POST-ISLAMISM OR POP-ISLAMISM?
Ethnographic observations of Muslim youth politics in Malaysia*

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ABSTRACT. This paper analyses transformations in the organisational culture of the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS) and its Youth Wing. By examining the party's changing approach towards popular culture, the article investigates whether the narrative of a transnational post-Islamist turn can be applied to the PAS Youth Wing. Based on anthropological fieldwork, I argue that in contrast to the assumption that Islamic marketisation and post-Islamism are reinforcing each other, the PAS Youth Wing has strategically appropriated and integrated Islamic consumerism in order to pursue a decidedly Islamist political agenda. This 'pop-Islamist turn' is reflected in a competition over the most efficient political exploitation of popular culture, which has emerged as a new 'battlefield' between PAS and its constitutive Other, the government party UMNO. The marketised 'popisation' of PAS is framed by firmly Islamist orientations. The discourse-dominating PAS Youth elites, which are at the forefront of implementing the new mobilisation strategies, categorically oppose post-Islamist tendencies within the party.

THE POST-ISLAMIST TURN

Several social scientists, such as Asef Bayat (2005, 2007), Husnul Amin (2010; cf. Roy 1999) and Werner Schiffauer (2010), have identified a 'post-Islamist turn' in 'wide parts of the Islamic world' (Schiffauer 2010:359; all translations DM). According to this narrative, since the 1990s, the state-political orientation of Islamism has gradually been replaced by an individualised focus on modern Muslim lifestyles, with a political ideology transforming itself into a life philosophy of systematised personal piety. The ideal-typical idea behind the analytic concept of 'post-Islamism' is that

> following a phase of experimentation, the appeal, energy, and sources of legitimacy of Islamism are exhausted, even among its once ardent supporters. [...] Islamism becomes compelled, both by its own internal contradictions and by societal pressure, to reinvent itself, but it does so at the cost of a qualitative shift [...] [towards a project] that emphasizes religiosity, individual choice, and human rights, as well as plurality in place of a singular authoritative Islamist voice (Bayat 2007:10–11).

For Bayat, the phrase 'post-Islamism' initially arose in connection with a largely empirical attempt to describe 'the realities of the Islamic Republic [of Iran]'.[1] He later revised this position and explicitly transformed 'post-Islamism' into an a n a l y t i c a l concept with a much wider claim of validity (2005:7), arguing that 'the core spirit of the term' refers 'to the metamorphosis of Islamism (in ideas, approaches and practices) from within and without' (2005:5).

Although differentiating 'contrastive trajectories' (2005:189) of post-Islamism in different countries, Bayat generalises them by suggesting that a 'gradual change in the nature of Islamism' has taken place as it has moved 'from a political project challenging the state to one concerned with personal piety' (2007:146.). In his view, this development was reinforced by post-Islamist tendencies within several Islamic movements, such as in Egypt (Muslim Brotherhood), Lebanon (Hezbollah), and Turkey (Refah, AKP).[2] Even in Saudi Arabia, Bayat observes signs of a 'nascent post-Islamist trend' that has 'begun to accommodate aspects of democratization, pluralism, women's rights, youth concerns and social development with adherence to religion' (2007:13, 188–189).

Husnul Amin identifies multiple locally specific pathways within post-Islamism, which share a common feature: abandonment of the goal of an Islamic state (2010:17). Similarly, Schiffauer (2010) argues that a transnational post-Islamist turn results from a general disillusionment with the state-political orientation of classical Islamism since the 1990s. In his understanding, post-Islamism has given up Islamist dogmatism in terms of the amalgamation of religion and politics, but is very systematic when it comes to individual Islamic lifestyles (2010:377). Furthermore, 'post-Islamism' is often described as essentially modern, marketised and consumption-oriented. According to Amel Boubekeur and Olivier Roy, therefore, a 'post-Islamist society' is defined by the rise of 'a younger post-Islamist generation which has used Facebook and social networking, not to talk about the Islamic state, but to join global discourses on freedom and pluralist societies' (2012:13).

The 'second wave' of Islamism

Conversely, Nilüfer Göle speaks of a 'second wave' of Islamism, which saw the replacement of the political orientation of 'first-wave' Islamism by a pluralising shift towards new patterns of Islamic consumption and marketisation since the 1990s (2002:174). In the course of this 'second wave', a 'political movement' supposedly turned into a 'cultural movement' (Ammann 2002:77) under the impetus of multiple, non-occidental modernities (Göle 2002:174–177).

