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A State of the One and Only God: Indonesian Muslims' Perceptions of the 'Secular' West

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A State of the One and Only God:

Indonesian Muslims' Perceptions of the 'Secular' West

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1. Introduction

"Freedom of expression should not be exercised in ways that tarnish the honor, sanctity and sacredness of religious values and symbols" (Nurbaiti 2020). These are the words Indonesian President Joko Widodo used to respond to French President Emmanuel Macron's statements about Islam. Over the last couple of years, terrorist attacks in France have hardened Macron's rhetoric about Islam, with his 2020 speech in which he depicted Islam as "a religion that is in crisis all over the world today" as its hallmark (Lester 2020). Macron's strong rhetoric has not only led to Widodo's condemnation, but sparked outrage among Muslims all over the world (Al Jazeera 2020). The contestation fits into a perceived trend of religious resurgence in the non-Western world, defined as "activities, movements, and processes that challenge authoritative secular settlements between metaphysics, politics, and state power" (Shakman Hurd 2008, 135). By contrast, Western society is commonly characterized as secularized, referring to the decreasing relevance of religion (e.g. Bruce 2002; Appleby 2000; Tickner 2009).[1]

With the largest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia is at the center of the "unprecedented religious resurgence" in Southeast Asia since the 1970s (Hefner 1997, 5). What makes religious resurgence in Indonesia stand out from resurgence in other Islamic-oriented countries, however, is the resurgence of rather moderate and secularist ideas instead of radical religious viewpoints (Assyaukanie 2009, 2-3). Moreover, Indonesia distinguishes itself through its particular state-religion relationship: Indonesians are legally obliged to have a religion, with atheism being considered a criminal act (Lindsey 2018, 80). Meanwhile, although 85% of Indonesians identify as Muslim, Indonesia is far from an Islamic state (Sakai and Fauzia 2014, 41). Instead, the Indonesian state is based on the five Pancasila principles, with as its first principle the 'belief in the one and only God' (Vickers 2005, 118). These principles are also grounded in secularist, pluralist, and liberalist ideas. What is more, secularization remains a topic of debate in Indonesia, with some intellectuals arguing that secularization is desirable or even necessary if Indonesia wants to be a full-fledged democratic state (Kersten 2015, 147-161).

Thus, while the Indonesian president condemned Macron's statements on Islam, Indonesia's particular state-religion relationship makes it difficult to place the country in a secularized West vs. religious non-West dichotomy. While religion plays a central role in

[1] To be sure, 'the West', 'secular', 'secularism', and 'secularization' are all complicated and contested terms that need further elaboration. This elaboration can be found in the theoretical framework later in this thesis.

Indonesia, there is far from a widely-shared rejection of secularist thinking. Based on this puzzle, this thesis examines how Indonesia's state-religion relationship with its 'belief in the one and only God' is reflected in Indonesian Muslims' perceptions of the 'secular' West.[2] The focus of this thesis on Indonesia is not only based on its particular state-religion relationship, but also on Indonesia's vast (Muslim) population and its ambition to become an international player of significance (Kersten 2015, 3). As such, studying the influence of Indonesia's state-religion relationship in the context of Muslims' perceptions of the West can generate findings that move far beyond the domestic context, and also serve to understand the general "sea of change that has been affecting other parts of the Muslim world" (ibid., 3). Moreover, this thesis is based on the conviction that religion deserves significant attention in the field of international relations (IR). After all, to understand how people live together and perceive each other across borders, religion can simply not be ignored (Fenton 2016, 182).

To achieve above-mentioned objectives, this thesis argues that interaction with Indonesian Muslims themselves is crucial to paint a reliable picture of their perceptions. Therefore, the thesis uses interviews as its main method to find an answer to the research question. The following sections all build up to, explain, analyze, and conclude the proceedings of this thesis. First, a historical context will be given as to sketch the background against which this thesis is written. Second, a literature review outlines existing academic literature on the topic, which serves to contextualize the content of this thesis. Third, the theoretical framework discusses the key terms 'secularism' and 'secularization', and explains how they will be used in this thesis. Fourth, the methodology outlines the process behind the interviews and explains important decisions that were made in this respect. Sixth, the discussion of insights from important Indonesian intellectuals and organizations serves as a starting point for the interviews, which results are discussed in the seventh section. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the main findings and gives recommendations for future research.

2. Historical Context

This thesis aims to determine how Indonesia's state-religion relationship is reflected in the way Muslims view the 'secular' West. Doing so, however, would be a foolish task without

[2] 'Secular' is put between quotation marks because this thesis aims to bring nuance to dichotomous depictions of a secular West and a religious non-West. The theoretical framework later in this thesis further elaborates this point.

having an understanding of how this particular state-religion relationship arose and developed. After all, as Maarif (2018) states, studying religious practices without a sense of their historical context "is to err like a man crawling in circles in the darkness, thinking he is walking in daylight" (30). The story of Indonesia's modern state-religion relationship started with the establishment of the independent Republic of Indonesia, which was officially acknowledged by the former Dutch colonizers in 1949. However, Indonesian state-building was already well on its way in 1945, when Indonesia declared its independence and the era of Revolution started. During these years, Indonesia was involved in a heavy anti-colonialist struggle with the Dutch occupiers. The revolution was led by Sukarno, who became the first president of the new Indonesian state (Vickers 2005, 86-95).

It was Sukarno who initiated in 1945 the now famous philosophical underpinning of the Indonesian republic, known as Pancasila or Five Principles (ibid., 117). The slogan of the new Indonesian state became *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* or 'Unity in Diversity' (SETARA Institute 2016, 1). The formulation of the principles of Pancasila, however, was a complex process characterized by various stakeholders who all wanted to see their own preferences and stipulations reflected in Pancasila. Central to the debate was the Jakarta Charter, which aimed to establish sharia or Islamic law as the legal basis of the new Indonesian state (Feillard 1997, 132). The crux of the Jakarta Charter is known as the 'seven words', which stipulate that all Muslims have to practice Islamic law (Boland 1971, 27). Meanwhile, others involved in the state-building process believed that Indonesia should become a secular state. Eventually, both positions were reconciled in the first principle that established Indonesia is based on the belief in the one and only God (Vickers 2005, 118). Although Muslim nationalists thus accepted that sharia would not become part of Pancasila, the issue has not been forgotten; in fact, some of them continue to pledge up until today for an inclusion of the Jakarta Charter in the Indonesian constitution (Van Bruinessen 2013, 2).

After two decades of state-building under the rule of Sukarno, the process was dramatically interrupted by General Suharto's rise to power in 1965. In this year, Suharto accused Sukarno and his allies of organizing a communist coup. As a consequence, Suharto and his army, with indirect support from the U.S., took control and killed and arrested hundreds of thousands of communists (Vickers 2005, 155-159). Suharto's ascendancy introduced a new era in Indonesia's state-religion relationship, in which the 1965 Blasphemy Law was a key moment. Given that communism was seen as directly related to atheism, this Law established that atheism would become a criminal act. It laid the basis for a strong suspicion among Indonesians of both atheism and communism, which, just like the Law itself,

remains in place up until today (Fenton 2016, 190-203). While Suharto did not tolerate any opposition for most of his time in office, he introduced a policy of economic and political openness in the 1990s. Economic liberalism allowed for the influx of capital and an increase of wealth, but only for the rich classes in Indonesia. Moreover, political openness allowed political opponents of Suharto, including Islamic groups, to organize themselves. These factors led to an economic and political crisis, which culminated into the fall of Suharto in 1998 (Vickers 2005, 197-209). His fall introduced the era of *Reformasi*, which concerns the transition from an autocratic to a democratic state, one in which religion continues to play a central role. All Indonesians receive religious education, which includes lessons about Pancasila at primary school (Menchik 2016, 155; Fenton 2016, 191). Moreover, all Indonesians are obliged to indicate on their identity card to which religion they belong, which can only be one of the six officially recognized religions (Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism). Although Indonesians may now also decide to leave this section blank, there remains discrimination of people who fall outside of the official religions (Swazey 2017, 3-12).

3. Literature Review

In the 21st century, the West is no longer known as a very religious place. Bruce's (2002) famous secularization paradigm argues that rationalization and differentiation processes resulting from the Protestant Reformation and monotheistic Christianity have made religion increasingly irrelevant. Meanwhile, the opposite process seems to be unfolding in the non-Western world; according to Shakman Hurd (2008), there can be no doubt about the resurgence of religion at the international level (134). For former colonies, religion is an important means to reinvent and reposition their national identities on both the domestic and the international level (Haynes 2021, 2). Indonesia can be seen as an example of non-Western religious resurgence; Islam, the dominant religion in Indonesia, has come to play an increasingly significant role over time as a result of urbanization, globalization, and modernization processes (Fealy 2008, 15). What is much more contested, however, is the type of Islam that should prevail in Indonesia (Gillespie 2007, 209-210). This section outlines key arguments and debates on this topic, and demonstrates that these discussions are of significant relevance to understand Muslims' attitudes toward the West.

