Editorial

The form of governance that a Muslim majority country should take, given the socio-historical and geographical conditions prevalent in our time, is a question which has attracted the interest of Muslim thinkers. In Southeast Asia, in particular, two modalities of government have been hotly debated: the secular and the Islamic.

Conceptually, secularism is a heterogeneous ideology with a wide array of forms and divisions. Some are more religion-friendly than others. Berman, Bhargava and Laliberté (2013, pp. 19-20) identify three forms of secular states in the Muslim majority countries: *assertive*, *passive*, and *majoritarian*. "Assertive secular state" (such as Kemalist Turkey) is opposed to Islam in the public sphere. It stands as the sole agent of social change and confines religion to the private domain. "Passive secular state" (such as Egypt and Iraq) allows religion and religious symbol for the public visibility. In such states, Islam is recognized as the state religion but its religious customary law is not recognized as the source of legislation, largely due to the pluralistic makeup of the population. Finally, in "majoritarian secular states" Islam plays a significant role in national identity but only for a larger or smaller majority (such as Sudan before 2010 and Nigeria).

In sharp contrast to secular projects, Islamic state is projected to be based on the Islamic worldview in its entirety. Advocates of Islamic state call for the (re)establishment of *khilāfah* (Caliphate). In the early twentieth century, there was a serious political campaign, primarily in India, known as *khilāfah* movement. Sayyid Abūl A'lā Mawdūdī (Maudoodi, 2005), among others, made a serious but unsuccessful attempt to reconceptualise modern democracy under the *Khilāfah* framework. An advocate of *khilāfah*-based democratic system of governance, Mawdūdī called for the Islamisation of state through the Islamisation of society, hoping that once the people are fully aware of the Islamic values, they would be drawn to embrace *khilāfah* system of governance. Such attempt, however, was not well planned or

executed and thus not well received. The call for the reestablishment of *khilāfah* system is now being pursued vigorously by Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr al-Islāmī (Islamic Liberation Party). Founded in 1953 by Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī, an Islamic scholar of Palestinian origin, the organisation is an international pan-Islamic political movement with branches in the Middle East, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and many Western countries (Taji-Farouki, 1996; Karagiannis, 2010). In a show of public support, its Indonesian wing (known as Hiszbut Tahrir Indonesia) recently organized an International conference on *khilāfah*, featuring more than 130,000 speakers and participants from around the world, including Australia, Lebanon, Europe, Sudan, Egypt, and Pakistan (Hussain, 2013).

The attempt to bridge the gap between "secular state" and "Islamic state" has not been so successful. Critical of both "assertive secular state" and "Islamic state", there arose an intellectual movement known as "liberal Muslims" or "progressive Muslim reformists", aiming to reconcile and build alliances between religion and secularism (Duderija, 2013; An-Naʿim, 2008). Navigating religion through a secular trajectory, the movement recognizes Islam as a frame of reference but within the parameters of secularism. Its modality is eclectic, often referred to as "quasi-secular democracy" (Lily, 2011), "religious secularity" (Ghobadzadeh, 2013), and most ambiguously "eclectic *wasatiyyah*" (Lily, 2013). Central to the Islamic worldview, *wasaṭiyyah* as used in the Qurʾān, refers to a middle path between the opposing extremes which Islam has discredited. It is worth noting that Islam in its entirety is named a religion of *wasaṭiyyah* and the Muslims are called *ummatan wasaṭan* (a justly balanced ummah/community) in the Qurʾān (2:143). When introduced in a secular-religious discourse or state-religion relations, however, *wasiṭiyyah* is now taken to be a middle path between "assertive secularism" and "*Sharīʿah*-based Islamic state", assuming that both are authoritarian and extremist (Lily, 2013). In a final analysis, one could hardly find any difference between "passive secularism" and "religious secularism" except in embellishing secular premises and ideologies with Islamic terms, such as *wasaṭiyyah* (moderation), *shūrā* (consultation), *ʿadl* (justice), and *maṣlahah* (common good). A religion, such as Islam, that vies for public space and is practiced at all levels of life will inevitably find itself at odds with such versions of secularism as well.

