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The End of Political Islam? A Comparative Analysis of Religious Parties in the Muslim Democracy of Indonesia

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Abstract: Why do some religious parties survive after adopting a moderate ideological outlook while others do not? The rise and fall of religious parties since the onset of democratic transition in Indonesia has set off an intriguing debate over the role and future of political Islam in electoral politics. This article seeks to explain the diverging – and unexpected – trajectories of the two most prominent religious parties, the National Awakening Party (PKB) and Justice Prosperous Party (PKS) through a close examination of the case of PKB. It emphasizes organizational qualities to advance two claims. First, the decline of the moderate PKB is the result of the permeation of personality-based clientelistic and ascriptive relations as well as lack of party institutionalization. Political survival of the puritanical Islamist PKS, on the other hand, is explained by organizational cohesion achieved through party institutionalization. Second, a disciplined party structure has allowed PKS elites to achieve controversial ideological adjustments. In short, a moderate centralist religious ideology or outlook alone is not sufficient to achieve political survival in the competitive environment of electoral and religious politics.

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Introduction

The growing prominence of religious parties in secular democracies such as Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP) has drawn scholarly attention to the role of religious organizations and ideology in electoral politics and democratic consolidations. It is conventionally held that the adaptation of a moderate centralist ideology would be key for the political survival of religious parties in emerging democracies. It is still not so clear, however, why some religious parties survive and thrive while others do not despite adopting moderate positions. What explains the varying fates of religious parties in an increasingly pious Muslim society?

This article[1] seeks to explain the diverging trajectories of religious parties in an emerging Muslim-majority democracy through an examination of the case of Indonesia. The rise and fall of religious parties since the onset of democratic transition in Indonesia has set off an intriguing debate over the role and future of political Islam in electoral politics.[2] The prevailing view emanating from the debate is that political Islam, that is, the political aspirations of Muslims to achieve religious ideals and principles in the public sphere, is on the decline as indicated by declining support for religious parties. Is political Islam, and Islamist parties more specifically, bound to fail because of their exclusive and puritanical ideology and illiberal character as conventionally argued (e.g., Fuller 2003)? What are the implications of the changing outlook of political Islam for the consolidation of democracy in a secular Muslim democracy such as Indonesia?

A close look at the political survival of religious parties in Indonesia, however, exposes intriguing patterns that defy expectations. One of the most moderate and centralist religious party, the National Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, PKB), adopted a moderate religious nationalist position from its inception and was the largest religious party in 1999. However, PKB has been in drastic decline ever since and it is widely speculated that PKB will likely not survive the next legislative election in 2014 on its own. By contrast, the most puritanical and exclusivist Islamist party, the Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, PKS), has steadily ex-

2   The article uses political Islam interchangeably with Islamism unless otherwise noted. See the debate about terminology and definition (Martin and Barzegar 2009).

panded to form the fourth largest political party. It has done so by pledging a commitment to moderation and eventual transformation into a more open and centralist party in the years ahead despite widespread suspicion and some opposition. The diverging patterns of these two religious parties poses an intriguing puzzle: Why is the most moderate and pluralist PKB in significant decline, while the avowedly puritanical Islamist PKS faces a much different future?

This article carefully looks into the case of PKB and also compares it with PKS to resolve this question. A comparative analysis of PKB and PKS is analytically valuable because the deviating trajectories have occurred in the presence of reasonably similar conditions: Both parties were newly established around the same time after the democratic transition (1998); they were based on a religious educational social movement; and they were born into a particular social milieu with strong social/ class bases. Furthermore, Indonesia, as one of a few Muslim democracies, offers a valuable case in which to investigate the possibilities and limitations of religious parties in the Muslim world.[3]

This article emphasizes organizational qualities and cohesion to argue that the rise and fall of religious parties is explained by party institutionalization, a thesis that is familiar in the literature of comparative politics and democratic consolidation (Huntington 1968; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Randall and Svåsand 2002a, 2002b), but is largely neglected in the studies of religious parties. More specifically the article advances two claims: Firstly, the fall of PKB in the first democratic decade is attributed to clientelistic characters and organizational fragmentation while the political survival of PKS is explained by organizational cohesion gained through party institutionalization; secondly, a well-institutionalized party organization has allowed PKS elites the flexibility to make ideological/ policy adjustments so as to facilitate political survival. The dramatic decline of PKB also shows that moderate religious ideology and inclusiveness in itself is not sufficient to expand a support base and keep the party together without party institutionalization. In short, the article emphasizes organizational qualities to account for not only religious parties' ideological adjustment but also their very survival under a democratic context.

The findings in this article are primarily based on fieldwork conducted in Indonesia in 2008–2011, in-depth interviews with party elites and cadres at national as well as regional levels, participatory observation in party activities and congresses, and access to primary language sources including party documents.

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3   Other democracies include Bangladesh, Mali and Turkey.

The End of Political Islam? Religious Parties in Electoral Politics

The collapse of the authoritarian regime and onset of democratic elections in Indonesia raised hopes and beliefs among various religious elites and organizations that they could gain better access to state power. Through participation in formal politics, they also hoped that they could achieve their vision of society. Some have chosen to establish political parties to participate in electoral competition and among the 48 parties eligible to take part in the 1999 polls, 21 were Islamic/ religious (Barton 2001: 246).