3.1. Religious Intolerance

With regard to religious sentiment in Indonesia, Kersten (2015) points to 2005 and 2006 as watershed years. In 2005, the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) issued a fatwa that sparked a lot of controversy and created new polarization just after the post-Suharto outbreak of religious violence came to rest (ibid., 1). In line with Kersten's observations about growing polarization, the Indonesian NGO SETARA Institute links the 2005 MUI fatwa to the increasing religious intolerance in Indonesia. The institute defines religious intolerance and discrimination as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on religion or belief and having as its purpose or as its effect nullification or impairment of the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis" (2016, 17), and argues that especially state actors are increasingly practicing intolerance and discriminating religious minorities. According to SETARA, an important factor behind this trend is the politicization of religion as exemplified by the 2005 fatwa. After all, the impacts of fatwas are not limited to Muslim intellectual circles; in fact, stipulations of fatwas are frequently incorporated into official state policies. As such, SETARA criticizes the Indonesian government for encouraging religious intolerance (2016, 59-60).

Growing religious intolerance is a topic that many authors writing about the Indonesian state-religion relationship touch upon (e.g. Lindsey 2018; Hamayotsu 2013; Mietzner and Burhanuddin Muhtadi 2018). By pointing to the political implications of religiously intolerant expressions, SETARA makes a direct link between the politicization of religion and religious intolerance. As such, SETARA implies that religious matters should not become too intertwined with political matters. This view is supported by Hamayotsu (2013), who argues that religious intolerance and radical Islam have become more prominent since the mid-2000s. According to Hamayotsu, this development has two causes: 1) religious hardliners gaining access to traditional political and religious institutions as well as popular media to spread their ideas, and 2) conservative Muslim politicians becoming more visible in the traditional media and institutions as a result of their own efforts as well as the outflow of liberal and secular politicians who increasingly use modern, less traditional means to spread their ideas.[3] In other words, the entrance of conservative Muslims into politics combined with

[3] Hamayotsu (2013) defines conservatives as Muslims who "tend to adopt and emphasise more rigid and doctrinal interpretation" as to "promote conservative religious visions, values and norms" (674). She argues that radicals/hardliners are similar to conservatives, but distinguish themselves in at least two says: they are willing to "employ radical and illegal means, typically violence and intimidation, in order to achieve their goals", and "aspire to achieve radical and drastic changes, including creation of an Islamic state" (ibid.).

the deliberate choice of other politicians to move away from the political arena has given a podium to hardline Islam and accompanying religious intolerance.

3.2. The Political Role of Islam

SETARA's (2016) and Hamayotsu's (2013) works fit within a wider academic discussion about the role of political Islam, or Islamism, in Indonesia. For example, Mietzner and Muhtadi (2018) claim that while religious intolerance does not seem to be particularly prevalent in comparison with other countries, a quarter of Indonesian Muslims are supportive of Islamism, of which an increasing portion consists of wealthy and highly-educated Muslims. Meanwhile, there are also scholars who downplay the political influence of Islam. Kersten (2015) argues that political Islam in Indonesia is rather fragmented, with Islamic political parties having to rely on swing voters who are moving between the two established nationalist blocs in the political arena. In contrast with Mietzner and Muhtadi's (2018) argument, Kersten states that not Islamism but rather apolitical interpretations of Islam are particularly prevalent among the Indonesian urban middle classes. Fealy (2008) adds that while religion is becoming more prominent in politics, political Islam in Indonesia is not very influential (37).

The argument that the significance of political Islam should be put into perspective seems to be supported by the increasing individualization of Indonesian Islam. While Sakai and Fauzia (2014) use the term Islamism, they pledge for a broader understanding of this concept that goes beyond a mere affiliation with (political) Islamic organizations. After all, they argue, personal relationships are becoming increasingly important in bringing Indonesian Muslims together, thereby replacing the need for organizations to fulfil this task. Access to popular media as well as study groups increasingly allow Muslims to practice their faith independent of established organizations, thus turning the practice of Islam into a more individualized yet still collective matter. As a result, Sakai and Fauzia argue, the growing prominence of Islam in Indonesia is not so much a political, but rather a cultural matter: Islam serves as an ethical guideline to Muslims' lives as a means of "upholding their faith in secularizing societies" (56). As such, Sakai and Fauzia's interpretation of Islamism fits perfectly with Hirschkind's (2006) notion of the Islamic Revival: an ethical, independent approach to Islam that is politically significant because Muslims come together to study and practice their religion collectively (1-31).

Another way in which Indonesian Islam is moving away from the political realm is the commodification of religion. Fealy (2008) defines this process as "the commercialisation of Islam, or the turning of faith and its symbols into a commodity capable of being bought and

sold for profit" (16-17). He argues that the commercialization of Islam allows Muslims to express their Muslim identity through the products they buy, the services they use, and the clothes they wear. This development should not be seen as a politicization of Islam; instead, Fealy states that commercialized Islam generally serves to showcase one's individual status and religious identity rather than to make a political statement (34-35). Rudnyckyj (2009) also refers to the commercialization of religion when he speaks of 'Market Islam'. However, while he observes an individualization process in Islam, he links the commercialization of Islam to the political realm. Rudnyckyj's Market Islam is not so much about materialism but rather about ideas: Muslims are taught how to practice Islam in line with a capitalist work ethic. Doing so, Rudnyckyj argues, prepares Muslims to deal with the consequences resulting from the Indonesian transition from an authoritarian regime with a state-led economy to a more democratic one in which Indonesians have to take more responsibility in meeting their needs.

3.3. Secularism and Religion: A Complex Combination

The debate on the nature and development of Islam in Indonesia raises the question if and how the debate influences Muslims' perceptions of the West. A politician belonging to a conservative Islamic party is likely to be more critical of secular influences from the West than a moderate Muslim who only practices Islam in a consumerist manner. Yet, even for the latter, expressing one's identity as Muslim is a kind of resistance against secularization (Fealy 2008, 56). To what extent Indonesian Muslims have a positive, negative, or moderate perception of secularized Western societies touches upon the issue of (in)tolerance again. While the SETARA Institute (2016) observes an increase in religious intolerance, still 93% of Indonesian Muslims said to support religious freedom for all in 2013 (Pew Research Center 2013, 63). Prominent Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah express themselves as supportive of tolerance too (Menchik 2016, 14). Meanwhile, 95% of Indonesian Muslims indicate that they consider religion necessary for a person to be moral (Pew Research Center 2013, 74). Thus, although Muslim individuals as well as organizations declare themselves tolerant, there remains reservation when it comes to persons and elements that distance themselves from religion altogether.

An explanation for this emphasis on being religious and religious tolerance at the same time requires a shift away from Western understandings of tolerance. In the Western context, tolerance tends to be associated with secularism, while intolerance is often equated with religion. In the Indonesian context, such a liberalist understanding of tolerance is much less prevalent; instead, Islamic organizations support and propagate tolerance, but not liberalism

(Menchik 2016, 3). This criticism of tolerance does not only come from Islamic organizations, but also from ordinary Muslims (Van Bruinessen 2013, 228). Menchik coins the Indonesian interpretation of tolerance 'communal tolerance', which he defines as a tolerance "based on group rights, legal pluralism, and the separation of religious and social affairs" (124). Thus, while liberalist tolerance centers around the individual, communal tolerance takes communities of people as its starting point. While Menchik's definition mentions a separation of religious and social affairs, it would be a mistake to interpret it as a separation between a private, religious realm, and a public, areligious realm. In fact, as Hefner (1997) argues, modern Islamic intellectuals in Indonesia consider it essential that religion is part of the public sphere. What should be avoided, however, is for religion to become enmeshed in politics and state affairs (28).

Despite a wide-spread emphasis on the prominence of religion in Indonesian society, there remains significant division within the Muslim community on what type of Islam should prevail, and, consequently, how Western-associated phenomena such as secularism and liberalism should be regarded. A 2013 survey among Indonesian students of International Relations showed that the majority of them was unsure whether to see the West as an opportunity or a threat (Nguitragool 2013, 6). Moreover, within the academic community, there is a debate on what course Indonesian Islam will take in the future: politicization or individualization, radicalization or liberalization. What appears to be certain, though, is that religion is here to stay in Indonesia. What also becomes clear from the academic debate, is that Indonesia is hard to place into a box of either a secular or religious state. There is an obvious need to respond to Enloe's (2004) and Menchik's (2016) call for curiosity to question existing categorizations, and instead zoom in on non-Western interpretations of key concepts (2-3; 3-5). The next section discusses does so by comparing Western and Indonesian understanding of secularism and secularization.

