The Impact of Religion

Challenges for Society, Law and Democracy

The Second International Interdisciplinary Conference

Uppsala University, Sweden, 24-26th April 2018

*IM*PACT

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Welcome to

The Impact of Religion
Challenges for Society, Law and Democracy

The second international interdisciplinary conference
Uppsala University, Sweden, April 24-26th 2018

The *Impact of Religion* conference offers an interdisciplinary forum to disseminate, share and discover current research on the role of religion in both the public and the private sphere – locally, nationally and internationally.

Religion (in all its diversity) influences different sectors of society and how they in turn influence religion. Migrations, provoked by international conflicts and poverty, have brought new challenges to secular states regarding the handling of religious and cultural pluralism. Religious traditions and convictions raise new issues for states, local governments, lawyers, healthcare workers, and teachers – in practice for all citizens. At the same time secularist counter-reactions oppose religious visibility in the public sphere and religious/ethnic pluralism is questioned by right wing groups. Increasing racism related to religion and religiously motivated terror, adds energy to growing polarizations. Additionally new existential issues appear due to feelings of insecurity arising from war, terror, global warming and advancing technology. In such circumstances, religion appears in a positive as well as negative light. These ongoing changes provoke new questions regarding the role of religion in democracy, human rights, law, family life, healthcare, well-being, welfare and science. Religion has become a crucial research area in a wide variety of academic disciplines.

The Uppsala conference provides an opportunity to disseminate, share and discover a wide range of data and ideas within this expanding field. Paper presentations include contributions from lawyers, human rights experts, social scientists, specialists in social policy, health and welfare, philosophers and scientists, as well as those engaged directly in theology and religious studies. The conference marks the end of the 10-year research programme *The Impact of Religion: Challenges for Society, Law and Democracy,* and the merging of the *Impact programme* with *Uppsala Religion and Society Research Centre* (CRS).

We look forward to three days filled with plenary sessions, panel discussions and parallel paper sessions.

Uppsala April 3rd 2018

The conference planning committee
Prof. Per Pettersson, Director of the Impact of Religion Research Programme
Prof. Anna-Sara Lind, Deputy Director of the Impact of Religion Research Programme
Dr Martha Middlemiss LéMon, Director of Uppsala Religion and Society Research Centre

Authors index

14:00 - 16:00	**3J The Social and Political Role of Religion and Religious Communities, Sidorummet**
	Chair: *Anders Sjöborg*
14:00 - 14:20	125 - Impacts of a religious ritual (mourning) on socio-political constructions in Shiite
	Zahra Khoshk jan
14:20 - 14:40	126 - Public Administration of Zakāt and the Making of Social Relations in Northern Nigeria
	Dauda Abubakar
14:40 - 15:00	127 - Encouraging democratic development and good governance in sub-Saharan Africa: Evaluating the potential of Christianity
	Nicola De Jager
15:00 - 15:20	128 - Framing Religion: A Social Cohesion Perspective on Public Religion as a Right to be Tolerated or a Value to be Promoted
	Kristin Skarning Eriksson
15:20 - 15:40	129 - The Impact of Islam on Post-Independence Malaysian Society and Rule: Challenges and Prospects
	Elmira Akhmetova
15:40 - 16:00	130 - A wish for social resilience – Participation and perspectives on local inter-religious councils in contemporary Sweden
	Tomas Axelson

15:00 - 16:00	**3K Results of Research Projects on "Religion and Public Politics", Lärosal X**
	Convener and Chair: *Solange Lefebvre*
15:00 - 15:30	131 - Comparing Public Commissions on cultural and religious diversity (Belgium, Canada, France, United Kingdom, Norway, Australia, etc.)
	Solange Lefebvre
15:30 - 16:00	132 - Can Public Policy concerning Economic Support buy Equality within Religious Communities?
	Lisbet Christoffersen