After the third round of democratic elections in 2009, however, the fate of Islamic parties in electoral politics was said to be bleak, leading to a prevailing view that political Islam is on the decline in electoral politics and the parliamentary sphere (e.g., Fealy 2009; Platzdasch 2009; Steele 2006). Political Islam is defined as political aspirations and/or collective activism of Muslims to achieve religious ideals and principles in the public sphere. Enforcement of *Syariah* (Islamic law) is one prominent example of the political ambitions underlying the political platforms of religious parties. Religious parties are defined as political parties that are either based on an Islamic ideology and/or utilize religious symbols and resources for mobilization, or are associated with prominent mass religious organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) or Muhammadiyah.[4] These parties include: orthodox Islamic parties such as the Crescent Star Party (Partai Bulan Bintan or PBB) and the United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan or PPP); the puritanical Islamist party inspired by Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS); modernist Islamic parties associated with Muhammadiyah such as the National Mandate Party (Partai Amanat Nasional or PAN); and nationalist-religious parties established by NU leaders, most notably the National Awakening Party (PKB).[5]

Indeed, as evidenced in the table below, popular support for religious parties *collectively* has shrunk at the national level over the last ten years. In 1999, religious parties garnered 34 per cent of the popular vote to secure 163 seats in parliament (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, DPR (People's Representative Council)). The support diminished to 26 per cent in 2009 although

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4   NU is a rural-based traditionalist religious organization and claims more than 30 million members. Muhammadiyah is an urban-based modernist organization and claims 25 million members.

5   It may be worth noting that religious identity and ideological position of these parties change over time according to their relations to sponsoring institutions or leadership, somewhat complicating categorization of these parties. PAN founded by former Chairman of Muhammadiyah, Amien Rais, offers a prominent example.

it in fact increased to 35 per cent to secure 219 legislative seats in 2004 chiefly thanks to the dramatic expansion of PKS (see Table 1). According to some scholars, the long-term decline of Islamic parties is also discernible if the post-transition electoral results are compared to the results of the first democratic election in 1955 when the two major Islamic parties, Masyumi and NU, enjoyed 39 per cent vote share (e.g., Fealy 2009; King 2003; Mujani and Liddle 2009: 584-585; Ufen 2008). Moreover, some scholars suggest that the political clout of organized religion and mass religions organizations such as NU and *Muhammadiyah* are diminishing in electoral politics, further contributing to a perception that political Islam is in decline (Jung 2009a; Machmudi 2011).

Table 1: Religious Parties in the House of Representatives (DPR), 1999-2009

	1999		2004		2009	
	Vote (%)	Seat	Vote (%)	Seat	Vote (%)	Seat
PAN	7.12	34	6.44	53	6.01	43
PBB	1.94	13	2.62	11	1.8	0
PKB	12.61	51	10.57	52	4.94	27
PKS	1.36	7	7.34	45	7.8	57
PPP	10.7	58	8.15	58	5.3	39
Total	33.73	163	35.12	219	25.85	166

Source: The General Election Commission (KPU) n.y., Indonesia Memilih n.y.

The aforementioned trends have led some scholars to conclude that the function of religion is not as significant as expected and the role of political Islam in electoral politics remains minimal. Mujani and Liddle (2009), for example, predict that the declining influence of religious parties indicates popular disapproval of the enforcement of *Syariah* or other forms of Islam-ism in Indonesian political life. In a survey of voting behaviours, they also find that voters do not care as much about ideology as they do about other factors such as personality and leadership (Liddle and Mujani 2007).

In contrast to the End of Political Islam proposition, however, other studies suggest that the utility of religion in fact has grown prominent as a symbol or instrument of popular mobilization among increasingly pious Muslim constituents precisely *because of expanded electoral competition*. Further-more, secular politicians and secular-nationalist parties such as the former ruling party Golkar have become more Islam-friendly and assertive in ad-vancing religious-based policies and agendas to gain more popular support (Baswedan 2004; Buehler 2008; Bush 2008; Tanuwidjaja 2010).

It is against this backdrop of highly competitive electoral and religious politics that religious parties must search for a way to survive politically. Why and how do some religious parties manage to survive while others do not under such competitive democratic conditions?

Analytical Limitations with "The End of Political Islam"

The literature of religious parties in general, and political Islam and Indonesia in particular, are largely concerned with the substance and outlook of religious ideology and tend to attribute the political fate – *both rise and decline* – of religious parties to dogmatic elements of religious ideology, ideological purity or ideological commitment.[6] In this view, the ideological outlook of party elites is key to understanding religious parties' political survival because it is their commitment to fundamental religious ideals that is thought to bind the party together.

What is not so clear yet, however, is why some religious parties manage to survive while others do not *when adopting a moderate position*. Studies of Indonesian religious parties seem to predict that an ideological outlook and/or elite commitment to a particular ideological position is vital for their future while ignoring the flexibility and malleability of religious ideas/ doctrines in religious mobilization as emphasized by Kalyvas (Kalyvas 2003: 297). By overlooking the ability of some religious parties (but not others) to achieve an ideological adjustment, these studies are oblivious to an intriguing *deviation* that has emerged conspicuous after a decade of electoral competition in Indonesian democracy: The most moderate and pluralistic party, PKB, has declined significantly while the avowedly puritanical Islamist party, PKS, has achieved steady growth and survival to become the most prominent religious party during the same period. Moreover, PKS has thus far managed to adjust their radical outlooks relatively effectively against a prediction among some scholars that their ideological adjustment would only hurt the party (Bubalo, Fealy, and Mason 2008; Hasan 2009; Hidayat 2010; Machmudi 2008; Tomsa 2011). The sections that follow seek to explain why and how some parties are able to survive while others are not despite their adaptation of moderate ideological positions under similar conditions.

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6   On Hindu BJP (Hansen 1999; Hansen and Jaffrelot 1998; Sahu 2002); on Christian Democracies (Kselman and Buttigieg 2003; Mainwaring and Scully 2003).

