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Sekularisasi dalam Masyarakat Majoriti Muslim: Gambaran Keseluruhan Penentu Utama

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Secularisation in Muslim Majority Societies: An Overview of the Main Determinants

[Sekularisasi dalam Masyarakat Majoriti Muslim: Gambaran Keseluruhan Penentu Utama]



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Keywords:

Secularisation, Religion, Islam, Secularism, Rentierism.

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews secularisation within Muslim-majority societies, emphasising the main determinants that shape the process and comparing it to the Occident, better known as the West. There are four sections. The first section comparatively analyses secularisation in the Muslim world and the Occident, emphasising the unique characteristics of the Muslim-majority countries where religion is still important despite socio-economic development. The second section elaborates on the determinants of secularisation, which include the role of urbanisation, economic development, education, democracy, science, technology and rentierism. Rentierism is argued to allow Muslim societies to maintain their devotion to religion, unlike in the Occident. The final section discusses the persistence of religion in Muslim societies despite the interaction between these determinants and secularism. The conclusion for this paper is that although secularisation is inevitably present in Muslim societies, it does not follow the same trajectory as in the Occident, with religion continuing to play an important role in both the social and individual spheres.

Contribution: This paper contributes to a nuanced understanding of secularisation in Muslim-majority societies, emphasising its unique divergence from the Western narrative. Secularisation will continue to diverge, albeit uniquely Muslim, as opposed to the predominantly Christian West. The study aligns with the journal's focus on contemporary Islamic issues and their global implications.

Kata Kunci:

Sekularisasi, Agama, Islam, Sekularisme, Rentierisme.

ABSTRAK

Makalah ini mengkaji sekularisasi dalam masyarakat majoriti Islam dan penentu utamanya yang membentuk proses ini dan membuat perbandingan

dengan trend sekularisasi di dunia barat. Artikel ini dibahagikan kepada empat bahagian. Bahagian pertama menganalisa perbandingan diantara sekularisasi diantara masyarakat Muslim dan Barat dengan memberi penekanan kepada ciri-ciri unik di negara majoriti Muslim di mana agama tetap utuh walaupun dalam kemajuan socio-ekonomi. Bahagian kedua membincangkan urbanisasi, kemajuan ekonomi, pendidikan, demokarasi, sains, teknologi serta peranan rentierisme. Rentierisme adalah penyebab penting yang membolehkan keutuhan dalam agama di kalangan masyarakat majoriti Islam apabila tiada tekanan kewangan, berbeza dengan sekularisasi di Barat. Bahagian terakhir adalah huraian interaksi antara penyebab-penyebab ini dan bagaimana ia menyumbang kepada keutuhan agama dalam masyarakat Muslim walaupun terdapat pengaruh sekularisme. Kesimpulan makalah ini walaupun sekularisasi wujud dalam masyarakat Muslim, trajektorinya adalah berbeza daripada masyarakat Barat baik dari segi sosial mahupun individu.

Sumbangan: Kajian ini menyumbang kepada pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang sekularisasi dalam masyarakat majoriti Muslim, dengan menekankan perbedaannya yang unik daripada naratif Barat. Sekularisasi akan terus berkembang dengan cara yang berbeza, tetapi unik kepada Muslim berbanding dengan Barat yang didominasi Kristian Barat. Kajian ini selaras dengan fokus jurnal terhadap isu-isu kontemporari Islam dan implikasinya di peringkat global.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The persistence of religion despite the economic development in Muslim majority countries questions the secularisation thesis. Qatar, for instance, according to Forbes (2012), is the richest country in the world, along with countries such as Brunei, UAE and Kuwait. What do these countries have in common? 1) They are all Muslim majority countries, 2) Among the richest countries in the world and 3) more than 90% of their citizens are still religious (PEW Research Center, 2015).

According to the Oxford dictionary, secular means a disconnection to religious or spiritual matters. For instance, if a person is secular, that means that he or she is not connected to religious or spiritual matters. This meaning also extends beyond individuals. It goes on the level of Institutions as well as societies (Casanova, 1994; Dobbelaere, 1981). Shiner (1967) mentioned that the definition of secular comes from *saeculum*, which means, as Al-Attas (1993) defines it as, the present time or contemporary events. In the Islamic world, the secular is defined as *almāniyyah*, which, if literally translated into English, it means 'this world' (Hashemi, 2010; Al-Attas, 1993) as opposed to *ākhirat* which means hereafter. Similarly, according to Al-Attas (1993), the nearest equivalent to the concept of the secular is indicated by the Quranic conception of *al-Ḥayāt al-Dunyā*, which means the worldly life.

Another term that is important to be discussed is secularism, which is defined as the focus on improving human welfare through material means on the basis on experiences in this life (Holyoake, 1871). Politicians and academics usually define secularism based on their situations, needs and desires (Barbier, 2005). Similarly with religion, secularism has its extreme and moderate definitions. Among moderate definitions of secularism are, the neutrality towards any beliefs and disbeliefs by separating religion from every aspect of society i.e politics, administration, academia, amongst others, similar to the practice of secularism in India (Zebiri, 1998). This ensures that people are not coerced to believe, disbelieve, practice religion or not practice religion. However, France represents an extreme definition of secularism. The French have their own formulation of secularism called Laicism which forbids any manifestation of religion in the public sphere (Asad, 2006; Zebiri, 1998). Laicism on the other hand although sometimes used interchangeably with secularism is a step further by enforcing an active exclusion of any religious expression and symbols from public spaces (Asad, 2006).