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1   Bayat (2005:7). See also Bayat (1996) and Kian (1997).
2   Bayat (2005:7). Cf. Bayat (2007:13, 189).

According to Göle, during the second wave of Islamism, 'a multiplicity of voices' replaces 'the ideological chorus' of classical Islamism of the 1970s and 1980s. As a consequence,

> actors of Islam blend into modern urban spaces, use global communication networks, [...] follow consumption patterns, learn market rules, enter into secular time, get acquainted with values of individuation, professionalism, and consumerism, and reflect upon their new practices. Hence we observe a transformation of these [previously political Islamist] movements from a radical political stance to a more social and cultural orientation, accompanied by a loss of mass mobilization capacity [...] (Göle 2002:174).

Both narratives – 'post-Islamism' and the 'second wave of Islamism' – share an epistemic focus on normative transformations of Islamist political convictions in a 'moderate' and marketised direction. I will scrutinise whether the concept of post-Islamism can be applied to the case of the Islamic Party of Malaysia (Parti Islam Se-Malaysia [PAS]) and its Youth Wing and examine whether the Youth Wing has become disillusioned with classical Islamist political convictions, leading Islamism to transform itself into post-Islamism.

THE ISLAMIST TURN IN MALAYSIA

To improve understanding of the PAS Youth Wing's discursive embeddedness, historical and political developments in Malaysia must be taken into consideration. Islam enjoys the constitutional status of the state's official religion in Malaysia. At the same time, the state exists alongside a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society in which more than one-third of the population is non-Muslim. The dominant ethnic group is the Malays (ca. 50 to 55 percent of the population), but ethnic Chinese (ca. 24 percent) and Indians (ca. 7 percent) are the second and third largest groups respectively, being considered 'races', a category that has been retained since the colonial era. According to the constitution, Malays are necessarily Muslims. The Malay majority has been precariously situated since the colonial period, causing chronic ethno-nationalist anxieties that they might be losing their majority status.

Discursive control over the constitutionally and politically privileged Malay population is the ultimate pre-requisite for power over the country. The battle over Malay votes and minds has traditionally been fought out between the Islamist opposition party, the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS), and the leading government party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), which has ruled the country since independence. Despite Islam constitutionally being Malaysia's official religion, UMNO initially emphasized the secular character of the state, in sharp contrast to PAS, which was founded as an anti-colonial Islamic movement in 1951 (Funston 1976, Farish 2004a). UMNO's claim of secularism began to disappear during the long tenure of Prime Min-

ister Mahathir Mohamad (1981–2003). The Mahathir administration integrated Islam-
ist ideas and activists into the government, which led to new policies of cultural and
economic Islamisation, as well as an Islamic turn in political rhetoric (Fischer 2008,
Liow 2009). New Islamic laws were created, with 122 state enactments and ordinances
by 2005 (Shad 2005). These laws are implemented by increasingly influential Islamic in-
stitutions. Against this backdrop, Joseph Liow points out that, although PAS is usually
perceived as the main Islamist actor, UMNO has manoeuvred itself towards Islamist
politics as well, effectively turning the state into a 'vehicle of Islamization' (2009:181).

THE PAS-UMNO 'ISLAMISATION RACE'

Besides Islamic resurgence internationally, UMNO's appropriation of Islamist politics
needs to be understood vis-à-vis PAS. By 1982/83, when Islamist 'Young Turks' took
over the PAS leadership and ousted its previous President, Asri Muda, who had joined
the UMNO-led Barisan Nasional (National Front [BN]) coalition between 1973 and
1978, the stage was clear for a dynamic that became known as the PAS-UMNO 'Islami-
zation race' (Farish 2004b:724).

   PAS and its 'traditional nemesis UMNO' (Farish 2004b:746) had competed for
Malay support ever since PAS's formation. However, the early and mid-1980s marked
a pivotal point, with the 'holier-than-thou' (Funston 1976:70) battle between PAS and
UMNO for Islamic legitimacy becoming the leitmotif of Malaysian politics. The compe-
tition between PAS and UMNO began to escalate when Mahathir became Prime Minis-
ter in 1981. Mahathir sought to integrate the popular waves of Islamic resurgence by ini-
tiating 'a centralized, concerted and controlled' Islamisation programme 'from above'
(Stauth 2002:216), shaped by the 'co-opting and sponsoring [of] Islamic intellectuals
from a strong socio-religious movement of anti-establishment groups into state [...] insti-
tutions' (Stauth 2002:15–16, 187). By 'officializing Islamic discourse' (Stauth 2002:198),
UMNO tried to take the oppositional 'wind out of PAS's sails' (Liow 2009:41). Con-
versely, PAS demanded further Islamisation policies, claiming that UMNO's approach
to Islam was 'hypocritical' (*munafiq*). This historically generated 'piety trumping' (Liow
2009:13, 15) between UMNO and PAS reflects their mutually constitutive relationship
(Farish 2004b:743–745), in which they constantly (re-)define themselves in opposition to
each other, with far-reaching consequences for both state and society. In the course of
this 'Islamisation race,' both parties tried to 'out-Islamize' (Farish 2004b:724) the other,
resulting in UMNO partly becoming 'more PAS than PAS' (Liow 2007:178).