Varying Trajectories of Religious Parties in Electoral Democracy

The divergent fates of PKB and PKS, and the drastic decline of PKB in particular, pose intriguing puzzles. It is commonly predicted that more moderate and pluralistic centralist parties such as PKB should be more competitive politically than puritanical religious fundamentalist/ Islamist parties such as PKS because of their alleged adoptability and inclusiveness as well as their broader appeal as a moderate party. However, the actual outcome was the complete opposite.

In 1999, PKB was the third largest party in parliament and the most prestigious religious party, having won the largest popular vote (12.6 per cent) among religious parties, while PK (the predecessor of PKS, the Justice Party) won merely 1.4 per cent of popular vote, falling below the electoral threshold (2 per cent) required to participate in the next election. However, PKB popularity has plunged steadily over time and the party was ranked fourth among all religious parties in 2009, only followed by PBB, another Islamist party supported by a small group of modernist elites and intellectuals.

PKB's decline is especially intriguing because it was sponsored by prominent *kiais* from NU, the largest mass religious movement claiming a membership of over 30 million, and was led by the most celebrated charismatic liberal religious leader, the late Abdurrahman Wahid, former chairman of the movement. His ideological proximity to secular-nationalism and commitment to pluralism and liberalism was expected to appeal to broader constituencies, both religious and secular, and help to keep political Islam and Islamists at bay (Bush 2009: 142). Furthermore, Wahid was elected as the first president of the republic after the democratic transition. There were previously high expectations for PKB to further notions of religious pluralism and diversity through participation in the newly formed democracy.

In contrast, PKS has achieved steady expansion to garner the highest share of the popular vote (7.8 per cent) among religious parties and become the fourth largest party to join the ruling coalition led by Democratic Party (Partai Demokrat, PD) in 2009. Moreover, PKS secured four cabinet positions, more than Golkar, the third largest party in parliament. Despite widespread suspicion about their commitment to democratic norms and some potentially serious costs, PKS elites have remained committed to moderation while managing to expand their support base in the two largest rural provinces, East and Central Java, beyond their traditional strongholds in urban middle-class constituencies (e.g., Hamayotsu 2011).

Getting Organization Right: Explaining the Trajectories of PKB and PKS

In order to explain the diverging – and unexpected – trajectories of PKB and PKS, especially the decline of PKB, this article assesses the organizational qualities and cohesion (or lack thereof) gained through party institutionalization. Scholars of comparative politics generally consider institutionalization of the party system and political parties an essential condition for the transition and consolidation of a democracy (e.g., Linz and Stepan 1996: chap. 1; Mainwaring and Scully 1995). However, as suggested by Randall and Svåsand, there is little clarity on what party institutionalization involves and what qualities individual parties should have although there is a growing consensus that party institutionalization occurs when parties gain such characteristics as "systemness" and "coherence" internally and/or externally (Randall and Svåsand 2002b: 9-15).

Drawing upon the characteristics of well-institutionalized parties advanced by Andrew Nathan, I emphasize the following features of well-institutionalized parties: merit-based recruitment and promotion; an emphasis on collective decision-making and interests; regular and predictable succession and regeneration of leadership; and a strong collective ideology (Nathan 2003).[7] Along the degree of party institutionalization based on these features, less-institutionalized parties lack these characteristics and instead are based on clientelistic and ascriptive relations and norms in their decision-making as well as recruitment and promotion, organizations defined as "patrimonial" or "clientelistic".[8]

The core argument of the article is that differing organizational qualities condition the long-term survival of religious parties. The article advances two specific claims. First, PKB's decline was the result of the dominance of clientelistic and ascriptive relations as well as organizational fragility due to a lack of party institutionalization. PKB has acquired such characteristics that approximate "patrimonial" and "clientelistic" organizations. As a result, the party was fragmented organizationally and susceptible to exogenous intru-

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7   Nathan's definition is broadly based on Huntington's familiar "institutionalization" (Huntington 1968) but more explicitly emphasizes meritocratic recruitment and organizational divisions of responsibilities. He argues that institutionalization of these characteristics were crucial for regaining party cohesion among party members to revitalize the Communist Party of China and its authoritarian control at a time when the party was experiencing a number of challenges exogenous to the party. For other similar conceptualization of party institutionalization, see (Randall and Svåsand 2002b).

8   Definition of political clientelism in this article is drawn from (Stokes 2009).

sions such as access to state patronage, corruption and electoral changes. On the other hand, PKS' political survival is attributed to its organizational cohesion gained through party institutionalization. PKS has embraced organizational characters that approximate merit-based well-institutionalized parties. In doing so, the party has gained organizational cohesion and adoptability to achieve political resilience and survival.

Second, organizational cohesion and adoptability gained through party institutionalization have enabled PKS elites to reassess and revitalize their political struggles in religious terms while remaining politically relevant and competitive.

The comparative analysis of PKB and PKS below helps to evaluate how the varying level of organizational cohesion affects the political survival of religious parties. Moreover, it also shows that moderate centralist ideology alone is far from adequate for religious parties to build broad support base to achieve political survival.