The term secularisation itself is defined comprehensively at different levels (Dobbelaere, 1981), connotations (Casanova, 1994) and dimensions (Shiner, 1967). In short, it is a process of disenchantment and decline of any forms of religious influence in every aspect of societies. This paper is focussing on a micro level of analysis of secularisation, which coincides with Dobbelaere's (1981) individual level secularisation, Casanova's decline of religious beliefs and practices and Shiner's religious decline.

The western world serves as a benchmark for its level of secularisation. After all, the term itself was coined and its principles was systematically formulated by a westerner, George Jacob Holyoake (1871) who was British. Holyoake himself were inspired by Auguste Comte a French philosopher who founded positivism and religion of humanity, a secular religion. Furthermore, the western world has undergone the renaissance, the enlightenment, wars and revolutions that were finalised in forms of treaties, all of them had an impact towards the position of religion in the society and ultimately disbelief among the people.

The differences of levels of religiosity between the occident and the Muslim world warrants attention. The main objective of this paper is to explain secularisation in Muslim societies and its determinants. This will be done by comparing secularisation between the western world and Muslim majority nations. Among the questions that will be answered in this essay are:

Does secularisation exist among Muslims?

What are the determinants of secularisation among Muslims?

Did the secularisation among Muslims acquire similar characteristics as Westerners or Christians?

The following sections are organised as follows. Section 2 discusses secularisation in Muslim countries and the differences relative to Western societies. Section 3 explains the determinants of secularisation while section 4 is the conclusion.

2. SECULARISATION IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES

The problem with the common understanding of Islam and its relations to the secular is the popular views of Islam made by Islamist extremist groups such as Taliban, Al-Qaeda and ISIS. Taliban is an Afghani based extremist while Al-Qaeda is a global Jihadist group found by Osama bin Laden and ISIS is an offshoot of Al-Qaeda focussing on Iraq and Syria. In reality Islam is not as archaic as portrayed and there are many other interpretations of the Quran and Sunnah besides the interpretation by these groups. The representation of Islam should not solely be based on Saudi Arabia and Iran especially when it comes to the parting of religion and government and the rights of women. This is because, based on the figures given by World Bank (2023a) and World Bank (2023b), the combined population of Saudi Arabia and Iran is only 6.48% of world Muslim population.

Islam is open to the secular. For instance, Asad (2003) suggest that instead of seeing Islam as a set of fixed belief, people should understand it as a flexible and adaptable tradition, therefore, he postulated that opinions given by Islamic jurists are undoubtedly according to their exegeses based on the Quran and Sunnah, but then again, the result of such studies were often highly subjective. This partially explains the resilience of Muslim individual level religiosity despite the secularisation of environment surrounding them. Ideally Muslims are supposed to practice Islam not just in their religious rituals, but in their daily lives as well. However, the reality is different. Muslims compartmentalise their religious rituals and their daily lives (*mu'āmalat*). For instance, a Muslim may pray five times a day but at the same time they may do things are less observant in terms of their dietary habits, for instance they might consume food items that they are not sure whether it is *ḥalāl* or

not. There are usually three levels of analysis of secularisation that is divided into macro, meso and micro (Dobbelaere, 1981). This paper however is going to focus on the micro level analysis.

Secularisation at a micro-level entails the reduction levels of practice, belief or affiliation an individual level. At this level of analysis is where we can find distinct differences in Muslim societies. To be compared to other societies, by many indicators, Muslims continue to believe and practice Islam. For instance, according to PEW Research Centre (2015), 84% of Malaysians, 89% of Qataris, 93% of Emiratis answered yes for the importance of religion in their lives. These figures are a stark difference to Christian majority nations such as the Netherlands that has only 24.5% of respondents that answer yes for the importance of religion while 22% from Sweden and 33 % from France.

3. WHAT ARE THE DETERMINANTS OF SECULARISATION FOR MUSLIM SOCIETIES?

The Muslim world and the predominantly Christian west have different historical trajectories to achieve the current levels of secularity. Ziad Esa, Ahmad Fauzi, Folmer, and Beaumont (2014) have presented the trajectory of secularisation in western Christian societies as well as its determinants, some of which are distinct from the determinants that are going to be explained in the subsequent paragraph. However, there is no doubt that there are some similarities in some of the determinants, particularly so in some parts of urbanisation and education. Figure 1 shows the determinants of secularisation for muslim societies.

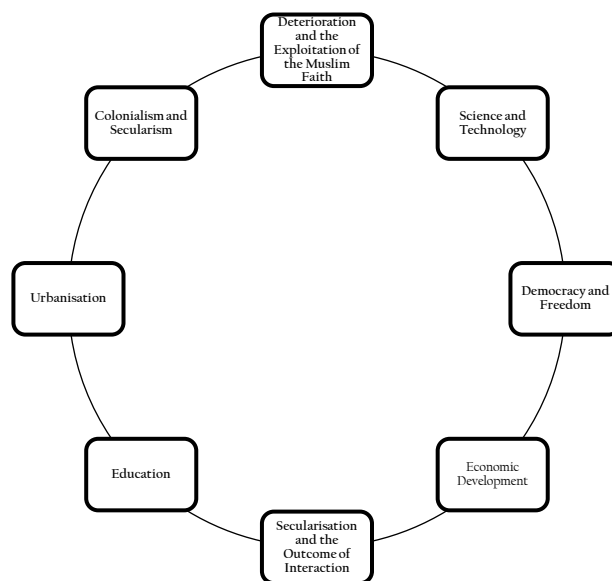


Figure 1. The determinants of secularisation for muslim societies

3.1 Deterioration and the Exploitation of the Muslim Faith

This section attempts to link the Ottoman Empire's glory (1299-1683) and deterioration (1683-1923) and its relationship with religiosity. The Ottoman Empire had witnessed its glory and deterioration (Akgunduz, 2009). The Ottoman society were primarily a peasant society where 90% of the Empire's Citizens were peasants working on a small, farms with their families. To measure whether the Ottoman Empire was at its peak, politically or economically is difficult. However, there are some obvious indicators of its level of development, considering the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire that happened more than a century ago. The closest indicator would have to be, the empire's expansion originating from the Middle East, Africa and half of Europe while having a pluralistic society with different races and religion living together in peace, which reflects socio-economic stability (Akgunduz, 2009). Equally difficult to know, at the same time is whether the society was religious or not.