   Although nowadays no UMNO politician openly defends secularism, the norma-
tive question of what it means to have Islam as the state's superior religion remains con-
tested. PAS has always criticised UMNO's efforts as insufficient and demanded 'com-

plete' implementation of the Syariah and its laws,[3] particularly since the transnational 'first wave' of Islamism peaked in the early 1980s. Despite some interpretative polysemy in terms of the details, there is a wide consensus within PAS that it is a religious duty for Muslims to implement a God-made legal order. From the perspective of PAS members, many of its concrete legal norms are clearly defined and consensually agreed upon in ideal-theory, including certain particularly controversial elements of Islamic Criminal Law (*hudud*, *qisas*). At the same time, strategies and priorities continue to be disputed, and during PAS's more than sixty-year history, many internal political transformations have occurred.

THE ISLAMIC PARTY OF MALAYSIA AND THE PAS YOUTH

Although PAS has always been internally heterogeneous, its history can be broadly divided into three ideological periods. Initially, under the leadership of Ahmad Fuad Hassan (1951–1953), Abbas Alias (1953–1956) and Burhanuddin al-Helmy (1956–1969), PAS consisted of a mixture of anti- or post-colonial Malay nationalist, reformist Islamic and socialist elements.

A more narrowly oriented Malay ethno-nationalist course followed under the leadership of Asri Muda (1969–1982). This period must also be understood against the backdrop of the excessive 'racial' polarisation of the 1960s. During these 'Asri years' (Farish 2004a:213), for the first and final time in its history, PAS joined the UMNO-led BN coalition (1973–1978).

The third period is the post-1982 or *ulama* leadership (*kepimpinan ulama*) era.[4] During this phase a Middle Eastern-inspired brand of Islamism became dominant within PAS. A group of reformist 'Young Turks', many of whom had studied in Egypt, Saudi Arabia or India and had established contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood, re-adjusted PAS's orientation. Some had witnessed the Arab-Israeli wars from within the Arabic world, and many were influenced by the Iranian Revolution of 1979. In an unprecedented confrontation at the PAS General Assembly in 1982, they verbally attacked Asri Muda, who was shouted down during his attempts to speak (Farish 2004b:344, Liow 2009:35–36). The PAS Youth Wing, which nowadays proudly regards itself as the party's 'first wing' (*sayap utama*) or 'pressure group' (*pendesak*), formally rejected Asri's presidential address for the first time in PAS's history. Asri resigned, and a new generation of leaders emerged, including Yusof Rawa, Fadzil Noor, Abdul Hadi Awang and Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat.

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[3]   The term 'Syariah' (lit. 'the path leading to the watering place'), or 'syariat Islam', denotes the legal order based on Islamic teachings.

[4]   *Ulama* are religious scholars. In PAS discourse, holding a degree in any field of Islamic Studies from an institution of higher learning qualifies a person to achieve this prestigious and privileged status.

Malay racism began to be perceived as un-Islamic ethnocentrism or chauvinistic communalism (*asabiyah*). Cooperation with the 'oppressors' (*mustakbirin*) from UMNO, labelled 'hypocrites' or 'infidels' (*kafir*), was aggressively condemned in Islamist terminology. Within PAS, the principle of *ulama* leadership was established (Farish 2004b:418). As a consequence, certain decisions could only be made by *ulama* in the newly created Ulama's Consultative Council (Majlis Syura Ulamak). Muslim Brotherhood-inspired education (*tarbiyah*) and study circles (*usrah, halaqah*) were systematically introduced, and networking with Islamist groups abroad was intensified. In sum, the once counter-hegemonic Young Turks re-interpreted PAS's Islamic cause in line with the 'first wave' of Islamism (Göle 2002:174). With their insistence on replacing the 'infidel' constitution with an Islamic order (Liow 2009:38), they can be categorised as classical Islamists in Schiffauer's terms. Two of these reformists, Abdul Hadi Awang and Nik Abdul Aziz, are currently the two most superior leaders of PAS.