Clientelistic Religious Parties and Organizational Fragility: National Awakening Party (PKB)

The case of moderate and pluralistic PKB shows that an absence of party institutionalization along with the permeation of clientelistic and ascriptive relations is detrimental to political survival. PKB is penetrated by personalistic relations and interests that are typical of clientelistic parties. As the party gained extended access to state offices and patronage especially when the founder of the party, the late Wahid, was president, the tendencies have further worsened. Key clientelistic features of PKB include: (1) personalistic recruitment and promotion of party cadres/ members; (2) emphasis on personal rather than collective interests of party members and constituencies; (3) domination by charismatic/ rich figures or prominent families and the lack of regularity in leadership succession; and (4) a weak ideological foundation. Organizational fragility derived from these characteristics has left the party vulnerable to external intrusions. More specifically, organizational weakness has allowed a few patrons, most notably Wahid, his daughter and nephew to control and abuse the party to pursue their personal ambitions, while neglecting the collective interests of the party and its chief constituency, NU communities. The results were intense and ugly internal conflicts, factionalism, court battles and finally a split of the party into two camps, thereby putting party survival at risk in light of the anticipated rise of the parliamentary threshold before 2014. Due to the organizational weakness and constant infighting among personalities, the party was not able to turn Wahid's celebrated religious philosophies, moderation and pluralism, into a

collective and coherent ideological ideal that bound party members together. It is this organizational fragility that has brought about the decline of PKB.

Clientelistic Party, Patronage Politics and Personalization of PKB

PKB was founded by the late Wahid, former chairman of the most prestigious religious movement, NU, in response to pressures from NU religious elites, locally known as *kiai*, to create a party representing NU interests at the onset of the democratic transition. The party's primary support base is a network of traditional religious boarding schools (known as *pesantren*), prominent *kiais* who run them and the small and medium landlord class in rural East and Central Java.

PKB was a ready candidate for a clientelistic party from the beginning. First, recruitment and promotion of leaders were based on personal and ascriptive connections and loyalty to leading patrons rather than merit. Within this clientelistic organizational structure, Wahid and a few individuals connected to him quickly used the party as a vehicle to advance their own personal interests. The party was formed at his residence and he appointed people loyal to him such as Matori Abdul Djalil and his nephew, Muhaimin Iskandar to top positions of the party. According to Bush, Wahid appointed the entire leadership line-up with little or no outside consultation (Bush 2009: 122). Appointment of Abdul Djalil as the chairman was especially controversial and disturbing among NU elites since he not only lacked adequate religious qualification but also did not have a large mass support base within the NU community (Bush 2009: 122; Mietzner 2009b: 255).

Dominance of personalities and clientelistic relations within the party's decision-making apparatus means that PKB did not invest in developing mechanisms to ensure collective-decision making or effective communication channels linking party elites and rank-and-file members both vertically and horizontally. Moreover, running parallel to NU's organizational structure, PKB relied heavily on NU infrastructure, resources and networks to expand their mass support base. For example, PKB local branches were housed in NU offices and run by NU members. PKB executive boards at the local level were almost always filled by NU notables who wielded significant influence at the grassroots level through their NU-linked organizations such as the youth wing, GP Ansor, and/or the women's wing, Muslimat NU, as well as other informal community networks.

According to Mietzner, on paper the organizational structures of PKB were designed to replicate those of NU, with a religious advisory board (Dewan Syuro) exercising supreme authority over the political leadership of

the party (Dewan Tanfidz). Moreover, prominent NU *kiais* were given key positions in the central board so that they could maintain adequate influence to protect not only religious characters but also the NU's corporate identity and interests within the party (Mietzner 2009b: 255).

This formal arrangement may have given NU elites a sense of ownership and representation. In reality, however, these decision-making bodies did not function in ways to represent and serve the collective interests of NU, due to the increasingly blatant personalistic rule of Wahid. Moreover, a lack of clear division of responsibilities or formula for power-sharing between the two highest decision-making bodies, Syuro and Tanfidz, means that the party is not equipped to resolve domestic issues and internal disputes on its own, adding an additional source of conflict among party elites. Bitter internal conflicts arose and deepened over time as personalization of the party by Wahid and individuals connected to (or opposed to) him worsened. As a result, the party severely hurt the long-term and collective interests of NU constituencies and upset NU elites (Jung 2009b: chap.6).[9]

Furthermore, there is no regular or systematic procedure pertaining to the succession of leadership in PKB because a single dominant figure and a few individuals who are loyal to them control the personnel matters of the party. Party patrons could not only pick and appoint their favourite individuals to high-ranking office as noted earlier, but also easily dismiss close allies including family members should they prove disloyal or threaten the supremacy of their chief patrons.

Such episodes abound in PKB. For example, Wahid fired the abovementioned Abdul Djalil in 2001 when he proved disloyal to him by getting involved in a discussion to remove Wahid from office as president. Since Abdul Djalil contested this decision and mounted opposition against him, the party split into two, one led by Abdul Djalil and the other by Alwi Shihab, Wahid's loyalist. The conflict between the two has resulted in a protracted court battle and lasted nearly two years until the 2004 elections (Bush 2009: 141-42).

Another similar conflict occurred in 2004 when Wahid abruptly dismissed Alwi Shihab and his nephew, Saifullah Yusuf, from the top executive positions of the party, chairman and secretary-general respectively. Wahid became upset with these men because they defied the party rule (and Wahid) to accept cabinet positions offered by the newly elected President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Wahid's political rival.[10] As with the earlier conflict involving Abdul Djalil, both Shihab and Yusuf contested the decision and

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9   Interview with Solahuddin Wahid, Jombang, 28 July 2010.
10   Shihab was appointed as the Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare and Yusuf as the Minister for the Development of Disadvantaged Regions.

formed their own faction to fight Wahid and newly appointed chairman and another nephew of Wahid, Muhaimin Iskandar. Again, because of an absence of party mechanisms to settle their domestic issues on their own, the case was taken to court in an effort to reclaim their party positions as well as ownership of PKB.