The zenith of the Ottoman Empire was even mentioned by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) based on Hadith number 18189 *Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal*, whereby nearly a thousand years before the birth of the empire, referring to the liberalisation of the Byzantine Empire by Mehmed II (1432-1481) (Kia, 2008). Paving the way for

the Zenith of the Ottoman Empire were the Sultans who put great emphasis of spreading knowledge. For every newly acquired territory, new mosques and *madrasas* were built (Ihsanoglu & Al-Hassani, 2004). Alongside the building of *madrasahs*, other buildings were also built, such as hospitals and observatories for research in medicine and astronomy (Ihsanoglu & Al-Hassani, 2004). Apart from these infrastructural, educational and religious buildings, according to Ihsanoglu and Alhassani (2004), special attention were also given to the poor and the destitute whereby twice a day these segments of the Ottoman empire were given two meals a day by the *imaret*, an Ottoman soup kitchen.

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire is attributed to many things. According to Kochi Bey, among the factors that contributed to the fall of the Ottoman Empire was the Turks starting to distance themselves from the teachings of Islam for the sake of Islamic salvation (Akgunduz, 2009) or in other words, moral decline (Lewis, 1962). This is contrary to Christian societies whereby the decline of Christian religion contributed to the advancement of what were formally Christian societies. The Muslim salvation here is referred to as devotion and submission to their belief in the divine creator as well social capital that binds Muslims together. As a result of this distance from Islam that leads to moral decline, other attributes surfaced, from vices, oppression and corruption among the Sultans and the viziers (Wallerstein, 1979) to the overdependence on booty income, extravagance, over indulgence, oppression and the lag of technological development. The Sultans themselves, towards the end of the empire no longer actively involved in government and the general Ottoman citizens, instead they relied on unworthy advisers and companions and lived the lives of indulgence and sin (Woodhead, 2005; Kia 2008).

To sum up, the teachings of Islam, if followed religiously without any ulterior worldly motives will benefit any society. There are many teachings of Islam that could be served as guidelines for society to prosper holistically, which include worldly economic development as well as spiritually. The fall of the Ottoman Empire is argued to be a classic example of the inevitable consequences once there is laxity in the teachings of Islam.

3.2 Colonialism and Secularism

Among the obvious outcomes of the decline and collapse of the Ottoman Empire is Western colonialism. Algeria and Tunis for instance, were invaded by the French in 1835 and 1881 respectively Egypt was invaded by the British in 1882. Western colonials brought along secularism and *laicism* with them to propagate among the remnants of the once mighty empire. Secularism for the Ottoman context, are amongst others, legal and education system modelled after European systems were introduced moving away from the Sharia and *Madrasah*. *Laicism* on the other hand comes after the collapse of the Ottoman empire with a more assertive stance against religion modelled after the French *laïcité*, to an extent that women are not allowed to wear headscarves (Berghahn, Çorbacioğlu, & Rostock, 2013).

Western Colonialism and secularism that comes with it encountered resistance especially when unintentionally, it made the North Africans, once divided between the Arab and Berber, speaks, unite against colonisation. According to Abd Hamid ben Badis, both the Arabs and the Berbers resisted the import of modern institution because he believes that it can indigenously evolve (Takeyh, 2003). Furthermore there are many influences brought in by the former colonialists which are contested by Islamic organisations for example, the distribution of alcohol and the westernisation of clothing among women (Layachi & Haireche, 1992). However, on the downside, even ideas that can be put to good use are contested just because it came from the west and treated as an alien idea that are believed to be destroying the foundation of Islam. Islamic Salvation (FIS) Front in Algeria is one of the examples that holds a traditionalist position of Islam, democracy is identified with vices such as drugs, alcoholism, fornication and homosexuality (Zoubir, 1996).

On the other hand, there are contemporary Muslim society who benefits the good elements from both Islam and Secularism. This fusion is called “*laicite Islamique*” which, if directly translated, means Islamic secularism (Zoubir, 1996). The French educated Malek Bennabi (1905-1973), influenced by Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridha, espoused the adaptation of Islamic values to modernity (Zoubir, 1998). For instance, during the term of President Houari Boumedienne of Algeria in 1967, there were pressures by conservative Islamic organisations i.e *Al-Qiyam*, to retain the traditional teachings of Islam (Marshall & Stokes, 1981). Taking a more neutral stance, Boumedienne’s administration encouraged for instance, women emancipation i.e women are supposed to have the rights of education and career, but it must not be to the extent of deviation from morals and tradition (Evans, 2007).

An interesting twist for Secularisation in South East Asia, particularly in Malaysia whereby what was formerly conventional is now Islamised and what was formerly Islam is secularised, bureaucratised and unfortunately politicised. Malaysia’s economy, banking and finance system which was entirely conventional is now partially Islamised. Meanwhile, Islamic welfare system and the governing body of Islamic authorities such

as Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM)/Department of Islamic Development Malaysia or Department of Islamic Affairs) Malaysia is secularised in the sense that it is now under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister's department. Therefore, the Malaysian government, with the advice of the *Ulama* have the ability to determine certain regulations regarding which brand of Islam is allowed to be practised and which brand is not. As an example, the brand of Islam espoused by Al-Arqam is considered 'deviant' and therefore banned by the National Fatwa Council doctrine (Fauzi, 2005). The reasons for the ban were among others, refusal of the movement to cooperate with the Malaysian government's capitalist system because they have their own Islamic system that is free from usury, speculation, gambling, among others (Hamid, 2003).