With the failure of Ataturk's model of assertive secularism in Turkey, the contestation is no longer between "assertive secular state" and "Islamic state", but between the protagonists of "passive secular state" or "quasi-secular democratic state" and "Islamic state". Both are well represented in Indonesia, the most populous Muslim country in the world. One recent event that shows how both are vying for public space is Miss World and Miss World Muslimah both of which took place almost concurrently in Indonesia. Organized by the World Muslimah Foundation, Miss Mulismah was held in Jakarta, Indonesia, on September 18, 2013, just before the mainstream Miss World final which was held in Bali, Indonesia, on September 28, 2013. Miss Mulismah contestants were required to observe the Islamic dress code. They were judged on their religious knowledge, how well they could recite the Qur'an and on their views on Islam and the modern world. The event was considered to be more relevant to the Islamic religious identity than secular beauty pageants (Bode, 2013). Though charged with an equal patriarchal objectification of women's body, and for engaging the West in an equally oppressive discourse, Miss World Muslimah is seen, at best, as a necessary measure to fight fire with fire and rectify incessant contempt or outright hostility towards Islamic *ḥijāb*, and, at worst a lesser of two evils and a non-violent answer to the Miss World pageant.

Given the fact that religion and religious demands have been increasingly voiced out through many democratic institutions, even in many Western countries, religion has become an issue within the secular institutions. Whatsoever form of government the future of Muslim majority countries may take, it is obvious that Islam will continue to play a vital role as a determinant of policy-making or as a force to counterbalance or counteract the secular forces.

This issue contains four articles on religion and politics and political discourse in Muslim majority or minority countries. In the first article Khairil Izamin Ahmad frames some strands of debate over secularization in Malaysian politics within the theoretical framework of post-modern discourse. The author admits that Malaysia needs to reinvigorate its democratic practices. To that end, he suggests inculcating a novel set of civic virtues and a positive democratic ethos instead of engaging in philosophical claims that stifle or foreclose the terms of engagements from the outset. The

discussion shows that the recent demands from certain political quarters in Malaysia for a greater secularization of Malaysia's plural society is rather impractical because religion is now an integral part of public space.

The second article by Azimah Shurfa Mohammed Shukry, provides a critical analysis of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's resistance speech against the "war on terror" launched by the Bush administration after 9/11 attack. Language use or discourse is instrumental in constructing an ideology and more so when it is used in a position of power. With his position as the Malaysian Prime Minister and his reputation as an outspoken leader of the Muslim world, Mahathir Mohamad aimed to construct his ideology to bring a positive change as he was deconstructing that of his opponent. Drawing on selected Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) principles, the author investigates the linguistic nuances of Mahathir Mohamad's discourse.

In the third article, Arshad Islam explores Shibli Nu'mani's critique of the early Muslim League in India. Shibli Nu'mani was a prominent Muslim intellectual in the Indian subcontinent and one of the early Muslim advocates of democracy in the modern sense of the term. Considering democracy to be an integral part of the Islamic heritage, particularly as manifested in political structures of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, he urged the Indian Muslim community to engage in the democratic process of Indian politics in order to prosper and to regain political strength sapped by the British suppression of the 1857 war of liberation. Shibli Nu'mani's critique, as the author argues, helped in making the League a more organized Muslim political party.

In the fourth article, Aliyu Mukhtar Katsina identifies four types of party systems Nigeria has experienced since its independence in 1960. He demonstrated how party system has undergone system transformation under various regimes. Over the five decades, political parties have appeared and vanished and the constitutions were drafted, debated and approved but not nurtured partly due to intermittent autocratic military regimes. Nigeria is a Muslim majority country and its status as a secular state or a multi-religious state has been a subject of intense debate. Ethnicity, culture along with religion, play important roles in its political and democratic process.

On a final note, on behalf of the editorial board, I would like to register our profound gratitude to the former Editor-in-Chief of *Intellectual Discourse*, Professor Abdul Rashid Moten. He has been associated with the journal since its inception in 1993 in various capacities, as author, Book Review Editor (1995-2001), Editor (2001-2009), Guest Editor (2011) and finally Editor-in-Chief (2012-2013). His commitment to excellence has kept the journal's credibility intact over the last two decades. As we bid him farewell, we welcome the new Editor-in-Chief, Professor Syed Arabi Idid, former Rector of IIUM (2006-2011). We hope that his vast experience in the field will help to enhance the journal's credibility and improve its quality.

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