A more recent and equally prominent example is Wahid's abrupt dismissal of Iskandar as party chairman in 2008. As discussed in detail below, this conflict between the two men, again, led to ugly court battles over their respective claims for party ownership. This time, however, the conflict resulted in a serious blow to the party which was already in decline. These examples demonstrate that a lack of regularity in leadership succession and mechanisms to settle an internal conflict can be a major source of organizational fragility.

Finally, PKB has not made a conscious effort to frame the party's *collective* ideology, thus failing to motivate and bind party members together and rendering the ideological foundation of the party rather superficial and feeble. A few prominent PKB politicians including Wahid and Iskandar have actively promoted an inclusive vision of the Indonesian nation and moderate traditionalist Islam as their party ideals. They have pledged their commitment to the national ideology, *pancasila*, that is, commitment to developing a just, peaceful, democratic, pluralistic, and civilized Indonesian society, and the national unity based on these principles. In doing so, they have sought to disseminate NU's ideological visions in the wider Indonesian society while politically differentiating themselves from other religious parties such as PKS and PPP (e.g., Iskandar 2006, 2009).

However, as some observers suggest, PKB elites are not overtly concerned about defining their mission or vision beyond its ambiguous identification with NU spirits. Nor did they appear committed to propagating their ideological visions to gain new adherents beyond traditional NU constituencies (Bush 2009: 122). In general, party (thus NU) elites considered member loyalty to the party to be almost automatic since PKB was the NU party and NU members should be attached to their leaders spiritually (Machmudi 2011: 2). Moreover, some PKB and NU elites themselves admit that they prioritize their own interests rather than ideology.[11] As a result, the party did not systematically teach or translate Wahid's celebrated liberal thoughts such as religious pluralism and liberalism and his commitment to democracy into the party's collective ideology or platform.

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11   Interview with NU and PKB elites in East Java, 27-29 July 2010. Thus, it is not surprising at all that many NU elites shift their allegiance from PKB to other secular parties when they realize that the return will be bigger in doing so.

PKB's adoption of secular-nationalist *pancasila* means that the party is in principle open to all Indonesians, just as in other centralist secular parties. Several prominent PKB politicians in fact emphasized their strategic possibilities to gain broader mass support beyond their traditional NU constituencies in rural Java by more aggressively propagating the centralist ideology. They did so because they realized that their narrow focus on NU-linked *kiai* interests and unrealistic expectations that all NU members would automatically support PKB because of their loyalty to those *kiais* had cost the party opportunities to expand their support base nationwide beyond Central and East Java (Choirie 2007).

Moreover, it is important to remember that Wahid was the most valuable intellectual and ideological figure of PKB. His famously progressive religious outlooks and belief in multiculturalism represent an inclusive ideal for the otherwise deeply divided nation thereby inspiring both Muslim and non-Muslims alike (JP 2009). In advocating for ideals to protect the interests of religious and ideological minorities, Wahid did not hesitate to offend and alienate some of the influential NU *kiais* and their sizable followers. Given the statute of Wahid in the party and NU as well as his access to state power, he and PKB elites could possibly have turned these ideals into practical party projects in order to appeal to broader constituencies across the archipelago if they had chosen to do so.

In reality, however, personal ambitions, greed and opportunistic behaviours among prominent NU elites and families have permeated the party and overshadowed the otherwise progressive and inclusive religious vision that Wahid had long advocated (Barton 1997; Hefner 2000; Ramage 1995). PKB failed to promote Wahid's inclusive and pluralist religious thinking to mobilize new constituencies beyond NU under the democratic regime.

Organizational Fragility, Internal Feuds and Political Decline

The clientelistic characteristics of PKB grew even more conspicuous after Wahid became president (1999–2001) and the party gained access to massive state resources, patronage and privileges. Wahid appointed his own men (such as Abdul Djalil and Alwi Shihab) and family members (such as his brother, Hasyim Wahid) to prominent government positions and lucrative agencies to benefit himself, his families, friends and personal constituencies, NU-linked *pesantren* and *kiais*. In the end, he was impeached rather disgracefully due to his abuse of state office and implication in corruption for personal gain (Budiman 2001). Even after the devastating experiences in relation to his presidency and impeachment, Wahid kept abusing the party for

his personal interests, thereby further exacerbating internal conflict, faction-alism and a culture of clientelism in the party (Bush 2009: chap. 4; Mietzner 2009b: 260-270). The case of PKB illustrates that clientelistic parties are highly vulnerable to external intrusions; greater access to state patronage and resources helped to benefit the party elites and their friends in the short run, but ultimately deteriorated the party's already weak organizational cohesion.

As previously mentioned, Wahid's personalistic and impulsive decision-making and abuse of the party has resulted in frequent personal feuds and court battles as well as the alienation of a number of loyal leaders and their followers. Some party leaders left the party to join other parties such as the Indonesian Democracy Party-Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuan-gan, PDI-P) or PD. Others established their own. In 2006, for example, one of the prominent PKB politicians, Choirul Anam, took numerous leaders as well as followers and established a splinter party, Ulema National Awaken-ing Party (PKNU).

In 2008 Wahid's destructive personalistic rule has finally culminated in the dismissal of his nephew, Iskandar, as party chairman and a split of the party into two camps, one led by Wahid and his daughter, Yenny Wahid and the other by Iskandar Wahid sacked not only Iskandar but also all loyal cadres in leadership positions so as to wipe out his faction (*Kompas* 2008a). Iskandar challenged the validity of the decision, alleging that Wahid had ignored the party's constitution and procedures as well as views from grass-roots in issuing such ruling (*Kompas* 2008b). Moreover, he sacked Yenny as secretary-general, an act widely seen as retaliation against Wahid (*Kompas* 2008c). Due to an absence of mechanisms to internally resolve the conflict, Iskandar took the case to court to claim legitimacy of his leadership and party ownership. After a series of ugly legal battles and verbal assaults in the public and media, Iskandar won the legal battle and managed to have his PKB recognized by the Election Commission to participate in the 2009 legislative elections. At the time of writing, reconciliation of the two camps is no longer plausible. Yenny ultimately founded her own party to pursue a separate path from Iskandar and his PKB.