To recap, European colonialism had a profound effect towards post Ottoman believing Muslims. However, the secular indoctrination of the Muslim population in the Maghreb region is not always successful in other parts of the Muslim society because there was real resistance towards ideologies brought in. Apart from the resistance against and embrace of colonial ideologies, which can sometimes be blind, there are also segments of the post-Ottoman majority Muslim societies that embrace the beneficial parts of colonial legacies whilst still maintaining the Islamic morals and tradition (Syed Ahmad, 2012). The South East Asian example of Malaysia also embraces their former British colonials in terms of their conventional legal system as well as having an independent Islamic court. The Malaysian Banking and Financial system have both conventional as well as Islamic financial system.

3.3 Economic Development

The effect of economic development towards secularisation in Muslim countries is a complicated and paradoxical one. One obvious observation is that the double-digit growth of Islamic banking and finance (DiVanna, 2011) demonstrates the increasing consciousness of Muslims towards a permissible mode of financial and banking transactions. This observation is also consistent with the persistence of Muslim majority nations to be religious even though these countries are financially well endowed.

At the institutional level, Islam is re-introduced in every aspect of the economy such as, instead of conventional banking and finance, there are Islamic banking and finance with the use of *al-Wadiah* account instead of conventional savings account and the use of *sukuk* instead of bonds, just to name a few. On the other hand, it is also contended that the Islamisation of Islamic Banking and Finance is mere cosmetics (Khan, 2010; Roy, 1991). This is because in reality it is still operating just like conventional institutions to spark the interest of wealthy investors from the oil rich Muslim nations, particularly from the countries that are affiliated with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (Mohamad & Saravanamuttu, 2015).

The Islamisation of the banking and financial system is also argued to be a strategy for the state and the elite to expand their influence towards the Muslims to participate in the neo-liberal economy. This is done by inviting the government salaried '*ulamā*' (a plural of '*ālim*') to be involved in legitimizing the Islamic banking and finance sector (Mohammad & Saravanamuttu, 2015). The legitimising role of the *ulama* extends to Islamic welfare institutions such as *waqf*, *bayt al-māl* and *zakāt*. The involvement of these influential people in Muslim societies would certainly garner support to convince not just Muslims but also other societies.

At the societal level, normatively, economic development increases secularity (Iannaccone, 1990; Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Sander, 2002). On the other hand, this is not necessarily true in some cases in Muslim societies. Muslims in Qatar, Brunei and United Arab Emirates are all religious although their economic development is comparable to the European economy. Evidence provided by the United Nations Human Development Report 2013 (UNHDR 2013), Human Development Index (HDI) and the religiosity index provided by PEW Research Centre showed some evidence. Brunei with the HDI index of 0.919, Qatar with 0.899, United Arab Emirates 0.903 and Malaysia 0.81, all of which comparable with some western developed countries. For instance, the Netherlands has the HDI of 0.915, Sweden 0.898 and France 0.884. At the same time, these Muslim countries are ranked to be among the most religious countries in the world. For instance, according to PEW Research Centre (2015) 81% of Malaysians, 94.5% of Qataris, 91% of Emiratis answered yes for the importance of religion in their lives. While only 24.5% respondents from Netherlands, 16.5% from Sweden and 29.5% from France responded yes for the importance of religion in their lives.

One reason given by Paldam (2009) is that these Muslim countries are rentier states, which means that they are highly reliant towards natural resources mainly oil revenues, as compared to other countries. This means that their oil revenues do not balance their labour and capital. Countries such as Japan or Switzerland on the other hand have the commitment towards development had made them too pre-occupied to devote their time to religion (Ulbrich & Wallace, 1984) as opposed to rich Muslim nations than can afford to be involved in religious activities.

To sum up, based on the arguments above, the effect of economic development towards religiosity is not a conventional one. One must look at different angles to see that there is a reciprocal adaptation between Islamic financial system and the neoliberalist system (Mohamad & Saravanamuttu, 2015). On one angle, at an institutional level, the Islamisation of banking and finance is seen as a way for the financial elites to tap into financial opportunities from Muslims, particularly from the GCC. On a different angle, some parts of the institution, particularly the banking and finance sector, are in the process of introducing an alternative banking and financial formulae as well as strategic Islamisation. On a societal level, rentierism is argued to be one of the main reasons for Muslim countries to remain religious despite its socioeconomic development. Paradoxically, the existing Islamic welfare institution is undergoing secularisation, are used to supplement the existing welfare system. Lastly, it is the religious environment itself that maintains the level of religiosity in Muslim majority countries.

3.4 Democracy and Freedom

Democracy has different meanings based on different societies at different times from ancient Greece to the modern West. Democracy does exist in Islam but not to the extent of European or American ideals. There is no priestly class in Islam and Islam forbids any priestly class to emerge, which reflects a great democratic force that asserts the rights of all human beings (Qadir, 1988). Furthermore, it could be argued that the Europeans are in violation of their very principle of democracy. For instance, the freedom of religion in France was violated based on the United Nations Human Rights communication 931/2000 when all auspicious religious symbols were banned in 2010 (Ssenyonjo, 2007).

