

Panel Title: ‘Liberalism, Majoritarianism, and Religious ‘Conservatism in Contemporary Indonesia’

Convenors: Dr Chris Chaplin, Dr Michael Buehler, Daniel Peterson.

Brief Description of Panel: On 18 August 2000, a second amendment was made to Indonesia’s 1945 Constitution. What resulted was the incorporation of a raft of liberal democratic human rights guarantees, which included the right to freedom of expression, the right to freedom of religion, and the right to freedom of assembly. Ironically, these same liberal democratic freedoms facilitated a backlash of conservative Islamic sentiment, which resulted in, among other things, the growth of religious vigilantism, greater sectarianism, an increase in the number of blasphemy convictions, and an increase in the number of Islamising regulations issued at the local government level. For almost two decades now, Indonesian democracy has become well established, but it has simultaneously veered away from the liberal democratic ideals contained in its highest law toward the illiberal and majoritarian notion of ‘religious harmony’. Religious harmony, as Indonesia’s Constitutional Court articulated in 2010, is the notion that public order is maintained by prioritising the protection of the religious sensibilities and religious orthodoxy of Indonesia’s Sunni Muslim majority over the fundamental rights of the country’s religious minorities. While this shift has been endorsed by the state and judiciary, and led to a resurgence of what Jeremy Menchik refers to as ‘Godly Nationalism’ in the public sphere, religious expression in Indonesia remains a site of constant contestation. This panel thus seeks to address the contemporary socio-legal trajectories that underpin the politicisation of religion, asking how it manifests itself, and whether the country will change trajectory and begin to uphold the democratic ideals enshrined in Indonesia’s highest law.

This panel will be a **single session**. The following three individuals will be presenting.

Abstract 1

Michael Buehler (Senior Lecturer in Comparative Politics at SOAS, University of London)

The diffusion of Anti-Ahmadiyah regulations in Indonesia

Since 1998, over 40 local regulations have been adopted that ban the Ahmadiyah group in Indonesia. Most of the existing literature examines these regulations with regard to their *consequences*, such as their impact on minority groups in Indonesia or human rights more broadly. This paper, however, is interested in examining the *causes* of these regulations and the processes through which they have spread across the archipelago. Drawing on theories about the diffusion of public policies, the paper will examine how these laws have spread across space and time, and identify the driving forces behind it. The paper will end with a comparison of how morality laws have diffused in other democracies in the past.

Abstract 2

Abstract – Daniel Peterson (PhD candidate and Researcher – Australian Catholic University)

Legal Literacy in Contemporary Indonesia

With Indonesia’s Blasphemy Law – Law No. 1/PNPS/1965 – having recently survived its third Constitutional Court challenge, proponents of the liberal democratic human rights theoretically guaranteed by Indonesia’s 1945 Constitution have reason to despair. Two recent developments, however, offer them hope: PSI party chair Grace Natalie’s public rejection of

Islamising and Christianising local regulations, and a report issued by Indonesia's Institute for an Independent Judiciary (LeIP) advocating improved levels of legal literacy among Indonesia's law enforcement authorities and judiciary. While Grace called for a return to the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by Indonesia's 1945 Constitution, the LeIP report argues that diminished reliance on Indonesia's peak Islamic body, the *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI), coupled with a correct interpretation of the Blasphemy Law, should result in significantly fewer blasphemy indictments and convictions. This paper addresses the ramifications of Grace's comments, as well as the conflicting interpretations of the Blasphemy Law and the confusion surrounding MUI's role and official status.

Abstract 3

Chris Chaplin (Fellow, Department of Methodology, London School of Economics and Political Science)

Shifting Religious Authority within the Urban Mosque: A Spatial Analysis of Salafi Expansion in Makassar, Indonesia

The Salafi Islamic movement has increasingly become a part of the religious landscape of contemporary Indonesia. Aiming to propagate a 'literalist' interpretation of Islam, Salafi activists, who have strong ties to the Arabian Peninsula, are frequently accused of seeking to foreground Islamic universalism at the expense of local histories and cultures. Yet, their spread has less to do with 'denouncing' other Muslim traditions than it does an ability to adapt their activism to local considerations. This paper examines the tactics and socio-political arrangements that facilitate their spread through a spatial analysis of Salafi mosque networks within Makassar, South Sulawesi. By investigating the growing influence of the Salafi inspired Wahdah Islamiyah across 10 mosques in the city, this paper explores how mosque authority fragments and shifts over time. I illuminate how Wahdah Islamiyah build their presence within a mosque and what spatial, demographic and administrative factors play into such competition. Despite wide variance across field sites, I argue that there is a clear pattern pertaining to Wahdah Islamiyah's increased presence. They do not directly contest the authority of others using the mosque. Instead, Wahdah Islamiyah deploy local activists who incrementally increase their presence by providing classes to local children, lectures for the community, and, only later, by taking up positions on the mosque's administrative council. While these tactics are local in orientation, they build into a national strategy. Indeed, they provide very real experiences through which Wahdah Islamiyah learns which communities and mosques are most amenable to its religious message.