4. Theoretical Framework

To examine how Indonesia's state-religion relationship is reflected in Muslims' perceptions of the 'secular' West, it is important to elaborate on what 'secular' means. Nowadays, a common distinction is made between a secular Western world and a rather religious non-Western world. While some scholars observe that the West is secularizing even further, theories of religious resurgence argue that the non-West is only becoming more religious (e.g. Bruce 2002; Shakman Hurd 2008). These developments do not necessarily occur in isolation; in fact,

the rejection of the association between secularism and modernity is an important reason for the resurgence of religion in non-Western states (Tickner 2009, 229). As a result of this religious resurgence, Habermas (2008) argues, Western secularism is "the exception rather than the norm" (18). While this thesis is inspired by accounts of religious resurgence versus secularization, it intends to challenge binary distinctions between religion and secularism. As Menchik (2016) argues, making such distinctions becomes more difficult if it is acknowledged that concepts can have multiple interpretations (3-5). This section elaborates on key concepts of this thesis, and outlines how their interpretation in Indonesia aligns with or differs from the West.

The topic of this thesis mentions the 'secular West'; however, to be sure, this thesis does not intend to claim that Western states are a homogenous, secular whole. Of course, there exists a wide variety of state-religion relationships within the West, each with its distinct historical background and practical implementation. Yet, this thesis argues that Western states are all to some extent characterized by a process of secularization, which can be understood as "a general tendency toward a world in which religion matters less and various forms of secular reason and secular institutions matter more" (Calhoun, Juergensmeyer, and VanAntwerpen 2011, 10). Moreover, the term 'West' has also been used by other scholars researching a similar topic, and proved to be a useful working term during the interviews of this thesis as well. In addition to secularization, Western states tend to be associated with secularism, which can be interpreted as both a way of organizing the state as to separate religion from politics, and as an ideology (Casanova 2011, 66). As a result, Charles Taylor speaks of the modern age as a 'secular age', in which "most people in modern societies, including religious people, make sense of things entirely or mainly in terms of this-worldly causality" (Calhoun et al. 2011, 10).

When zooming in on Indonesia, it appears rather hard to place it into the conceptualization of a secular age. As Kersten (2015) argues, religion and its presence in the public sphere remain a very important matter for Indonesians (3). Moreover, 70% of Indonesian Muslims disagree with the notion that a society cannot be modern if it is religious (Pew Research Center 2013, 128). Zooming in Indonesia also shows that it is not so easy to make a clear-cut distinction between 'modern' secular societies and 'non-modern' religious societies. The fact that religion is more present in the Indonesian public sphere than in Western states does not mean that secularism is absent in an intellectual sense. According to Kersten (2015), secularism is a key topic of debate in Indonesia, with the role of religion in the public sphere being "the foremost issue in the minds of many Indonesian Muslims" (3).

However, it is key to emphasize that concepts such as secularism and secularization are understood differently than in the Western context. Here again, it is crucial to make a distinction between 'secularism' and 'secularization'. Rather than interpreting it as a decline of religion in society, Indonesian intellectuals tend to perceive secularization as a process of differentiating religious from state matters (ibid., 151). The emphasis here is on 'differentiating', which is different from separating the state from religion. Menchik (2016) argues it is impossible in the first place to disentangle religion from the state, a point of view that is shared by many Muslim intellectuals who believe religion has to play a key role in the public sphere (93; Hefner 1997, 28-29). As such, it challenges the notion of secularism as a clear-cut separation between a religious private and a secular public sphere.

While there seems to be general agreement among Muslim intellectuals that religion has to play a public role, they are far less united when it comes what that role should be. This debate centers around questions of disentangling religion from politics, and the desirability of secularism. Whereas secularism refers to a separation between religion and politics in the West, in Indonesia it is often understood as an ideology, which the prominent intellectual Madjid described as the idea of "man's own ability to resolve all issues of human life" (Kersten 2019, 107). Islamic organizations play a key role in the debate on the role of Islam in the public sphere, which are not only divided between themselves, but also fragmented from within, according to Kersten (2015). At the same time, there may exist a difference between the positions of Islamic organizations and Muslim individuals. It exemplifies why the study of religion needs more attention in IR, a topic that is often overlooked because of the secular foundations of the academic field (Shakman Hurd 2008, 136-137). Tickner (2009) adds that traditional IR approaches fail to explain anti-Western views because they overlook the importance of religion (223-225).

While this thesis agrees that religion tends to be overlooked, it pledges for a broader application of religion than the mere study of anti-Western views. More specifically, this thesis aims to challenge stereotypical conceptualizations of a secular West versus a religious, non-West. To obtain a more nuanced view, it is crucial to stop approaching Muslims outside the West as objects of study and instead start treating them as agents (Acharya 2018, 19). To do so, the rest of this proceeds with the following objectives in mind. First, with reference to the research question that mentions the 'secular' West, the thesis aims to focus on both secularism as a state structure and ideology, and secularization as a process of differentiation between religion and the state. It intends to follow Indonesian rather than Western understandings of those concepts, and aims to establish if Indonesian Muslims believe

religion should play a role in the public sphere, and if so, what this role should be. Second, this thesis aims to complement scholarly thought with views of Indonesian Muslims by conducting interviews. The following section outlines how this thesis intends to achieve this objective.

5. Methodology

This thesis has as its foundation the conviction that human beings, no matter where they are from, deserve to be treated as agents rather than objects. In addition to Acharya (2018), Enloe (2004) is a strong advocate of giving individuals, especially those who are marginalized by society, a voice in the study of international relations (19-42). When it comes to religion, Tickner (2009) points out that there has been a lot of attention for extremists' views of secularism and the West, but much less so for the views of non-extremist individuals (224). To give a voice to individuals, it is likely not sufficient to consult existing sources only; rather, it requires active engagement with those individuals, whose personal accounts become the direct data on which research is based. As Vrasti (2008) argues, there is a need to move beyond textual analysis in IR and focus on the context of texts as well (292). The textual information about secularism and religious resurgence in the Western and Islamic world is already there; however, their true relevance can only be demonstrated through an engagement with the people in those societies that are under study. Therefore, in combination with a literature study of works by key scholars, this thesis uses interviews to find answers to the research question.

This thesis specifically focuses on Muslims, for which the motivation is twofold: first, Islam is the majority religion in Indonesia, and second, religious relations between the West and Islam are frequently framed in a rather polarized manner, and are therefore particularly worthy of further investigation. In addition, the thesis focuses specifically on highly-educated Indonesian Muslims. To be sure, the views of Indonesian Muslims who do not fit into this category are also very much deserving of attention. Yet, the motivation behind the focus on highly-educated Muslims is again twofold. First, the researcher's limited proficiency in the Indonesian language leads to the inevitability of English as the working language. Since it is predominantly highly-educated Muslims in Indonesia who master the English language, there is an unavoidable focus on this group of Muslims as the source of data. Second, the focus on highly-educated Muslims is justified by the academic literature. According to Assyaukanie (2009), intellectuals have a key influence on how the Indonesian Muslim population

understands and thinks of important concepts. In addition, the rise of the urban middle class in Indonesia makes the views of highly-educated Muslims increasingly relevant (Kersten 2015, 36).

Given the importance of intellectual thought, this thesis combines its interviews with a discussion of a number of works on secularism by key individual Indonesian intellectuals and one influential Islamic organization consisting of Muslim intellectuals. They include Ahmad Syafii Maarif, Luthfi Assyaukanie, Nurcholish Madjid, and the MUI. The discussion outlines their stances on secularism and/or secularization in Indonesia. Such a discussion provides useful starting points for the interviews, while also allowing for a comparison between the interviewees' responses and the intellectuals' views. While the discussion gives a useful overview of intellectual thought, the interviews allow for two perspectives that are missed by a focus on the intellectuals' works only. First, interviews give a voice to Indonesian Muslims who, albeit highly-educated, are in less influential positions. Second, while influential intellectuals are generally in middle-age or higher, interviews allow young Indonesian Muslims to enter the discussion. As such, the combination of intellectual works with interviews enables a comparison of views across generations.