Thursday 26 April 2018 10:30 – 12:00 Paper session 4

10:30 – 12:00	**4A Acknowledging Diversity, Claiming Equality, Lärosal VIII**
	Convener: *Katia Boissevain, Christophe Pons*
	Chair: *Önver Cetrez*
10:30 - 10:50	133 - African Migration in the Maghreb and Religious Conversion. An ethnographic comparison between Morocco and Tunisia
	Katia Boissevain
10:50 - 11:10	134 - Looking for religious' pluralism in North and South. The problems of Universalism and of the men who did not want to act by themselves
	Christophe Pons
11:10 - 11:30	135 - The Invisible Rise of Latin-American Evangelical Christianity in Sweden
	Emir Mahieddin

argument, and uses perspectives from the theoretical construct of *social cohesion* to unfold how religion is framed in public debate. Perceptions of religion as a phenomenon to be '*promoted*' or just '*tolerated*' will be central. In this paper, I will discuss differing constructions of the societal role of religion and hence, arguments for supporting religious organisations based on an analysis of a Norwegian public commission report and the response to the report. Norwegian authorities grant generous public funding to all recognised faith and worldview organisations. *The Commission on Faith and Worldviews* was established as a first step in a revision of the relation between religion and state in legislation and public policy. Applying the concept of social cohesion in the analysis may contribute to a useful development of the concept, and to the understanding of religion in contemporary society.

129 - The Impact of Islam on Post-Independence Malaysian Society and Rule: Challenges and Prospects

Elmira Akhmetova, Asst. Prof. Dr., International Islamic University Malaysia
Nadzra Ahmad, Asst. Prof. Dr., International Islamic University Malaysia

This paper discusses the relationship between the state, civic society, and the country's dominant religion, Islam, in Post-Independence Malaysia. When Malaya obtained its independence from the British in 1957, Islam has been expected to play a declining role in national affairs. The Constitution guaranteed Islam to be the religion of the state, while religious freedom for non-Muslims should be assured without any discriminations. Since then, religious affairs remained under a state responsibility and Malaysia has been hailed for decades as an oasis of moderate Islam. Within last few years, however, increasing religiously motivated hatred gains popularity in Malaysia. This paper accordingly endeavours to underline the main factors for a decline of moderate and enlightened attitude of Islam in Malaysia. It proposes that the politicisation of Islam in the government affairs, combined with the simultaneous authoritarian tactics in policing opposition as one of the main factors for the decline in religious freedom. The external factors for an intensifying role of political Islam in Malaysian state affairs by highlighting the impact of globalisation, the global 'War on Terror' and Islamophobia on wellbeing and security of Muslim communities are discussed thoroughly. Conclusions and recommendations are highlighted in the last part of the paper.

130 - A wish for social resilience – Participation and perspectives on local inter-religious councils in contemporary Sweden

Tomas Axelson, Associate Professor Sociology of Religion

Swedish society is characterized by secularization but as a result of migration during the last decades Sweden has developed into a more pluralistic society. On local level this is also detectable through a development of inter-religious councils in a growing number of Swedish cities. Often local political authorities has decided to play a crucial part in the councils, seemingly out of a growing awareness of faith-based organizations vital role in promoting social cohesion in local settings. This paper presents a case study where the formation of an inter-religious council is taking place in a mid-sized Swedish town. It presents the result of interviews with three kind of actors; (1) elected politicians responsible for strategic policymaking in local community, (2) civil servants responsible carrying out these policies and (3) representatives of participatory Christian and Moslem faith-based organizations active in the local community. Main research questions: What are the key expectations on the council from the different actors' point of view? What kind of challenges should be dealt with in the short and long perspective from different actors' point of view? Analysis will be made comparing similarities and disagreements in various views.

The Impact of Islam on Post-Independence Malaysian Society and Rule: Challenges and Prospects

DR. ELMIRA AKHMETOVA, IIUM, MALAYSIA

DR. NADZRA AHMAD, IIUM, MALAYSIA

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

BACKGROUND

INDEPENDENCE IN 1957

One of the most significant countries in the Muslim world with sustainable rapid economic growth

