on the clergy—restrictions, which do not apply to the unconsecrated laity. For canonical definitions and obligations of clergy, religious, and laity, see the following, all in Roman Catholic Church, Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland, Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand, and Canadian Canon Law Society, *Code of Canon Law in English Translation,* Pasay City: Daughters of St. Paul, 2001: for the

partisanship does not, at present, threaten religious pluralism, and speculates on the possibility that such partisanship may have benefits for electoral democracy and for religious pluralism.

The leaders of the Church are its ordinaries: bishops who head its "particular churches", or ecclesiastical territories. As of April 8, 2015, the Church in the Philippines has seventy-nine ordinaries.[161] Despite differences in rank and in the status of the particular churches they administer, each ordinary has within his particular church the same powers as all other ordinaries have in theirs. None of them is formally accountable to any other except to the bishop of Rome, the Pope, who heads the Church worldwide. None of them has formal authority to speak or act for the Church beyond his particular Church. Only the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has the authority to speak and decide for the entire Church in the Philippines, subject to the authority of the pope, of canon law, and of Catholic teaching.[162]

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clergy cc. 232-289: 38-49; for the religious cc. 573-607: 105-110; for the laity cc. 224-231: 37-38.

[161] See CBCP website, <http://cbcpwebsite.com/archdioceses.html> (accessed on April 8, 2015). The number of ordinaries does not include those designated as "apostolic administrators", whose task is to administer an ecclesiastical territory until an ordinary is appointed.

[162] See cc. 381, 431, and 436, §1, in Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland, Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand, and Canadian Canon Law Society, *Code of Canon Law in English Translation,* Pasay City: Daughters of St. Paul, 2001: 67-68, 76-77. For the powers of the CBCP and the functions of its plenary assembly, see its constitution in CBCP, "Preamble /Constitution", in *CBCP Online,* undated <http://www.cbcpwebsite.com/preamble.html> (accessed on February 1, 2014) and "Functions of the Plenary Assembly" in *CBCP Online*, undated <http://www.cbcpwebsite.com/ plenary.html> (accessed on February 1, 2014). See also Jaime B. Achacoso, JCD, "The Magisterium of the CBCP", *CBCP Monitor* January 7-20, 2013: B2 <http://www. scribd.com/doc/119728189/CBCP-Monitor-Vol-17-No-1> (accessed on February 1, 2014).

9.2 Official Church Teaching on Electoral Partisanship Hierarchical Partisanship

The Church as an institution, and its bishops, lower clergy, and non-ordained religious, may not endorse or oppose electoral candidates or political parties "unless, in the judgment of the competent ecclesiastical authority, this is required for the defence of the rights of the Church or to promote the common good."[163] In only one instance has the "competent ecclesiastical authority" for the Church in the Philippines, the CBCP, ever rendered that judgment.

In 1986, the CBCP Administrative Council effectively pronounced the Marcos administration to be illegitimate because of "unparalleled" fraud used to win the presidential election.[164] The Vatican, the centre of governance in the Roman Catholic Church worldwide, and its *nuncio* or diplomatic representative to the Philippines at the time, Msgr. Bruno Torpigliani, attempted to dissuade the CBCP from taking sides in the crisis.[165] These admonitions demonstrate that the Vatican does not encourage partisanship even when the bishops' conference of a country agrees it is a moral imperative.

Nonetheless, the CBCP has never backed down from the 1986 post-election statement, and to this day holds that it was necessary to avert a grave moral evil and a mortal threat to the common good: the persistence of a murderous dictatorship and the disintegration of the nation into protracted civil war. They found affirmation for this judgment in the hundreds and thousands of Filipinos, clutching rosaries and religious images, who surrounded two army camps in Metro Manila

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[163] *Code of Canon Law in English Translation*, c. 287, §2: 49.

[164] Administrative Council of the CBCP, "Post-Election Statement", *in CBCP, Pastoral Letters, 1945-1995, Manila: CBCP, 1996: 621-623.*

[165] Eric O. Hanson, *The Catholic Church in World Politics,* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987: 331, and Francisco F. Claver, SJ, *The Making of a Local Church,* Quezon City: Claretian Publications and Jesuit Communications, 2009: 38.

until military defections and withdrawal of support by the United States government caused the dictatorship to collapse.[166] In 1991, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP-II), the assembly that set the directions of the Church in the Philippines for the twenty-first century, sacralized the 1986 uprising—and the Church's participation in it—as "an historical event with a religious dimension, that continues to call us to be a people who work for conversion, reconciliation and peace."[167]

However, PCP-II did not continue to call for the hierarchical Church to take political sides. PCP-II's decrees conform to canon law when they stated, "Bishops, priests and religious must refrain from partisan politics, avoiding especially the use of the pulpit for partisan purposes, so as to avoid division among the flock."[168] The CBCP's 1997 "Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Politics" further states:

> *The members of the hierarchy simply set guidelines to help the laity vote wisely. Under normal circumstances, they do not endorse any particular candidate or party but leave the laity to vote according to their enlightened and formed consciences.[169]*

The CBCP 1998 "Catechism on the Church and politics" allows an exception—"a case when the Bishops can authoritatively order the lay faithful to vote for one particular and concrete option"—although the bishops asserted that:

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[166] For an account of the 1986 uprising, which describes the role of the Church in the unseating of Marcos, see Antonio F. Moreno, SJ, *Church, State, and Civil Society in Post-Authoritarian Philippines: Narratives of Engaged Citizenship*, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2006: 65-66.

[167] Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP-II), "Decrees", in PCP-II, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines,* Manila: CBCP, 1992, Art. 4: 243.

[168] Ibid., Art. 28 #2: 242.

[169] CBCP, "Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Politics", in *CBCP Media Office*, September 1997 <http://cbcponline.net/v2/?p=387> (accessed on February 2, 2014).

> [T]he case would certainly be extraordinary. This happens when a political option is clearly the only one demanded by the Gospel. An example is when a presidential candidate is clearly bent to destroy the Church and its mission of salvation and has all the resources to win, while hiding his malevolent intentions behind political promises. In this case the Church may authoritatively demand the faithful, even under pain of sin, to vote against this particular candidate. But such situations are understandably very rare. [170]

9.3 Lay Partisanship

Such restrictions do not apply to the unconsecrated laity. PCP-II states that "lay men and women in responsible positions in our society must help form the civic conscience of the voting population and work to explicitly promote the election to public office of leaders of true integrity." [171] The Council enjoins "Catholics in politics … to work in favour of legislation that is imbued with [Christian] principles." The 1997 pastoral exhortation states, "Direct participation in the political order is the special responsibility of the laity in the Church. It is their specific task to renew the temporal order according to Gospel principles and values." [172] The 1998 "Catechism on the Church and politics" recommends that this renewal be undertaken "through active and partisan political involvement"—for instance, "by working for and joining a political party in order to get elected into public office or to support truly qualified candidates and to help ensure that the political party itself abide by the values of integrity, honesty, and issue-oriented

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[170] CBCP, "Catechism on the Church and politics", February 1, 1998, #11, <http://www.cbcpwebsite.com/1990s/1998/1998catechism.html> (accessed on February 8, 2014).

[171] PCP-II, "Decrees", in PCP-II, *Acts and Decrees*, Art. 28 #1: 242.

[172] CBCP, "Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Politics".

electoral campaign."[173] In 2009, the CBCP called the laity to engage in "principled partisan politics".[174] They reiterated that call in two pastoral statements on the 2010 elections.[175] These teachings form the magisterial context against which may be viewed the partisanship of Church elements in the 2013 elections.

9.4 Catholic Partisanship in 2013 Elections Hierarchical Partisanship

The Team Buhay/Team Patáy Campaign. In February 2013, a tarpaulin with two lists went up on the façade of San Sebastian Cathedral, the seat of the bishop of Bacolod. One list, "Team Buhay" (Team Life), named six senatorial candidates and two party-list groups, which had voted against the RH Law. The other list, "Team Patáy" (Team Death), named seven senatorial candidates and four party-list groups, which had supported the law.[176]

The counsel for the diocese, Mitch Abella, said the tarpaulin was not a partisan campaign, but simply an education campaign about which

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[173] CBCP, "Catechism on the Church and politics", #s23: 44.

[174] CBCP, "A CBCP pastoral statement on lay participation in politics and peace", July 12, 2009, <http://www.cbcponline.net/documents/2000s/ html/2009-Statement%20on%20Lay% 20Participation.html> (accessed on February 2, 2014).

[175] CBCP, "A call for vigilance and involvement: a pastoral statement of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) on the occasion of its 100th General Assembly held at Pius XII Centre, Manila", January 24, 2010, <http://www.cbcponline.net/documents/2000s/   html/2010-A%20Call%20for% 20Vigilance%20and%20Involvement.html> (accessed on February 2, 2014); and CBCP, "Statement on the coming national and local elections: Transforming election through a solidarity of consciences", May 4, 2010, <http://www.cbcponline.net/documents/   2000s/html/2010-Statement%20on%20the%20Coming%20National%20and%20Local%20 Elections.html> (accessed on February 2, 2014).

[176] Gilbert Bayoran, "Diocese defies Comelec on Team Patay poster", *Rappler*, February 26, 2013, <http://www.rappler.com/nation/politics/ elections-2013/22631-diocese-defies-comelec-on-team-patay-poster> (accessed on January 3, 2014).

senatorial candidates and party-list groups had voted for or against the RH Law. This reasoning was used to justify exemption of the tarpaulin from campaign poster size regulations of the Commission on Elections (Comelec). [177] However, the statement could also have been a hedge against internal criticism, because the tarpaulin might be seen as in breach of a rule more important to the Church than Comelec poster size regulations: the canonical convention against hierarchical partisanship.

