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Muslim Moderates and Democratic Breakdown in Indonesia

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Abstract: For much of the 2000s, scholars and activists lauded Indonesia's surprisingly successful transition to democracy. Recent years, however, have made imperfections visible to the point where the breakdown of Indonesian democracy is imaginable if not yet underway. This article investigates the conditions under which moderate Islamic organizations support non-democratic values and actors, and by doing so contribute to Indonesia's democratic decline. Drawing on original survey data and interviews, as well as case studies in which the preferences of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah leaders have become visible, this paper argues that these organizations' values are compatible with both democracy and authoritarianism. While NU and Muhammadiyah exemplify the civic associational ties and democratic culture that are necessary for making democracy work, civic pluralism is not their only value. NU and Muhammadiyah have a hierarchy of values that they promote and defend, and are willing to forgo civic pluralism in order to combat blasphemy against Islam, ensure Muslim control over overwhelmingly Muslim regions, and limit political expression concerning heterodox approaches to Islam or non-Muslim involvement in matters of *aqidah* (faith). NU and Muhammadiyah also operate within the country's political patronage system, and their material interests can lead them away from supporting democratic values.

Keywords: democracy, authoritarianism, Indonesia, Islam, moderates

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Bio: Jeremy Menchik is Assistant Professor in the Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies at Boston University and faculty affiliate in Political Science and Religious Studies. His first book, *Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: Tolerance without Liberalism* (Cambridge University Press, 2016) explains the meaning of tolerance to the world's largest Islamic organizations and was the winner of the 2017 International Studies Association award for the best book on religion and international relations. He has received numerous awards and fellowships for teaching and research, and his work has appeared in the academic journals *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *Comparative Politics*, *International Studies Review*, *Politics and Religion*, and *South East Asia Research* as well as in *The New York Times*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The Washington Post* and elsewhere.

I. Introduction

In the twenty years since Indonesia's democratic transition and consolidation, scholars have pointed to mass Islamic organizations as a crucial reason for the country's relative success. While other Muslim-majority democracies have backslid into authoritarianism—including Egypt, Turkey, Senegal, Pakistan, and Nigeria—Indonesia has remained a largely successful democracy, according to indicators from Polity as well as most scholars (Liddle and Mujani 2013; Künkler and Stepan 2013). In comparison to its region, too, Indonesia is a surprising success: Thailand and the Philippines have reverted to authoritarianism, while durable authoritarianism reigns in Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Burma (Slater 2010). Though facing major challenges with regard to corruption, rule of law, sectarianism, and economic inequality, Indonesia continues to hold successful elections with alternations of power, and state policies are largely crafted and implemented by broadly accountable elected representatives (Aspinall 2015).

Central to Indonesia's democratic transition and relative success have been the giants of Indonesian Islamic civil society: Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. These organizations run tens of thousands of schools; hundreds of universities, hospitals and health clinics; and women's wings, youth wings, and other civil society organizations that build strong associational ties (Bush 2009; Hicks 2012). Dedicated to promoting Islam and improving the social welfare of society, these civil ties are what many scholars point to as the reason why NU and Muhammadiyah have helped make Indonesian "democracy work" (Putnam, Leonadi and Nanetti 1993; Hefner 2000; Künkler and Stepan 2013; Lussier and Fish 2012; Lussier 2016).

Yet, in recent years imperfections in Indonesian democracy have become visible to the point where the breakdown of democracy is imaginable, if not yet underway (Warburton and Aspinall

2017). While scholars have devoted considerable attention to the role of Muslim moderates in supporting democracy, and the role of Islamic extremists and autocrats in undermining it, less attention has been paid to the role that Muslim moderates like NU and Muhammadiyah have themselves played in undermining democracy (Schäfer 2017). This gap deserves attention if scholars are to understand the role of Islam in democracy. Normatively, too, this gap merits attention in order to combat the backsliding of the country into authoritarianism. As a result, this article investigates the following questions: which of NU and Muhammadiyah's values support democracy, and which values support authoritarianism? Under what political conditions will these organizations support democrats, and under what conditions will they support autocrats and Islamists?

Drawing on original survey data and interviews, as well as case studies that reveal the preferences of NU and Muhammadiyah leaders, this paper argues that their values are compatible with both democracy and authoritarianism. This argument builds on Robert Hefner's canonical book, *Civil Islam* (2000), which presciently unearthed a pluralist movement among Islamic intellectuals. This movement celebrated mutual respect, individual autonomy, and volunteerism, thereby providing the social infrastructure for Indonesia's democratic culture.

Yet, while NU and Muhammadiyah exemplify the civic associational ties and democratic culture that are necessary for making democracy work, civic pluralism is not their only value. NU and Muhammadiyah have a hierarchy of values that they promote and defend, and they are willing to forgo civic pluralism in order to oppose blasphemy against Islam, ensure Muslim control over overwhelmingly Muslim regions, limit political expression concerning heterodox approaches to Islam or non-Muslim involvement in matters of *aqidah* (faith), and gain patronage. While NU and Muhammadiyah are interested in the maintenance of an open democratic political

system, they have other priorities, too, which means that under certain circumstances they will not defend democratic institutions or values. Such a hierarchy of values is not exceptional; it is the norm among political actors and a reoccurring component of democratic breakdown (Linz 1978, 4).

In that respect, NU and Muhammadiyah are “contingent democrats,” a term that Eva Bellin coined to describe how capital and labor’s enthusiasm for democracy varies with their dependence on the state and their position vis-à-vis the aristocracy (Bellin 2000). Where capital and labor are independent from the state and socially ambivalent about the ruling class, they will support democratization. Where capital and labor are dependent on the state and tied to the ruling class, they will oppose democratization. Likewise, when NU and Muhammadiyah see the material and ideological interests of the Muslim community as being served by democracy, they will support it. But when their material and ideological interests are better served by aligning with Islamists and autocrats, they will do so.