Independence ceremony in Merdeka Stadium.
August 31, 1957

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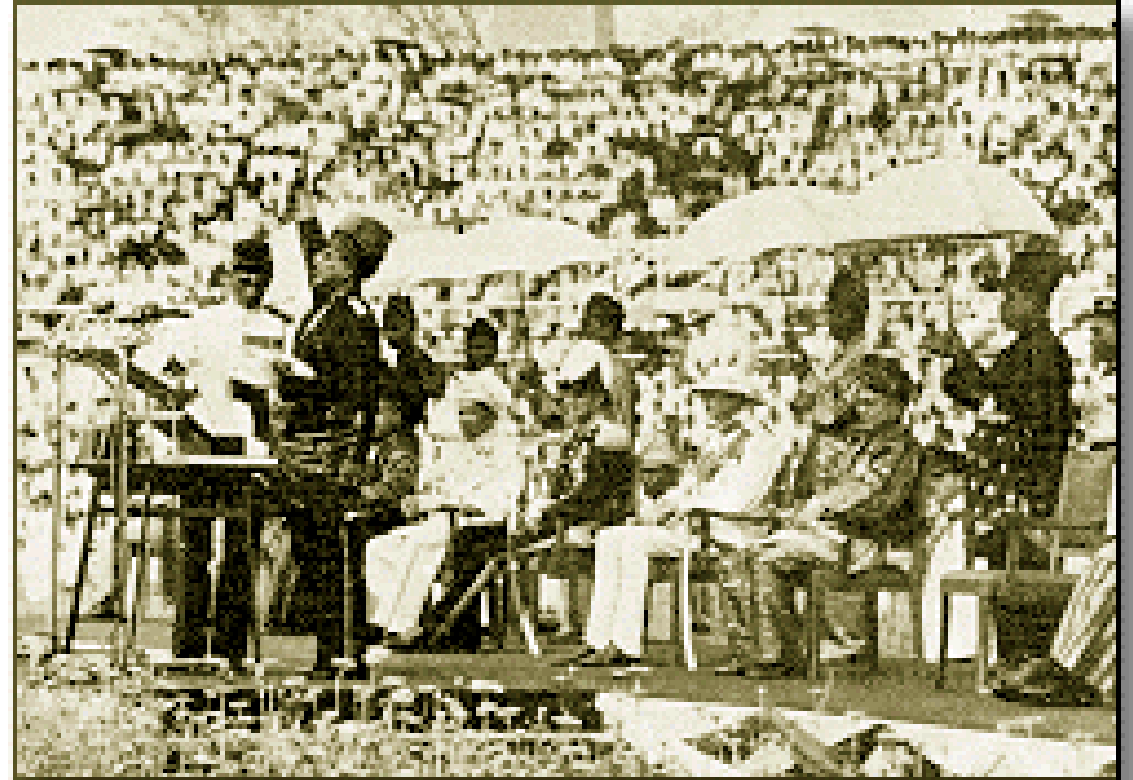Islam becomes progressively important in politics, economic, legal and educational spheres of Malaysia

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Relatively plural and moderate state

Radicalization of some social segments due to spread of foreign cultural elements at societal and the state level

Independence ceremony in Merdeka Stadium. August 31, 1957

DEMOGRAPHICS

▶ total population - 28.3 million

▶ of which 91.8 % are Malaysian citizens and 8.2 % were non-citizens

▶ *Bumiputras* (Austronesian origin, natives) -68.8%

▶ Chinese minority - 23.2% and

▶ Indian minorities -7.0%

▶ Others – 1%

▶ *CENSUS 2010*

Carta 7: Taburan peratus penduduk mengikut kumpulan etnik, Malaysia, 2010
Chart 7: Percentage distribution of the population by ethnic group, Malaysia, 2010

Warganegara Malaysia
Malaysian citizens
91.8%

Bukan warganegara
Non-citizens
8.2%

Bumiputera
67.4%

Lain-lain
Others
0.7%

India
Indians
7.3%

Cina
Chinese
24.6%
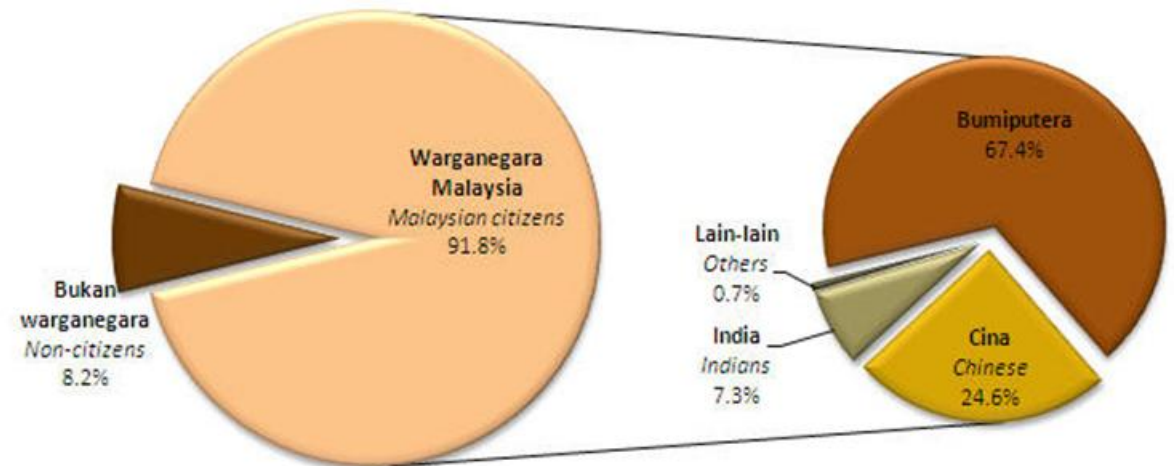
RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