INVOLVMENT IN PAKATAN RAKYAT: TOWARDS POST-ISLAMIST MODERATION?

Until the 1990s, the *ulama*-led PAS showed little interest in compromising over its Islamist convictions. However, in the late 1990s, signs of a possible change were in the air. The arrest of the former Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, in 1998 resulted in mass mobilisation by an emerging opposition, the *reformasi* movement, during which such seemingly incompatible groups as PAS and the secularist, mainly Chinese-based Democratic Action Party (DAP) started to align with one another in confrontation with their shared enemy BN. However, in 2001, DAP ended its cooperation with PAS under the Barisan Alternatif opposition coalition, which had been founded in 1999. Due to the fact that PAS had, prior to 2004, unsuccessfully tried to implement a part of Islamic Criminal Law (*hudud*) in the then PAS-controlled state of Terengganu and had passionately campaigned for an Islamic state, DAP felt that it no longer had any common ground with PAS.

PAS suffered a disastrous loss at the general elections of 2004, and what was left of the Barisan Alternatif broke apart. Shocked by these results, several PAS leaders softened their tone and decided to emphasize 'the substance of an Islamic state instead of the term'.[5] Within PAS, the conviction grew that patience and compromise were necessary in order to become elected and change the state apparatus from within. After a much more 'moderate' campaign and a relatively successful general election in 2008,

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5   Conversation with Azim, a PAS functionary, Kuala Lumpur, 22 January 2010. The names Amirah, Anuar, Azim, Mohammad Saiful, Nurul, Yaakob and Zakaria are pseudonyms to protect the identities of my interlocutors. For various reasons these persons could face disadvantages if their identities would be disclosed. The only original names are those of high-ranking party officials, names of interlocutors that have granted me permission, and names that are related to publicly accessible sources and activities.

the Barisan Alternatif opposition coalition was revived under the new name of Pakatan Rakyat (People's Alliance), and the PAS pragmatists seemed to be gaining ground.

Although the conviction that it is obligatory for the 'Islamic movement' to institutionalise Islamic rule based on Islamic law, including *hudud*, was in principle never given up, its public emphasis decreased. However, not everybody within PAS was happy with this development. Particularly since 2009, when the PAS Youth Wing leadership was taken over by Ustaz Nasrudin Hassan Tantawi ('Ustaz Tantawi'), several PAS Youth Wing leaders passionately expressed their aspirations for an Islamic state and associated legislation, thereby aligning themselves with conservative *ulama*. Ustaz Tantawi frequently emphasized that 'the sovereignty of Islam can only be realized if we choose an Islamic State. [...] It is certainly a duty for the Islamic community to struggle for it' (Nasrudin 2011). In fact, the PAS Youth Wing has become a bastion of conservatism in PAS today. The Youth Wing's leadership explicitly maintains its support for classic Islamist targets and raises serious doubts about the reform agenda propagated by the senior pragmatists. While the Youth Wing traditionally plays the role of a newly emerging agent of change within PAS, its identification of itself as opposed to the senior party currently seems to be limited to the opposition to the senior 'moderates'. At the same time, it backs strict *ulama* rule even more radically than some senior conservative *ulama* themselves.

The conservatives' core position is best summarised in the following statement by Ustaz Yusuf Mahmud, one of the *ulama* wing's leaders, uttered in 2010: 'It must be remembered that the goal of the struggle of PAS is not to come into power, but to emphasise God's laws. There is no use going to Putrajaya [the government district] if the basis of PAS's struggle becomes eroded' (Malaysian Insider 2010a).

On the other side of the spectrum, the pragmatist Dzulkefly Ahmad, a favourite among journalists and Western scholars for interviews, stated:

> [An Islamic state] may be our lifelong aspiration. But by looking at our demographics, it is only academic to us [...] We cannot simply push it aside, so it remains as a utopian dream. But in realpolitik, it makes no sense for us to keep on harping on it [...] an Islamic state will never come to fruition within what is foreseeable. [...] The Islamic state is a PAS thing, so we keep it in the party. That is the beautiful thing about coalition politics. [...] If it is achieved through a proper democratic and legislative process, then we will implement it. But there is no such thing as a backdoor implementation of Islamic laws with PAS (Malaysiakini 2010).