The remainder of the essay elaborates these points. Section II delves into the scholarship on Indonesia in order to pinpoint the place of Islamic civil society in the country’s democratic transition and consolidation. Section III makes the argument for NU and Muhammadiyah as “contingent democrats” who will support Islamists and autocrats under specified conditions. Section IV presents three case studies over the past ten years that have helped to reveal NU and Muhammadiyah’s diverse preferences, as well as original interviews and survey data from NU and Muhammadiyah leaders. The case studies demonstrate the contingency of NU and Muhammadiyah’s commitment to rule of law, minority rights, and government policies that reflect public preferences. Section V concludes by elucidating the implications of that contingency for democratic decline and breakdown in Indonesia.

II. *Civil Islam Revisited*

Civil Islam (Hefner 2000) has provided the foundation for discussions of Islam and democracy in contemporary Indonesia. Drawing on decades of field research, Hefner argued that Islamic civil society could provide the backbone for democracy to develop and thrive in the Muslim world. At a time when scholars worried that Indonesia would fall apart like Yugoslavia, and prominent scholars like Samuel Huntington (1996) were arguing that non-Protestant “civilizations” lacked the values necessary for democracy, Hefner argued that Islamic civil society could enable the country to democratize:

“For civil *structures* to become effective precedents for civil *ideals*, at least three additional conditions must be met. First, native intellectuals have to look into their own social experience and derive from it a model of political *culture* that affirms principles of autonomy, mutual respect, and volunteerism. Second, and equally important, influential actors and organizations must then work to generalize these democratic values and organizations beyond their original confines to a broader public sphere. Third and last, if these principles are to endure, they must be buttressed by an array of supporting institutions, including those of the state” (Hefner 2000, 35–36).

Hefner argued that these civic values helped provide the political culture necessary for democratic political institutions to thrive in Indonesia as well as the broader Muslim world. Hefner’s argument was grounded in normative arguments made by NU leader Abdurrahman Wahid and Muslim activist Nurcholish Madjid, as well as in the democratic sensibilities of Muhammadiyah leaders Syafi’i Anwar and Ahmad Syafi’i Maarif.

Hefner’s argument is sometimes presented as saying that Indonesian Muslims are *essentially* pluralist or that radical movements are absent Indonesia. This is a misreading of the book. Chapters five and six of *Civil Islam* focus on radical organizations like Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII; Indonesian Islamic Dakwah Council) and anti-pluralist actors, including Mohammad Natsir, Anwar Harjono, Ahmad Sumargono, and Lukman Harun.

Likewise, *Civil Islam* does not contend that NU and Muhammadiyah are coterminous with civil Islam; the preface and chapter three focus on anti-pluralist behavior in NU's past, such as its involvement in the mass killings of 1965-1966. Nevertheless, NU and Muhammadiyah are certainly key players in the normative Muslim politics Hefner cites as essential for Indonesian democracy's continued success. Empirically, they satisfy Hefner's first two conditions, and since the early 2000s they have taken up the mantle of providing Indonesia's *masyarakat madani* (civil society). Their writings, advocacy, organizing, and political networking have proven crucial to making Indonesian democracy work.¹

As a result, other scholars have expanded upon Hefner's theoretical framework. The democratic theorist Alfred Stepan (2000) has demonstrated that all religious traditions are "multi-vocal" and contain a diversity of beliefs and practices. Some belief and practices bolster democracy, and some do not. Stepan demonstrated empirically that hundreds of millions of Muslims living in democracies like India, Indonesia, Senegal, Albania, and Tunisia support democratic governance (Stepan and Robertson 2003). With Mirjam Künkler, he published an interview with the former leader of Muhammadiyah, Amien Rais, about the reform movement that overthrew Suharto and led to democratization in Indonesia, inviting Rais to make theologically grounded arguments for democracy in order to provide support to other Islamic movements working to democratize their own countries (Stepan and Künkler 2007).

Looking beyond Indonesia, Norris and Inglehart (2011) have further countered Huntington by demonstrating that support for democracy is just as high in the Muslim world as in Christian-majority countries. Muslims are not exceptional in their views of democracy, tolerance, or the place of religion in modern life (Fish 2011). More recently, Menchik (2016) has demonstrated that NU and Muhammadiyah's vision of tolerance is compatible with democracy, but not

necessarily the secular kind that some scholars take for granted. He has also suggested that India, Switzerland, Romania, Hungary, and Greece offer better templates to understand Islamic civil society's vision for a "soft separation" between mosque and state (Menchik 2018).

That said, there are still scholars who question Islam's compatibility with democracy on empirical and theoretical grounds (Fish 2002; Hamid 2016). Empirically, over the past fifteen years, a number of prominent Muslim-majority countries have lapsed into full authoritarianism, stalled or backslid. And some scholars continue to stress Islam's "exceptionalism," albeit on theoretically unconvincing grounds (Hamid 2016). Recent scholarship on NU and Muhammadiyah has also mapped their internal heterogeneity (Gustav Brown, this issue), raising the question of under what conditions more conservative clusters come to shape their policy.

This article suggests that the debate over whether or not Islam is compatible with democracy has occluded other, more empirically grounded and less polemically charged questions: which of NU and Muhammadiyah's values support plural democracy, and which support authoritarianism? Under what empirical conditions are Islamic organizations likely to support democratic institutions, and under what conditions will they support anti-democratic actors such as Islamists and authoritarian strongmen? Democratic theorists have long recognized that democracy is unlikely to be supported unconditionally by any social actor (Linz 1978, 12). The most pressing question, then, for empirical social scientists, is *when* and *why* moderate Islamic organizations like NU and Muhammadiyah will stop supporting democracy.

III. Argument: Indonesia's Contingent Democrats

This section argues that NU and Muhammadiyah's values are compatible with democracy as well as with a specific type of authoritarianism. While NU and Muhammadiyah exemplify the civic associational ties and democratic culture that Hefner argues are necessary for making democracy work, civic pluralism is not their only value. NU and Muhammadiyah have other values that they promote and defend, and they are willing to forgo civic pluralism in order to defend against the blasphemy of Islam and to protect Muslim leadership in overwhelmingly Muslim regions of the country.