An Islamic version of democracy is of course within the confines of the Quran and the Sunnah. *Shūrā* is a Quranic practice which is argued to be similar to democracy (Esposito, 1998; Osman, 2001). It basically means participation of the ones not involved in the leadership, particularly among the scholars (Osman, 2001). As a testament to the importance of the *Shūrā*, there is a specific *sūrah* (chapter) in the Quran that that is dedicated to address matters regarding the *Shūrā* and other verses in other *sūrahs* (chapters) (See. The Quran *sūrah* al-Shūrā [4]: 38, Āli 'Imrān [3]: 159, al-Naml [27]: 32). All these *sūrahs* and *āyāts* (verses) command Muslims repeatedly to make decision after consultation (Parray, 2012).

One of the main reasons for the unsavoury connotation of democracy among Muslim countries, especially among the Islamists, is that democracy is defined largely by the western world (Esposito & Voll, 2001). Western democracy, as well as secularism in the West is associated with human rights, pluralism and modernisation (Hashemi, 2009) and thus its apparent success. However, a Western concept of democracy is seen by the Muslims as a foreign concept that has been enforced by the Western world (Esposito & Voll, 2001).

Looking at the most current measurement of democracy which is provided by Karatnycky (2002), Muslim majority countries are not among the most democratic states in the world. Based on the table of political rights and civil liberties in Karatnycky (2002), the richest and most modern Arab Muslim majority countries still do not have the level of democracy comparable to non-Muslim developed countries. For instance, using a score for political rights and civil liberty, 1 being highest and 7 being the lowest - countries such as UAE has a score of 6 for its political rights (PR) and 5 for its civil liberties (CL). Qatar scored 6 for both PR and CL whilst Bahrain scored 6 for PR and 5 for CL. These scores from the table provided by Karatnycky (2002) have indicated that these selected Muslim countries are considered as not 'free.' Non-Muslim majority countries however fared better than Muslim majority countries. For instance, the UK scored 1 for PR and 2 for CL, while the Netherlands scored 1 for both PR and CL. However, based on the Gallup poll survey that was accessed in 2023, countries such as the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain have 85%, 88% and 90% respectively of their populations who answered 'yes' to the question on the importance of religion in their daily lives. However, in countries such as the UK and Netherlands, only 23% and 21% of their population answered 'yes'.

The primary reason for the absence of democracy in Muslim-majority countries has been argued to be due to their leadership (Karatnycky, 2002). Most Muslim countries particularly the ones in the Middle East are either absolute monarchies or authoritarian Ba'athist regimes. Both of these leadership systems practiced by the respective head of states adheres by secular ideals, to some extent, suppress any opposition to their leadership.

The events that happened in in Egypt warrant special attention. A peculiar relationship exists in Egypt between the secular, religious, democracy and authoritarianism. The secular military Egypt had ousted Morsi, an elected President of Egypt through democracy who is a member of Muslim Brotherhood (Abul-Magd, 2013). To add to that, the secular military leadership of Egypt even banned the Muslim Brotherhood, claiming that it was a terrorist organisation (Al-Anani, 2016). The peculiarity in this context is that, this time, a leader from an Islamist party was democratically elected and the secular authoritarian military regime ousted the

democratically elected President Morsi by force. Religion however is there to stay in the Egyptian public sphere although the political and administrative spheres are secular.

To summarise, the relationship between democracy and secularisation for Muslim majority countries is indeed complex. It is very difficult to tell whether democracy has a positive or negative effect on religiosity. On one hand, there are Egyptian military leaders who are secular although, at the same time, authoritarian. On the other hand, there was the first ever democratically elected president in Egypt who happened to be from the Muslim Brotherhood, which was considered as a terrorist group by the Egyptian military and the west.

3.5 Urbanisation

A traditional argument regarding the relationship between urbanisation and religiosity is that urbanisation has a negative relationship with religiosity (Brown & Moore, 1970; Van Dijk, Feijten, & Boyle, 2010). Typical reasons include hectic lifestyles and worldly environment. People in the urban areas are argued to have hectic lifestyles; therefore, they have less time for religion and spirituality (Bolund & Hunhammar, 1999). Secondly, urban areas are argued to have very worldly and indulgent environments as opposed to being spiritual and 'other-worldly.' For example, urban areas are where the posh restaurants, high end boutiques and night-clubs are located. To certain extent this is true, even for some Muslim majority countries (Krauss et al., 2006). Evidence provided by Krauss et al. (2006) gave some substantiation of the negative relationship between urbanisation and religiosity among Malaysian Muslim youths. Among the reasons provided by Krauss et al. (2006) was that Muslim youth in urban areas are exposed to cultural milieus, particularly the secular Western ones and have less exposure to religious lifestyles.

Historically, Muslims are no stranger to urbanisation. The builders of the Muslim empires were also great founders of cities such as Kufa, Cordoba, Damascus and the best of all, Baghdad which during that time, in the ninth century, was the largest city in the world (Sinaceur, 1977). To illustrate how big they were, the city of Baghdad during the tenth century had more than one million inhabitants which could be compared with cities in Europe which had only 30,000 to 40,000 (Sinaceur, 1977). Every characteristic of an urban city from sewage, to advanced water system, public baths, toilets and landfills already existed during the ninth century (Lapidus, 1973). It has been said that the religion of Islam is similar to Christianity in the sense that is also argued to be an urban religion (Abu-Lughod 1987; Shell, 1993; Turner, 1998). Similar to the Christian church, the *masjid* was used to be the centre of the city, not just in terms of location, but in terms of the economy, religious rituals, knowledge, science and technology - all of which were undifferentiated from Islam.