The post-2009 PAS Youth Wing leadership disagrees with the idea of an Islamic state being a 'utopian dream'. In a number of papers that have been published attacking the senior party's toning down of Islamist goals, the Youth Chief Ustaz Tantawi has frequently emphasized that 'there is always a way to implement an Islamic State' (Nasrudin 2011), that 'the sovereignty of Islam can only be realised under *Daulah Islamiyyah* [Ne-

gara Islam]' (Nasrudin 2011),[6] and that it is the duty of the community of believers (*ummah*) to struggle for its realisation. Elsewhere, he has stressed that PAS is the 'wing of one global Islamic movement', which was born from the demise of the Islamic Caliphate (*khilafah Islamiyyah*) and aspires to 'build a new Caliphate' (Nasrudin 2010a) – a new and highly remarkable rhetoric in PAS discourse. When Tantawi became head of the Youth Wing in 2009, the slogan 'Purify the struggle, bring about victory' ('Murnikan Perjuangan, Maknakan Kemenangan') was chosen. It represents the classical Islamist stance of the now discourse-dominating PAS Youth Wing elites.

By illustrating the contrast between Dzulkefly Ahmad's and Ustaz Tantawi's statements, the incompatibility between these poles of thinking becomes obvious, although in theory both agree that an Islamic State is 'a PAS thing' (Malaysiakini 2010). Given that Dzulkefley Ahmad is not prepared to abandon the goal of an Islamic state as such, it is doubtful whether even his position should be described as post-Islamist, as p r a g-m a t i c a n d p l u r a l i s t i c as it is within the PAS spectrum.

ISLAMISM OBSERVED: XPDC DAKWAH

Founded in 1953, the PAS Youth Wing traditionally plays a crucial role, namely 'to nurture cadres and leaders, and to effectively mobilise grassroots' (Liow 2011:666) for the party.[7] The strategies for attracting new supporters, however, have significantly changed since the political reform era of the late 1990s.

Since the *reformasi* movement, PAS has witnessed a previously unseen influx of large numbers of young university graduates and professionals who often do not come from PAS-supporting families.[8] These new actors, who often belong to the new Malay middle class and who differ from PAS's previous either 'rural Malay' or 'conservative *ulama*' image, transformed the party's appearance and introduced innovative strategies. During my fieldwork in 2009 and 2010,[9] the young PAS activists were highly enthusiastic about professionalising the party's public relations campaigns (*kempen*), which they perceive to be part of their missionary work. The main targets of such attempts to 'approach the youth' (*mendekati generasi muda*) are young Malays.

The PAS Youth Wing annually conducts missionary expeditions, called Expedisi Dakwah (XPDC Dakwah), on New Year's Eve.[10] I joined one such XPDC on New

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6   *Negara Islam/Daulah Islamiyyah* = Islamic State
7   Liow's paper (2011) is an excellent historical analysis of this role from a social movement theory perspective.
8   Fuelled by the *reformasi* movement, significant parts of the new Malay middle class – once a key support base of UMNO – have 'dramatically' turned away from BN (Abdul Rahman 2002:97).
9   Multi-sited fieldwork was conducted in the Malaysian states (*negeri*) of Kelantan, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Perak, Selangor, Terengganu, and the Federal Territories (Wilayah Persekutuan) during three stays between February 2009 and June 2010 for a period of altogether ten months.
10 'Dakwah' is the term for Islamic missionary work.

Year's Eve in 2009/2010 at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC), a crowded location that includes a luxury mall, where New Year celebrations are held annually. A PAS Youth Wing activist described XPDC Dakwah as a tremendously valuable opportunity to leave the field of *dakwah* theory and meet 'young kids who are g r o o v y and b o h e m i a n, wearing weird fashions that distress the eyes' (Riduan 2008:54; emphasis in the original). During their XPDC, PAS Youth Wing members should approach these troubled souls and 'help them with a kind smile' (Riduan 2008:54).

The New Year's Eve 'expedition' started with a meeting at the Masjid Asy-Syakirin KLCC: a mosque located in a public park attached to the mall. In the mosque's basement, a non-PAS-related event took place. Accessible through a staircase that led to a back entrance, several PAS Youth Wing leaders and approximately a hundred grassroots activists had gathered for a closed meeting on the first floor. Using a megaphone, the PAS Youth leader Ustaz Tantawi opened the meeting with a motivational speech and instructed the participants about the spiritual and practical implications of their upcoming XPDC. After a common prayer, the young missionaries spread out in small units, equipped with PAS-produced 'information' materials (such as *dakwah* comics).

I joined a group consisting of three young leaders, two of them *ulama* with prestigious degrees from the Middle East, and two grassroots members. The group made its way through the masses and approached young people. Reactions ranged from interest to disinterest, from bewildered irritation to amusement. However, almost all '*dakwah* targets' politely received the print materials and had a look at them.