More specifically, NU and Muhammadiyah's democratic values include opposition to a monolithic Islamic state, autonomy, communal tolerance, and volunteerism. These values enabled Indonesia's democratic transition and consolidation. Survey research suggests that Indonesian Muslims are neither unusually supportive of democracy nor exceptionally tolerant, compared to Muslims elsewhere (Menchik and Trost 2018). The country is exceptional, however, in that Indonesians—and hence Indonesian Muslims—are unusually well organized (van Bruinessen 2013). The leaders of those organizations are more tolerant than their members and their co-religionists abroad (Menchik and Trost 2018). In that respect, NU and Muhammadiyah are important contributors to the country's relative stability and continued resilience against more anti-democratic forces.

That said, not all leaders of NU and Muhammadiyah are equally committed to Hefner's principles of "autonomy, mutual respect, and volunteerism." Research on the conservative forces within NU and Muhammadiyah is underdeveloped, but three decades of behavior suggests that the democratic commitments of leaders including Ma'ruf Amin, Adian Husaini, Yunahar Ilyas, Yusril Ihza Mahendra, Hasyim Muzadi, Amien Rais, and Din Syamsuddin are weak at best (Assyaukanie 2009, 185-188; Burhani 2013, 124-125; Husaini 2016; ICG 2008). All have formal

or informal ties with conservative Muslim organizations or Islamists, such as Front Pembela Islam (FPI; Islamic Defenders Front), DDII, Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI; Indonesian Council of the Ulama), and Partai Bulan Bintang (PBB; Crescent Star Party). And all have acted in anti-democratic ways. For example, despite Rais's public commitments to democratic pluralism (Künkler and Stepan 2013), he also has a long history of disrespect toward Christians. In the 1990s, Rais lambasted the influence of Christianization in Indonesia and called for jihad against Christians in the country's outer islands (Sidel 2006, 183). In 2014, he campaigned for the strongman Prabowo Subianto on the grounds that Prabowo would combat an alleged Jewish-Christian conspiracy against Indonesia (Persatuan Islam 2014). And in 2016, Rais, alongside Amin and Syamsuddin, helped cripple the election campaign of a Christian of Chinese ethnicity by falsely claiming that the candidate had committed blasphemy against Islam.² At times, Rais has supported democratic values by making theologically grounded arguments for religious tolerance, egalitarianism, and modern political institutions instead of an Islamic Caliphate. At other times, however, he has undercut democratic values by engaging in demagoguery and by allying with Islamists and autocrats in order to win political power. This, too, is Islamic civil society.

To resolve this seeming paradox, it is important to recognize that NU and Muhammadiyah hold values other than the principles of "autonomy, mutual respect, and volunteerism." NU and Muhammadiyah's non-democratic values include a commitment to the defense of Islam, opposition to blasphemy, limitations on non-Muslim control over overwhelmingly Muslim regions, and limitations on political speech about substantive issues such as heterodox approaches to Islam or non-Muslims' demonstration about matters of *aqidah* (faith) (Menchik 2016, 138-146). NU and Muhammadiyah are opposed to having a non-Muslim political leader in

regions that are overwhelmingly Muslim (such as Banda Aceh, Jakarta) or as president. NU and Muhammadiyah are opposed to the building of churches in overwhelmingly Muslim areas, especially rural areas. They are vehemently opposed to the proselytizing of Muslims by non-Muslims. They are against non-Muslims teaching Islamic studies in schools whether public or private, and they are opposed to non-Muslims engaging in protests on issues that are seen as germane only to Muslims, such as matters of Islamic law and interfaith marriage. These are seen as issues of *aqidah*, and hence inappropriate for non-Muslims to interfere in. Likewise, it is seen as inappropriate for Muslims to intrude in the faith matters of Christians, such as by celebrating Christian holidays. As Syamsul Maarif of the NU branch in Bangil, East Java noted in an interview, “If we pray for humanity there is no problem. But if we pray for *akidah* then we have problems. The same is true for *tauhid* [oneness of God]” (interview with the author, Bangil, July 29, 2010).

The literature on patronage has tended to stand apart from the literature on civil Islam. Yet, another mechanism by which Islamic civil society has contributed to democratic decline is through interests, rather than values. NU and Muhammadiyah operate within the same political patronage system as other actors, and material concerns have long shaped their behavior. This was especially apparent for NU in the mid-1950s, when it broke ranks with the other Muslim parties in order to win more cabinet seats and opportunities for its students to fill the ranks of the Religious Affairs offices (Fealy 1998, 123-129). Today, NU’s strong backing for Amin, the architect of mass intolerance toward Ahmadi Muslims as well as a key player in the downfall of the Christian governor of Jakarta, has earned the organization significant patronage from Joko Widodo’s administration (Fealy 2018). NU has gained this patronage at a significant cost to

minority Christians, Ahmadis, and Shiites, who have fared poorly under Amin's rise to power. As in the 1950s, NU's material interests have led it away from supporting democratic values.

The fact that NU and Muhammadiyah hold non-democratic values and interests is not inherently problematic for Indonesian democracy. In any free society, portions of the public will inevitably hold views that run counter to democratic ideals. Yet, if institutionalized, these values may truncate the criteria laid out by Robert Dahl, Alfred Stepan, and Juan Linz for political institutions to be considered democratic: freedom to form and to join organizations; freedom of expression; the right to vote; eligibility for public office; the right of political leaders to compete for support and votes; alternative sources of information; free and fair elections; institutions for making government policies depend on voting and other expressions of preference; a democratic constitution that respects fundamental liberties and offers considerable protections for minority rights; and a democratically elected government that rules within the confines of the constitution and is bound by law and a complex set of vertical and horizontal institutions that help to ensure accountability (Dahl 1971, 1–3; Linz 1978, 5; Stepan 2000, 38–39). For example, NU and Muhammadiyah's desire to defend Islam against blasphemy has led them to back restrictions on free expression. Their overt support for truncating the rights of unrecognized groups, and their implicit opposition to the rights of non-Muslim political leaders to compete for support, likewise violate these criteria. In the following sections I will pay closest attention to other aspects of NU and Muhammadiyah's values that lead them to back anti-democratic actors and policies.