To answer the research question, 15 online interviews have been conducted with university-educated Indonesian Muslims from different cities and universities. The decision to conduct the interviews online was inevitable due to the researcher being in the Netherlands without the option to travel to Indonesia. After all, the researcher needed to attend activities that required presence in the Netherlands, and faced international travel restrictions resulting from COVID-19. Seven of the interviewees come from Islamic universities, and eight from non-Islamic universities. It was decided to interview Muslims from both types of universities as to account for potential differences in attitudes depending on the religious or non-religious nature of the university. Regarding origin, seven interviewees are from Bandar Lampung (Sumatra), 5 from Jakarta, 2 from Yogyakarta, and 1 from Bogor (all Java). The interviewees all have a study background in the field of social or economic studies. The interviewees have been found through snowball sampling, which means new interviewees were found through connections of other interviewees (Boeije 2010, 40). Although this sampling strategy leads to interviewees that are often from the same network, this situation has been attempted to avoid by specifically targeting interviewees from different cities. Moreover, given the large physical distance between the Netherlands and Indonesia, snowball sampling was considered the most practical and successful sampling strategy.

The interviews each have a duration of one to one-and-a-half hours, and have been

conducted via Zoom. Before the start of the interview, the interviewees were requested to read an interview consent form, after which the interviewees were asked whether they agreed with the content of the form (see appendix 1). Of course, only those interviewees who agreed were interviewed, and fortunately all interviewees did. The interview questions have been designed in a semi-structured manner, which refers to a set of pre-determined questions in combination with room for spontaneous questions depending on the interviewees' answers (Rubin and Rubin 2012, 31). The list of pre-determined questions can be found in appendix 2. Each interview has been recorded, including both audio and video, and the recording has been used to transcribe the interviews manually via Word.

The transcriptions of the interviews have been coded manually as well, which refers to "the process by which segments of data are identified as relating to, or being an example of, a more general idea, instance, theme or category" (Boeije 2010, 95). A mix has been used of inductive, deductive, and in-vivo codes. Inductive codes are codes that are derived from the content of the interviews themselves, whereas deductive codes are based on academic literature or interview questions. In-vivo codes, then, are codes that capture specific phrases the interviewees came up with (Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey 2011, 218-223). The majority of the codes are deductive, which is a deliberate decision because it allows the interviews to be linked more directly to the academic literature. However, to ensure spontaneous questions, answers, and comments could be incorporated as well, the thesis used inductive and in-vivo codes too. The coding results have been used to write the analysis, in which each interviewee was given a number between 1 and 15 as to ensure anonymity. The choice for anonymity was based on the conviction that interviewees would feel more comfortable to participate in the interviews, the more so since the topic of this thesis might be considered as sensitive by some.

Before moving to the analysis, it is important project to mention the limitations of this thesis. First, this thesis does not aim to make generalizations from the interviews that would supposedly account for the Indonesian Muslim population as a whole. As Fealy (2008) points out, "it is all too easy to set one's eye on one part, mistakenly believing it to represent the whole" (37). His point relates to Kersten's (2015) emphasis on the importance of not exaggerating the power of individual intellectuals (5). Since the interviewees come from a limited number of cities, the results cannot speak for Indonesian Muslims living in other large or small cities or villages. In addition, the interviewees were all university-educated, whereas this group only represented around 11% of Indonesians in 2010 (Sakai and Fauzia 2014, 42). The interviewees cannot be considered to speak for the university-educated population as a whole, thus let alone for the general Indonesian population. The purpose of this research is not

to give a general account of the views of the Indonesian population, but rather to add detailed, contextual insights to the academic debate about secularism, secularization, and religious resurgence in IR.

Second, this thesis is aware of the importance of positionality, which refers to "the identities of the researcher in relation to the 'researched'", including for example "nationality, ethnicity, race, class, education, family affiliation, ideological leanings, epistemological perspectives and philosophical orientations" (Anyidoho 2006, 158). Whereas all interviewees come from Indonesia and identify as Muslim, the researcher is from the Netherlands and does not identify as Muslim. Especially the Western background of the researcher is a sensitive issue which needs to be highlighted when it comes to the process and results of the interviews. Although the researcher has tried to make the interviewees feel as comfortable as possible to voice their opinions about religion in the West, they might have felt a bit hesitant to express negative perceptions. Moreover, as much as this thesis aims to give agency to the interviewees, it is an inevitable eventually the researcher is the interpreter of the data. Therefore, while this task has been executed as well as possible, the researcher accounts for any misinterpretations based on incorrect understandings or influences from the researcher's different cultural background.

6. Indonesian Intellectuals on Secularism and Secularization

As argued in the section above, the views of intellectuals are very influential on the interpretations and ideas of the Indonesian Muslim population as a whole. Therefore, this thesis argues a discussion of important intellectual visions should be the starting point of an examination of Indonesian Muslims' perceptions of the 'secular' West. This section starts the analysis of this thesis by discussing Indonesian intellectuals' views of secularism and/or secularization. It provides an overview of the arguments of influential Indonesian intellectuals: Ahmad Syafii Maarif, Nurcholish Madjid, Luthfi Assyaukanie, and the MUI. All of those intellectuals have or have had a significant influence on the debate about secularism and/or secularization in Indonesia. Their views on these topics have been used for comparison with the interviewees' views, which will be discussed in the next section.

6.1. Advocates: Nurcholish Madjid and Luthfi Assyaukanie

Madjid and Assyaukanie are two famous intellectuals known for their positive perception of secularization as distinct from secularism. Madjid (1939-2005), one of the most prominent

Islamic thinkers of Indonesia, spent his lifetime advocating for an Islam that reconciles itself with the current times. He strongly believed that Islam needs Muslims who interpret Islamic teachings critically, and apply them according to their local context. Moreover, Madjid fiercely rejected the political problems Islam create in Indonesia, which he intended to solve by distancing Islam from politics (Pringle 2010, 102-103). This belief is reflected in his understanding of secularization as a process of "separating temporal from transcendental values", which is different from secularism as "an ideology advocating man's own ability to resolve all issues of human life" (Kersten 2019, 107).

While rejecting secularism, Madjid advocated for secularization, and disputes the wide-spread perception of secularization as an outside phenomenon that is imposed on Muslim societies (Assyaukanie 2009, 18; Kersten 2019, 107-108). In fact, Madjid believed that secularization is the way to preserve the unique, exceptional realm of the transcendent God: by 'desacralizing' temporal, non-transcendental matters, secularization protects the distinctiveness and holiness of the transcendental. Temporal and non-transcendental matters also include politics; thus, as such, Madjid advocated for distancing politics from religion (Kersten 2019, 108). In addition, Madjid pledged for a proactive attitude among Muslims, concerning a motivation to study, understand, and interpret Islamic teachings on an individual basis rather than merely relying on established interpretations of the Qur'an (Madjid 1996, 106).

Madjid's works have had a profound influence on Assyaukanie (1967-present) who is one of the founders of the Liberal Islam Network (JIL) and the Freedom Institute. Assyaukanie conceptualized Indonesian thinking about the organization of the state according to three models: the Islamic Democratic State (IDS), Religious Democratic State (RDS), and Liberal Democratic State (LDS) (see table 1) (Assyaukanie 2009). According to Assyaukanie (2009), secularization lies at the basis of the third model, defining secularization as "the separation of religion and the state through giving freedom to every citizen to pursue his or her religious affairs privately" (230). Although Madjid's interpretation of secularization differs from Assyaukanie's definition by emphasizing a transcendental-temporal distinction rather than a public-private distinction, Assyaukanie states that Madjid advocated for the LDS model. Assyaukanie (2009) also associates himself with the third model by arguing that "there is hope for liberal democracy to stand firmly in the world's largest Muslim country" (232). Moreover, he argues that the inclusion of 'Western' practices and beliefs in the LDS model contradicts Samuel Huntington's notion of a clash between the Western and Islamic civilizations (ibid., 231).

Issues	*Islamic Democratic State*	*Religious Democratic State*	*Liberal Democratic State*
Religion and the State			
Basis of State	Islam	Pancasila	Pancasila
Department of Religious Affairs	Support	Support proportionally	No
MUI	Support	Support locally	No
Shari'ah application (the Jakarta Charter)	Support	Yes at regional levels	No
Religious teaching in schools	Support	Support	No
Bill of Religious Harmony	Support	Partly Support	No
Religious Formalism			
Islamic parties	Strongly support	Moderately support	No
Islamic financial system	Strongly support	Moderately support	No
Freedom			
Freedom of thought	Subject to Islam	Subject to religious values	Unbounded
Freedom of expression	Support within Islamic doctrine	Support within religious doctrine	Unbounded
Freedom of belief	Partly Support	Support	Fully Support
Interreligious Relations			
Citizenship	Exclusive	Inclusive	Pluralist
Non-Muslim leadership	No	No	Yes
Marriage	Strictly No	Subject to Islamic doctrine	Doctrine is interpretable
Gender Issues			
Political leadership	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 1: Assyaukanie's Three Models of Polity (Assyaukanie 2009, 228).