One group revealed to me that they supported UMNO. When I told one of the missionaries about this reaction, he explained that this was 'normal': '*Dakwah* takes a lot of time, we don't expect immediate success'.[11] Deep inside, he added, the targeted persons knew that their behaviour was un-Islamic.

Eventually midnight arrived and a firework lit up the sky. For a moment, the group stopped their work, looked at the sky and, together with the masses, watched the display of pyrotechnics. A PAS Youth Wing member pointed to the masses and told me: 'Once we are in power, it will not be like this anymore!' When I then asked him whether such festivities should be banned, he answered, 'not banned, but made much smaller and controlled better'.[12]

FROM BANNED CONCERTS TO PIOUS POP

Since the 1970s, the PAS Youth Wing has become (in)famous for its protests against concerts and other perceived dangers of immorality. From its theological point of view,

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[11]   Conversation with Mohammad Saiful, a PAS Youth Wing member, Kuala Lumpur, 31 December 2009

[12]   Conversation with Mohammad Saiful, Kuala Lumpur, 31 December 2009

only 'Islamic' music, sung *a capella* or with acoustic drumming, was deemed permissible. In the last few years, the PAS Youth has received wide media attention for demonstrating against performances of foreign singers such as Rihanna, Avril Lavigne, Inul Daratista, Pitbull, and the homosexual musicians Adam Lambert and Elton John.[13] In some cases, concerts were finally cancelled or rules imposed restricting dress and onstage behaviour. Kamaruzaman Mohamad, a PAS Youth Wing functionary, told me:

> We consistently protest aginst a bad concert. Like Rihanna. [...] Now we have moral problems, social problems, bringing in another bad element will make it worse. [...] The Rihanna issue is not a small issue actually. Because this brings a very [bad] value to the public.[14]

This, however, is only one side of the story. Despite the PAS Youth Wing's enthusiasm, its protests met with a mixed response. Even within PAS, not everyone was happy with the Youth Wing's obsession with protesting against p o p u l a r concerts, as this was unlikely to increase PAS's p o p u l a r i t y beyond its already convinced cadres.

In a surprising shift, during the last few years PAS has gradually opened itself up to l o c a l popular music. PAS events nowadays regularly include not only Islamic *nasyid* bands,[15] but also long-haired rock singers with electric guitars, wild looks and heavy-metal T-shirts. The new approach to integrating popular music beyond 'Islamic' genres has also found increasing acceptance during the last decade, until it finally became official PAS policy. Since then, PAS has discovered that an impressive number of rock and pop celebrities are supporters of its 'Islamic struggle' (*perjuangan Islam*) and are – more or less – practising Muslims. Because several musicians seem to become more pious, PAS is implementing a partly interrelated strategy of p o p i s a t i o n.[16]

Individual pioneers from the PAS Youth Wing, such as Muhaimin Sulam and Khairul Faizi, contributed to PAS's changed stance on music, until it was finally appropriated by senior *ulama* and officialised with new narratives of justification. The new position holds that modern music can be accepted, as long as the musicians are 'good Muslims', refrain from sinful lifestyles (including, for example, alcohol and extramarital sex), and do not convey immoral messages through their lyrics and stage shows.

A PAS functionary argued that actually it was Malaysian musicians who had changed, not PAS.[17] However, obviously PAS has changed as well. The new buzzword is Islamic entertainment (*hiburan Islam*), and the PAS Youth Wing's Bureau for Art, Cul-

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[13]   One PAS Youth Wing activist argued that Pitbull, a rapper, represented immorality, and added, 'bad enough that he is named after a dog' (Malaysian Insider 2010b).

[14]   Interview with Kamaruzaman Mohamad, Kuala Lumpur, 18 December 2009

[15]   *Nasyid* is an Islamic music genre that is highly popular in Malaysia. For an excellent study of Malaysian *nasyid* and particularly its best-selling variant of *pop-nasyid*, see Barendregt (2011).

[16]   The term 'popisation' denotes processes of adjusting something to the requirements of popular culture in order to widen its popular appeal. It has been used elsewhere for art (Pine 2006:418) and music (Lucas 2000:44).