The alliance between NU, Muhammadiyah, and anti-democratic actors could lead to further democratic breakdown. If NU and Muhammadiyah compromise other democratic values, then we are likely to see a further democratic decline. If the state crosses red lines by putting into place policies that are against Islamic civil society's material and ideological interests, then we

are likely to see NU and Muhammadiyah not just criticize the state, which they should and often do, but further support autocrats and Islamists who will put into place increasingly more anti-democratic policies. In that respect, Indonesia's moderate Muslims are akin to white American evangelical Christian supporters of Donald Trump, who care so much about abortion and the Supreme Court that they will back a populist demagogue (Beckman 2016).

IV. Case Studies

The three case studies in this section, drawing on original interviews, survey data, and newspaper reports, provide empirical evidence to support the argument that NU and Muhammadiyah will align with anti-democratic actors under certain conditions. The first case study dates from the early 2000s, when Islamist vigilante groups began attacking a small, socially marginal Islamic sect known as Ahmadiyah. Some Ahmadiyah followers believe that their sect's founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, was a prophet, a belief that differs from the beliefs of many Sunni Muslims, including the leaders of NU and Muhammadiyah.³ Despite their opposition to the violence, NU and Muhammadiyah aligned with Islamists in calling for restrictions on minority rights to prohibit the Ahmadis from proselytizing or otherwise spreading their views. The second case study continues the focus on Ahmadiyah by showing how, at a constitutional court hearing in 2010, leaders of NU and Muhammadiyah again allied with Islamists in support of maintaining the country's law against *penodaan agama* (defamation of religion), further truncating freedom of expression. Finally, the third case study focuses on the contentious 2016 Jakarta gubernatorial race, which saw NU and Muhammadiyah choosing to oppose blasphemy against Islam over supporting the Christian governor, at the expense of rule of law and minority rights. And since 2016, NU has continued to back Amin in order to gain

patronage. In sum, each case study demonstrates the conditions under which Indonesian Muslim moderates will align with anti-democratic actors due to shared values or interests.

Case 1: Persecution of Ahmadiyah

Since the early 2000s, Islamist vigilante groups have been verbally and physically attacking members of a small, socially marginal Muslim sect called Ahmadiyah. Two Ahmadiyah mosques in Manis Lor, Kuningan (West Java), were attacked on December 23, 2002 (Alfitri 2008, 3 n. 15, 23), following the decision of the local government of Kuningan on November 3 to prohibit the activities of Ahmadiyah (Crouch 2010, 11). Attacks followed across the archipelago, including in East Lombok, Tasikmalaya, Sintang, Wajo, Ciaruteun, Cianjur, Ranowila, Sadasari, and Sebang. Public critiques of Ahmadiyah came to a head on July 29, 2005, when MUI, Indonesia's foremost state-sponsored Muslim body, issued a *fatwa* (edict) declaring the Ahmadiyah to be *sesat*, having deviated from core Islamic doctrine. The fatwa against Ahmadiyah was a success for Indonesia's small but vocal radical groups, notably the FPI and Amin Jamaluddin's Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengkajian Islam (LPPI; Institute for the Study and Research of Islam), and offered a boost to their campaign against apostasy. Violence followed the fatwa. Ahmadiyah mosques were burned down across Indonesia, and Ahmadiyah followers were driven from their homes by mobs.

The government made an effort to stop the violence while also stopping short of criticizing MUI. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono issued a series of ambiguous statements about the need for both Ahmadis and the militants to adhere to the Indonesian constitution, but did not state that Ahmadis have freedom of expression and the right to form organizations or that they otherwise merit protection. Likewise, Indonesian Attorney General Hendarman Supandji called

for the violence to stop, but meanwhile called for Ahmadis to stop all religious activities or face legal prosecution (Jakarta Post 2008).

When the attacks began, many scholars and activists expected NU and Muhammadiyah to step in and defend the Ahmadis, just as they would for Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, or Confucians. Instead, NU and Muhammadiyah supported the government's decision to use the blasphemy law to prohibit the Ahmadis from proselytizing or otherwise spreading their beliefs.

The elected chair of NU, Hasyim Muzadi, came out against the violence but condemned Ahmadiyah as deviant. Like President Yudhoyono, he said that both Ahmadiyah and the FPI were guilty of breaking the law (Nahdlatul Ulama 2008a). And at a plenary session of the NU executive board's *Syuriah* (Islamic law) council, NU issued a statement confirming Ahmadiyah's deviance from Islam, and called on the government to be firm with both Ahmadiyah and the perpetrators of violence (Nahdlatul Ulama 2008b). Nasaruddin Umar, a member of NU's executive board and one of Indonesia's most renowned proponents of pluralism, led the government's investigation of the beliefs of Ahmadiyah.

The chair of Muhammadiyah backed the government on slightly different grounds. Din Syamsuddin made a distinction between the Ahmadiyah Qadiani and the Ahmadiyah Lahore and said the former should return to proper Islamic belief or declare themselves to be a new religion. They did not have the right to form and join organizations and were not entitled to the same protection as other minorities. They could not be permitted to continue practicing their faith. Syamsuddin upheld the government's right to ban Ahmadiyah and encouraged the state to dissolve the Qadiani branch (Detiknews 2005).