- Islam is the most widely professed religion - 61.3%

- Buddhism - 19.8%

- Christianity - 9.2%

- Hinduism - 6.3%, and

- 1.3 % - Confucianism, Taoism and other traditional Chinese religions

  - (*"Population Distribution and Basic Demographic Characteristic Report 2010"*)

Carta 12: Taburan peratus penduduk mengikut agama, Malaysia, 2010
Chart 12: Percentage distribution of the population by religion, Malaysia, 2010

Islam
61.3%

Buddha
Buddhism
19.8%

Kristian
Christianity
9.2%

Hindu
Hinduism
6.3%

Lain-lain agama
Other religion
0.4%

Tiada agama
No religion
0.7%

Tidak diketahui
Unknown
1.0%

Konfusianisme, Tao dan Puak/suku/folk/agama tradisi lain orang Cina
Confucianism, Taoism and Tribal/folk/other traditional Chinese religion
1.3%
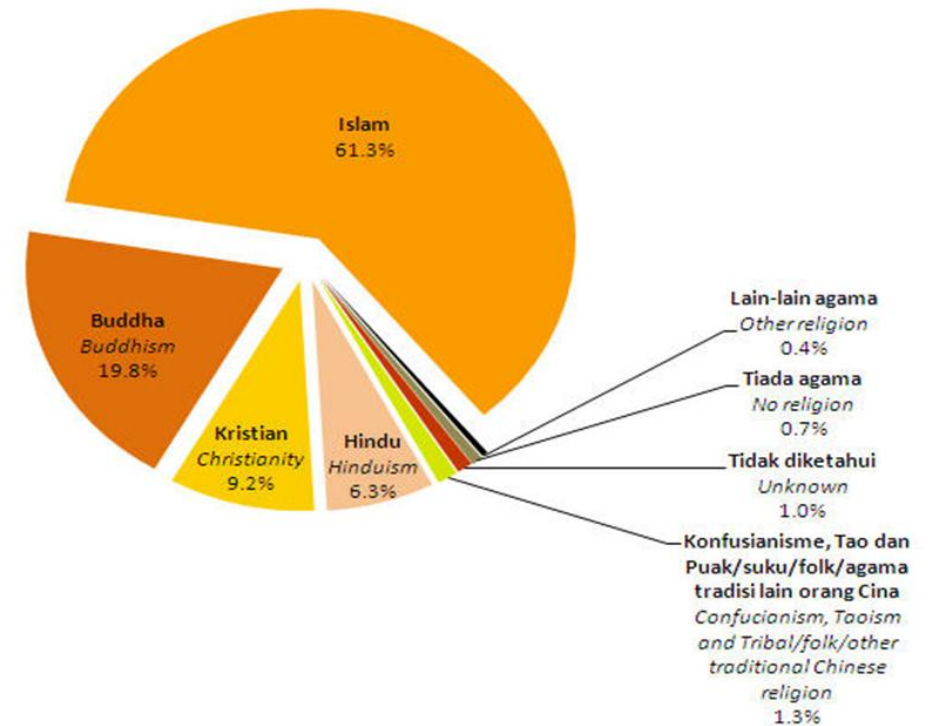
GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM

■ **A Federal Constitutional Elective Monarchy**

■ Modelled on the Westminster parliamentary system

■ The head of State is Agong (King) elected to a 5-year term among other hereditary rulers of Malay states

The government is lead by the **Prime Minister**

PARLIAMENT

DEWAN RAKYAT
House of Representatives

222 members
Elected for maximum 5 years

DEWAN NEGARA (Senate)

70 senators

(26 are elected by the 13 state assemblies)

(44 are appointed by the Agong upon PM recommendations)