The difference between Islam and the Christian religion is that in modern times, Islam plays more importance in Muslim majority urban population than Christianity's importance in Christian majority cities. This calls into question the normative relationship between urbanisation and religion. To illustrate further, modern history has witnessed Muslims in South Africa flourishing in the urban areas especially after slavery was abolished (Shell, 1993). This was because the urban characteristics of Islam, such as the remarkable network of social, educational and religious institutions, made it attractive for the marginalised yet recently freed former slaves.

New evidence also questions the normative relationship of urbanisation and Islam. For instance, new generations of Muslims, in almost all Muslim majority countries come from the recently urbanized and modern educated social groups (Göle, 2017; Hefner, 2014). These include countries such as Egypt, Iran and Turkey. What are the reasons for the positive relationship between urbanisation and religiosity? One reason is that urbanisation brings along facilities for education (Hefner, 2014) which lead to economic development and thus a sense of empowerment. In the case of education in Muslim majority countries, the education system includes religious education and even the secular education has been Islamised with Islamic worldviews, ethics and principle (Al-Tabbakh, 2007).

To sum up, evidence from Muslim majority countries questions the normative relationship between urbanisation and religiosity. Among the reasons are the sheer size and rich history of Muslim urban city-life which have been associated with it. In modern times, however, there are two different relationships between the urban Muslims and religiosity. On one hand, there are the poor urban dwellers who turn to religion to cope with their situation. On the other hand, there are the well-educated, revivalists and outspoken urban dwellers who strive to re-integrate Islam in the modern system that exists in the urban areas.

3.6 Education

One of the reasons for this is that during ancient times in Christian societies, education was only for the priestly class. The few priestly classes flourished while the common people were left behind in a state of ignorance (Qadir,

1988). Therefore, the gradual collapse of the ecclesiastical power along with the priestly class was a result of the rebellion of the common people against the church. This gave opportunities for them to also participate in acquiring knowledge. At the same time the education system was also gradually and rebelliously disassociating from religion. This explains the normative understanding of education levels and secularisation in a society where, the higher the education level, the more secular the society will be (Beckwith, 1985; Weber, 1905). Nevertheless, whether education is secular or not, it instils a sense of scientific objectivity that enables one to differentiate between fact and fiction.

The secular worldview in a Muslim education system did not go through similar development comparable to what had happened in Western countries. Most of the development that has now become the mainstream worldview is attributed to the legacy of colonialism instead of internal reformation and revolution. Although there are reforms, it is mostly reactions against the colonials (Dangor, 2005). European protectorates, be it French or British, for example, introduced their education system, most of which was western or secular in nature, that has become the mainstream worldview of the intellectual class among the Muslims. In Turkey, the French played an important part in secularising the Turkish education system insofar as abolishing the religious *madrasah* system in 1924 (Turner, 1998). Ultimately these young seculars educated Muslims were sent to European nations to pursue their higher education (Ringer, 2001). These intellectual elites were the ones who took over what the colonials left after independence. However, at the same time, there were also a significant number of Muslims who did not favour the colonial style education. Therefore, instead of attending colonial schools, young Muslims attend *madrasahs* (Shamsul Amri & Azmi, 2011) that offers Islamic education as well as worldly sciences without forgoing their religious worldviews (Noor, Sikand, & Van Bruinessen, 2008).

In summary, based on the arguments above, to conclude whether education levels have a positive or negative effect on secularisation is too simplistic. This is because it also depends on what kind of education we are dealing with, whether it is infused with Islam or not. For the Muslim case, secular education is still considered mainstream due to the legacy of colonialism. However, the development of Islamic based education has produced intellectual elites utilises both Islamic and worldly education with an emphasis of Islamic worldview. Therefore, for most Muslim majority countries, the rise of education levels may increase the level of religiosity.

3.7 Science and Technology

In modern times, science holds the status of the objective universal truth (Hayek, 1941; Popper, 2014; Putnam, 2009). Technology on the other hand, with the aid of science, has liberated society from anxieties and the unpredictable, hence releases the dependence from 'out-of-the world' forces. This improves the quality of life and freedom within society. Just like other societies, Muslim societies can enjoy the labour-saving luxury of cutting edge of safety technology in transportation, internet, medicine, agriculture and so on. European scientists with regards to the emancipation of science from Medieval Christianity suffered greatly in terms of advancement. Copernicus (1473-1543), Galileo (1564-1642), Bruno (1548-1600) and Kepler (1571-1630) were prosecuted and some of them received death sentences for promoting the heliocentric view of the world which was against the bible's teaching (Dao, 2008; Hajdu, 2007; Lindberg & Numbers, 1986).

The advancement of science in Islam vis-à-vis the Arab world is somewhat unique. The harsh environment endured by the Arabs provided them with various innovations for survival and also for religious needs. The nomadic way of life required innovations in astronomy and complex mathematical solution to find directions (Hannam, 2011). They also developed the lunar calendar and innovation in determining the qiblah or direction of prayers, which is facing the Kaabah. Muslims believe that, if possible, rituals such as prayers, slaughtering of animals and even when doing something which is related to knowledge such as reading or studying, should be carried out facing the Kaabah. Since the spread of Islam throughout the world, ancient Muslims have been researching for the most accurate measurements in determining the direction of the Kaabah, which has intrigued the greatest astronomers, mathematicians and geographers in the Islamic world to develop sophisticated mathematical solutions using spherical Trigonometry and Geography (King, 2021; Saliba, 2007).

The European colonisation of Muslim lands after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire have had an impact towards the worldview of science in the Muslim world. After series of losses in battles with western powers, the Ottoman Empire soon realised that they are left behind in terms of science and technology (Iqbal, 2007). Therefore, to keep up, the Ottomans embraced western science together with their culture and at the same time de-Islamise them. Arabic language that was once the lingua franca of science in the Muslim world is now replaced with the language of the respective colonials. Consequently, this difference in language have severed the ties between Muslim scholars in different parts of the Muslim lands (Iqbal, 2007).

