Indonesia has been faced with challenging problems of religious tolerance, minority communities, and freedom despite a relatively successful consolidation of democracy. Will an emerging Muslim-majority democracy such as Indonesia be capable of accommodating various faith communities, both majority and minority alike, to build a tolerant society? Are individual and communal rights of religious minorities provided and protected equally by the state and civil society, as the liberal democratic model prescribes? In what manner are different religious views, values, and practices accommodated in public policy-making?

*Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: Tolerance without Liberalism* offers fresh perspectives and thought-provoking arguments to address those questions pertinent to not only contemporary Indonesia, but also other multi-religious democracies. He does so through creative application of multiple methods, comparative political theories, and original data that he gathered through fieldwork, surveys, interviews, participatory observations, and archival research. Menchik makes several methodological, theoretical, and empirical contributions to the field of politics and religion. Most striking — and somewhat controversial — are the four theoretical claims that he puts forth regarding the place of religion in the formation of modern democracy, state, and nation that challenge the conventional wisdom in the literature.

First, Menchik’s historical analysis of Indonesia’s three major Islamic organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and Persis suggests that religion plays a more prominent role than conventionally expected in the formation of the state, nationalism, and national identity. In Chapter 4, he introduces the concept of “Godly Nationalism” to demonstrate the process and argues that Islamic organizations and actors have strived and managed to imbue religious identity, values, and characters in the building of Indonesian nationalism based on the idea of Pancasila. Godly Nationalism is not Islamic as envisioned by Islamists, but assertively religious and different from the alternative models of secular
nationalism as envisaged by liberal modernists. Godly Nationalism is the result of compromises and alliances forged among various major religious communities, both Muslim and non-Muslim, and is produced by state and societal exclusion of small religious minorities such as Shia and Ahmadiyah, religious communities that have endured various forms of persecution and discrimination to this day.

Second, religious tolerance, defined as “willingness to put up with those things one rejects or opposes” (19), varies across major Muslim organizations. According to his theory, it is the “path dependency” that accounts for the varying attitudes and levels of tolerance among those Muslim organizations toward other religious communities, especially Christians (Chapter 3). Based on an array of survey, ethnographic, and archival data, he concludes that there are enduring patterns in terms of tolerance over time and across region. The identity politics, social cleavages, and perception of other religions, established in the founding moment of respective organizations during the Dutch colonial rule, have shaped the patterns of attitudes.

Third, the enduring patterns of tolerance do not mean that Muslim relations with other religious communities are absolute and static. As discussed in Chapter 5, the attitudes of Muslim communities toward other religions have shifted over time according to the historical contexts and political conditions. Menchik argues that the shifts of tolerance in competing communities are attributed to the Muslim leadership and their coalitions with other religious and ideological groups to gain access to state power under an increasingly authoritarian political regime. The chapter sheds light on the malleability of religion and tolerance due to fierce political competitions among various groups and the importance of their access to the powerful and resourceful state for their organizational survival. Here Menchik challenges the secularist visions of state-religion relations to emphasize that the two — state and religion — are mutually constituting and evolving together.

Fourth, and finally, Menchik advances the concept of “communal tolerance” in Chapter 6 to argue that the secular liberal model of democracy is not entirely helpful to understand the type and vision of democracy that Muslim elites have devised on their own terms to promote their fundamental religious values, identities, and communal order. Communal tolerance gives priority to group rights rather than individual rights and is functionally similar to other models of democracy such as consociationalism that other advanced European democracies have designed. Indonesian democracy based on the principle of communal tolerance may not be sound from
the perspective of the secular Western liberal model that privileges individual rights and freedom, but according to Menchik, it works well to accommodate competing religious identities and values.

Menchik’s theses and findings raise several broader questions that may merit further investigation. First, his empirical findings of the collective attitudes of three Muslim organizations drawn from survey data — and path dependency theory — seem to tell us relatively little about the patterns of their behaviors. It is still uncertain when and how the specific attitudes toward other religions are turned into actions at a particular time and place but not others. Moreover, these findings tell us very little about significant variation within the respective organizations across region, especially among NU, the largest movement that Menchik has found more tolerant than the other two. As widely acknowledged by other studies and data, the largest number of more recent anti-minority movements and intolerant actions typically took place in the districts dominated by NU pesantren (religious boarding schools) in West Java. This was not because those NU leaders having endorsed violence were the ethnic Sundanese or close to Persis, the group Menchik has found least tolerant and dominant in West Java. Furthermore, the youth wing of NU, Gerakan Pemuda (GP) Ansor, fought aggressively to protect those targeted minority communities including Ahmadiyah and Christian communities that other intolerant senior NU ulama had little interest in accommodating at the national and local levels. The internal conflict within NU over the accommodation of particular religious minorities including Ahmadiyah into the national community, and their new inclusive vision of Islam Nusantara (Islam of the archipelago), appears to have had considerable bearing not only on the degree of religious tolerance, but also the manner in which religious conflict is settled across districts. This is against the backdrop of expansion of radical Islamism and Wahhabism in the archipelago, the trend both NU and Muhammadiyah have seen as a major threat to their dominance.

Next, in order to answer the question of deteriorating religious tolerance in some districts and changing attitudes and behaviors within those Muslim organizations, it may be beneficial to consider other institutional changes during the regime change. For example, how have the newly introduced democratic institutions such as direct election of the heads of local government and decentralization shaped the incentives and attitudes of religious authorities and organizations and the ways in which anti- (or pro-) minority coalitions are forged among political elites, religious
authorities, both progressive and radical, and other secular groups in civil and political societies?

In the end, we are left wondering whether the democratic model based on the tripartite pillars of godly nationalism, religious state, and communal tolerance might do a convenient service to intolerant state and societal actors justifying — rather than effectively regulating — discriminatory attitudes and violent behaviors toward other vulnerable religious communities in the name of communal order and rights as sanctioned by the majority religion. If the majority Muslim communities could be legitimate to insist that those minorities do not deserve the equal rights and privileges granted to mainstream and “orthodox” religious communities sanctioned by state and unelected religious officials because of their religious membership, protection of essential democratic rights — either communal or individual — may be primarily dependent upon the interests and worldviews of religious elites who have attained privileged access to the powerful state in the context of highly competitive religious market and patronage-driven electoral politics. How a modern state should relate to religion to make a democracy work for all the communities regardless of their membership in Indonesia and beyond still remains to be debated. *Islam and Democracy in Indonesia* certainly is an important contribution to the debate.


doi:10.1017/S17550483160000845

John Anderson
*University of St. Andrews*

On October 2, 2016, Hungary held a referendum on whether to accept European Union migration quotas and, in the context of a highly inflammatory anti-migrant campaign, the population voted overwhelmingly against accepting such quotas. During the course of the debate, Roman Catholic Bishop Béla Balás was asked how he would vote and responded