6.2. Skeptics: Ahmad Syafii Maarif

In line with Madjid and Assyaukanie, Maarif (1935-2022) pledged for a tolerant Indonesian society where people from different religious backgrounds can live in harmony with one another. Maarif, as well Madjid, was given the title "teacher of the nation" for his contributions to Islam in Indonesia, and is described as having a "liberal leaning"(Maarif 2018, 11; Menchik 2016, 82). Maarif also problematized the use of Islam for political gains based on one's own interest. According to Maarif (2018), this misuse of Islam is too prevalent, and tolerance is too scarce in Indonesian society. He even went as far as to speak of a 'cultural sickness' in Indonesia which has eroded the role of Islam as a moral guideline. To him, there was only one remedy to this cultural sickness, which involves a mix of "Islam, Indonesianness, and humanism" (40). The mix of these three values concerns a leading role of Islam in Indonesia, and requires that other religious groups accept that Muslims are the majority in Indonesia. However, such a recognition does not mean that Indonesia should move closer to an Islamic state; on the contrary, Maarif argued, Islam as the moral leader has to ensure Indonesia becomes a happy place for all Indonesian people. If this task is to be achieved, Islamic leaders should conduct exemplary behavior, while Maarif also called on individual Muslims to actively study their religion (25-42).

When Maarif (2018) said Indonesia has to become a happy place for all Indonesian people, he also included people who choose not to have a religion. He praised the young

generation of Muslims for being more tolerant toward atheists and people from different religious backgrounds. Meanwhile, as Kersten (2015) also observes, Maarif was skeptical of secularization, secularism, and atheism (149). Maarif argued that modern societies need religious guidance, which is lacking in secular and atheist societies, according to him. More specifically, Maarif stated that secular and atheist societies are not sincere because of their neglect of religious knowledge. Thus, while Maarif agreed with Madjid's and Assyaukanie's call for self-study of Islam and their pledge for religious tolerance, his point of view diverged when it comes to secularization. After all, where Madjid and Assyaukanie consider the secularization of Islam desirable, Maarif saw in it the risk of an Islam that loses its sincerity and guiding role (195-200).

6.3. Opponents: MUI

The MUI is an Islamic organization that was established in 1975 on Suharto's initiative (Menchik 2016, 81). Traditionally, it has close links with the government: it receives government funding, and is often approached to legitimize government policies in the Muslim community (Gillespie 2007, 202; Van Bruinessen 1996, 27). Since the early 2000s, however, the MUI has been trying to dissociate itself from the government, and instead build a reputation of an organization that represents the Muslim community. However, this shift away from the government should not be interpreted as an attempt to move away from politics; in fact, the MUI is very much engaged in politics, and strongly condemned secularism in its 2005 fatwa (Van Bruinessen 2013, 3-7). The 2005 fatwa is well-known as an example of the hardening debate about the role of religion in Indonesia. Issuing fatwas, or "authoritative opinions on matters of religious importance" is common practice for the MUI, but fatwa number 7 from 2005 stood out because it declared secularism, pluralism, and liberalism as incompatible with Islamic teachings (Van Bruinessen 2013, 6; Kersten 2015, 1).

By making this statement, Kersten (2015) argues the MUI directly undermined the secularist, pluralist, and liberalist foundations of Pancasila (34). The fatwa was therefore heavily criticized by more moderate Islamic organizations, such as the NU. In addition to its affront to Pancasila, the fatwa was criticized for its improper definitions and understandings of the key terms of secularism, pluralism, and liberalism (Gillespie 2007, 222-226). At the same time, the MUI and its fatwa received support from conservative Islamic circles, including the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI) and conservative members of all kinds of Islamic organizations, even including the moderate NU (Kersten 2015, 138). This support from members of a variety of Islamic organizations highlights the

polarization not only between, but also within Islamic organizations in Indonesia. More specifically, it shows that Indonesian intellectuals are far from united in their opinions on the desirability of secularism.

7. Interviews

The section above has provided an outline of intellectual viewpoint on secularism and secularization. However, this thesis aims to give a voice to Indonesian Muslims in less influential positions, thus also including young Indonesian Muslims. To do so, 15 interviews have been conducted with university-educated Muslims from various universities and cities. The interview questions that were used are based on five categories: getting to know the interviewees; their religious educational backgrounds; religion in Indonesia; religion in the West; and the relationship between Indonesia and the West. The questions of the first two categories were meant to get a first impression of the interviewees and their general interest in and attitude toward religion. The questions of the third and fourth categories centered around the interviewees' impression of and opinion on the religious situation in Indonesia and the West. The last category served to wrap up, and ask the interviewees about their perceptions of the current relationship between Indonesia and the West. This section presents the results of the interviews based on the five categories mentioned above.

7.1. The Interviewees and their Educational Backgrounds

Of the 15 interviewees, seven study or studied at an Islamic university, and eight at a non-Islamic university. Only two interviewees of the former group went to an Islamic university based on personal religious motivations; the others did so because their parents wanted them to go there, or had multiple universities in mind but ended up at an Islamic university for practical reasons. The interviewees who went to a non-Islamic university mostly based their choice on the quality of the university. Three interviewees mentioned they principally discarded an Islamic university, because they consider Islamic universities of lesser quality. Interviewee 5, for example, said she believes a good university has input from a variety of perspectives, which she associates with non-Islamic universities. A large majority of the interviewees went to one or more religious schools before going to university. Of the interviewees who continued their education at a non-Islamic university, only interviewee 6 indicated that she liked her time at the Islamic schools more. The other interviewees enjoy their non-Islamic university more, or have positive memories of both. Two interviewees who

continued their education at an Islamic university emphasized that their studies and faculty are not as Islamic in nature as other studies and faculties at the same university. Their observations provide the important insight that the extent of Islamic orientation is not only influenced by the university, but also by the field of studies.

The interviewees were asked about the education on Pancasila they received at school, a key aspect of the Indonesian state-religion relationship. All interviewees indicated to have a positive opinion on the teachings of Pancasila. However, some interviewees pointed out that the teachings are not always put into practice or are misused. For example, interviewee 8 said that many Muslims think Pancasila should be interpreted from an Islamic perspective, meaning that the first principle refers to Islam only. Interviewee 10 confirmed this statement by saying that she learned at her Islamic elementary school that the first principle refers to Islam only. Their observations can be seen as supportive of the scholarly literature that highlights how the debate about the relationship between Islam and Pancasila is still ongoing today. Interviewees also frequently referred to the slogan 'Unity in Diversity' that is closely related to Pancasila. Moreover, apart from the content of the first principle, the interviewees' descriptions of Pancasila closely resembled each other. It suggests that, in combination with the interviewees' positive perception of Pancasila, this aspect of the state-religion relationship has become rather embedded in the interviewees' minds.

7.2. Religion in Indonesia

A key issue that was discussed in the context of religion in Indonesia was the identity card with its obligation to indicate one's religion on it. With regard to the desirability of this obligation, the interviewees are rather divided; however, the majority believes the requirement should be abolished. The interviewees who are supportive of the obligation are so for a variety of reasons, but of most of their reasons are based on practical usefulness. Two interviewees gave the same example of such usefulness, referring to a situation in which someone dies in an accident. In such a scenario, the identity card can give information about the victim's religious background, and thus about how the victim's body should be dealt with. Interviewee 10 said the obligation simply serves for the government to monitor how many Indonesians belong to each religion. Interviewee 4 argued that the obligation helps schools to determine what kind of religious education their students should receive. Only two interviewees support the obligation for more fundamental reasons. Interviewee 12 does so because she considers religion a key aspect of one's identity, and interviewee 5 thinks the obligation logically results from the first principle of Pancasila.

The interviewees who do not support the religious obligation of the identity card base their decision on two reasons. A reason which was frequently mentioned is the opinion that religion is a private matter, which contrasts the emphasis Muslim intellectuals place on religion in the public sphere that Hefner (1997 discusses. Another reason, in contrast with the opinions of the interviewees who support the obligation for practical reasons, is the lack of usefulness. Interviewee 10 considers the obligation useless because there are many informal ways through which you can tell to which religion someone belongs. Interviewee 5, who supports the obligation because it logically results from Pancasila, also mentioned uselessness: if there was no Pancasila, she would consider the obligation useless, because the religion on one's identity card does not always match their religion in practice. This point relates to the fact that there are only six officially recognized religions to choose from, an issue that was brought up spontaneously by many interviewees. A large majority thinks there should be more options to choose from, Such a stance suggests a solidarity with religious minorities; interviewee 12, for example, spoke of "our friends" when referring to religious minorities.