3-years term
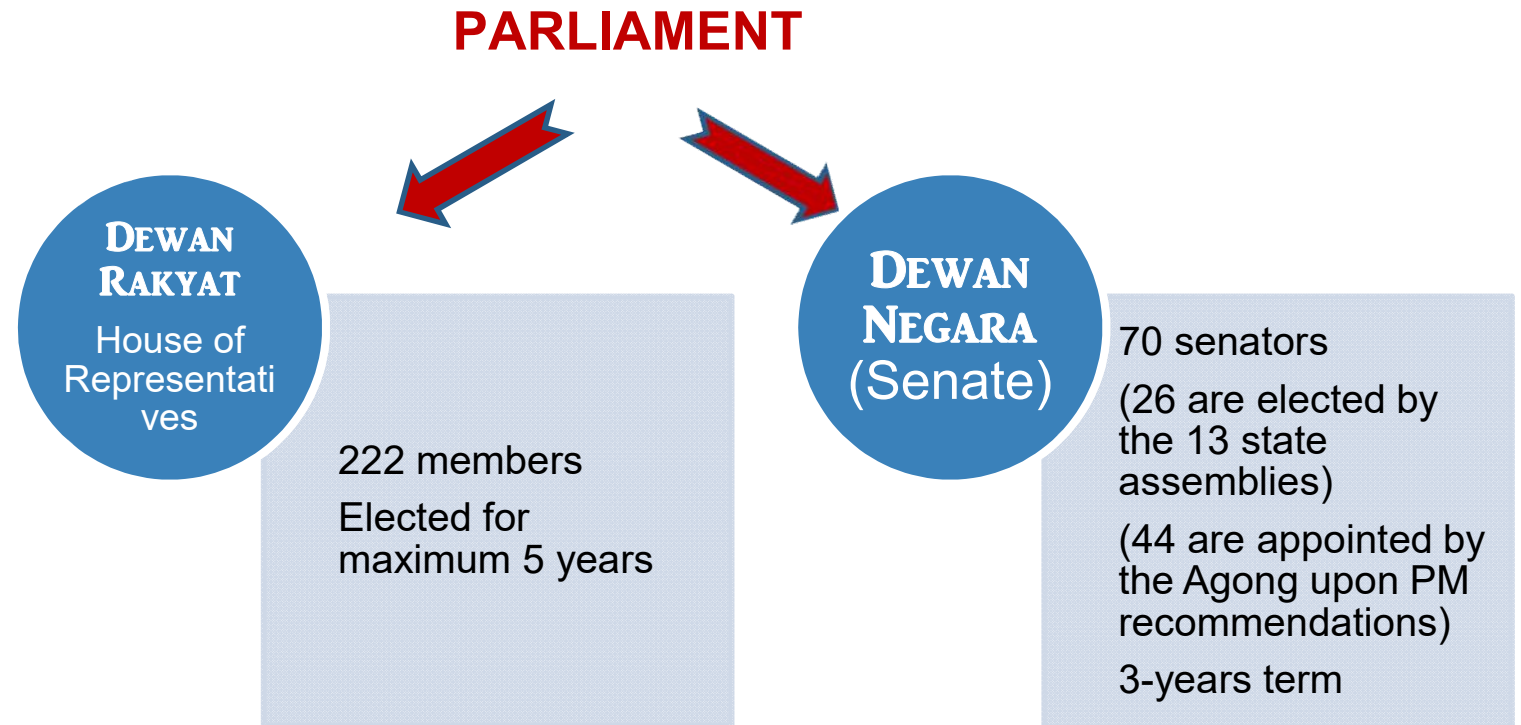
ISLAM AND FEDERAL CONSTITUTION

▶ When UMNO obtained independence in 1957, **no prominent role** for Islam **in governance**

▶ **Constitutional position**: Islam is the religion of the Federation

▶ 3. (1) **Islam is the religion of the Federation; but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation**

▶ (2) In every State other than States not having a Ruler the position of the Ruler as the Head of the religion of Islam in his State in the manner and to the extent acknowledged and declared by the Constitution of that State, and, subject to that Constitution, all rights, privileges, prerogatives and powers enjoyed by him as Head of that religion, are unaffected and unimpaired; but in any acts, observances or ceremonies with respect to which the Conference of Rulers has agreed that they should extend to the Federation as a whole each of the other Rulers shall in his capacity of Head of the religion of Islam authorize the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to represent him.