Fr. Melvin Castro, Executive Secretary of the CBCP's Episcopal Commission on Family and Life (ECFL), used the same line as Abella's when he announced that similar posters would go up in the archdiocese of Lipá and the dioceses of Tarlác, Kidapawan, Sorsogón, and Borongan. "Actually, we are not endorsing candidates," he explained, perhaps imagining he was obeying the Gospel injunction to be cunning as snakes and innocent as doves (Mt 10:16). "[The names] written under Team Patáy and Team Buhay are the party lists and senators with clear positions as to whether they are pro- or anti-RH … it's up to people to interpret that." [178]

Another line of defence was the assertion by Fr. Ronaldo Quijano, a priest of the diocese of Bacolod, that the campaign was a lay initiative,

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[177] Ibid. The poster was declared illegal by the Comelec because it exceeded the size regulations. The diocese got around the restriction by cutting it diagonally into two portions: one for Team Buhay and the other for Team Patáy. The diocese also appealed against the judgment. The Supreme Court recently declared the judgment unconstitutional <http://sc.judiciary.gov.ph/pdf/web/viewer.html?file=/jurisprudence/2015/january2015/205728.pdf>.

[20] The quote above is my translation of the following quote, in mixed Tagalog and English: "Actually *kasi hindi naman tayo nag-e-*endorse *ng mga candidates. Ang nakasulat dun sa* Team *Patay* and Team *Buhay e kung sino 'yung mga* party-list *at senador na malinaw ang naging* position *kung sila ba ay* pro or anti RH . . . *bahala na ang tao* mag-interpret *dun*." Quoted in Ferdinand G. Patinio, "Philippines: 52 parishes to put up team patay, team buhay tarpaulins", *balita.ph*, March 5, 2013 <http://balita.ph/2013/03/05/52-parishes-to-put-up-team-patay-team-buhay-tarpaulins/> (accessed on January 3, 2014). No evidence could be found in the newspapers, or on the diocesan websites, that the dioceses of Sorsogón or Borongan ever issued lists of candidates.

which the bishop, Vicente Navarra, had merely endorsed. This implied that the hierarchical Church was not imposing partisan views on the faithful, but simply standing behind legitimate partisan engagement by the laity.[179]

These rationalizations indicate awareness among the campaign's supporters that Bacolod's partisanship might be viewed within the Church as anomalous. Nevertheless, Bacolod's Team Buhay/Team Patáy campaign was a clear instance of hierarchical partisanship in a particular church. The poster was unambiguously a recommendation that Bacolod's Catholics vote for Team Buhay and not for Team Patáy. The decision to put the poster on the cathedral walls was Bishop Navarra's.[180] A decision to put up the same posters in Bacolod's parish churches was made at a meeting of the diocese's clergy.[181]

Some bishops publicly lauded Bishop Navarra's move. Bishop Antonio M. Bastes, SVD, of Sorsogón declared himself inspired by Bacolod's initiative and announced he would follow its lead.[182] Archbishop Ramon C. Argüelles of Lipá proclaimed, in his diocese's

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[179] Nirva'ana Ella Delacruz, "Bacolod's 'Team Patay,' lay people's initiative", CBCP News, March 1, 2013 <http://www.cbcpnews.com/cbcpnews/ ?p=14567> (accessed on February 10, 2014).

[180] Ibid.

[181] Ryan Christopher Sorote, "More 'Team Patay' tarps in Bacolod churches", *Rappler*, February 27, 2013, <http://www.rappler.com/nation/politics/ elections-2013/22697-more-team-patay-tarps-in-bacolod-churches (accessed on February 1, 2013); Carla Gómez, "Bacolod Rector: 'Team Patay' list 'unChristian,' *Philippine Daily Inquirer,* March 16, 2013, <http://newsinfo. inquirer.net/374783/bacolod-rector-team-patay-list-unchristian#ixzz2svcOIwhj> (accessed on January 3, 2014).

[182] Sheila Crisóstomo, Danny Dangcalan, and Evelyn Macairan, "Public Consultations Set on RH Law Implementing Rules", *Philippine Star*, February 28, 2013, <http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2013/02/28/ 914049/public-consultations-set-rh-law-implementing-rules> (accessed on May 24, 2014). However, Bishop Bastes may later have changed his mind. No evidence can be found that his diocese ever issued a list of candidates for the guidance of its voters.

official newspaper, his support for Bacolod's campaign.[183] Bishop Z. Emilio Marquez of Lucena allowed to be hung on the façade of his diocese's cathedral a Team Patáy list identical to that of Bacolod, and a Team Buhay list endorsing five of Bacolod's six Team Buhay candidates.[184] Bishop Florentino F. Cinense permitted Team Buhay and Team Patáy lists to be hung on the façade of the cathedral of the diocese of Tarlác. Tarlác's Team Buhay listed five of Bacolod's Team Buhay candidates plus four more, and one of Bacolod's Team Buhay party-list groups plus three more. Its Team Patáy poster blacklisted the same candidates and party-list groups as Bacolod's, and added two more candidates. Above the cathedral entrance hung a third poster that suggested divine provenance for the lists: "Vote as God the author of life would wish you to vote. Vote to protect family and life."[185]

Dissent from other bishops, clergy, and laity. Whether or not God endorsed those lists, the CBCP did not, nor did most bishops. Bishop José F. Oliveros of Malolos was initially reported to be considering putting out lists of candidates.[186] But the head of his diocese's Commission on Mass Media, Fr. Dario Cabral, later said the diocese's laity was being counseled to vote according to their consciences, not

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[183] Ramón C. Argüelles, "HABEMUS PAPAM!!! And the 2013 Philippine Elections", *Ulat Batangan: Official Newspaper of the Archdiocese of Lipa*, March 2013: 10.

[184] Delfín T. Mallari Jr, "Quezon Catholic churches display Team Patay, Team Buhay tarpaulins", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 11 March 2013 <http://newsinfo. inquirer.net/371655/quezon-catholic-churches-display-team-patay-team-buhay-tarpaulins> (accessed on May 7, 2014).

[185] Karen Boncocan, "'Team Patay,' 'Team Buhay' posters reach Tarlac", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 4 April 2013 <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/ 385111/team-patay-team-buhay-posters-reach-tarlac> (accessed on April 22, 2014).

[186] Aries Rufo, "5 more bishops campaigning vs 'Team Patay'", *Rappler*, March 6, 2013 <http://www.rappler.com/nation/politics/elections-2013/23196-5-more-bishops-campaigning-vs-team-patay> (accessed on April 22, 2014). In an interview conducted by Anna Marie A. Karaos more than a year after the elections, when asked about his involvement in the opposition to the RH Law, Bishop José F. Oliveros rated his involvement as "moderate" and did not mention campaigns for or against specific candidates in the 2013 elections.

according to lists released by Church authorities.[187] A spokesman for the archdiocese of Palo similarly announced that although the archdiocese would urge the faithful to vote according to Catholic ethics, it would not name candidates.[188]

Archbishop José S. Palma, then president of the CBCP, at first appeared to support the Bacolod initiative by issuing a statement asking the Comelec to respect the Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) secured by the diocese against the removal of the Team Buháy/Team Patáy tarpaulin.[189] But when, in his own archdiocese of Cebú, Team Buhay and Team Patáy lists appeared on archdiocesan property, near its cathedral, and on the walls of churches, he is reported to have asked that such posters not be displayed on church grounds.[190] This would have been consistent with an earlier statement that he did not think bishops should campaign for or against candidates, and would not permit his clergy to use the pulpit for such partisan campaigns.[191] Archbishop

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[187] Carmela Reyes-Estrope, "Bulacan Priests: Heed Conscience, Not Team Patay, Team Buhay Posters", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, April 5, 2013 <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/385633/bulacan-church-leaders-heed-conscience-not-team-patay-team-buhay-posters#ixzz3H3NwWQDT> (accessed on May 4, 2014).

[188] Carla P. Gómez and Ador Vincent Mayol, "Now comes 'buang' after 'buhay', 'patay', 'tatay'", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 13, 2013 <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/372625/now-comes-buang-after-buhay-patay-tatay#ixzz2v4mtp6ue> (accessed 3 January 2014); cbcp news, "no 'team patay' list in leyte but ...", *cbcp news*, april 24, 2013, <http://www.cbcpnews.com/cbcpnews/?p=18097> (accessed on February 27, 2014).

[189] CBCP News, "CBCP Props TRO vs Order to Remove 'Team Patay' Tarp", *CBCP News*, March 5, 2013 < http://www.cbcpnews.com/cbcpnews/?p=14749> (accessed on February 27, 2014).

[190] Jessa Chrisna Marie J. Agua, Marigold P. Lebumfacil and Sanden J. Anadia, "Seen Posted at Some Parishes: Team Patay Posters Now Invading Cebu", *Freeman*, March 12, 2013 <http://www.philstar.com/ cebu-news/2013/03/12/918688/seen-posted-some-parishes-team-patay-posters-now-invading-cebu> (accessed on May 1, 2014); Juan L. Mercado, "Shell Shock", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 17, 2013 <http://opinion.inquirer.net/ 52813/shell-shock#ixzz2v9IVLDEO> (accessed on February 3, 2014).

[191] Jhunnex Napallacan, "Palma: pulpit can't be used against pro-RH lawmakers", *Cebu Daily News*, December 20, 2012 <http://newsinfo.

Sergio L. Utlég of Tuguegarao, whilst encouraging the laity to engage in political partisanship based on Catholic ethical principles, warned that "they are not to speak either in the name of the parish or of the Archdiocese," and added: "As Clergy, we do not endorse any party or any candidate."[192] The archbishop of Lingayén-Dagupan, Socrates B. Villegas, warned that "when the Church *ENDORSES CANDIDATES* in political elections she always ends up a *LOSER*. The endorsed candidate may win in the votes but the Church never wins with him." [193]

Still, the partisanship of bishops who endorsed or condemned candidates was canonically defensible. Those bishops were the "competent ecclesiastical authorities" in their dioceses. Perhaps they deemed the RH Law to be a sufficient threat to the rights of the Church and the common good to warrant an exception to the admonition against hierarchical partisanship.

However, canonical compliance was not the only concern of the campaign's Catholic critics. Archbishop Villegas emphasized the potential damage to the Church's prophetic charisma:

> *In endorsing candidates, the Bride of Christ the Church tarnishes her spiritual mission with the stain of the mundane. The endorsed candidate might win but religion has been reduced to a political party; religion has been used for political gain and our spiritual mission has been compromised.[194]*

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inquirer.net/327355/palma-pulpit-cant-be-used-against-pro-rh-lawmakers#ixzz 2v9LGRKMc> (accessed on January 3, 2014).