Many interviewees agree with the observation of interviewee 5 that one's religion on the identity card does not always match one's religion in practice. Most interviewees consider themselves active practitioners of Islam, although interviewee 1 admitted she does not always pray five times a day, and sometimes wonders why she is actually Muslim. Meanwhile, many interviewees indicated they have friends who do not actively practice their religion. Interviewee 4 called them "religion KTP" Muslims: they are registered as Muslim on their identity card, but are not really Muslim in practice. Interviewee 1 said she thinks only 20 or 30% of the Muslim community is really active in practicing Islam. According to her, most Muslims are somewhere in-between: they generally follow Islamic rules, but not always and not all rules. It hints at Fealy's (2008) commercialization of Islam, in which Islam becomes a status symbol and a lifestyle. Many interviewees affirmed such a development is indeed happening in Indonesia. It indicates that the Indonesian state-religion relationship, which very much emphasizes religiousness, does not always succeed in convincing Indonesians of the necessity and desirability of actually practicing religion.

Some interviewees strongly condemned the discrepancy between one's religion on paper and in practice. Interviewee 13 expressed strong hatred of such an instrumental use of Islam, and believes the development is an Islamic one that does not seem to be happening in other religions. Interviewee 7 spoke of "flexing": the phenomenon of people showing off on social media. For example, she dislikes that some Islamic women wear veils because they

consider it fashionable rather than doing it for religious reasons. This interviewee thinks this phenomenon signifies Indonesia's "bad culture", which can be seen as in line with the cultural sickness Maarif (2018) spoke of. Maarif's cultural sickness also refers to the religious intolerance in Indonesia addressed in the academic literature, which was also brought up by numerous interviewees. In line with the literature, interviewee 6 argued that religious intolerance in Indonesia has increased over time. She supposed that this religious intolerance may be stimulated by social media, an interesting argument given the many interviewees who consider social media a stimulator of tolerance.

Multiple interviewees gave examples they witness of religious intolerance. Interviewee 12 confirmed the academic literature on discrimination of religious minorities by giving the example of the Ahmadiyah.[4] However, she argued that due to the support of various institutions and communities, religious minorities have become more assertive over time. The example of religious intolerance which was most frequently given is the *dua satu dua* or 212 movement.[5] The movement appears to be a key example to the interviewees of the politicization of religion. Most interviewees refrained from giving their personal opinion on the movement, but interviewee 7 called it a "tragedy". Yet, she has mixed feelings about it: the interviewee thinks it is good that Muslims stood up for themselves, but she dislikes the movement for threatening the unity of Indonesia. Interviewee 10 has a more outspoken opinion, rejecting the movement because she thinks it resulted from miscommunications and misperceptions. The fact that many interviewees referred to the 212 movement in the context of religious intolerance suggests that they associate the latter with the politicization of religion, in line with the SETARA Institute (2016).

Regarding the politicization of religion, the interviewees' opinions on the relationship between politics and religion differed. Most interviewees think that Islam currently dominates

[4] Ahmadiyah is a small Islamic sect with followers all over the world. Ahmadiyah Muslims believe that their sect was founded by a prophet, thus arguing there has been another prophet after Muhammad. Moreover, they believe Jesus died naturally and cannot return to earth. Both beliefs are considered to contradict Sunni Islam. As a result, Ahmadiyah Muslims are frequently attacked and discriminated by other Islamic streams in Indonesia (Menchik 2016, 73-74).

[5] *Dua satu dua* or 212 refers to December 2, 2016. On this day, over half a million of Indonesians protested against Ahok, the Christian governor of Jakarta. Ahok was accused of having insulted Islam, which had a significant negative impact on his re-election campaign. However, the protesters wanted a stronger punishment, which the Indonesian state obeyed: Ahok was sent to prison in 2017 with a sentence of two years (Mietzner and Muhtadi 2018, 479).

over other religions in politics, but they drew different conclusions from it regarding the desirable relationship between Islam and politics. Many interviewees think the involvement of Islam in politics suppresses the voices of other religions, or leads to a situation in which Muslim politicians misuse religion to achieve political goals. For example, interviewee 8 said that "politics can use religion as a weapon". As such, they seem to disagree with Fealy's (2008) statement that political Islam is not very influential in Indonesia, but actually think it is too influential. Therefore, these interviewees draw the conclusion that it is best for Islam to stay out of politics, in line with Madjid's secularization of Islam. However, other interviewees the problems should not be solved through removing Islam from politics, but rather through using Islam in a better way. Interviewee 11 said that if Islamic politicians practice Islam in a true manner, they will be tolerant toward other religions. Numerous other interviewees emphasized the peaceful nature of Islam, appearing to be eager to defend Islam against negative stereotypes. Interviewee 7 gave a particularly fundamental reason for the involvement of Islam in politics: she argued that Islam cannot even be removed from politics, because Islam is inherently political.

When discussing the relationship between religion and politics, Islamic organizations also came to the fore in some interviews. Three interviewees argued that Islamic organizations are very influential in Indonesia, especially the MUI. Interviewee 12 brought up the MUI when she was talking about Indonesian policies and how they tend to be rooted in Islam, which suggests that there remains an association between the MUI and the Indonesian government, in her perspective. Interviewee 5 elaborated on this issue by explaining that the government often asks the MUI for advice about policies, especially when those policies concern the Muslim community in particular. She said that the MUI then gives opinions on those policies, which the government does or does not take over. If the government does not take over the suggestions when it concerns policies that particularly apply to the Muslim community, this community will be angry, according to the interviewee. Both interviewees indicated that they do not associate themselves with a specific Islamic organization, because they believe it is important to avoid having a tunnel vision.

7.3. Religion in the West

When asked about their religious perceptions of the West, the interviewees all have the impression that religion plays a less important role in Western society than in Indonesian society. Many interviewees said to think that religion is more of a private matter and is not so central to people's lives in the West. A few interviewees zoomed in on Islam in particular.

Interviewee 7 said to have the impression that it has become easier and more comfortable over time for Muslims to practice their religion in the West. Interviewee 2 has a similar impression: from her friend who lives in Australia, she heard it was a struggle to adapt to the local culture; however, when the interviewee heard that her friend started to do better as time went by, she got a more positive impression of living in the West as well. Interestingly, the interviewees rarely asked for clarification about what was meant by 'the West'. Apparently, they had a clear idea in mind of what the West consists of. Their stories, in which France and Australia were frequently given as examples, also illustrated what the interviewees understand the West to be. Meanwhile, the interviews demonstrated that it was a good decision to not specify 'the West' any further, since most interviewees already had to think deeply about the question.

After the general question about their religion perceptions of the West, the interviewees were asked about their understanding of the term 'secular', given it is often associated with Western society. A few interviewees said they had never heard of the term; however, most interviewees had, and have a large variety of interpretations of it. Interestingly, some interviewees associate the term with liberalism, or even indicated they thought they are one and the same. Again, however, the interviewees had different understandings of secularism and its relation to liberalism. Interviewee 11 said that the term 'secular' refers to a separation between religion and other issues in life, in order to view those issues from a non-religious perspective. The interviewee argued that secularism belongs to liberalism, and also includes an absence of punishment for wrong deeds. Interviewee 10 said she thinks secularism and liberalism are one and the same, and refer to the absence of a religious guideline and belief in an afterlife. As such, this interviewee seemed to associate secularism with an absence of religion in one's life altogether. Then again, other interviewees associated the term with a way of organizing the state, or as a private relationship between believers and their god, or as referring to a person's private decision to be religious or not. These interpretations fits well with Assyaukanie's (2009) emphasis on the religious privacy in relation to the state.

Regarding interviewees' opinions on secularism, there was a lot of variety, of course also depending on their understanding of the term. Interviewee 9, who views secularism as a separation between religion and other issues in life, considers it to be irreconcilable with Islam. Meanwhile, interviewee 1 understands secularism as a separation between religion and state, and is supportive of it because she thinks religion should be more of a private matter. Interviewee 4 said she does not have enough knowledge of secularism as a way of organizing

the state to make a judgment on it. Yet, the interviewee does not think such a system will be implemented in Indonesia in the future, and seemed to find it an undesirable development if it would be implemented. When speaking about this topic, the interviewee brought up the former Communist Party of Indonesia and its "secular" ideology, saying that such a government would be harmful to Indonesia and create a situation similar to "communist" Russia. Her words can be seen as confirmative of Fenton's (2016) observation of ongoing suspicion of communism in Indonesia.

With regard to the term 'secularization', the interviews were meant to focus on the Madjid's interpretation of secularization as differentiation between religion and politics. However, the more 'Western' understanding of secularization as the declining relevance of religion in society also came to the fore in some interviews. In terms of the former interpretation, there was quite some support among the interviewees, as the discussion on the political role of Islam in the previous subsection illustrated. Interviewee 9, however, had the opposite opinion: he thinks Islam cannot be secularized, because doing so would endanger the purity of the religion, in line with Maarif (2018). With regard to the declining importance of religion in the West, most interviewees did not have a negative opinion on it. They stated that cultures differ, and that they have no intention of judging other cultures through their own lens. Interviewee 4 told a story of how she applied to study at a French university, when she was asked if she would be willing to take off her hijab in case she was accepted by the university. She refused, but when the interviewee was asked about what she thought about this requirement, she did not condemn it. Rather, she said she does not want to force French people to have the same beliefs as her. Such tolerance toward Western culture was widespread among the interviewees.