In sum, NU and Muhammadiyah didn't want the Ahmadis imprisoned or killed, but, like the FPI, they supported forced reeducation of the Ahmadis into proper belief and severe limitations

on Ahmadi organizations. This demonstrates that NU and Muhammadiyah do not feel that Ahmadis merit the same protection as members of religions recognized by the Indonesian state and are willing to ally with the FPI in order to ensure that policing of heterodoxy is a state mandate.

The issue of Ahmadiyah broke onto the national scene again a few years later. In response to the violence in Kuningan in 2003, a group of liberal political activists began researching victims of religious violence and the laws that were being used to persecute religious minorities, and gathering material to petition the constitutional court to strike down those laws. The liberals' campaign gained steam, paradoxically, due to a violent attack on the Aliansi Kebangsaan Untuk Kebebasan Beragama dan Berkeyakinan (AKKBB; National Alliance for Freedom of Religion and Belief), a network of representatives from over 70 Indonesian organizations including Abshar Abdalla's Jaringan Islam Liberal (JIL; Liberal Islamic Network), the Wahid Institute, Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja Indonesia (PGI; the Indonesian Communion of Churches), Jemaah Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI; Ahmadiyah Indonesia Congregation), and others. On May 10, 2008, the AKKBB published a full-page advertisement in multiple Jakarta newspapers calling for a return to the values of the constitution and the Pancasila, including respect for Ahmadiyah. The Pancasila is the basis of Indonesian national ideology; its five principles are belief in God, humanitarianism, national unity, social justice, and democracy as expressed through representatives of the people. The signatories included prominent religious and political leaders. Then, on June 1, 2008, AKKBB held a rally in central Jakarta to mark the 63rd anniversary of the Pancasila and again call for the protection of religious minorities.

Instead of celebrating pluralism, however, the attendees were attacked with clubs and sticks by 400 members of hardline groups including the FPI, Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), Forum

Ukhuwah Islamiyah (FUI; the Islamic Community Forum), and Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI; Indonesian Mujahidin Council). Upwards of 70 of the AKKBB demonstrators were injured, with some requiring surgery (Crouch 2010, 13). The spokesperson for HTI claimed the group was neither directly nor indirectly involved in the attack on the AKKBB (Yusanto 2010). The International Crisis Group, like Crouch, suggested otherwise (ICG 2008).

Until that point, most of the violence toward Ahmadiyah was in Indonesia's geographic and political periphery. It came as no surprise that eight days after the violence in Jakarta, the Minister of Religion, the Attorney General, and the Minister of Home Affairs attempted to resolve the issue of Ahmadiyah with a *surat keputusan bersama* (SKB; joint ministerial decree). The SKB warned citizens not to support groups whose activities deviate from the teachings of an official religion; warned followers of Ahmadiyah not to promote deviant teachings; informed followers of Ahmadiyah who did not comply with the warning that they would be liable to penalties; and warned the public not to resort to vigilantism (Crouch 2010, 5).

Once again, NU and Muhammadiyah supported restrictions on the rights and liberties of Ahmadiyah. Muhammadiyah Chair Din Syamsuddin said that Ahmadiyah's views could not be tolerated because they pertained to *aqidah*. Similarly, NU's Rais Aam Habib Luthfi bin Ali bin Yahya said that Ahmadiyah followers should be invited to follow true Islam.

[Table 1 here]

In doing so, they reflected the views of an overwhelming majority of their leaders. **Table 1** presents survey data from a representative sample of NU and Muhammadiyah leaders at the branch (*cabang*) level across Indonesia. This survey data was collected in 2010 at the national

meetings of the organizations. This table demonstrates that most NU and Muhammadiyah leaders are not willing to allow Ahmadiyah members the same rights as Christian minorities on the issues of constructing new buildings, holding political office, and teaching in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools). In sum, while NU and Muhammadiyah oppose the Islamists' use of violence, they share a belief that deviance from Islam is a problem that the state should solve. Unlike blasphemy laws on the books in democracies such as Ireland and Greece, which are not enforced, NU and Muhammadiyah want the state's blasphemy laws enforced to combat religious heterodoxy. Their vision for pluralism and their commitment to democratic values do not extend to heterodox Muslims, and they are willing to ally with increasingly influential anti-democratic actors like MUI and Islamists in order to shape state policies on the issue of defamation of Islam and truncate the influence of what they see as a deviant movement (Hicks 2014; Iskandar 2016; Rethel 2017; Schäfer 2015).

Case 2: Blasphemy Trial

In 2009, the liberals' petition against the 1965 blasphemy law that was used to restrict Ahmadiyah reached the constitutional court. Muhammadiyah supported maintaining the blasphemy law to truncate the freedom of expression of some minorities: "Islam teaches mutual respect and freedom to practice, but not by mixing religion and not by insulting the religious beliefs of others" (Mahkamah Konstitusi Republik Indonesia 2009). Abdul Mu'ti, currently Muhammadiyah's Secretary General Umum, has written a book with the title, "*KrisMuha*," an abbreviation of "Christian Muhammadiyah," that describes the curriculum of Muhammadiyah schools in areas where the local population and the students at Muhammadiyah schools are overwhelmingly Christian or Buddhist. Teachers of any faith can provide instruction in secular

subjects to students of any religion, while the doctrines of each specific religion are taught by a member of that religion (Mu'ti and ul Haq 2009). In a 2009 interview, former Muhammadiyah chair Ahmad Syafi'i Maarif touted Mu'ti's research as an example of the group's tolerance, while also making it clear that there would never be a book titled "AhMuha" or "Ahmadiyah Muhammadiyah" (interview with the author, September 30, 2009).

Muhammadiyah's first testimony in the court case, by Dr. Saleh Partaonan Daulay, certified that the central board supported maintaining the blasphemy law, with a clear reference to its support for the ban on Ahmadiyah.