ISLAM AND STATE

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- The secular orientation of the governance did not mean the diminution of religious and traditional influences in state affairs and educational spheres

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- (*Fred R. Von Der Mehden, "Malaysia and Multiethnic Polities, 1987*)

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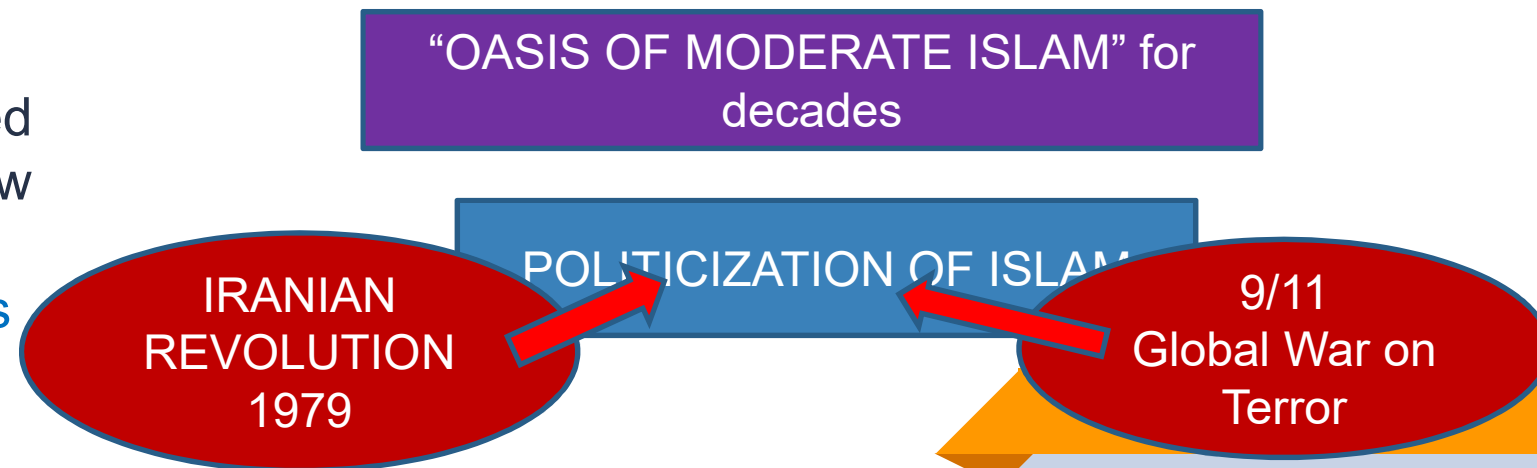
IRANIAN REVOLUTION 1979

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POLITICIZATION OF ISLAM

IRANIAN REVOLUTION 1979

9/11 Global War on Terror

RADICALISATION OF ISLAM IN MALAYSIA

- Islam is represented by PAS (Islamic Party of Malaysia) established in 1951 – increasingly conservative

- Focus on hudud and shariah

- Lack of openness and inclusivity

- Prohibition of the usage of the word "Allah" for non-Islamic literature in Malay in 2015

- Marginalisation of non-Muslims as Islamist parties try to 'out-Islam' each other

- Islam became a political tool of parties to marginalise the opponents

- The virtues of Islam as civilization such as balance, moderation and justice are not highlighted

- (Joseph Liow, 2015)

RISE OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

◼ Malaysia has arrested hundreds of people over the past few years for suspected links to militant groups

▶ **Islamic State declares war on Malaysia**

▶ **FMT Reporters**

▶ **May 18, 2016**

▶ PETALING JAYA: Zainuri Kamaruddin, a former Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM) leader known for several attempted murders and his involvement in armed bank robberies, has announced the Islamic State's (IS) plan to "lead a charge" against Malaysia

◼ **2018 January:**

◼ 2 men were arrested for allegedly walked around KL armed with a knife aiming to kill Buddhist monks

REASONS FOR RADICALISATION

WAHHABISM
- Takfirism
- Dichotomous worldview

Two distinctive sides – Islam and infidelity. War between these two is an unavoidable until the right fight will be established

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International developments/ current geopolitics

Social Media/ propaganda

◾Recent radicalisation of Islam at political and social levels should be evaluated within the **framework of the current geopolitics** rather than **localising it into national faults**

◾Religious extremism is a **reality** which may jeopardise the well-being of Malaysians

◾The rise of extremism in Malaysia is **not necessarily** the indication of the lack of secularism

◾**Finding solutions**

◾Good governance

◾Following the universal principles of Islam such as moderation, balance, openness, respects of human rights, equality of all citizens regardless their religious and ethnic backgrounds

◾**Amanah** Party (Trust) was established in 2015 (from PAS) with the aim of establishing good governance

◾It shows the shift from political (radical) Islam towards civilizational and inclusive interpretation of the Islamic way based on good governance

Thank you