Interestingly, two interviewees argued that secularization in the sense of declining religion is not merely a Western phenomenon, but is present in Indonesia as well. Both of them consider this development problematic and wish it would stop, but they consider it an inevitable result of globalization, and think it is nearly impossible to put secularization to a halt. Their observations are in line with many other interviewees' arguments about social media and its eroding influence on religion in Indonesia. As such, their accounts of secularization and religion in Indonesia challenge academic theories of religious resurgence, which argue that religion is on the rise in non-Western parts of the world. While not all interviewees argued religion is declining in Indonesia, their stories did not provide evidence for the conclusion that religion on the rise either. In addition to social media, the lack of appeal of aspects of the Indonesian state-religion relationship may play a role. After all

interviewees are not satisfied with the current identity card and its religious obligation or the relationship between religion and politics.

After a religious discussion of the West, the interviewees were asked about their general impression of the West to examine to what extent religion determines this impression. In general, the interviewees were very positive about the West. What came to the fore frequently, was a positive perception of the West in terms of knowledge, technology, and education. Interviewee 1 said she believes Indonesia should "import' these aspects of the West. Another positive perception of the West that was frequently mentioned is the freedom of the West. When asked about what 'freedom' means, interviewee 13 said it refers to not being watched and judged by others all the time. For interviewee 7, freedom involves being bound to less rules. She indicated that she would once like to try alcohol, but the religious rules in Indonesia forbid her to do so. This statement is interesting, since the same interviewee criticized other Western practices that can be considered as rather 'free', such as wearing exposing clothes. Interviewee 11, however, included wearing exposing clothes in his definition of freedom, claiming that young Indonesian Muslims like to take over Western "sexiness".

When asked about how this orientation towards the West relates to the development of commercializing Islam, interviewee 11 said that Indonesia is divided between people who want Islam as a lifestyle, and people who are moving away from religion and towards the West. From other interviews, however, the situation appeared to be less black-and-white. Interviewee 8 argued that many Muslims combine being religious with a Western lifestyle. Interviewee 6 said she combines both as well, although she indicated to find it difficult to draw the lines sometimes. The extent to which Muslims combine Western and Islamic practices or choose one of them again depends on the generation, but also on the local situation, alas some interviewees. Interviewee 13 argued that Indonesians living in the countryside tend to be much more religious than Indonesians living in cities. Interviewee 6 added that she also sees differences between cities, arguing that Indonesians living in big cities diverge more from Islamic rules than Indonesians living in smaller cities like hers. Interviewee 2 also said that Indonesians in the big cities tend to be less religious and more resembling of the West. Their statements are an important reminder that it is impossible to make claims about the religiousness and Western orientation of Indonesia as a whole; rather, local differences always need to be considered.

Despite widespread positivity about the West, some interviewees also have negative perceptions. Two general points of criticism were excessive (religious) freedom in the West

and Islamophobia. Regarding the first point, interviewee 3 thinks too much freedom can lead to "uncontrollable" behavior, giving sex before marriage as an example. Interviewee 11 made a similar statement by saying he does not want to do drugs and have "free" sex as occurs in the West. The biggest concern about the West, however, appeared to be Islamophobia. Interviewee 2 once experienced it personally: when she visited Australia with her family, she noticed how a cashier seemed to be very afraid and suspicious of their presence. Interviewee 6 finds it interesting how the West does not seem to care much about religion, but when it comes to Islam, she thinks Western people tend to be very sensitive. Interviewee 5 agreed by saying that "people always see us terrorists" in the West. Interestingly, however, both interviewees have the impression that Islamophobia decreased over time, although they also indicated they would still be on their guard in case they would go to the West. Meanwhile, while interviewee 3 also believes there is Islamophobia in the West, she has no fear of going there. Reasons for the lack of fear are her impression that especially Muslim women wearing long hijabs are under attack (the interviewee wears a short hijab), and the positive stories she hears from Indonesians who visited France.

As mentioned earlier in this section, generational differences turned out to be a point of attention. Although this thesis tried to address this issue already by including a discussion of Indonesian intellectuals that come from the older generation, the interviewees' emphasis on generational differences call for further attention to this issue. Interviewee 14 emphasized numerous times that the young generation of Indonesian Muslims tends to be more tolerant, because they come into contact with people from different religious backgrounds more than the older generation, which had to learn religious tolerance from textbooks. He formulated a rule saying that "the younger the generation, the more tolerant they are". Interviewee 8 added that education still plays a role in teaching young Indonesians to be tolerant. He argued that this generation tends to be more tolerant than the older generation because it receives better religious education. According to interviewee 13, generational differences are also reflected in Indonesian Muslims' interest in the West, and interviewee 11 even went so far as to say that young Indonesians are "addicted" to the West.

Interviewee 1 explained how influences coming from the West normalize behavior that used to be considered as sinful. Interviewee 6 males the same observation, giving eating pork and dressing in non-Islamic ways as examples of behavior that is being normalized. This interviewee indicated she participates in such behavior as well. Interviewee 1 took it further by arguing that Western influences are eroding religiousness among young Indonesian Muslims. For example, whereas long hijabs used to be common among Indonesian Muslims,

they are increasingly replaced by short hijabs, alas the interviewee. Interviewee 2 also argued that religion is on the decline among young Muslims, and as such, "Indonesia is not too different from the West". Meanwhile, interviewee 3 described the exact opposite development for the older generations. According to her, religion is on the rise among the older generation, and short hijabs are increasingly replaced by long hijabs by these Muslims.

Another generational divide related to Indonesian Muslims' perception of the West was raised by interviewee 14, who spoke of an "inferiority complex" among the older generation. According to this interviewee, older Indonesian Muslims have the impression that they have always been considered as inferior by the West, and are therefore rather hostile toward it. Two interviewees were asked if they observe such an inferiority complex among the young generation of Muslims as well. Both interviewees said they do not observe such a complex, although interviewee 6 thinks young Indonesians feel inferior to Western people when it comes to education. Her observation is in line with the positive impression many interviewees have of Western knowledge, education, and technology, as described earlier in the analysis. Interviewee 8 has a particularly interesting opinion: he thinks the inferiority complex has nothing to do with the West, but results from Indonesians who do not work hard enough to show how capable they are. Interviewee 7 also suggested that Indonesians themselves play a role in creating the complex. She said that the older generation generally has not experienced inferiority to the West directly, but just goes along with others' negative impression of the West. Some formulations made by the interviewees, however, can be interpreted as hinting at an inferiority complex. Multiple interviewees called Indonesia a "developing country"; however, these interviewees used the term carelessly, and did not seem to worry much about the perceived development gap between Indonesia and the West.

To understand where the interviewees' perceptions of the West and the generational differences come from, it is important to be aware of the sources that provide them with information about the West. When asked about the presence of Western religion in Indonesian media, most interviewees indicated they rarely read or hear something in the Indonesian news concerning this topic. In those rare cases in which this topic features in the news, it mostly concerns negative news. Two interviewees even said they have the impression that the Indonesian news is manipulated. Interviewee 11 stated that he often consults international news to check whether it matches the content of the Indonesian news. Interviewee 5 gave an elaborate explanation of this perceived manipulation. She argued that the meaning of the news is often changed when news is translated from English into Indonesian. Therefore, she prefers to read the English-language The Jakarta Post, because here nothing will be lost in translation,

literally. The interviewee argued that the older generation usually only accesses the Indonesian news, and therefore gets a rather negative impression of the West.

Whereas news is not a major source of information about religion in the West for the interviewees, all of them pointed to the significant influence of social media. Interviewee 6, who spoke of the normalization of behavior, argued that social media are responsible for this development. Numerous interviewees also stated that social media tend to make the young generation of Muslims more open-minded, less religious, and more interested in the West. As such, social media offer Indonesians different perspectives of how to approach religion, in which the interviewees indicated the West to be of particular influence. Yet, some of the interviewees' stories demonstrated that the young generation of Muslims cannot be viewed as a unified whole. Multiple interviewees explicitly mentioned that they have friends that the interviewees consider as being less open-minded than themselves. For example, interviewee 13 told that her friends asked her why she is interested in learning about other religions; after all, the interviewee is Muslim, and her friends therefore expected her to only engage with Muslims, she explained. Interviewee 12 said that she knows that her friends talk behind her back about her open attitude toward other religions. The way these two interviewees deal with this situation provides further proof of their open-mindedness, however: despite their friends' judgements, the interviewees still decide to remain friends with them.