"Muhammadiyah believes that freedom of religion or religious freedom is not freedom without limits. ... Muhammadiyah's view is that desecration of religion is done where there are interpretations and religious practices deviating from the points of religious doctrine believed by all religious people involved, or at least by a majority of the people of the religion. For example, the entire Islamic Ummah believes that the Prophet Muhammad is the final prophet; therefore, if there is someone or some group of persons claiming to be prophets after the Prophet Muhammad then it is a form of desecration and sacrilege." (Mahkamah Konstitusi Republik Indonesia 2009)

Abdul Mu'ti testified to how Islam and Muhammadiyah have long recognized and celebrated religious diversity. He then read the "Guide to an Islamic Life for Members of Muhammadiyah," issued by the Central Executive Board of Muhammadiyah in Yogyakarta on February 5, 2001, and signed by the Chairman Prof. Dr. H. Ahmad Syafi'i Maarif and Secretary Dr. H. Khaidar Nasir, M.Sc., in order to demonstrate Muhammadiyah's tolerance.

NU took a similar position, with the chair Hasyim Muzadi saying, "We have to be able to differentiate between democracy and moral deviation" (Christanto 2010). Outside the courtroom, Muzadi has been a vocal critic of the vigilante group FPI and has refused its repeated requests to engage in dialogue; but inside the courtroom, FPI and NU were on the same side.

In court hearings, Syafi'i Maarif and the late Abdurrahman Wahid supported the petitioners, while the leaders of Muhammadiyah and NU, and thus the formal policy of the institutions, was

on the side of retaining the 1965 blasphemy law. Would their policy have changed if Wahid or one of the new generation of NU leaders like Masdar Mas'udi were leading NU instead of Hasyim Muzadi? I posed this question to the lawyer for NU and a close friend of Mas'udi, Arsul Sani.

Interviewer: What would change in NU's policy regarding the blasphemy law if Masdar became *Ketua Umum* [Chair] of PBNU?

Sani: Nothing.

Interviewer: But he has been more supportive of tolerance to the Ahmadiyah [than Hasyim Muzadi], right?

Sani: Yes, of course. But he would be surrounded by other people whose opinions need to be considered (interview by the author, March 17, 2010).

Even though Assyaukanie, Mas'udi, Maarif, Wahid, Mulia, and Abshar Abdalla supported revoking the blasphemy law, the bulk of opinion in NU and Muhammadiyah was against them. The majority of NU and Muhammadiyah leaders favored restrictions on freedom of expression in order to combat heterodox interpretations of Islam.

After administering the survey mentioned above, I frequently chatted informally with respondents. In conversation, Muhammadiyah leaders would often differentiate between Christians and Ahmadis in a way that illustrates how they tend to disavow intolerance while still marginalizing Ahmadiyah: "We respect Christians because they pray to God. But Ahmadiyah are incorrect in their belief and they damage religion." By emphasizing their tolerance, they place the onus on the Ahmadis for their own exclusion for breaking Islam (conceived of as an institution) and undermining the state's structure of support for Islam (interviews with the author, Yogyakarta, July 5–8, 2010).

By the end of the trial the outcome was certain: the justices, NU, Muhammadiyah, and the overwhelming majority of witnesses and experts came out in support of the status quo. In private conversation, Sani expressed frustration with the government for presenting a wide array of

hardline groups rather than engaging with the moderate NU and Muhammadiyah. But like Muzadi, he took the official position of PBNU in the courtroom. Rather than view the law as an inappropriate intervention of the state in private religious matters, or an abrogation of the state's duty to protect free expression, a consensus emerged that the state should prioritize the prevention of blasphemy.

This section has demonstrated that there are aspects of NU and Muhammadiyah's values that align with those of the Islamists. While not solely responsible for democratic breakdown in Indonesia, this overlap means that NU and Muhammadiyah are willing to partner with non-democratic actors in order to advance their values on the issues of freedom of expression, blasphemy, and minority rights. NU and Muhammadiyah do not feel that heterodox Muslims or non-Muslims should be permitted to engage in public speech about topics that are germane to orthodox Muslims' faith or belief. **Table 2** shows that an overwhelming majority of their leaders oppose Christians undertaking demonstrations in Monas (Jakarta) against the Shari'a bylaws in Aceh or in favor of interfaith marriage. They are less opposed to Christians demonstrating about secular issues like the price of gasoline. But given their views on the limits of freedom of expression, it should not come as a surprise that NU and Muhammadiyah aligned with Islamists to keep the state's blasphemy law in place. Indeed, when those issues become highly salient, we can expect them to ally with Islamists to the detriment of democratic institutions. The result is the further strengthening of conservative actors like MUI and of limitations on minorities.

[Table 2 here]

Case 3: Persecution of Ahok

On November 19, 2014, Basuki “Ahok” Tjahaja Purnama was inaugurated Jakarta governor for the period 2012–2017, following the October 2nd resignation of Joko Widodo in order to become President of Indonesia. Ahok had been elected Widodo’s vice governor in 2014. As governor, he was the first Chinese-Indonesian to hold that office in the country’s history, and only the second Christian governor, following Henk Ngantung, who held the office 1964–1965. He proved a popular governor, whose berating of corrupt bureaucrats earned him praise from the populace as well as consistently high levels of satisfaction in public opinion surveys, and he ran for re-election in 2017.

On September 30, 2016, Ahok was on the campaign trail in Pulau Seribu giving a speech to civil servants. He stated that those who cited the Quran verse Q4:144, known as Surat Al-Maidah 51, to support their view that Christians should not hold high office, were being deceitful. An edited video of his speech, which made it appear as though Ahok was criticizing those who followed the Quran, was posted online. The video went viral. The NU and MUI cleric Ma’ruf Amin issued a statement calling for the government to combat blasphemy and the defamation of Islam, and for law enforcement to arrest Ahok (Detiknews 2016). Islamist vigilante groups seized on the moment to rally against the Christian governor and in support of Ahok’s opponents in the April 19 election. One of Ahok’s opponents, Anies Baswedan, who once had a reputation as a moderate, saw the benefits of demagoguery and publicly allied with the FPI (Topsfield 2017). The FPI pressured the police, then the North Jakarta District Court, to charge Ahok with blasphemy against religion and called on the public to rally against the Christian governor.