The nasty and prolonged internal fighting between the two camps demonstrated that such organizational fragility could significantly weaken competitiveness and ultimately bring about the decline of religious parties. As a result of the fighting and various attempts the Wahid camp mounted to undermine Muhaimin-PKB and its electoral campaigns, party membership declined, local branches were in disarray, and registration of the party, selec-tion of candidates and preparation to contest elections were delayed, thereby causing massive electoral losses especially in the party's strong hold, East Java province (*Kompas* 2008d; JP 2010a).

Both PKB members and observers have acknowledged that the prolonged personal battles were the main factor for the party's declining popularity (*NUonline* 2009). In 1999, PKB won the third largest popular vote (12.6 per cent) following PDI-P (33.7 per cent) and Golkar (22.4 per cent) to secure 51 seats in DPR and was the largest religious party alongside PPP, the oldest religious party established under the New Order regime. In the same year, Wahid was elected as the first president of the republic after the transition, supported by a coalition of religious parties in parliament, having heightened expectations that Islam and moderate Islamic forces would assume a greater role in Indonesia's new democracy (e.g., Barton 2001). However, PKB's popularity and influence have continued to fall since the dismissal of Wahid from presidential office in 2001; the popular vote plunged to 10.6 per cent in 2004 and to a mere half, 4.9 per cent, in 2009.

The internal battle between the two camps has easily trickled down to the local levels since the party is vertically organized along clientelistic relations and factionalism based on personal connection. The conflict at the national level split up and paralyzed the leadership and local branches, particularly in East Java, thereby bringing party operation to a virtual halt.[12] In 1999, PKB won 35 per cent of the popular vote and 24 seats in DPR and was the largest party in the same province. In 2004, PKB still garnered around 30 per cent of the popular vote to secure 27 seats although its overall popularity was already in decline (*Kompas* 2008d). In 2009, the party's popular vote drastically plunged to 12 per cent while secular rivals, PD and PDI-P, as well as PKS have gained more votes. PKB now holds only 12 DPR seats in the province.[13] Moreover, PKB has lost a number of important Pilkada, direct elections for regional executive office, such as gubernatorial and numerous other regent/ mayoral elections in East, Central and West Java. Now that Wahid passed away and that NU is no longer a reliable support base, it is widely expected among party elites as well as observers alike that further decline will be inevitable (JP 2010b).

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12   Interview with Masud Adnan, deputy head of the PKB East Java Province Executive Board, Surabaya, 27 July 2010.

13   The popular vote for DPR in the province has drastically fallen from 5,978,513 in 2004 to 1,926,556, almost a third, in 2009. The General Election Commission (KPU) (n.y.).

Well-institutionalized Religious Party and Organizational Cohesion: Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)

Political Survival of PKS

Comparison with the diverging trajectory of PKS presents an opportunity to further illuminate the effect of party organization on political competitiveness and survival. The case of PKS demonstrates that political survival of religious parties could be possible not only without charismatic and/or prominent personalities and clientelistic relations alone, key features of major Indonesian parties, but also with disciplined and ideological-based party organization. PKS has developed one of the most well-institutionalized parties in Indonesia although it also displays some clientelistic characteristics. Organizational cohesion gained from party institutionalization accounts for political competitiveness of PKS.

As already well known, Partai Keadilan (Justice Party, PK), predecessor of PKS, was founded by leaders of the *dakwah* (missionary) movement Tarbiyah as a political wing of the group at the onset of democratic transition in 1998. The party elites, inspired by Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, initially pursued their struggle to achieve an Islamic society based on Syariah through democratic means (e.g., Machmudi 2008). The PKS support base was primarily concentrated in urban, educated, middle-class constituencies around major cities such as Jakarta and the surrounding suburban areas such as Depok and Bekasi. Within the last ten years, however, PKS has steadily expanded its support base beyond their traditional strongholds. In 2009, for example, PKS gained more popular votes in almost all districts to win additional four legislative (DPR) seats in the two largest rural provinces, Central and East Java. Its electoral gain in East Java, traditionally a stronghold of PKB, is especially significant; PKS won six seats at DPR, seven at DPR-D (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah or Regional Assembly) province, and 80 at DPR-D districts/ cities in 2009, compared with two, three, and 36 in 2004 respectively (*PKS jawa timur online* 2010). In total, PKS gained close to 1,200 legislative positions at all levels in 2009, including 57 seats in DPR.[14]

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14   Interview with a PKS Central Board member, 28 July 2011.

Well-institutionalized Party, Merit-based Recruitment and Disciplined Party Cadres

PKS largely encompasses key characteristics of a well-institutionalized party: (1) merit-based recruitment and promotion of party members (rather than based on personal loyalty to particular individuals, personal connection or money); (2) priority on collective interests (rather than personalistic interests); (3) regular succession and regeneration of leadership; and (4) strong ideological foundation. Overall, the party elites run the party according to rules and procedures stipulated in the party by-laws and respected by members.