[192] Sergio B. Utlég, "A Pastoral Letter on the 2013 Elections", *CBCP News*, April 23, 2013 <http://www.cbcpnews.com/cbcpnews/?p=17826> (accessed on April 30, 2014).

[193] Socrates B. Villegas, "The Church and Our Elections", *Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan: Blogsite of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan*, April 13, 2013 <http://rcald.org/?p=775> (accessed on February 3, 2014); italics and capitalization in the original.

[194] Ibid.

Other priests felt that the Team Buhay/Team Patáy campaign dishonoured Catholic ethics and teaching in a key document of the Church, "*Dignitatis Humanae*", the Declaration on Religious Freedom of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II).[195] Msgr. Victorino A. Rivas of Bacolod defied the decision by his diocese's presbyteral council to put up the posters on parish churches, pronouncing the label "Team Patáy" to be "unchristian" and a violation of the Church's commitment to the dignity of the human person. "As Christians," he said, "we must denounce what is wrong, but the person believed to be erring still has the right to be respected, heard and given human dignity, as stated in the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom."[196] Fr. Joel E. Tabora, SJ, president of a prominent Catholic university, the Ateneo de Davao, castigated the campaign as "unconscionable".[197] He called on the campaigners to respect Catholic freedom of conscience: "Let them present to the Catholic citizen their views on authoritative Church teachings and their values, but do not pretend to bind conscience where it cannot yet be bound. Let the Catholic consider his options in an autonomous world ultimately created by a loving God who redeems and respects peoples' [*sic*] freedom. Let the Catholic citizen make up his own mind according to the dictates of his/her own conscience."[198] Fr. Eric Marcelo O. Genilo, SJ, a moral theology professor at the prestigious Loyola School of Theology, wrote: "Respect for the

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[195] See Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (hereafter cited as Vatican II), "Declaration on Religious Freedom: *Dignitatis Humanae*, on the Right of the Person and of Communities to Social and Civil Freedom in Matters Religious", December 7, 1965 <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/i_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_ dignitatis-humanae_en.html> (accessed on May 24, 2014).

[196] Gómez, " 'Team Patay' list 'unChristian'".

[197] Joel E. Tabora, SJ, "Team Patay, Team Buhay: Unconscionable", *Rappler* (Manila), 25 February 2013 <http://www.rappler.com/thought-leaders/ 22511-team-patay,-team-buhay-unconscionable> (accessed on January 3, 2014).

[198] Joel Tabora, SJ, "Urgent: not a TRO but self-restraint", in *taborasj*, March 2013 <http://taborasj.wordpress.com/2013/03/05/urgent-not-a-tro-but-self-restraint/> (accessed on January 3, 2014).

conscience of the Catholic voter, even if the person votes contrary to the teachings of the Church, remains a basic principle of Catholic social teaching."[199]

A group of lay Catholic dissenters, Catholics for Reproductive Health (C4RH), criticized the Team Buhay/Team Patáy campaign using a more secular norm: the legal separation of Church and state. "[For the Church] to campaign for and against particular candidates in the coming elections," they argued, "impinges on the constitutional guarantees to a secular society."[200]

9.5 Lay partisanship

Lay partisanship based on Catholic sexual and reproductive ethics: Cebú's Team Buhay/Team Patáy Campaign and the White Vote Movement. Not all the laity were of the same mind as C4RH. The Team Buhay/Team Patáy posters, which appeared in Cebú in March 2013 were allegedly initiatives of the laity.[201] More national in scope was the Catholic alliance called the White Vote Movement (WVM), initiated by the *Sangguniáng Laiko ng Pilipinas* (Council of the Laity of the Philippines), or Laiko, an umbrella organization of CBCP-mandated lay groups. Launched about a month before the elections, the WVM eventually endorsed ten candidates, but did not issue a blacklist.[202]

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[199] Eric Marcelo O. Genilo, "A Catholic vote or a conscience vote?", April 28, 2013 <http://jjcicsi.org/2013/04/a-catholic-vote-or-a-conscience-vote> (accessed 1 March 2014); the website has since been hacked and the article is no longer available online.

[200] Sun.Star, "4 dioceses to follow Bacolod 'Team Patay'", *Sunstar Manila*, February 27, 2013 <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/manila/local-news/2013/02/27/4-dioceses-follow-bacolod-team-patay-270355> (accessed on January 3, 2014).

[201] Agua, Lebumfacil, and Anadia.

[202] See Aurora A. Santiago, "Where a divided vote changes nothing a united vote changes everything", *CBCP News*, undated, ca. April 2013 <http://www.cbcpnews.com/cbcpnews/?p-17681> (accessed on May 3, 2013); CBCP for Life, "White Vote Movement endorses 6 candidates, pushes involvement in social

The WVM's website's home page featured a slide show projecting four themes: "Vote for the poor. Vote for the abused. Vote for family. Vote for life." But the write-up on the "About Us" page focused only on the last two themes, announcing that the movement would support "electoral hopefuls who are believed to best represent the values of the Filipino people and have manifested their commitment to protecting *family and life.*"[203] A holistic Catholic theology of the family and of life can encompass a broad range of advocacies such as just wages, gun control, peaceful resolutions to armed conflict, and opposition to the death penalty. However, those Filipino Catholics who are most vocal on "family and life" are preoccupied with opposing contraception, divorce, and any legislation that appears to grant legitimacy to homosexuality. The universal criterion for WVM's choice of senatorial candidates seems to have been opposition to the RH Law.[204]

Unlike the Team Buhay/Team Patáy campaigns of the bishops, which had to deny their partisan character lest they be seen to be flouting Church laws, WVM was free openly to promote its candidates, since Catholic teaching encourages such lay partisan engagement. Nonetheless, WVM ruffled some Catholic feathers by portraying itself

transformation", *CBCP for Life*, 15 April 2013 <http://cbcpforlife.com/?p=10748> (accessed 3 May 2013); Ira Pedrasa, "Did the Catholic vote work in 2013?" ABS-CBNnews.com, May 15, 2013 <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/focus/05/15/13/did-catholic-vote-work-2013> (accessed on July 25, 2013). For the estimated number of El Shaddai members see Christian Esguerra, "Church revenge: Buhay says Catholic vote was the key", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 26, 2013 <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/415349/church-revenge-buhay-says-catholic-vote-was-key#ixzz2wFvfz7xV> (accessed on January 17, 2014).

[203] See White Vote Movement (WVM), "Catholic faith calls for unity with the White Vote Movement", in *White Vote Movement,* ca. April 2013, <http://whitevote.org#> (accessed on January 3, 2014).

[204] Genilo. However, a member organization of the WVM, El Shaddai, broke with the WVM in the last week before the election by endorsing two of the incumbent administration's pro-RH candidates. See Maila Ager, "El Shaddai endorses two more Team PNoy senatorial bets", *Philippine Daily Inquirer,* May 7, 2013 <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/403707/el-shaddai-endorses-two-more-team-pnoy-senatorial-bets> (accessed on April 7, 2014).

as the only Catholic vote. The article on its "About Us" page proclaims: "Catholic faith calls for unity with the White Vote Movement." [205]

The CBCP discourages such totalizing pronouncements. The 1997 exhortation on politics recognized that there might be a plurality of options consistent with the Gospel, and that it was legitimate for Catholics to differ about whom to vote for. The document stated, "Justice, peace, and integral development can be pursued through many political ways. Hence there can be neither one political party nor one political program that can exclusively claim the name Catholic. That is why there is normally no such thing as 'the Catholic vote'. Nor can particular Catholic groups present their candidates as the Church's candidates." [206] In 2007, then CBCP president Archbishop Angel N. Lagdameo cautioned Catholic lay groups against portraying their electoral choices as the only Catholic choices. He made it clear that although the CBCP encouraged lay groups collectively to discern about which candidates to endorse, it was not acceptable to violate the freedom of conscience of individual members through pressure to vote for the group's candidates, or through sanctions against those who did not. "To dictate on them whom to vote [for]," he claimed, "is as bad as buying their votes." [207]

Lay partisanship based on Catholic social teaching: Catholics for Risa Hontiveros. The CBCP documents that encourage the laity to engage in "principled partisan politics" rarely mention opposition to contraception as a principle on which such partisanship should be based. The "truths" listed by PCP-II for guiding lay political involvement are drawn not from Catholic sexual and reproductive ethics, but from Catholic social teaching: "the pursuit of the common good", the

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[205] White Vote Movement.

[206] CBCP, "Pastoral exhortation on Philippine politics".

[207] Angel N. Lagdameo, "Freedom to choose candidates", in *In and Out of Season*, March 2007 <http://abplagdameo.blogspot.com/2007/03/ freedom-to-choose-candidates.html> (accessed on March 1, 2014).

"defence and promotion of justice", "the spirit of service", "a love of preference for the poor", and "empowering people".[208] Other documents have emphasized laws for the protection and empowerment of the poor, the defence of human rights and redress of violations thereof, negotiated resolutions to armed conflict, electoral integrity, and the redemption of politics from patronage and corruption.[209]

Such were the principles and issues espoused by a group of Catholics who wrote an open letter towards the end of April 2013 campaigning for senatorial candidate Ana Theresia N. Hontiveros. Hontiveros was on the Team Patáy lists of Bacolod, Lucena, Tarlác, and Cebú.[210] The letter, titled "Catholics for Risa Hontiveros", tried to make the case that despite Hontiveros's support for the RH Law, Catholics could vote for her in good conscience because her positions on other issues just as important to the Church—on peace, agrarian reform, accessible health care, redistributive reforms, and good governance—were consistent with Catholic teaching.[211]

Like C4RH (an entirely different group), Catholics for Risa Hontiveros is an example of counter mobilization generated when some segments of the Church mobilize politically around a narrow set of ethical principles. Such mobilization intensifies and brings to the surface the internal debate about which of the Church's ethical principles are truly important. Catholics for Risa Hontiveros, C4RH, and WVM also demonstrate why a unitary Catholic vote would be difficult to constitute.

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[208] PCP-II, "Conciliar document", in PCP-II, *Acts and Decrees*, #351: 120.

[209] CBCP, "Pastoral exhortation on Philippine politics"; "Pastoral statement on lay participation in politics and peace"; "Call for vigilance"; and "Statement on the coming national and local elections".