[17]   Conversation with Anuar, a PAS member, Kuala Lumpur, 22 January 2010

ture and Sports is formally responsible for making the party more attractive to young people who do not yet support PAS in this field. Even the ultra-conservative Ustaz Tantawi now argues that 'people need entertainment to help brighten their lives', and adds that only 'extreme entertainment' that 'damages the human mind' should be banned (Star Online 2011). The argument that Islamist dogmatism and *dakwah* pragmatism should be harmonised was made more colloquially by a PAS Youth Wing activist, who goes by the e-mail nickname "HAMAS_Mujahid": 'Music is not wrong, music is only wrong if it is not at the place where it is supposed to be' (posted on his personal Facebook profile, 30 June 2011).

Since PAS has identified popular music as a tool for *dakwah*, local rock stars like Mel Wings, RENGGO/Arrow, Man John, Sham Kamikaze, Isa/Gravity and Amy Search have performed at PAS events. Although this would have been unimaginable twenty years ago, nowadays any PAS General Assembly (Muktamar) will be accompanied by a colourful entertainment programme that includes musicians and celebrities (*selebriti*). Mirroring PAS's turn towards modern entertainment, in 2009 the Muktamar used computer-produced atmospheric sounds and artificial smoke as special effects. While some pro-PAS rock musicians are senior celebrities, others such as RENGGO/Arrow and Sham Kamikaze come from a younger generation. In 2009 RENGGO joined the PAS Youth Wing, with the then 78-year old PAS Spiritual Leader (Mursyidul 'Am) Nik Abdul Aziz attending the ceremony admitting him to the Party, enthusiastically covered by PAS's media channels. Nik Aziz reportedly also developed a friendship with the Malay rock legend Mel Wings, and pictures of them praying together were circulated widely in the PAS mediascape (Ar-Rifke 2010). The list of celebrities who recently joined PAS could be extended. The pro-PAS musicians seem deliberately to be offering themselves for use in PAS's public relations, while they simultaneously serve as agents, tools and receivers of *dakwah*. When rock singer Amy Search, who repeatedly declared she was a 'fan of Nik Aziz' (Jiwo Kelate 2009), opened a restaurant in Wangsa Maju, Nik Aziz was among the special guests – a 'win-win' situation. During our car ride to this restaurant, while local music played on the radio, the PAS parliamentarian Hatta Ramli told me how close PAS and several musicians had become, and how positively he greeted this development.

Khairul Faizi, since 2011 the PAS Youth Wing's Secretary General, told me about his ambivalent relationship to music, which on the micro-level mirrors the macro development of PAS in general.[18] When he was an undergraduate, he played music in a band. He also wrote lyrics for a cousin who was a popular singer at that time. However, as his involvement in PAS increased, Khairul, who originates from the 'UMNO heartland' of Johor and was not socialised in a PAS family, distanced himself from such music for years. With PAS gradually changing its stance, Khairul realised that popular music could benefit the movement's *dakwah* if adequate boundaries were set. Nowadays,

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[18]   Interview with Khairul Faizi, Kuala Lumpur, 24 January 2010

he is at the forefront of establishing contacts with PAS-friendly musicians. He himself now even performs with a guitar at PAS events. While the senior PAS primarily invites well-known singers, Khairul is trying to develop an additional network with grassroots bands with the aim of mobilising more supporters. He wants the PAS Youth Wing to provide an open door for young people who adhere to sub-cultures that were previously deemed incompatible with PAS. In Johor, Khairul provided space for amateur musicians by establishing a PAS 'jamming studio'. He told me that, in order to make the Youth leader Ustaz Tantawi more familiar with contemporary youth cultures, he brought him to the studio, where long-haired PAS supporters played hard rock. The white robed and turban-wearing PAS Youth Chief was provided with an electric guitar and posed for a picture to be circulated via PAS's social media.

Ustaz Tantawi, who had sometimes been criticised for being too distanced from ordinary young people, now declared that the PAS Youth Wing wished to work together with more 'local bands' (*band-band tempatan*) and 'underground' bands (*yang ada bersifat underground*) to 'attract the attention of local youngsters' (YouTube 2011a). In contrast to Tantawi's mostly theology-centred rhetoric, this statement demonstrates that even some of the most dogmatic hardliners are actively promoting the cultural popisation of PAS. However, they strategically combine this popisation with a classical Islamist mission. For example, in December 2011, the PAS Youth Wing released a professionally produced short film entitled "Oley!!: Hudud Allah", which seeks to advertise *hudud* laws.[19] Among the film's 'actors' is Ustaz Tantawi, holding a guitar and sitting alongside other PAS Youth *ulama* at a soccer field. The former actor Bob Lokman and the singer Man John play the role of youngsters to whom the *ulama* are explaining why Muslims are obliged to implement *hudud* laws. Finally, they play guitar and sing a song. Here, pop appeal and classical Islamist political ideology melt into each other, the popisation serving as a strategy for the ideology's realisation.