The first organizational characteristic that facilitates organizational coherence is meritocratic recruitment and promotion instead of personal loyalty and/or connections to prominent figures (Fealy 2001: 101). Cadres are organized into core study groups at the district level, the basic unit of member recruitment and participation, and graded by senior cadres through a mandatory weekly group meeting and other trainings so as to be qualified for particular office.[15] Moreover, the party is equipped with mechanisms such as the judicial committee (Syariah Council) and a disciplinary body (Badan Penegak Disiplin Organisasi) to discipline members if they breach the party rules and regulations. New members usually cannot be promoted quickly without participating in these regular activities even if they are rich, famous or well connected to a prominent figure/ family.[16]

Much to the chagrin of rank-and-file members, however, in recent years there is a growing tendency to stray from this principle, exemplified by the nomination of non-cadre candidates from outside the party structure for high-ranking government office at various levels. It is important to note, however, that non-cadres are not allowed to participate in party decision-making and management even if they secure party nomination to win state office. There is a clear division of labour between state and party offices, another key characteristic of a well-institutionalized party. For example, Arifinto, a member of DPR and a founding member of PKS, found watching pornography during a House plenary meeting, immediately resigned from the DPR position after the scandal erupted due to a disciplinary action taken by the party. He was allowed to remain in the party, however, now focused on party activities and community services in his constituency. This option

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15   The party inherited cell-based religious study groups (*usrah*) from the Tarbiyah movement. PKS evaluates three qualities: (1) commitment to service; (2) qualification; and (3) grassroots support for promotion and selection of cadres for higher office.

16   Interviews with various PKS elites and cadres.

of "rehabilitation" is not available to non-cadre members of state office.[17] The second organizational characteristic of PKS that facilitates party cohesion is the party's emphasis on collective decision-making, discouraging personalisic rule found in PKB. The most important structure to ensure this feature is Majelis Syura (Consultative Council), the highest-decision making body. The 99-member council consists of executive members, regional representatives and other associate organizations. It offers crucial two-way communication channels for gaining grassroots input while communicating elites' positions to the lower echelons of the party on a range of party affairs.

There is growing speculation and concern that a few powerful figures, most notably the chairman of the assembly and spiritual leader Hilmi Aminuddin and the secretary-general Anis Matta, exert extraordinary influence in the council and the party, particularly as the party becomes bigger and more powerful after the 2004 elections.[18] Nevertheless, the party's institutionalized structures restrain these men from overtly abusing the party to achieve personal ambitions and enrichment in the same way as Wahid did with PKB as discussed above. Moreover, council membership provides party cadres with a sense of representation, ownership, mandate and honour (*Tempo* 2010). At the regional levels, party executives are elected by cadres and report to a higher level of party leadership. Furthermore, unlike many other parties such as Megawati Sukarnoputri's PDI-P or Yudhoyono's PD, PKS has made a conscious effort to prevent any individuals from emerging as dominant figures to claim party ownership and potentially damage the party.[19]

PKS emphasis on collective interests and regular regeneration of the party leadership is reflected in the patterns of leadership succession at almost all levels, the third organizational characteristic of PKS. It is a party norm that incumbent leaders should give way to new leaders to encourage regeneration although there are some prominent – and alarming – exceptions at the highest level that defy such expectation including Aminuddin and Matta, two leaders mentioned above.[20] As a result of this systematic

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17 Confidential interview with PKS executive members and members of DPR, Jakarta, 28 and 31 July 2011.

18 Some high-ranking party cadres suggest that cadres need personal endorsement of these men to gain and retain influential positions in the party. Confidential interview, Jakarta, 28 July 2010.

19 Interviews and communications with national and regional leaders in Jakarta, Banten, Yogyakarta, West Java, Central Java, East Java and South Sulawesi in 2008–2011.

20 Interviews with party leaders at the district levels, Depok, Jakarta, Tangerang, Yogyakarta, and Semarang in 2008–2010.

circulation of power among party elites, factional or personal conflict related to leadership succession has been relatively minimal.

The fourth and final organizational feature of PKS facilitating internal cohesion is a strong ideological foundation that holds party cadres together. PKS was founded by a *dakwah* movement committed to religious indoctrination and activism as mentioned earlier. Party cadres undergo comprehensive ideological indoctrination programs after they joined the movement. The religious ideology that PKS elites have devised and propagated *internally* within the party emphasizes an individual and collective struggle to serve the community, thereby imbuing a sense of commitment to collective goods and allegiance to the party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera 2007).

Through the collective decision-making mechanisms such as the Majles Syura, regional leaders are able to convey grievances and views among the rank-and-file members to the highest echelon of leadership. Moreover, concepts of "religious mandate (*amanat*)" and "obligation (*kewajiban*)" are firmly permeated among party elites and cadres alike. Thus, party members commonly maintain that

> in PKS, you don't seek a position, but are assigned to it by the party according to your qualification and party needs. Party assignment is mandate and you cannot decline it whether you like it or not. All you could do is to do your best to serve the mandate. We are like a military.[21]

Party Cohesion and Political Survival

The organizational cohesion of PKS achieved through party institutionalization has important effects on political survival. First, PKS is equipped to run election campaigns effectively despite a relative shortage of financial and socio-cultural resources to mobilize electorates compared with other major parties. PKS has adopted a campaign strategy to build regular and intimate contacts with electorates not only during elections as other parties such as PKB do, but also during nonelection periods. To this end, party cadres are committed to a range of welfare and social services on a regular basis as part of their duties (Hamayotsu 2011). Such grassroots activism has helped to reinforce "caring" and "clean" images in the eyes of the Muslim community, factors that many observers pointed out have contributed to the political expansion of PKS (e.g., Aspinall 2005: 128-131).

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21   Interviews with Rama Pratama, former member of DPR, Jakarta, 13 July 2010; T. Farida Rachmayanti, DPR-D Kota Depok, 21 July 2010. Numerous other cadres echo the same view.