Yet, their stories highlight that it is difficult to make generalizations about the open-mindedness and religious attitudes of the young generation of Indonesian Muslims. Similarly, the generational differences discussed above further obstruct the possibility of making generalizations. Two interviewees attempted to clarify and bring nuance to the generational differences. Interviewee 5 argued that generational differences are not so much based on ideational differences, but rather on different ways of communicating and expressing ideas. She explained that the older generation often thinks their children do not understand the meaning of religion anymore, which makes them send their children to Islamic schools, for example. However, according to the interviewee, their children still have religious ideas, but just talk about them in a different manner. Interviewee 10 brought further nuance to the situation by arguing that the differences are not only between generations, but also between highly-educated and less educated Indonesians.

7.4. The Relationship between Indonesia and the West

At the end of the interviews, the interviewees were asked about their opinion on the current relationship between Indonesia and the West, and their hopes for the future relationship. None

of the interviewees answered to have a negative impression of the relationship; all of them were either positive about it or indicated their opinion is somewhere in-between positive and negative. Some interviewees distinguished between various aspects of the relationship. Interviewee 6 said the relationship is very good, except for "Western exploitation" of Muslim countries, which she argued all Indonesian Muslims are angry about. Interviewee 9 made a similar comment: he is positive about the relationship, except when it comes to what he sees as Western violations of Muslims' rights in Palestine and Southeast Asia. In addition, interviewee 1 specifically mentioned the eroding influence on religion coming from the West as a negative aspect of the relationship.

With regard to their hopes for the future relationship, multiple interviewees answered they would like to see a more equal relationship. Interviewee 15 said she hopes for a relationship of equal dependence. Interviewees 3 and 6 hope for better educational opportunities for Indonesians to study in the West as to close the current educational gap between both sides. Interviewee 8 said to hope that Indonesians will stop treating white, Western people as if they are exceptional. This remark is interesting, because the same interviewee said Indonesians have no inferiority complex, but rather treat Western people in a special way because Indonesians are "friendly" and "humble". Finally, three interviewees hope for more tolerance in the relationship, specifically from the Western side. Their point relates to experiences of Islamophobia in the West, and refers to the wish that Muslims can live comfortably in the West.

The fact that interviewees frequently distinguished between various aspects of the relationship between Indonesia and the West shows that the interviewees do not perceive the world through a religious lens only. The interviewees' general positive attitude toward the West despite their observations of a different approach to religion and even Islamophobia in the West, provides further evidence for this conclusion. This conclusion can be seen as in contradiction with the Indonesian state-religion relationship that favors an active, public role of religion. However, the interviewees' attitudes can also be interpreted as a sign of success of the state-religion relationship when it comes to teaching Indonesians to be tolerant towards others. What becomes clear from the interviews, however, is that the interviewees are increasingly interested in other lifestyles, with some interviewees explicitly stating that religion is on the decline among the young generation of Indonesian Muslims. An explanation for this religious stabilization or even decline among the young generation could be fading memories of the colonial past. Since the young generation of Indonesian Muslims never

experienced colonialism in-person, they likely feel less of a need to re-establish and reinvent their identity through religion in line with Haynes's (2021) argument.

8. Conclusion

This thesis examined how Indonesia's state-religion relationship with its 'belief in the one and only God' is reflected in Indonesian Muslims' perceptions of the 'secular' West. Indonesia has a state-religion relationship that emphasizes the societal importance of religion, exemplified by Pancasila that has as its first principle 'the belief in the one and only God'. In addition, the identity card with its obligation to indicate one's religion on it and the great influence of Islamic organizations illustrate the prominence of religion in the public sphere. Academic theories of religious resurgence argue on a more general level that religion is on the rise in non-Western parts of the world. Meanwhile, Western society is often labeled as 'secular', which can be interpreted as referring to an organization of the state that separates religion from politics, as well as a decline in religiousness. Through its research question, thesis aimed to assess if binary distinctions between a world that favors secularism and a world that favors religion hold in the Indonesian case. It did so through interviewing 15 university-educated Indonesian Muslims, in combination with a discussion of works by influential Indonesian intellectuals.

The interviews demonstrated that the interviewees indeed observe a significant difference in the role that religion plays in the West and in Indonesia. However, their stories challenge theories of religious resurgence for their tolerance toward the Western approach toward religion. Rejection of the association between secularism and modernity is an important scholarly explanation for religious resurgence in the non-Western world; however, most interviewees did not reject it. Many interviewees expressed frustration with aspects of the Indonesian state-religion relationship, and argued they would be in favor of a more private and less politicized role of religion. In addition to religious motivations, the interviewees also based their positive attitude toward the West on other issues, particularly freedom and education. Those interviewees who were more skeptical of the religious situation in the West still indicated they do not have a negative impression of the West in general. As such, the interviewees demonstrated that their views on the world do not place as much emphasis on religion as the Indonesian state-religion relationship. Yet, when it comes to teaching Indonesians to be tolerant, the state-religion relationship appears to be very embedded in the interviewees' minds.

The interviewees that were involved in this thesis provided significant and valuable input. Yet, it has to be acknowledged that the initiator of this thesis comes from a Western country, which may have influenced the research and its findings. To check to what extent this issue was indeed present, a similar research project could be conducted in the future by a non-Western researcher. Other recommendations for future research would be to zoom in on the perceptions of lower educated Indonesian Muslims, and Muslims living in the countryside, since some interviewees argued there are differences in mindset depending on these factors. Lastly, this thesis recommends future research uses in-person rather than online interviews as a method; after all, online interviews are never ideal and are sometimes disturbed by internet connection problems. Nevertheless, this thesis argues that the best has been made out of the situation, and is confident that the results provide valuable contributions to religion in IR.

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Appendix 1: Interview Consent Form

Title of thesis: *A State of the One and Only God : Indonesian Muslims' Perceptions of the 'Secular' West*

Researcher: Nina Janssen (Leiden University, Leiden, Netherlands)

Interviewee: ……

Thank you for your participation in my research project. This consent form is meant to inform you about your rights with regard to the interview and its results. It helps you to get a clear idea of the purpose of the interview and the way in which the information you share with me will be used. The bullet points below outline the interviewing procedure and analysis afterwards. I would like to ask you to read them carefully and inform me whether you agree with these points or not. Please be aware that you can withdraw your consent at any time, also during the interview.

- The interview has a duration of approximately 1.5 hours. Again, you are free to stop the interview and withdraw your consent at any moment you want.
- The interview will be online via Zoom and conducted in English.
- The interview will be recorded via Zoom (video and audio) to make sure I can watch and listen to the interview again afterwards. This recording will only be used for my research purpose and no other purpose. The recording will stay between us, and I will delete the recording once my research project is completed.
- The recording will be used to make a transcript of the interview. This transcript will then be used to categorize my findings and write my thesis. Everything I write will be anonymized; that means that I will not mention your name. Nobody except me will know that a specific statement was made by you.
- If you want, you may receive the recording, transcript, and findings. Before I submit the thesis, I will give you the chance to read through my findings and tell me whether you agree with what I wrote.
- The thesis will be submitted to my supervisor and a second reader.

I hope that I informed you sufficiently. In case you have questions, now or at a later stage, always feel free to contact me at n.j.g.janssen@umail.leidenuniv.nl or +31629936981.

Appendix 2: Pre-Determined Interview Questions

Getting to know the interviewees and their backgrounds

- Opening question: in what year of studies are you, and do you enjoy your studies?
- Can you tell me a little bit about the content of your studies?
- Is the content of your studies very much focused on Indonesia, or also on other parts of the world? If so, what parts?

Religious education

- Was it your own choice to study/teach at an Islamic university?
- Does the Islamic orientation of your university influence the content of your studies? If so, how?
- What did you learn about Pancasila at school (primary school, but also later?)

Religion in Indonesia

- I know that the first principle of Pancasila is 'belief in the one and only God'. It implies that religion is quite important in Indonesia. Can you tell me a bit about the role of religion in Indonesian society?
- Have you noticed any changes in the number of people who are religious in Indonesia in recent years? And changes in how actively people are practicing their religion?
- What role should religion play in Indonesian society, according to you? And in politics?
- What should be the role of Islam, being the most dominant religion in Indonesia?

Religion in the West

- The West: what do you know about the West, particularly in terms of the religious situation?
- From what sources do you get this information?
- It is often argued that Western society is very 'secular'. Have you ever heard of this term, and if so, what does 'secular' or 'secularism' mean to you?
- What do you think of the role religion plays in Western society?
- How does religious situation in the West affect your general feeling about the West?

Indonesia and the West

- How do you feel about the current relationship between Indonesia and the West?
- What do you hope for the future relationship between Indonesia and the West?