[210] See Bayoran, Rufo, Mallari, Boncocan, and Agua, Lebumfacil, and Anadia.

[211] Kimberly Álvarez et. al., *UP for RISA HONTIVEROS,* May 9, 2013 <https://www.facebook.com/UP4RISA/photos/a.10151110774366909.441468.3 71483031908/10151466761661909/?type=1&permPage=1> (accessed on May 10, 2013); John Nery, "A Catholic vote for Risa", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, April 29, 2013 <http://opinion.inquirer.net/51723/a-catholic-vote-for-risa> (accessed on April 30, 2013).

The range of Catholic ethical principles is so comprehensive and diverse it would be difficult to find them all incarnated in any one candidate or party.

9.5 Catholic Partisanship:
A Threat to Religious Pluralism?

The objection has been raised—for instance, by C4RH—that political partisanship by religious institutions, or based on religious grounds, is a violation of the separation of Church and state. It is not—at least, not in the current constitutional understanding in the Philippines of the meaning of Church-State separation. Article II, Section 6 of the 1987 Constitution declares that "the separation of Church and State shall be inviolable," but no provision prohibits religions from campaigning for or against candidates or parties. Article III, Section 5 states merely that the state may not favour a particular religion over any other: "No law shall be made respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever be allowed. No religious test shall be required for the exercise of civil or political rights." Hence the separation of Church and State is limited to the prohibition of a state religion. A case may even be made that prohibiting religions from electoral partisanship based on religious conviction is a curb on religious freedom, which the constitution also guarantees. [212]

But even if religious partisanship is constitutionally permissible, such engagement may still be seen as a threat to religious pluralism and religious freedom. Catholics constitute a majority in the Philippines. If they voted as a bloc they might, hypothetically, be able to impose

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[212] Philippine Constitution. For the CBCP's interpretation of Church-State separation in the 1987 constitution, see CBCP, "Catechism on the Church and politics", #11.

peculiarly Catholic practices or proscriptions on non-Catholics. For instance, few religions share the Catholic ban on artificial contraception. Most Christian churches in the Philippines and the indigenous Iglesia ni Kristo supported the enactment of the RH Law. For Islam and most other non-Christian religions, the RH Law was not an issue. If a Catholic vote were, say, to lead to restrictions on contraceptives distribution, this could be interpreted as an infringement on the right of non-Catholics to have access to a wide range of options for fertility management.

9.6 What Catholic Vote? A Reality Check

To assess the prospects of a scenario in which a Catholic vote might impose Catholic religious beliefs upon other religions, an empirical reality check may be salutary. Although the enactment of a law mandating government's provision of broad access to modern contraceptive methods has taken about twenty-five years, this seems to have been due more to politicians' fear of the Church's power over the electorate than to the actual existence of such power.

Surveys by the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) over almost two decades suggests that despite high and even rising levels of trust in the Church, Filipino Catholics do not like to be told by the Church hierarchy whom to vote for. From 63 to 68 percent of Catholic respondents agreed with the statement that the Church should not try to influence how people vote in elections. The percentage of Catholic respondents who strongly agreed with this position grew from 12 percent in 1991 to 40 percent in 2008.[213] Perhaps not coincidentally,

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[213] See Gerald M. Nicolás, Loila A. Batomalaque, and Gladys G. Rabacal, with Roberto E. N. Rivera, SJ, "Qualified Confidence: Church, State, and Public Opinion", in *Becoming a Church of the Poor: Philippine Catholicism after the Second Vatican Council*, edited by Eleanor R. Dionisio (Quezon City: Institute on Church and Social Issues, 2011). The data that Nicolás et. al. examined was from the following sources, all by the International Social Survey Program

those were years marked by rising stridency about contraception on the part of certain elements of the Church.

The national results of the May 2013 senatorial elections seem consistent with this finding (see Table 1). WVM's endorsement appeared to have no significant effect on national voting patterns for senators. Seven of WVM's ten candidates won nationally—that is, made it above thirteenth place. However, all seven had already been predicted to win by a survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations (SWS), a reputable Philippine social survey organization, in January 2013, three months before WVM was launched. Only one of those winners rose significantly in ranking between January 2013 and the May elections. Two dropped by six to seven places. Another WVM candidate, ranked seventh in January, dropped seven places in May and lost. The sharp declines in ranking of those three candidates do not necessarily indicate that the WVM endorsement was deleterious to their electoral performance. The decline, however, suggest that the endorsement was of no great help either.

Conversely, inclusion in the Team Patáy lists did not seem to do much damage to the seven blacklisted candidates whose names were on all the lists mentioned here. Three lost, but two of those were already predicted to lose in the January survey, a few weeks before their inclusion in the Team Patáy lists. One of these ranked about the same in May as in January; the other moved two to three places up. The third

(ISSP): "International Social Survey Program: Religion, 1991" [Computer file] (Koeln, Germany: Zentralarchiv fuer empirische Sozialforschung [producer], 1993, and Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributors], 1994); "International Social Survey Program: Religion II, 1998" [Computer file] (Koeln, Germany: Zentralarchiv fuer Empirische Sozialforschung [producer], 2000, ICPSR version, and Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributors], 2001); and "International Social Survey Program 2008: Religion III (ISSP 2008)" [Computer file], GESIS Koeln, Germany ZA4950 Data file Vers. 2.0.0, doi:10.4232/1.10206. In the Philippines, the ISSP surveys have been conducted by the Social Weather Station (SWS) among 1,200 respondents aged 18 years and above, selected through multi-stage probability sampling.

losing candidate had ranked eighth to ninth in January, but dropped to fifteenth place in May. However, the drop in his ranking probably had more to do with an alleged offence against life *ex utero* than with his supposed lack of support for life before the moment of conception.[214] Of the four who won, one had hovered just beyond the twelfth slot in January but catapulted into sixth place by May. The rest did as predicted in January, or dropped by only one or two places. Those drops were due to the rise of a dark horse who was on not on any of the lists mentioned here.

Did the Team Buhay/Team Patáy campaigns sway votes at the local level? Results of the senatorial elections for Bacolod, Lucena, and their urban centres suggest that these campaigns did not have much of an impact in the territories of the dioceses conducting them (see Table 2).

Five of Bacolod's Team Buhay won nationally, but only three won in the territory of the diocese and in Bacolod City, the centre of the campaign, at places only one to two places above or below their national rankings. For the two who won nationally but not in the diocese, diocesan and city rankings were considerably lower than their national rankings. One candidate who did not place above thirteenth at the national, diocesan, or city levels placed only one higher in the diocese of Bacolod and in Bacolod City than she did in the nation.

Among the candidates blacklisted by Bacolod, four won in the territory of the diocese, the same four who won nationally. But five won in Bacolod City. Two of these ranked four to five places higher in the diocese and in Bacolod City than in the nation; one ranked the same in all three levels; one ranked the same at the national and city levels and a place lower at the diocesan level; one ranked two to four places lower.

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[214] Rumors about Juan C. Ponce Enrile's involvement in the 1981 death of a film actor resurfaced after the survey was conducted, and may influenced voters not to elect him. See Carmela G. Lapeña, "JPE and Son Jack Differ on Story of Alfie Anido's Death", *GMA News Online*, January 31, 2013 <http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/292792/ news/nation/jpe-and-son-jack-differ-on-story-of-alfie-anido-s-death> (accessed on May 25, 2014).

The two losing blacklisted candidates ranked the same at the national and diocesan levels, and one to two places higher or lower at the city level. None of this suggests that the diocesan blacklist significantly affected local electoral performance.

The results for the diocese of Lucena are similarly inconclusive for construing a local Catholic vote. Of Lucena's five Team Buhay candidates, the same four won at the national and diocesan levels, but only three won in Lucena City, the centre of the campaign. Only one of these did considerably better at the diocesan and city levels than nationally. The rest did one to two places better or two to three places worse. Of Lucena's seven Team Patáy candidates, the four who won nationally had similar rankings at the diocesan and city levels, about one to two places higher or lower. Of the three who lost, two ranked a place or two better or worse at the diocesan and city levels than at the national level; one did three to four places better.

In summary, evidence from surveys and the 2013 senatorial elections indicates (1) that Filipino Catholics are not generally warm to the idea of a "Catholic vote"; and (2) that Catholic endorsements or blacklists, whether by the hierarchy or by the unconsecrated laity, have no consistent effect on national or local electoral performance of candidates. Catholic partisanship does not seem, at least at this historical moment, to be a potential instrument of Catholic hegemony over public policy, or a significant threat to the rights of non-Catholics or Catholic dissenters.

Catholic partisanship in the elections of 2013 may even have eroded such Catholic hegemony as previously existed, because its results challenge the assumption that the Church has significant electoral influence. After 2013, politicians and state functionaries may be less timorous about espousing policies and legislation objectionable to the Church.

9.7 Partisanship as Catalyst for Internal Dissent

Catholic partisanship in the 2013 elections has exposed yet another myth: that there is one Catholic vote. Groups such as C4RH and Catholics for Risa Hontiveros, which openly dissent from political positions taken by the hierarchy and other Catholics, demonstrates the counter mobilization that occurs when segments of the Church take a militantly partisan stand. Such militant partisanship angers serious Catholics who do not share the positions on which this partisanship is based, or the emphasis it places on particular issues at the expense of others. It is safe to say that without the clamorous activism of anti-RH groups, C4RH would not have emerged. Without the Team Buhay/Team Patáy campaign and WVM, the letter titled "Catholics for Risa Hontiveros" might never have been written.

The Team Buhay/Team Patáy campaigns and "Catholics for Risa Hontiveros" took different positions on the same candidate based on different Catholic ethical principles. The Team Buhay/Team Patáy and WVM campaigns also show that Catholics may support different candidates even when they profess the same ethical principles. WVM's list and the Team Buhay lists of Bacolod, Lucena, and Tarlác had a core of candidates in common, but the lists were not the same. Some candidates and party-list groups were dropped, others added. Cebú's Team Buhay list had no candidates in common with that of Bacolod or Lucena, and only one candidate in common with WVM.[215] Moreover, even Catholic organizations may compromise on principles for political gain, as might be shown by the endorsement of two of the incumbent administration's pro-RH candidates by the largest member organization of WVM, El Shaddai, which some interpreted as an attempt to curry favour with Philippine president Benigno S. Aquino III.[216]

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[215] The lists of candidates endorsed by these dioceses may be found in Mallari, Boncocan, and Agua, Lebumfacil, and Anadia.
[216] Ager; Esguerra.