Moreover, the highly institutionalized party structures have made the party less susceptible to exogenous intrusions such as corruption and party hijacking by rich figures *even after* the party gained greater access to state office, privileges and patronage since 2004. When state patronage and resources become more readily available to the party, the party attempts to invest these resources to build party machineries further rather than advancing individual politicians' personal ambitions, financially, politically, or otherwise.[22]

Undoubtedly, more than a few PKS elites have been involved in and/or accused of high-profile corruption cases and scandals (for corruptive behaviours of PKS elites see Mietzner 2007, 2009a; Tomsa 2010). Since the party was committed to anti-corruption campaigns, corruption allegations and scandals are detrimental to the party's credentials as a clean religious party (e.g., Fealy 2009). As seen in the case of PKB above, however, corruption and excessive patronage politics could exacerbate internal divisions and factionalism if the party is not well-institutionalized. So far, PKS has been able to limit such devastating intrusions even after the party attained close to 1,200 state offices at all levels thanks to its well-institutionalized disciplined party structure.

Finally, the exceptionally disciplined and well-functioning party machineries have given PKS a comparative political edge in negotiating deals with other parties and governing elites including the President. For example, PKS not only quickly endorsed Yudhoyono for presidential candidate, but also offered to monitor and guard the polling stations (locally known as *saksi*) by deploying disciplined and skilled cadres across the archipelago.[23] In return, President Yudhoyono has allocated PKS four cabinet positions in the strategically important areas for PKS.[24]

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22   For PKS's use of state patronage through ministerial positions for political campaigns, see JP 2011. Cadres are obliged to contribute around 45 per cent of their salaries to the party once they are elected to state office.

23   A PKB-linked political analyst confirms that in 2009 PKS has deployed its cadres at all the polling stations in East Java, a province with the largest number of electoral districts. It is worth comparing with PKB which could not have done so in the same province, PKB's stronghold. Interview with Kacung Marijan, Surabaya, 27 July 2010.

24   PKS lost one ministerial position in the recent cabinet reshuffle in October 2011.

Conclusion

The article focuses on organizational qualities, and party institutionalization in particular, to account for the political survival of religious parties in the Muslim democracy of Indonesia. It argues that the varying – and unexpected – trajectories of the two most prominent religious parties, PKB and PKS, in the first democratic decade are explained by organizational cohesion or lack thereof.

The dramatic decline of moderate and pluralistic PKB associated with the most prominent mass religious organization, NU, is one of the most intriguing trends in Indonesia's electoral politics after 1998. As this article has established, the declining popularity and political competitiveness of PKB is the result of a permeation of personality-centered clientelistic and ascriptive relations. PKB has never made an effort to build a party organization insulated from the personalistic ambitions and interests of a few figures related to prominent NU families, especially the late Wahid, his daughter and nephew. As a result, greater access to state power, prestige and patronage, including the much-coveted presidency as well as a few cabinet positions, has led to further deterioration of the cohesion and survival of the party.

The much studied case of PKS offers counter-factual evidence to support the proposition emphasizing the effect of party institutionalization. The puritanical Islamist PKS has achieved significant expansion and survival, thereby defying an expectation that dogmatic and exclusivist religious ideology would prevent it from surviving in light of Indonesia's largely secular state as well as moderate Islamic tradition. It has done so by devising well-institutionalized party machines ready to serve the collective party interests. Moreover, party cohesion gained through such effort has allowed party elites to make drastic ideological adjustment to moderate their radical agendas without causing any devastating internal rifts so far.

This comparative analysis of religious parties in Indonesia offers important theoretical insights for gaining a better understanding of religious mobilization in a Muslim democracy. Firstly, if we analyse religious parties from an institutional perspective, we can better understand why growing popular piety is not automatically translated into votes for religious parties. It is important to note that the decline of many religious parties since the last democratic decade has more to do with their failure to build a well-institutionalized party, rather than peculiarities or dogmatic elements of religious ideology. A threat to PKS survival would most probably come from permeation of clientelistic relations or dominance of a few figures in the party's decision-making because such trends would threaten the collective identity and allegiance of party cadres that have brought about the rise

of PKS in the first place. Other religious parties have realized that building a more meritocratic organizational structure is crucial for their survival after 2014. PPP, for example, has been focused on the regeneration of an aging leadership and recruitment of competent young leaders by attempting to introduce more meritocratic recruitment and promotion. The party has also established a disciplinary body to limit corruptive behaviours and money politics.[25]

Secondly, moderation of religious parties such as PKS seems to have contributed to consolidation of democracy so far, limiting radical challenges to secular democratic norms and practices. It is in fact the rampant clientelistic politics and corruptive practices now dominating Indonesian politics that may pose a serious challenge to the survival of moderate religious parties. As demonstrated by the case of PKB, moderate religious parties could otherwise counter radical and intolerant religious elements and steer Indonesian society into a more pluralistic and liberal direction.

Finally, through the comparative analysis of religious parties that have experienced diverging trajectories, the article has questioned the proposition among some scholars that political Islam is declining in the electoral sphere and that religious ideology and parties will not attract Muslim electorates. Indeed, a narrow interpretation of Islam, the most notably state enforcement of *Syariah*, may no longer be an attractive option, motivating Islamist parties to adjust their ideological position. However, both religious as well as secular parties and politicians still exploit religious ideas, symbols, networks and resources in order to win the hearts and minds of increasingly pious Muslim electorates. As this article has shown, the question of whether religious parties can survive in this competitive environment of electoral and religious politics will depend on the ability of party elites to build a coherent party organization that can counter the spread of destructive personalistic rule.

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