The rallies were some of the largest in Indonesian history. The November 4, 2016, rally in Monas attracted an estimated 200,000 people and was led by the hardline FPI, supported by HTI as well as the conservative MUI. It drew participants from the Islamic recitation groups Majelis

Rosulullah and Majelis Dzikir Nurussalam (Mudhoffir 2016). The second rally, on December 2, 2016, was attended by upwards of 750,000 people. Organized by a coalition of hardline groups called the National Movement to Safeguard the Indonesian Ulema Council's Fatwa, the rally was a show of force by Islamists. While not all of the attendees wanted the state to be governed by Islamic law, or to restrict minority rights, they clearly wanted Ahok punished for blasphemy against Islam (Fealy 2016).

Not surprisingly, the election results were overwhelmingly in favor of Baswedan, who won by polarizing Jakarta along ethnic and religious lines. Non-Muslims overwhelmingly voted for Ahok, while 65–70% of Muslims voted for Baswedan (Warburton and Gammon 2017). Ahok was brought up and convicted on blasphemy charges despite the recognized fact that the video had been edited in a misleading way. Rather than following the rule of law, the judges bowed to public pressure from MUI, Islamists, and demonstrators.

As in the other two cases, NU and Muhammadiyah prioritized defense of Islam, alongside Muslim leadership in Jakarta, over adherence to rule of law or minority rights. An overwhelming majority of NU and Muhammadiyah leaders do not believe that a Christian should be allowed to be the mayor in a majority Muslim area like Banda Aceh or to be the president of Indonesia. 48% of leaders oppose a Christian being allowed to be the governor of Jakarta. **Table 3** demonstrates that they support Christians holding elected office, but only in areas that are predominantly Christian like Manado, or in an unspecified office and region. Other surveys of the elites and mass membership of NU and Muhammadiyah (Bush 2014), as well as surveys of broader Muslim public opinion (Mujani 2003), suggest that the leaders of these organizations are more tolerant than either the membership or the Muslim public at large. Yet even they do not

support a Christian becoming governor of Jakarta, which shows that Ahok always faced an uphill battle.

[Table 3 here]

The leader of NU, Said Aqil, invited Ahok to some events but also criticized him for his comments about the Quran and his critiques of Amin, the NU and MUI cleric who accused Ahok of blasphemy. NU did not mobilize in favor of Ahok, and it is not clear that it could have. Most NU leaders dislike Islamists but not enough to rally support for a Christian governor. Muhammadiyah was similar: Chair Haedar Nashir condemned the anti-Ahok rallies and urged Muhammadiyah members not to join them. But Amien Rais was very vocal in condemning the allegedly blasphemous act committed by Ahok and was featured prominently as a speaker in the rallies. Din Syamsuddin condemned Ahok's action and said he would lead a "resistance" movement should Ahok not be brought to justice.

NU's behavior since the Ahok case has further affirmed the strength of the organization's non-democratic values. Amin is a prominent NU cleric, and it was always unlikely that NU would publicly break with Amin in favor of Ahok. Since 2017, moreover, President Widodo has actively cultivated Amin and channeled state resources to NU in order to guarantee the organization's support in the April 2019 presidential election (Fealy 2018). Amin's ability to deliver patronage to NU has proven more important to the organization's leadership than supporting mutual respect. Patronage politics are not new to NU; scholars in the 1950s and 1960s frequently explained NU's political behavior on the basis of crass opportunism (Lev 1966, 125,

272, 280-281; Samson 1968, 1003). Today, both material and ideological interests appear to be driving NU toward support for Amin, and away from supporting democracy.

This most recent case again demonstrates that many leaders of NU and Muhammadiyah are contingent democrats who hold non-democratic values in addition to democratic ones. From the standpoint of empirical democratic theory, such a hierarchy of values is unsurprising, albeit worrisome given the implications for democratic breakdown.

V. How Indonesian Democracy Dies

While the literature on civil Islam demonstrates that NU and Muhammadiyah supported Indonesia's democratic transition and consolidation, this article has demonstrated that they are also willing to ally with anti-democratic Islamists and autocrats on certain issues. Specifically, they will ally with anti-democratic actors in order to combat blasphemy against Islam, non-Muslim speech on matters pertaining to Islamic faith, and non-Muslim political control over majority-Muslim regions of Indonesia. Other "red-line" issues include the building of churches in overwhelmingly Muslim areas, non-Muslims teaching Islamic studies in schools whether public or private, and proselytizing of Muslims by non-Muslims.

This finding has three important implications. First, this article has demonstrated that while NU and Muhammadiyah are opposed to the creation of an Islamic state, many of their leaders and members will support politicians like the demagogue Anies Baswedan and the military strongman Prabowo Subianto when the alternative means sanctioning policies to which they are viscerally opposed. They will also support conservatives from within their own ranks, such as Amin, when their material interests are served. The result has been a strengthening of anti-democratic actors, and a weakening of the quality of Indonesian democracy: court decisions are

often swayed by public opinion rather than the rule of law, minority rights are too frequently dependent on majority support rather than citizenship, and unelected actors like MUI have become more powerful than elected officials (Crouch 2016). At these moments, Indonesia resembles authoritarian Pakistan or Malaysia rather than a consolidated democracy.

Second, this article provides an alternative narrative to the most common interpretation of the Ahok case. The common view is that the defeat and imprisonment of Ahok boded ill for Indonesian democracy. Pundits argue that it is an omen of increased minority oppression, the rising power of Islamists ahead of the 2019 presidential election, and a judiciary swayed by the emotions of the mob rather than the letter of the law (Kurniawan 2017).