There have been many attempts to revive Islam in the field of science by Muslim academics. The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) and Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC)

(Abaza, 2002), were initiated by intellectuals namely S. H. Nasr, Osman Bakar and Syed Naguib Al Attas are institutions with objectives among others to revive Islamic science. Most of them were trained in various fields of sciences such as philosophy, sociology and even hard sciences in both oriental and occidental institutions. Similarly, Indonesian reformist movements such as the Muhammadiyah movement are currently led by people with both religious and secular training combining the ideals of religious training and the best of and without the limits of secular thoughts (Abaza, 2002). These Muslim intellectuals, or better known as “Islamisers,” believe that the education system in Muslim countries is deficient in the sense that it is Westernised and their main aim is to liberate the Muslims from militant secularist mentality (Abaza, 2002). Nevertheless, there are also Muslim intellectuals such as Pervez Hoodbhoy who has a very occidental worldview of science to the extent of “religionizing” science (Abaza, 2002).

Science has emancipated Muslims from the shackles of cultural belief and directed them to the true spirit of monotheism. Brakel (2004) has provided an example of a Muslim-Javanese tradition that uses offerings such as food and animal sacrifices and even erect dolls in order to placate dangerous forces and disasters, which are practices that are against the strict monotheism of mainstream Islam. The spread of science with the knowledge of as Gellner (2013) described it as “high Islam” has made these cultural beliefs inapplicable in modern times. Consequently, these cultural beliefs are replaced with the reliance of science and technology to placate dangerous forces and disasters together with the belief in the concept of *tawakal*, which means putting the utmost trust in Allah after efforts, has been made. Modern technology aids the speed of religious revolutions. For instance, The Iranian Revolution in 1979 took approximately three to four years for a series of street demonstrations to depose the Shah (Skocpol, 1982). At that time, the internet technology was non-existent, which could explain the relatively long timeline. The Arab Spring of 2011 on the other hand took place during the age of advanced internet with social media applications, such as *Facebook*, *X (Twitter)* and *Instagram*, which were able to spread information almost instantly to the entire world (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011).

To sum up, to say whether science and technology impedes the religiosity of Muslim society or vice versa is indeed very puzzling, especially when it involves Muslim majority societies. This is because the teachings of Islam as well as the harsh environment of the Muslim world encouraged early Muslims to explore science. However, through colonization, the Europeans managed to bring along their worldview of science to the Muslim world to replace Islamic Science. However, multiple attempts to revive Islam in modern sciences has led this essay to conclude that science and technology, if used and interpreted in an Islamic worldview, are contrary to the secular worldview and ultimately also contrary to secularisation.

3.8 Secularisation and the Outcome of Interaction

Did the economic development and secularisation in Muslim societies acquire similar characteristics as Western predominantly Christian societies? Secularisation does not depend on only one single variable. It actually depends on the interaction of these variables; at least this is what has happened in the Western world (Ziad Esa et al., 2014). The 1960s witnessed rapid socio-economic development and the notion of anti-establishment in the Western world might explain the drastic religious decline in Europe (Bruce, 2002). However, this religious decline is argued to be a Western phenomenon because, the Muslim world in the 1960s, was still struggling with social unrest and invasion of colonial powers, which started during the end of the decline of the Ottoman Empire (Hourani, 2013). The closest those Muslim nations could get equivalent to the 1960s Western counter-culture movement was anti-imperialism, which happen in Iran in 1979 (Abrahamian, 1982).

The Iranian case posits a very unique interaction of variables that ultimately led to the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The interaction of rentier economy, rapid urbanisation, industrialisation and rapid increase of education levels seems to be an important determinant to the revolution. Under the rule of the last Shah, Iran's government became a rentier state which was closely linked with United States (Skocpol, 1982). Iran under the secular Shah relied heavily on oil exports as income and spent a lot on infrastructure, military and subsidies. Rural urban migration was argued to be the consequence of poor planning forcing the rural peasants to migrate (Skocpol, 1982). The urban population after the migration were heavily dependent on the state for employment and services. The shift of oil price came as a shock to the Iranian economy. Therefore, the sudden rise in oil price in the early 1970s not only gave sudden huge revenues that increased employment and spending power for the Iranians but escalating inflation. However, in the mid-1970s, the demand for Iranian oil declined and many projects were abandoned thus raising unemployment. The consequence of this instability led to resentment and distrust towards the Shah and at the same time strong Islamic revolutionary sentiments came together with anti-imperialism. Consequently the 1979 Islamic revolution came into being signifying the failure of the secular rentier monarch and the victory of an Islamic republic that follows the Sharia (Skocpol, 1982).

Arab speaking nations such as Egypt and the Maghreb region, are mostly led by secularist leaders. Although some of them appear to be anti-imperialist, they have actually inherited ideologies left by the

imperialists and still have economic and political ties with them. Most of these leaders are argued to be corrupt and anti-Islamic to an extent, there have been attempts to ban the hijab (Belczyk, 2010), which has spurred discontents among the Islamist opposition (Lubeck, 1999). To add to the problem, their rentier economies are not sufficient to prevent the dawning of Islamist oppositions (Asumah, 2010), although there were attempts to urbanize, increase education level and provide better welfare in the hope that an increase in education levels also might be good for the secular regime. Unfortunately, if the Islamised education levels do not match with the demand for labour, secular Arab leadership believes that it will further jeopardise their power, giving the opportunity for more educated religious Muslims to take over, which partially explain the Arab Spring in 2010.