This diversity of political positions within the Catholic Church may be further articulated by a contingent development at the Vatican. Pope Francis, who ascended to the papacy two months before the 2013 elections, emphasizes the Church's obligation to love the poor rather than to hate transgressions against the Church's sexual and reproductive ethics. He makes gestures of compassion towards the transgressors and criticizes those who, in their zeal against those transgressors, neglect the needs of the poor.[217]

The "Francis effect" was still inchoate during the Catholic mobilizations around the 2013 elections. However, the sense that the new leader of the Roman Catholic Church shared their ethical priorities could have emboldened the authors of "Catholics for Risa Hontiveros" to challenge those for whom the foremost Church's foremost political mission is defence of its sexual and reproductive ethics. It will be interesting to see if the content of Catholic political engagement in the Philippines changes, as hierarchs and laity slowly fall into line with Francis's perspectives on what issues and which ethical principles are most important for the Church, or as they muster resistance to these perspectives.

In sum, Catholic electoral partisanship in the Philippines does not pose a clear and present danger to religious pluralism for two reasons. First, most Filipino Catholics do not agree that the Church should tell them whom to vote for. Second, a unitary Catholic vote is difficult to constitute because of the diversity of Catholic ethical principles for grounding political choices, the diversity of political choices based on

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[217] See, for instance, Francis I, "Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* of The Holy Father Francis to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World", November 24, 2013, #49 <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/ apost_exhortations/ documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html>; and Anthony Spadaro, SJ, "A Big Heart Open to God", *America,* September 30, 2013: 26.

the same ethical principles, and considerations other than the ethical in Catholic political choices.

9.8 Catholic Partisanship: Good or Bad for the Church?

While Catholic partisanship does not currently endanger religious pluralism, there is danger to the Church itself when the hierarchy engages in such partisanship. No single candidate or party can embody all of the Church's ethical principles. Partisanship based on a single principle or set of principles may lead the Church to gloss over violations of other principles.

For instance, several Team Buhay lists included one or two former military men who have never apologized for their participation in attempted *coup d'état* against legitimately elected governments. One of these is suspected of culpability in the deaths of leaders of the aboveground left in the late 1980s.[218] Hierarchical support for such "pro-life" candidates compromises the Church's moral standing in a way that unconsecrated lay partisanship does not, simply because the unconsecrated laity do not have the same institutional authority as bishops, clergy, and religious. Hierarchical alliances with specific candidates and parties may also constrain the Church's moral autonomy by making it difficult for hierarchs to be moral voices when their allies

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[218] Adrian Addison, "Another Philippines Coup Plot Fails", *Time*, November 29, 2007, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599, 1689001,00.html> (accessed on May 23, 2014); Philippine Daily Inquirer, "What Went Before: The 26-Year-Old Olalia-Alay-ay Double Murder Case", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, October 11, 2012 <http://newsinfo. inquirer.net/ 286854/what-went-before-the-26-year-old-olalia-alay-ay-double-murder-case> (accessed on May 23, 2014); ABS-CBN News, "Gringo Guilty in Olalia Slay: Montano", *ABS-CBN News Channel/ Headstart*, March 14, 2013 <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/ video/nation/03/14/13/gringo-guilty-olalia-slay-montano> (accessed 23 May 2014); and Philippine Congress, Senate, "Gringo Denounces 'Massive Misinformation Campaign': Honasan Reaches Out to Left, Reveals: 'It was Red'", *Press Release*, May 10, 2013 <http://www.senate.gov.ph/press_ release/2013/0510_honasan1.asp> (accessed on May 23, 2014).

violate Catholic principles other than those on which the alliance is based.

Nonetheless, Catholic partisanship at the level of the unconsecrated laity may have benefits for the Church—not just in terms of its capacity to promote Catholic ethical principles in the political arena, but also in terms of its capacity to deal with diversity, both externally and internally.

Participation in a competitive political arena requires Catholics to address not just fellow Catholics but non-Catholics. This means Catholics need to abjure language couched in exclusively Catholic terms and to use more universal language to persuade those who do not share their religious convictions. This effort at translation has the potential to broaden the translators' moral and social perspectives by compelling them to understand how non-Catholic others think and why. Participation in competitive politics also requires Catholics to learn how to identify what is morally essential in their positions and what can be given up to accommodate the needs, situations, and beliefs of non-Catholic others.

Thus Catholic lay partisanship may, rather than curtailing religious pluralism, eventually cultivate greater Catholic openness and understanding towards other religions. We have yet to see this happening among anti-RH Catholic partisans in the Philippines. But it is already visible in the ecumenical orientation of those whose politics is based on Catholic social principles. This may be because those principles are easier for non-Catholics to understand and agree with. It may be because those principles include human dignity, which in Catholic teaching is the basis of freedom of conscience and religion, and therefore of respect for other religions and for the nonreligious.[219] It may also be because those who base their politics on Catholic social

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[219] For the connection between human dignity and freedom of conscience and religion, see Vatican II, "*Dignitatis Humanae*".

principles are such a minority in the Church that they need to draw strength from alliances with people of other faiths who share the same principles.[220]

Catholic partisanship in the 2013 elections has also shown how political participation can flush out diversity within the Church, compelling those with different positions to announce and defend them to other Catholics in Catholic terms. This exposure of Catholicism's ethical plurality does not always generate tolerance, but it generates contestation of hegemonic claims and assumptions—a prerequisite for the legitimization of dissent, and for an authentic attitude of religious pluralism. Thus Catholic partisanship, instead of narrowing political space for non-Catholics, may expand political space within the Church by causing internal differences to be articulated and debated.

9.9 Can Religious Partisanship Be Good for Electoral Democracy?

Finally, Catholic partisanship may have benefits, hypothetically at least, for electoral democracy in the Philippines. Electoral competition in the Philippines is not generally based on ideas of the common good, or on interests other than those of political élites or of voters who expect to be individually rewarded for their support. Catholic partisanship can add the currency of values and principles to the main electoral currencies of violence, patronage, and popularity. This can be true even when those values and principles are not framed in language that non-Catholics can relate to. However, it can be especially true of partisanship based on values and principles of Catholic social teaching: human dignity, respect for human life in its fetal and non-fetal forms, the common good, a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable,

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[220] I am grateful for this last insight to Fr. Paul Medina, O. Carm, a convener of the National Clergy Discernment Group (NCDG), an association of Catholic clergy committed to the promotion and application of Catholic social teaching.

solidarity, stewardship, equality, freedom. Those values and principles are universally understandable and accessible as standards to evaluate and anchor political platforms, policies, and legislation.

Thus, partisanship based on Catholic ethics—or on religious ethics in general—can potentially challenge the deficiencies of mainstream Philippine politics, and model the possibility of a politics built around visions of what a good society should be. But such religiously based politics can be compatible with a religiously plural democracy only if it is translated from particular religious terms into terms that can be shared by those who belong to other religions, or to no religion.

9.10 Tables

Table 1: Ranking of White Vote Movement (WVM) and Team Patáy Candidates in January 2013 Social Weather Stations Survey [221] and in May 2013 Final National Election Tally: [222]

WVM Candidates	Ranking in SWS Survey January 2013	Ranking in National Elections May 2013
Ma. Lourdes Nancy S. Binay	12	5
Joseph Victor G. Ejercito Estrada	4	11
Richard J. Gordon	14	13
Gregorio B. Honasan	5-6	12
Marwil N. Llasos	33	32
Ma. Milagros Esperanza E. Magsaysáy	21-22	21

[221] Social Weather Stations, "SWS-BW January 2013 Pre-Election Survey", *SWS Media Release*, February 1, 2013 <http://www.sws.org.ph/pr 20130201.htm> (accessed on July 14, 2014).
[222] Rankings were drawn from final election returns obtained from the Commission on Elections (Comelec).

Aquilino Martin D. Pimentel III	5-6	8
Antonio F. Trillanes IV	10-11	9
Cynthia A. Villar	8-9	10
Juan Miguel F. Zubiri	7	14
Team Patáy candidates		
Juan Edgardo M. Angara	13	6
Teodoro A. Casiño	22 to 23	22
Alan Peter S. Cayetano	3	3
Juan C. Ponce Enrile	8 to 9	15
Francis G. Escudero	2	4
Ana Theresia N. Hontiveros	18 to 19	17
Loren B. Legarda	1	2

Table 2: Comparative ranking of Team Buhay and Team Patáy Candidates: Nation, Diocese of Bacolod, Bacolod City, Diocese of Lucena, and Lucena City: [223]

Team Buhay	**Ranking in Nation**	**Ranking in Diocese of Bacolod**	**Ranking in Bacolod City**	**Ranking in Diocese of Lucena**	**Ranking in Lucena City**
Estrada	11	18	26	7	6
Honasan	12	16	16	10	10
Magaysáy	21	20	20	21	20
Pimentel	8	9	7	11	11

[223] Rankings were drawn from national and municipal data obtained from the Comelec. Data for the dioceses of Bacolod and Lucena were obtained by aggregating votes for each candidate from all municipalities included in each diocese.

Trillanes	9	10	9	N/A	N/A
Villar	10	11	10	12	13
Team Patáy	**Ranking in Nation**	**Ranking in Diocese of Bacolod**	**Ranking in Bacolod City**	**Ranking in Diocese of Lucena**	**Ranking in Lucena City**
Angara	6	2	2	5	5
Casiño	22	22	21	22	21
Cayetano	3	3	3	4	4
Enrile	15	15	17	15	17
Escudero	4	5	4	3	3
Hontiveros	17	13	12	13	14
Legarda	2	4	6	2	2

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10

A CONSTRUCTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Muslims and U.S. Policies on Religion in Southeast Asia

Robert W. Hefner

10.1 Introduction

When one speaks of U.S. policy toward Southeast Asia on matters of religion and politics, it is helpful to recall one basic fact: that most of the major policy courses pursued by U.S. policy makers in the contemporary world reflect, not just the unique circumstances of any particular event or country, but broad policy debates over global movements and developments. For anyone old enough to have lived through the varied course of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia since the end of the Second World War, this generalization may appear so self-evident as to seem trivial. Whether in the Huk rebellion in the Philippines in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Vietnam in the 1950s and early 1960s, Indonesia during and after the transition to the New Order, or Muslim Southeast Asia in the aftermath of 9/11, U.S. policy makers' perceptions of particular challenges and issues have always reflected, not just local events, but more global and theoretical models of world order and disorder.