This article suggests that such a view is overly positive in its assessment of Indonesian democracy prior to the Ahok case, overstating the religious and political freedom of Christians and other minorities before Ahok. There are implicit and explicit red lines in Indonesia that minorities know not to cross: publicly criticizing Islam, interfaith proselytizing, and supporting Christian leaders in Muslim-majority areas. These are areas where society and the state are structurally oppressive toward minorities. In that respect, Indonesia is a lot like the United States, where African Americans make up 13% of the overall population but 40% of the incarcerated population. African-American males are six times more likely to be incarcerated than white males. Racial minorities are more likely than white Americans to be arrested; once arrested, they are more likely to be convicted; once convicted, they are more likely to face stiff sentences (NAACP 2017). In other words, the US criminal justice system is structurally oppressive toward racial minorities. It is a feature of the American system in the same way that the Indonesian state is oppressive of religious minorities.

The third implication is less theoretical and more akin to a normative proposition. Although

this article provides a warning about the limits of NU and Muhammadiyah's commitment to democracy, their values could be articulated with greater emphasis on social welfare, education, anti-corruption, national sovereignty, and pluralism, to name a few. If these issues were more central to public deliberation, then we might see less Islamist mobilization and a return to the era when civil Islam set the terms for debate in Indonesia (van Bruinessen 2013). Linz notes that extremist appeals can be marginalized if leaders committed to democracy actively oppose anti-democratic actors (Linz 1978, 12). A coalition of moderates like Joko Widodo, former president Susilo Bambang Yudhono, NU leaders like Masdar Farid Mas'udi and Ahmad Mustofa "Gus Mus" Bisri, and Muhammadiyah leaders like Abdul Mu'ti and Haedar Nashir, working alongside minority groups and mainstream political parties, could truncate the appeal of autocrats and advance democratic reforms.

How might such a coalition emerge? It is difficult to imagine democratic deepening at a time of rampant patrimonialism, and when demagogues like Subianto, Baswedan, and Amin dominate politics. Yet here again, Bellin's work is instructive (Bellin 2000, 205). As political and economic conditions change, moderate Muslims may shift their alliances. The biggest menace to moderate Muslims is not blasphemy; it is the country's astonishing levels of corruption and the weak social welfare institutions that hamper social and economic development. Politicians that pledge to fight corruption, improve public infrastructure, and develop schools and healthcare are likely to find support from moderate Muslims. NU and Muhammadiyah activists can themselves increase the ability of their organizations to back democratic reforms by strengthening policies mandating that members who run for political office resign their institutional position; greater distance from party politics will make the organizations less dependent on patronage and its polluting effects. After all, their contingency presents the possibility for democratic development,

as well as democratic breakdown.

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Tables

TABLE 1: NU and Muhammadiyah Elites' Opposition to Ahmadiyah

Survey Question	Christians	Ahmadiyah
New Christian churches/Ahmadiyah buildings should be prohibited in Jakarta	46% (967)	74% (973)
Christians/Ahmadis should be prohibited from being mayor [governor] in Jakarta	48% (970)	67% (971)
Christians/Ahmadis should be prohibited from teaching math at <i>pesantren</i>	31% (986)	48% (981)

Note: Differences between groups are significant at $p < 0.01$ using a two-sample test of proportions. Percentage refers to respondents that agree or strongly agree. Sample size is in parentheses.

TABLE 2: NU and Muhammadiyah Elites' Opposition to Non-Muslim Speech about Islam

Survey Question	Agree or Strongly Agree
Christians should be prohibited from ...	
... demonstrating in Monas (Jakarta) against the Shari'a bylaws in Aceh.	68% (977)
... demonstrating in Monas in favor of interfaith marriage.	60% (978)
... demonstrating in Monas.	22% (974)
... demonstrating in Monas about the price of gasoline.	13% (976)

Note: Differences between issues are significant at $p < 0.01$ using a two-sample test of proportions. Sample size is in parentheses.

TABLE 3: NU and Muhammadiyah Elites' Opposition to Christian Elected Officials

Survey Question	Agree or Strongly Agree
Christians should be prohibited from ...	
... becoming the mayor in Banda Aceh.	77% (971)
... becoming the President in Indonesia.	68% (971)
... becoming the mayor [governor] in Jakarta.	48% (970)
... becoming the mayor in Manado, North Sulawesi.	17% (972)
... holding government office.	11% (974)

Note: Differences between regions are significant at $p < 0.01$ using a two-sample test of proportions
Sample size is in parentheses.

¹ The prominent pluralist intellectuals from NU and Muhammadiyah is are too numerous to list exhaustively here, but among the most influential since democratization have been Ulil Abshar Abdalla, Tutty Alawiyah, Luthfi Assyaukanie, Azyumardi Azra, Achmad Mustofa Bisri, Arief Budiman, Sandra Hamid, Syafi'i Maarif, Sahal Mahfudz, Masdar Mas'udi, Husein Muhammad, Abdul Mu'ti, Siti Musdah Mulia, Haedar Nasir, Lies Marcoes Natsir, Quraish Shihab, Said Aqil Siradj, Maria Ulfah, Nasaruddin Umar, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Habib Luthfi Yahya.

² Ahok's conviction was based on comments he made on the campaign trail on September 27, 2016, when he said that those who cited a quranic verse to support their view that Christians should not hold high office were being duplicitous. He warned his audience not to believe those who invoked verse 51 of the Surah Al-Maidah to deceive people into not voting for him. An edited video of his speech was posted online and made to appear as though Ahok was criticizing those who follow the Quran. The video went viral. Islamist vigilante groups seized on the moment to rally against the Governor and in support of Ahok's opponents in the April 19 election. They held the largest rally in Indonesian history in "defense of Islam". Their movement propelled Ahok's opponent, Anies Baswedan, into the governor's mansion. And they propelled Ahok into prison.

³ The two major sects of Ahmadiyah, Qadiani and Lahore, differ on the question of the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad. This paper focuses exclusively on the Qadiani since they have been the subject of controversy in Indonesia. The term "Ahmadiyah" thus refers to the Qadiani.