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## Williams, M.S. Indonesia, Islam, and the International Political Economy: Clash or Cooperation? London and New York: Routledge, 2017.

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**Williams, M.S. *Indonesia, Islam, and the International Political Economy: Clash or Cooperation?* London and New York: Routledge, 2017.**

In September, 2016, a cell phone video of a speech by Basuki Tjahaja Purnama went viral on social media. At the time, Basuki, better known by his Hakka Chinese nickname, “Ahok,” was the Governor General of Jakarta, arguably the second highest elected position in Indonesia. His speech was part of his reelection campaign, which until then seemed to be going well. He is now serving a two-year prison term for blasphemy. In the video, Ahok cites the Koran, specifically verse 51 of the Al Maidah surah, and argues that Indonesian voters should not be swayed by those who would interpret the passage to mean that a non-Muslim could not govern a Muslim community. This had been an accusation leveled at Ahok, a Christian, by a number of Muslim political activists. While Ahok’s team uploaded the video to his YouTube channel, a certain Buni Yani downloaded it, edited it, and uploaded a version altered to make it appear that Ahok told the audience not to be swayed by the actual passage, not interpretations of it deployed for political gain. A number of Islamist groups, including the militant Islamic Defenders Front, mobilized massive rallies against Ahok. Hundreds of thousands of people flooded the streets of Jakarta to protest the alleged insult to Islam. Many openly declared that only Muslims should hold high office in the (secular) republic. While the demonstrations and the subsequent legal proceedings damaged his reelection bid, Ahok made it through the February primary, only to be defeated in the two candidate run-off election in April. In May, he was found guilty, and the judge doubled the penalty requested by the prosecution. He was stripped of his office and sent directly to prison. Ahok, who in January 2017, spoke of running for the presidency, has decided not to pursue an appeal and serve his sentence. In addition to revealing Indonesia’s deep Sinophobia and hostility towards minority groups, the incident clearly shows the power of Islamic identity politics in the world’s largest majority Muslim democracy. Mark S. Williams’ *Indonesia, Islam, and the International Political Economy: Clash or Cooperation*, however, attempts to argue otherwise.

Published in 2017, *Indonesia, Islam, and the International Political Economy* is a slim, 143-page political history based upon limited primary research, secondary literature, and theoretical models. After a very brief introduction, Williams offers a chapter that discusses the various rhetorical models relevant to his analysis, four chronological chapters, and a chapter summarizing the book. Williams argues that despite the potential for Islam to be a “counter-hegemonic bloc,” for well over a century, moderation has triumphed in a series of distinct historical phases and contexts. Readers familiar with the long history of the uses of Islam as a rallying cry against Dutch colonialism, postcolonial secular republicanism, Marxism, military rule, and American imperialism or the links between Indonesian Muslim groups and open rebellion in the 1950s, mass murder in the 1960s, and scores of terrorist incidents since the 1990s may raise a concerned and curious eyebrow at such an assertion. However, the author carefully frames and consistently qualifies his argument to such an extent that it is persuasive.

The first chapter will be of interest primarily to political scientists. Here Williams rightfully argues that the field of international relations traditionally paid insufficient attention to the role of religion, assuming that post-Enlightenment rationality and positivism would do away with traditional belief systems. However, Samuel Huntington’s work in the 1990s and the post-9/11 international crises swung the pendulum in the other direction. Williams criticizes both the silence on religion and the “clash of civilizations” thesis. He argues for an appropriate and nuanced analysis of Islam and other religious belief systems to be an important aspect of international political economy.

Chapter two examines the relationship between Islam and colonialism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Dutch East Indies. Williams shows that an “Islamic awakening” was part of the anti-imperialist “national awakening.” While Islamic groups such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah reacted against the social inequalities of Dutch rule, they did not reject participation in the international economy. Chapter three discusses parliamentary politics in an independent Indonesia governed by nationalist hero-cum-President Sukarno. Faced with internal dissent and American intervention, Sukarno ruled in an increasingly authoritarian manner that he termed “Guided Democracy.” After a U.S. backed separatist revolt with ties to Islamic groups, Sukarno banned organizations such as Masjumi, characterized by Williams as the most important Muslim party in the young nation. Chapter four discusses the bloody seizure of the presidency by General Suharto and his subsequent use of Islam as a source of consolidating dictatorial power. Williams accurately describes Suharto as pursuing dirigist policies that offered Muslim groups limited control opportunities during the country’s thirty-two-year dictatorship. Chapter five starts with Suharto’s fall and the subsequent restoration of Indonesian democracy. Here Williams downplays the dangers of Islamic identity politics and dismisses terrorist groups as fringe dwellers. He holds that bellicose extremists have alienated the majority of the nation’s Muslims and that Islam is actually a moderating force that encourages international economic engagement. The final chapter of this short book reviews the material from the previous chapters and restates Williams’ argument that Islam has not been an oppositional force. This very short chapter has some vague conclusions and lacks persuasive evidence.

This book has several shortcomings. Most important is the rather lackluster thesis. By arguing against the stereotyped caricature that is Huntington’s much criticized “clash of civilizations,” Williams challenges an easy target. Of course Islam does not reject engagement in the global political economy. What would be the example of Islam rejecting international trade? Surely not the Prophet Mohammed’s life and teachings, which directly engaged the issue of commerce. Definitely not the millennium during which Muslim merchants played a leading role in structuring the economic order of the greater Indian Ocean Basin. Also of concern is the author’s difficulty distinguishing between domestic politics and the international political economy. Perhaps the biggest conceptual problem is that the book never really defines what it means by “Islam.” Does it mean the community as a whole or just Islamic organizations? When Williams discusses specific organizations, he does not discern between leadership and the rank-and-file membership. This is an extremely important distinction, as many lower-class Muslims who joined Nahdlatul Ulama in the 1960s may have had different material interests than the landed elite at the organization’s higher levels.

While the book takes a historical perspective, it would have been better to start its analysis well before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The historical memories of the Portuguese crusaders’ seizure of Malacca in 1511 and century of warfare with the sultans of Aceh and Johore and Diponegoro’s declaration of jihad against Dutch colonizers and Chinese tax farmers in the Java War (1825-1830) are frequently invoked in contemporary Indonesia. Generally, the book is lightly sourced and fails to engage several important books by James Siegel and others. When Williams analyzes primary documents, he appears to take them at face value. Some of Williams’ conclusions are surprising and questionable. For example, the discussion of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s funeral oration for Suharto cherry picks a formulaic turn of phrase as evidence for Williams’ analysis rather than understanding it as typical of Javanese ritualized politeness. Elsewhere, the narrative of the overthrow of Sukarno and subsequent massacre of 500,000 to possibly well over 1,000,000 individuals accused of Communist

affiliation is confusing. In the discussion of Suharto's New Order (1966-1998), Williams fails to consider the 1984 Tanjung Priok massacre, in which the army killed scores of protestors angry about the alleged desecration of a north Jakarta mosque. The most shocking statement comes on page 91, on which Williams holds that "there is a tendency to describe Suharto as more of a dictator than is entirely fair."

Currently, Indonesia is witnessing a powerful rise in Muslim identity politics. Since the derailing of Ahok's career, attention has turned to various symbols deemed an affront to Islamic sensibilities. In August, 2017, Muslim groups in East Java led a campaign to cover up a massive statue of a Chinese god and now hope for its complete removal. Without even considering the ongoing issue of terrorism and the spread of ISIS sympathizers, such actions call into question Williams' conclusion about Islam as a moderating force in Indonesian politics.

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