Some of these models, not least the one with all the dominos that informed U.S. policy in Southeast Asia at the height of the Vietnam war, can in retrospect seem simplistic or mistaken. By this I mean that, as with Cold-War commentaries on Ho Chi Minh and Vietnamese Communism, the narratives subsume so much local culture, history, and personality under a single global paradigm that they do violence to the specificity of national and regional circumstances. Others among the global narratives, however, can be considerably more nuanced, even where large numbers of academic and policy observers take exceptions to them. A case in point, which I will say a little here today, since it is relevant for our topic of religion and public policy in Southeast Asia, is Samuel P. Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" argument.[224]

Although Huntington never spoke for the U.S. State Department, arguments for and against his "clash" views, especially on Islam, played a major role in structuring policy debates on Muslim Southeast Asia from the mid-1990s to the late 2000s. Contrary to some accounts of U.S. policy on Islam and Southeast Asia—not least of all those that circulate among the conservative Islamists with whom I have at various times dialogued over the course of my career—these ideas were presented in a context that was nuanced, agonistic (i.e. opposed perspectives on the clash were not the exception, but the rule), and bracingly theoretical. It is something of the nature of these exchanges about which I want to talk today. In particular, I want to provide a thumbnail overview of the policy debates and conclusions in U.S. policy circles with regard to Muslim Southeast Asia, especially since the end of the Cold War.

In addition to discussing these and other discussions in and around policy circles on Islam in Southeast Asia, I will, second of all, discuss

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[224] The phrase "clash of civilizations" was made prominent by Harvard Professor of Political Science Samuel P. Huntington, when he wrote a journal article in *Foreign Affairs*, which was subsequently expanded into a book. See "Clash of Civilizations?" in *Foreign Affairs*, 73(2) Summer 1993 and *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996 (Editor).

the relationship between these often highly intellectual policy reflections and some of the policies actually implemented by the U.S. with regards to Muslim populations in Indonesia, first and foremost, but also with regard to those in Malaysia and Muslim minorities in the Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore. I will suggest that the road from policy analysis to actual policy is sometimes a difficult and indirect one. The simple reason for this is that, as I learned first-hand, the path from policy analysis to policy enactment is often characterized by two constraining influences: a progressive diminution in case detail and analysis as one moves from first-stage policy analysts to actual policy formulation; and, second, greater intervention in the policy formulation process by higher-ranking administration officials. Many of the latter are intent on or obliged to put aside the detailed analyses of the first-stage analysts in favour of policy statements that conform to an administration's broader policy philosophy. For those of us who care about U.S. policy on religion and religious actors in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, the lesson from this discussion, I believe, is that better policies and fewer mistakes result where lines of communication remain open and strong between local actors, local U.S. representatives, and high-ranking policymakers.

10.2 From Clash of Civilizations to Policy Outreach

Let me begin the substance of my remarks with a personal anecdote, one that has to do with the very first U.S. State Department event to which I was invited to Washington D.C. in the spring of 1995. These and other anecdotes I relate today reflect what was to become over the next 17 years, which is to say through 2012, an informal ethnography of policy analysis that I was able to carry out as a result of my involvement in policy-oriented conferences and paper-writing during this period. At the peak of my involvement—which is to say in the six years following the fall of the Suharto regime in May 1998—I was making about four to six trips to Washington each year. Shortly after those years, as things

seemed to settle in Southeast Asia and policy anxieties diminished, I got into a more regular pattern of two or three trips. In 2009, I became director of the Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs (CURA) at Boston University, and I had to cut back my Washington involvements all the more. I also cut back because I was finding the meetings less urgent, since U.S. policy on Muslim Southeast Asia seemed to have stabilized, and the potentially disastrous course that had prompted me to get intensively involved in policy discussions after 2001—when one line of talk referred to Southeast Asia as a "second front" in the U.S. war with Al-Qaida,[225] and military options seemed to overshadow all others—had faded.

This is not to say that U.S. policy analysis or enactment in Muslim Southeast Asia is entirely consistent or far-sighted. However, I believe that policy is marked by considerably less friction between what knowledgeable first-stage policy-analysts are saying and the kinds of practical policies President Obama's administration is implementing. In my opinion, U.S. policy on Muslims in Southeast Asia tends to be more nuanced in its understanding of the variation within Muslim culture and society than has sometimes been the case in areas of the Muslim-majority world geographically closer to Israel. As was also the case with the Clinton and Bush administrations, officials in the Obama administration responsible for Southeast Asia are keenly aware that Muslim associations and parties come in a variety of forms, and those that are most influential in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines are of the sort that the U.S. can regard as willing interlocutors.

Southern Thailand, I would add, is a separate and rather sadder case—and, although my information here is less complete than it is with regard to the other countries I have mentioned, my sense is that there is

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[225] The term "second front" has been used as a title of a book, which attempted to uncover "the veil of secrecy" of the Jemaah Islamiyah's exploits in Southeast Asia. See Ken Conboy, *The Second Front: Inside Asia's Most Dangerous Terrorist Network*. Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2006 (Editor).

great concern and uncertainty about the situation of Muslims in Thailand's four southern provinces. The uncertainty reflects not just a higher level of anxiety with regard to the course that the small but violent wing of the Muslim insurgency has taken over the past few years, but the sense that the Buddhist-dominated government in Bangkok has mishandled most stages in the gradual escalation of insurgent violence in the south, pouring oil onto the flames of a once small fire. In any case, before getting ahead of myself, let me back up and provide you with a personal anecdote that I hope will provide a point of entry into our understanding of how the first-stages of policy analysis of Islam in Southeast Asia tends to work, and just how this plays into U.S. perceptions of and policies toward Muslim Southeast Asia.

In the spring of 1995, two years after the publication of Huntington's much debated article on the clash of civilizations in *Foreign Affairs*, I received an invitation to present a paper at a government-sponsored conference in Washington D.C. on "The Clash of Civilizations and U.S. Policy in the Muslim World." Prior to this event, I had done some here-and-there consulting on Indonesian affairs for a think-tank or two, but not really very much. I was an anthropologist, and, like many in my profession, my inclination had always been to keep the U.S. government at arm's length. The reason for this was simple: any public record of discussions with U.S. officials could put a damper on my interactions with the conservative wing of the Muslim community. Although in the early 1990s the focus of my attention in Indonesia—and to a distant degree, in Malaysia and Singapore—was Muslim participation in the pro-democracy movement, I was also spending time in circles like the conservative Indonesian Council for Islamic Predication or Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII). I was certain that my conversation partners in the DDII—who had been consistently decent and welcoming

in interviews—would look at me differently were they to hear that I was involved in any way in U.S. government affairs.

However, by this time, early 1995, the invitation to speak as a conference keynoter—along with, I later learned, Francis Fukuyama—was something I felt that I could not in good conscience turn down. At the time, the issue was of great concern to those of us in academia, who work on Muslim affairs; government buy-in to the Huntington thesis struck many of us as a sure road to disaster for U.S. policies in Muslim lands.

The State Department conference was to bring together a couple of hundred policy analysts from State and other government-linked think tanks to address the question of whether Huntington's thesis on Islam in his *Clash of Civilizations* was correct and should inform U.S. policy across the Muslim world. At the time of my invitation I was told that I was expected to speak for those who disagreed with the thesis. Although prior to this time I knew Huntington personally from conference events at the Boston University institute with which I am associated, the conference organizers had guessed correctly that I held a dissenter's view of Huntington's basic views on Islam. Nonetheless, having never been invited to play such a public role at a government-sponsored event, I reacted with a mixture of nervousness—was I qualified to speak at such an event?—and academic arrogance—How could it be that the State Department would devote time and resources to a thesis that was so patently false?

Whatever the motives for my original reactions, my academy-based perception of the event proved mistaken. I came away from the meeting impressed by the quality and depth of the discussion and the familiarity of many speakers and audience members with the cultural landscape and history of various Muslim-majority countries. The eight-hour meeting was lively, and after presentations by Fukuyama, a Middle East academic analyst, and myself, the conference opened up to what I found

to be an impressively articulate exchange of views on the varied nature of Muslim-majority societies and polities. I came away from the conference with what was to be a regular impression over the years to come from my participation in State Department and government events on Muslims in world affairs: that most academics' conviction that there is little discussion of serious ideas in U.S. policy circles is deeply mistaken—even if, as I believe is also the case, the best of those policy discussions often have an only indirect impact on the decision-making that takes place higher-up in the policy formation process.

Let me push forward this general history a bit, and reveal what I came to understand about the 1995 meeting, and others. As a result of these meetings and other developments, by early 1996 the consensus in State Department circles was that the Huntington thesis was mistaken and dangerous. In the early 2000s, a U.S. ambassador to Indonesia stated this to me directly, and I heard the same view expressed in many State Department events. More serious yet, the sense was that if something were not done to convey the news that the U.S. government took exception to the Huntington thesis, the U.S. would have a public relations disaster on its hands in no time. So, quietly but persistently, the State Department sponsored lecture tours in Muslim countries by Huntington sceptics to send the message that Huntington did not represent the views of the U.S. State Department.

I should point out here that interest in this anti-clash-of-civilization effort was not a Clinton administration or Democratic Party preserve. Republicans, including the well-known Bush advisor Paul Wolfowitz, were no less prominent in the ranks of those declaring that it was imperative that we signal to our Muslim friends that the U.S. was not at war with Islam. I would also add, however, that this consensus was one that was in these years mostly restricted to policy and policy-oriented academic circles. For most of the U.S. public, and for most chattering

class pundits, Islam remained a relatively unfamiliar entity. But all this was about to change.