The advancement of technology has made information more transparent with instant messaging and social networking websites that are able to reveal information against the regime. Arguably, according to Asumah (2010), the state takes care or buys off the citizens by providing almost the same things as provided by welfare states such as subsidies, welfare and education. Arab monarchies such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and United Arab Emirates are examples of such states although it is argued that democracy does not go well with rentier states (Dunning, 2006). In Saudi Arabia, some social networking websites are blocked from access to prevent criticism to the Royal Family which could possibly lead to social unrests (Al-Shehri, 2013). Since most Muslim monarchists are also leaders of Islam, they are compelled to follow the Islamic way of being a head of the state and follow the Islamic welfare injunctions such as *zakāt*, *ṣadaqah* and *waqf*, which are still widely practised until now.

Malaysia and Indonesia can be considered as rentier economies after the discovery of oil although many would argue that it is not to the same extent as countries such as Saudi Arabia or Qatar. Unlike many Muslim majority countries, despite their rentierism and the negative correlation between rentierism and democracy, Malaysia and Indonesia hold elections to elect the prime minister for Malaysia or the President of Indonesia. Nevertheless, the futuristic vision of leaders from both nations has diversified the use of petroleum wealth into more sustainable economies (Rosser, 2007) such as industrial manufacturing, Halal industry and tourism. Presently, both countries are going a step further by attempting to re-integrate Islamic values in every possible aspect of society including Islamic financial products, some aspect of the judiciary, the education system and work ethics. This is because, despite the fact that most Muslim Arab countries are rentier states, Islam, as a religion as well as an ideology in the Malay Archipelago, promotes industrious behaviour (Alatas, 2013).

The interrelationship between the determinants is argued to create a unique secularisation trajectory. Economic development along urbanisation often paves the way to better accessibility to education and modern technologies. However, different to the occident, these determinants have not lead to decline in religion. The integration of Islamic worldviews counterbalances the secularising effects of modern predominantly western based education system (Shamsul Amri & Azmi, 2011). Oil rich nations that gave birth to modern rentiers allow governments to ensure the soundness of the economy without significant labour participation hence allowing citizens to be devout to religion (Paldam, 2009). The structure of rentier states also can bypass democratic pressure whereby citizens are dependent on abundance of state subsidies rather than protesting for political reforms. Science and technology, although are usually linked to secularisation are often integrated to vast scientific contribution by Muslim polymaths (Usman, Wazir & Ismail, 2017). Together, these factors interact between each other maintaining a solid religious presence in Muslim societies, which is distinctively different than what is happening in the West.

To sum up, to answer whether economic development and secularisation in Muslim societies acquire similar characteristics as Western predominantly Christian societies, the answer is, no. Firstly, the main source of economy for western countries is different from Muslim countries. However, there are different extents of rentierism depending on how rich the country is in terms of natural resources proportionate to the population. Less wealthy rentier states face more risks of losing power to lead to be compared with wealthier rentier state because they are less able to pay off or subsidise their people sufficiently. Nevertheless, regardless of the extent of rentier wealth, Muslim countries are more religious than other countries. The only difference is the leadership - whether it is secular or religious. The dependence of rentier income is also an important factor in addition to rentier wealth. Therefore, some countries, more than others, resort to initiatives for example, manufacturing and industry for a more sustainable economy. Countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia integrate a sustainable economy together with Islamic values, making sustainable economy aligned with Islam from seed capital provided by rentier wealth. Secondly, the process of secularisation in Muslim countries is different than the west. Secularism, from its inception and its initial in-depth discussion began in the West, while in Muslim majority countries it was not just imported, it was forcefully imposed by the colonial masters and the legacies continued to the current secularist leaders.

4. CONCLUSION

The study of Secularisation is almost always looked from a Eurocentric angle. This essay however, has attempted to neutralize the Euro-centric view of secularisation and present an alternative discussion of the subject. The separation between religion and all aspects of society is a very Eurocentric idea that is based on the bitter history between Christian societies and the church. Although this separation does happen in Muslim societies, it is indeed an imported idea brought in by the European colonials. There are Muslims who accepts it and there are also Muslims who oppose it. There are many ways by which Muslims accept this idea by localizing while still maintaining its secular elements. On the other hand, there are also Muslims who embrace it, keeping the good elements of the disenchanting system i.e banking, technology and science while reviving religion or integrating Islam in those systems.

The determinants of secularisation for Muslim societies challenge the applicability of the secularisation thesis outside of the Western world. Among the reasons for this is that Muslims persist in being religious insofar as reviving Islam in almost every aspect that build the modern world. Among the pertinent aspects are the economy, welfare, law, finance and banking. An important puzzle that explains the interaction between these determinants and secularisation is the fact that many Muslim nations are oil-based rentier states. The characteristics of a rentier states vary from being richer than a welfare state to being as poor as any Third World country. Both continuums, however, are conducive for religious beliefs because when a country is poor, religion is used as a measure to cope with the hardships. However, when the country is rich, people still have time for religious activities because of the imbalances of the capital and labour that would have to be invested.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Ziad Esa Yazid: Involved in the conceptualisation of the study and provide the overarching framework and played a significant role in drafting and revising the manuscript. Shahid Azim Saufi: Focus on comparative analysis between Secularisation in the West and the Muslim world, giving critical insights into the dynamics of Muslim socio-politics. Mohd Fodli Hamzah: Contributed to the nuanced argument on economic development and education and how these determinants influence religiosity in Muslim societies. Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid: Contributed on the expertise on the history and determinants of secularisation, focussing on the impact of colonialism and modernity in Muslim societies. Abubakar Yusuf Sanyinna: Ensures the consistency and accuracy of references throughout the whole manuscript.

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