And change it did with the events of 9/11. As I have noted, U.S. policy analysts in the 1990s had reached a consensus that Muslim societies and movements are greatly diverse and not by any means anti-democratic. U.S. analysts, then, rejected the core claim of Huntington's clash narrative. However, to invoke a clumsy metaphor, the attacks of 9/11 insured that the cat of conversation about Islam and Muslims was now out of the policy-circle bag. In the months following 9/11, the issue of Islam's compatibility with democracy, pluralism, and human freedom once again became a matter of intense debate, not only among policy-oriented academics and government analysts, but among talk-show hosts, journalists, public clergy, and anyone else who felt the issue urgent. It soon became clear that the anti-Huntington consensus many of us felt securely in place was actually in peril.

10.3 From Analysis to Program Action

There was an even broader background to events like the 1995 policy conference on the "Clash of Civilization" thesis that is important to highlight here. First, in 1995, the Clinton administration was in power. One of the more interesting innovations of policy analysis begun in the Clinton administration, but then continued under Presidents Bush and Obama, was the effort to invite areal and topical specialists in academia to make substantive inputs to first-stage policy analysis. Although this intensification of outreach to the academic community took place for analysis in all areas of the world, I was told by many government analysts that specialists of the Muslim world and Muslim affairs were the targets of the most extensive outreach.

At its peak from 1993 to 2010, the government sponsored dozens of projects and conferences on all aspects of Muslim politics and society. The largest and most public of these was an annual spring conference on

"Political Islam". This event recruited some 30-40 top-of-the-field academics working in all areas of the Muslim world, and speaking before an audience of some 200-300 government analysts. As was the case at the conference that followed the Bush administration's invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the discussions became quite heated, with many or even most of the academic speakers taking strong exception to administration policies. Dr. Emile Nakhleh, the architect of this outreach under the Clinton and Bush administrations and a specialist of Islam himself, has provided an insightful, first-person account of the rationale and course of this outreach in his book, *A Necessary Engagement: Reinventing America's Relations with the Muslim World*, published by Princeton University Press in 2009. His book captures well the broader background to this policy outreach, and the spirited exchanges that sometimes resulted.

In addition to events like the annual conference on Political Islam, there were dozens of more focused working groups, on topics as varied as Islamic banking, Islamic law, *madrasah* education, and, of course, terrorism. I myself was involved in a number of these policy discussions, including those on banking, law, education, and Muslims and electoral politics. I was never involved in closed-door discussions on terrorism, and I am not sure what the quality of discussion was in those circles. But my point is that during these years, there was a remarkable and serious effort to come to terms with the complexity of Muslim affairs in everything from economics and education to electoral politics.

The second event that forms part of the background to events in the 1990s and 2000s is more Southeast Asia- and Islam-specific. In the mid-1980s, and in part as a result of the transition to democracy in Korea and Taiwan, as well as post-Cold War developments in Eastern Europe, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) began to develop policies that emphasized the importance of intermediary or

"civil society" groupings for sustainable economic development and democratization. Prior to this time, government aid agencies like USAID tended to steer clear of collabourations with religiously-based organizations. In fact, as I heard at many Washington events, and in the course of an evaluation I carried out of USAID programs with Indonesian Muslim associations in 2004, many people in the State Department and USAID objected to any collaboration with religious organizations, whether in the Muslim world or elsewhere. For these policy analysts, the high wall of separation enjoined by the First Amendment to the U.S. constitution pre-empted any such cooperation with religious actors. However, the events that had ushered in the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe had been marked by the prominence of Christian Church groups in much of the pro-democracy opposition. Along with the new discourse in academia on civil society as a key to democracy and economic growth, this confluence of events led many in the USAID wing of the government to rethink their policy on partnering with religious organizations.

In Muslim Southeast Asia, this rethink had its most serious impact in Indonesia; its effects were felt less dramatically in other Southeast Asian countries. Under its independent-minded prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysia had a far more cautious attitude toward American aid, welcoming U.S. businesses and private investment but declining direct aid or advice on matters related to politics or religion. The situation in Indonesia was quite different. Beginning in the Reagan Administration (1981-1989), and especially under that Administration's ambassador to Indonesia from 1986-1989, Paul Wolfowitz, USAID had initiated a variety of program-outreaches to Muslim organizations. These initiatives at first took their cues from efforts a decade earlier by the Germany-based Neumann Stiftung to explore the possibility of using Islamic educational institutions, and especially rural-based Islamic boarding schools (*pesantrens*), as institutions for grassroots economic

development. The man who became the leader of Nahdlatul Ulama's (NU) Executive Board in 1981 and the eventual president of post-Suharto Indonesia in October 1999, Abdurrahman Wahid, had been involved in the Jakarta-based Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), known by its acronym as the LP3ES, that had mediated some of the first Neumann Stiftung contacts with Indonesian *pesantrens*. After becoming the NU Executive Chair, Wahid also began discussions with the Australian, German, and U.S. embassies in an effort to secure financial support for NU-led programs in family health, women's education, civic- and democracy-education, and grassroots development.

Under the Reagan Administration's Wolfowitz, these conversations with Muslim leaders and intellectuals reached a new height. Wolfowitz's wife, Clare Selgin Wolfowitz, was a respected anthropological linguist, who separated from Paul Wolfowitz in 2001. According to people close to her, Ms. Wolfowitz played a great role in refining her husband's understanding of Indonesian Islam. However one evaluates his role as Secretary of Defence during the younger Bush Administration's invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Wolfowitz developed a subtle and nuanced understanding of Islam in Indonesia.

From my outsider's perspective, the fact that a central and broadly conservative Republican in the U.S. in the 1990s and 2000s had extensive experience in Indonesia served as a significant counterweight to those in the Bush Jr. administration, which, in the aftermath of 9/11 and the Bali bombings in October 2002, lobbied for a securitized, "anti-terrorism first" policy in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. The most influential of those figures was Vice President Dick Cheney. The vice-president disagreed with Wolfowitz's recommendations on the prospects for working closely with mainstream Muslim organizations in Indonesia. His objections became all the louder when, as was most dramatically the case after March 2003, those organizations took exception to U.S. policies in Afghanistan and Iraq in no uncertain terms.

From the late 1980s onward, then, the U.S., especially through the USAID, initiated a series of joint programs with mass-based Muslim organizations in Indonesia. In February and March 2004, I was invited to travel to Indonesia to carry out an assessment of the more than 30 programs with Muslim organizations that USAID was sponsoring at the time. In the course of my interviews with USAID officials, I learned that these Indonesia programs were the largest and most successful collaborations between USAID and Muslim organizations in the world. My conversations with USAID officials also revealed that the agency hoped to use the Indonesia programs as models for social, economic, and civic collaboration with Muslim organizations elsewhere in the world. However, as I mentioned above, I learned that there was also widespread ambivalence in State Department circles about any such initiative both in Indonesia and especially in Muslim South Asia and the Middle East. Some of the opposition was on First Amendment grounds: that the U.S. should maintain a high wall of separation with religious organizations everywhere. No less important, other officials worried that there were few if any Muslim organizations elsewhere in the world committed to democratic reform and willing to partner with U.S. aid agencies.

Although my experience in other parts of Southeast Asia is not as extensive as in Indonesia, I had the opportunity in several programs to see that USAID and State Department officials felt that Philippine Muslims, including those in the mainline wings of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, were also regarded as willing and capable partners for development programs. In the late 1990s, U.S. officials had also attempted to identify such program partners in southern Thailand too. However, according to reports I heard, these officials were hampered in their efforts both by the Thai government, which insisted on handling the southern problem on its own, and by their inability to identity a broad-based Muslim organization with whom they might work as a

partner. By comparison, finally, in Malaysia and Singapore, the U.S. adopted a decidedly less pro-active policy, recognizing that those two governments preferred to handle affairs related to Muslims entirely on their own.

10.4 Grassroots Development to Democratization

U.S. aid cooperation with Indonesian Muslim partners had begun in the mid-1980s, then, with a few collaborations on practical matters in the fields of public health and education. A decade later, however, the cooperation had expanded into more than 30 programs on various aspects of social, educational, and political life. Most remarkably, perhaps, beginning in 1993 and then blossoming in 1997, USAID began a series of democracy-oriented programs. These centreed on election monitoring, civic education, women's rights, and efforts to build pluralism and tolerance. The initiatives gained additional momentum in 1997, when the Jakarta office of The Asia Foundation (TAF) applied for and won a grant to operate a multi-pronged program entitled "Islam and Civil Society".

The latter program marked a new, bolder, and potentially controversial phase in US cooperation with Muslim parties in Indonesia. The program's two declared objectives were, first, to implement civil society programs through Islamic networks and organizations, and, second, to promote democratic and pluralist values, not in religiously-neutral terms, but in normatively Islamic terms. The premise of the latter policy aim was that a religious terminology would be more effective than secular discourse to win popular support for democratic values among the growing portion of Indonesia's Muslim population that was religiously observant.

Echoing the remarks of other Indonesian observers at the time, TAF proposal to USAID had noted that Indonesian society had been transformed by an Islamic resurgence, making the country "religiously

and culturally more Islamic." The result was that "increasing numbers of Indonesians look to Islam as a source of guidance and inspiration in a period of rapid socio-economic change and political uncertainty, while at the same time they seek to enhance democracy and strengthen civil society".[226] As I was reminded during my assessment in 2004, for those in Washington, D.C. convinced that developmental assistance should be provided in a manner that maintains a high wall of separation between the political and *anything* religious, these programs crossed a First Amendment threshold and were regarded with studied ambivalence. A few others in U.S. policy circles worried less about First Amendment issues than they did that the Suharto regime would take exception to the programs on the grounds that they were putting wind in the sails of the pro-democracy opposition. Based on my own interviews with Suharto administration officials in the late 1990s, these latter suspicions were entirely correct.

Without burdening you with too much detail, let me describe some of the larger programs that USAID and TAF organized with Muslim partners over the next few years. What is so striking about these is the way in which the programs responded to fast-changing developments in Indonesia society. The major programs in the pre-*Reformasi* (i.e. pre-May 1998) period included training programs with five Indonesian Muslim NGOs on human rights, democratic ideals, and religious pluralism. More than 2000 Muslim leaders and activists participated in these programs, which lasted several days and were followed up by later monitoring programs or field exercises. In response to outbreaks of ethno-religious violence during 1996-1997, NU's Institute for the Study and Development of Human Resources (Lakpesdam) mobilized alumni of its civic education program to distribute food assistance in poor communities. Lakpesdam also used its networks to dampen religious tensions in conflict areas and guard Christian churches threatened by

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[226] The Asia Foundation Report 1997: 2.

provocateurs. In a similar manner, the Institute for Islamic and Social Studies (LKIS) in Yogyakarta (Java) initiated programs on tolerance and civil society among urban youth in cities like Pekalongan, site of an earlier anti-Chinese riot.

The second phase of the program began in September 2000 with an additional grant of US$3.4 million. In developing the second phase of the program, TAF took into consideration the changed political landscape of the country in the aftermath of Suharto's resignation in May 1998. During this period political power had become more diffused and the civil society had been politicized. As TAF saw it, the most serious threat to democratization now came not from anti-democratic elements in the state, but from armed sectarian groups in society. Some among the latter took exception to the concept of pluralist democracy on conservative Islamic grounds. While the elections of 1999 were generally peaceful, clashes between supporters of various political parties showed the deepening of politically based divisions in the Indonesian society. As a TAF Report noted: [227]

> *The paradigm of state versus civil society … no longer reflects current political realities. In the past much public discourse was geared towards challenging the hegemony of a repressive regime and obstacles to the flourishing of such a discourse usually came in the form of the state. Things are no longer that simple. The greatest challenge to this budding discourse now comes from within society itself, reflected in the alarming proliferation in the media of views antithetical to civil society values of pluralism and tolerance.*

The changed political scene, TAF officials argued, required a shift towards promoting social and political reconciliation and combating violence in the body-politic. In reformulating its programs, TAF directly

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[227] The Asia Foundation Report 2001: 2.

addressed the sensitive issue of inter-religious strife. It also sharpened its focus on gender equality in response to demands for the implementation of *syariah* in a manner that some Muslim parties saw as contrary to Islamic law properly understood. TAF also expanded the number of partnering organizations and resolved to promote increased interactions between them as recommended by a USAID evaluation. Eventually the ICS program had some 32 partners, operating in six fields: (a) civic education and Islam; (b) democracy training through mosque and *pesantren* networks; (c) pluralism and tolerance initiatives; (d) Islam and the media; (e) gender; and (f) policy advocacy initiatives.

Civic education had been a central component of the ICS program since its inception, and it remained its largest and most ambitious initiative through the end of the program in 2004. Interestingly, TAF tried hard to ensure that its program partners included, not just Muslim progressives, but moderately conservative Muslims. The one success the TAF achieved in this regard was its cooperation with the Shalahuddin Religious Predication (Dakwah) Labouratory (Labda) in Yogyakarta, Java. Founded in 1982, Labda has long had a reputation as a theologically conservative organization. However, the ethno-religious violence that raged in Indonesia from 1998 to 2002 led the young Labda leadership to develop an interest in combating religious extremism by developing seminars on pluralism and democracy. Its activities were targeted at university campuses known as strongholds of conservative Islamism. Although TAF hoped to extend its list of conservative partners more widely, Labda was the only such organization to agree to this participation.

That said, TAF had great success finding partners in Indonesia's enormous mainline Muslim organizations, including especially the Muhammadiyah and NU. In cooperation with the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University in Jakarta, and with the blessing of Muhammadiyah and NU officials, TAF supported a Muslim consortium,

the Indonesian Centre for Civic Education (ICCE), to prepare a civic education textbook, eventually adopted in many state Islamic colleges and universities, entitled *Democracy, Human Rights, and Civil Society*. The authorship of the book, I should point out, was entirely Indonesian. A first edition was published in early 2000. Shortly thereafter, the ICCE conducted a twelve-day seminar to train 162 faculty in the course subject as well as in the new "active learning" pedagogy used for its instruction. ICCE emphasized that pedagogy is an important part of the civic education program. Assessment teams' interviews with students and faculty confirmed that the pedagogical component of the civic education has proved quite popular. In 2003, the ICCE program enrolled 8000 students. A revised edition of the course book was later published; the text is still widely used today.

The Institute for Research and Educational Development (LP3) at the Muhammadiyah University in Yogyakarta was the second major Islam and Civil Society partner involved in the development of a civic education program designed to introduce and discuss issues related to democracy, pluralism, and human rights. The authors of this book were, again, Indonesian Muslims, but the approach they took differed from that of the ICCE effort. Like its State Islamic University (UIN) counterpart, the Muhammadiyah program was intended to replace the school-based political indoctrination mandated by the Suharto regime with courses on democracy, pluralism, and citizenship. The difference between the UIN and Muhammadiyah program was that the former adopted a largely secular discourse when discussing democratic ideals, making few explicit references to Islamic legal or ethical traditions.

In contrast, the Muhammadiyah program blended the discussion of democracy and human rights with extensive references to Islamic law and history, as well as the history of Indonesia and the Muhammadiyah. In a striking example of the program's "open educational" philosophy, participants in the Muhammadiyah civic education program were also

urged to reach their own conclusion as to the compatibility of Islam with democracy, citizenship, and human rights. Although book's authors clearly hoped that students and teachers would reach a positive conclusion, the text and the course instruction left the matter open. I know from interviews that some students and faculty used the civics course to affirm that democracy and pluralism are antithetical to Islam.

The LP3 began preparation of its textbook and training of 350 university lecturers in 2002, and shortly thereafter developed a second and expanded edition of its textbook, which was adopted in most of the 169 institutions of higher education owned and managed by the Muhammadiyah. The aim of the program was, in a three-year period, to extend civic education instruction to all first-year students in institutions of Muhammadiyah higher education. As of 2011, when I last checked in on the program, most Muhammadiyah colleges offered the course.

There were dozens of other TAF/USAID collabourations, too many to detail here. Ironically, perhaps, programs developed in the rather well-controlled Indonesian political climate of the 1980s and 1990s were eventually scaled back by USAID after 2004, despite the fact that electoral democracy was alive and well. The cutbacks were at first said to be the result of fiscal constraints in Washington, D.C. However, the off-the-record comments of program managers whom I interviewed, both Indonesian and American, indicated that many agency officials in Washington had concluded that theological arguments over democracy and pluralism were not appropriate foci for U.S. government-funded activities. An additional influence on the decision, I was told, is that the 2003 invasion in Iraq had made even liberal Muslims wary of collabourating too closely with American officials. This wariness had played into the hands of American critics of the Islam programs. The critics argued, I think incorrectly, that lack of support for US policies in the Middle East showed the failure of the Indonesian initiative. In the face of these and other events, the USAID officials scaled back their

pluralism-and-democracy programs, closing one of the most unusual chapters in America's engagement with Muslim social associations in modern times.

10.5 Conclusion: Bringing the Local Back In

However distinctive its details, no aid program in any country tells the whole story of U.S. government attitudes toward and engagement with religious associations and movements around the world. Had I opted to discuss the U.S. government's implementation of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998, the story told would have been quite different from that I have described here. The legislation that gave rise between 1996 and 1998 to IRFA was inspired in large part by Christian Evangelical concerns for the plight of indigenous Christians in several countries in the global south. Other groups, including the Baha'is in Iran, were cited in the course of the policy-making discussion. Nonetheless, it is clear that much of the force for the policy emanated from Christian evangelical lobbies concerned first and foremost with the persecution of Christians.

An early draft version of the law included a controversial provision that would require the U.S. government to automatically impose sanctions on countries found to be in violation of international religious freedom. The Clinton administration opposed the legislation because of these mandatory sanctions, and revisions to the draft eventually resulted in a law that did away with automatic sanctions. The final version of the law focused on the establishment of three bodies to monitor religious freedom: an Ambassador at Large for Religious Liberty, a Special Advisor on Religious Persecution, and a congressionally-appointed Commission on International Religious Liberty.[228]

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[228] Eugenia Relano Pastor, "The Flawed Implementation of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998: A European Perspective" in *Brigham Young University Law Review,* 2005: 713-717.

Interestingly, an unusual coalition of business groups, State Department professionals, and secular human rights activists continued to find fault with the law, as do human rights activists in many countries beyond the U.S. Many in the State Department object to the way in which the law pre-empts behind-the-scene diplomatic discussions, which many officials see as a more effective way to promote reform than public criticisms in annual reports. Secular human rights activists, both in the U.S. and abroad, object to the way in which the law implicitly accords religious freedom greater importance than other human rights. Even supporters of the law in and around government complain that the U.S. has shown a "consistent pattern of neglecting to fully enforce principles of religious freedom abroad if the violating nations possess economic or strategic value for the United States". [229]

My aim in this paper has not been, however, to provide a comprehensive analysis of U.S. policy making on religion around the world or even in Southeast Asia. My aim has instead been to suggest that here in Muslim Southeast Asia, and especially in Indonesia, a combination of variables has made for a surprisingly nuanced series of U.S. policies on Islam—policies far richer and more astute than the "Clash of Civilizations" thesis sometimes attributed to U.S. government agencies. The variables that favoured this more nuanced policy included Indonesia's relative distance from the front-lines of the Israel-Palestine confrontation; an early and positive history of European and American cooperation with Muslim associations in economic development programs; a series of ambassadors, both Republican and Democrat, who looked with interest and affection at Indonesia and Indonesian Muslims; and, most important perhaps, a sophisticated and forward-looking Muslim leadership in organizations like the Muhammadiyah, NU, and the State Islamic University System.

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[229] Ibid., 725.

It may well be that the "golden age" of this U.S. and Indonesian Muslim engagement has passed. Always proud in their nationalism, Indonesians today may feel that they no longer need any assistance on democratic matters, not least of all from a country that many, even pluralist democrats, regard as having violated some of its core democratic principles. Whatever the current opinion, our reflection on the history of cooperation between USAID and Indonesian Muslim organizations from the late 1980s to 2005 is still important. The history reminds us that, when it comes to religion and U.S. policy, detailed local knowledge and engagement with local interlocutors matter enormously. Both can make a great difference in program outcomes. Both also help to give substance to the conviction that, rather than a clash of civilizations, our world today is alive with and in need of ever more cooperation across organizations, cultures, and nations.

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