Although PAS used repeatedly to condemn the 'worship of artists' (*puja artis*), it now exploits the magnetism of celebrities. This also pertains to *nasyid* singers. The underlying conflict became obvious when participants of "Akademi Fantasia", a casting show modelled after "American Idol", expressed their support for PAS. The show was initially condemned by PAS *ulama* as 'deviating' from Islam (New Straits Times 2005). Once it became known that one of its winners, Mawi, is a PAS supporter, the party integrated Mawi, who performed at PAS events and met with Nik Aziz. Although the success of "Akademi Fantasia" is rooted in the veneration of artists, with the winners being elected by telephone, the problem remains that PAS rejects such 'artist worship' while at the same time exploiting it for political purposes. An emic response is that

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[19]   After two days, the clip had been watched 16 000 times on YouTube. It was also circulated via PAS Youth Wing weblogs and its Facebook service *HarakahMuda*. As of February 2013, there had been 235 000 hits (YouTube 2011b), and "Oley II" was in the planning stage.

sympathy should not be confused with worship. In any case, the underlying theological debates remain contested.

Not only are musicians increasingly being integrated into PAS's mobilisation strategy, several PAS Youth Wing members have also started to make music. The PAS Youth firebrand Ustaz Zulkifli Ahmad (not to be confused with the above-mentioned Dzulkefly Ahmad) received wide press coverage during the PAS Youth Wing Muktamar in 2008 when he aggressively opposed the senior party's 'moderate' course within Pakatan Rakyat.[20] However, the Al-Azhar graduate displayed his more melodic side when he sang at a PAS event in 2011.[21] At another event, called "I Rock, I am pious" ("Gua Rock Gua Beriman"), he was accompanied by a white robed guitar player who played Arabic-inspired tunes under the banner of 'pious rock' ('rock beriman'). The young activist Zulkifli Ahmad is firmly dogmatic in matters of Islamist state organisation, but passionately involved in the party's cultural popisation.

Given that PAS's previous attempts to take over the national government have failed, the PAS Youth Wing seems to have identified 'the importance of tactics to the ability of social movement organisations to generate resources' (Munson 2001:503) in the field of popular culture. The Youth Wing is trying to mobilise new supporters by 'linking' (Munson 2001:503) themselves to pre-existing social structures and cultural trends among their *dakwah*-target groups and (re-)framing their 'struggle' (*perjuangan*) respectively. In social movement theory, the concept of framing 'refers to the interpretations of events provided by social movement organisations that are intended to resonate with the beliefs' of already existing or prospective supporters (Munson 2001:500). This is precisely the strategy that the PAS Youth is following with its popisation of *dakwah*.

In fact, I witnessed the great enthusiasm of young PAS supporters for rock music. At a PAS Youth Wing event in Perak in 2010, a *nasyid* group evoked little response from the audience, but when the pro-PAS rock superstar Mel Wings got up on stage, a much larger crowd immediately swarmed to the front. This may indicate that the new strategy could indeed be efficient in developing a more 'contemporary' profile in order to mobilise new cadres.

The PAS Youth Wing's formation of the Bureau for Arts, Sports and Culture and the creation of a special office in the senior party in 2010, were key steps in institutionalising the new popisation approach. However, the change in attitude towards permissible popular culture also suggests a considerable degree of uncertainty. Apparently, PAS is

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20   Since nearly forty percent of Malaysian citizens are non-Muslims, the PAS Youth Wing's positions have serious implications for ethnic dynamics and are likely to alienate PAS's ethnic Chinese-dominated coalition partner DAP. Many PAS Youth Wing activists regard the DAP as 'protected infidels' (*kafir dhimmi*) and receivers of *dakwah*, rather than as equal dialogue partners.

21   Prestigious degrees from domestic and international Islamic universities are a vital source of social capital for young, upwardly oriented PAS *ulama*. The expansion of the Islamic education sector has created a new class of highly self-confident young religious scholars and contributed to the divide between the PAS Youth Wing and some of their non-*ulama* elders.

under pressure to adapt itself to social realities and cannot uphold certain dogmatic positions of the past if it wants to mobilise a wider support base. Like other social movements, PAS 'faces the task of mobilising the support and resources of individuals with a variety of different beliefs and levels of motivation for collective action' (Munson 2001:499). It is also against this backdrop that PAS's opening to music can be understood.

Its recent attempts to be seen as a 'government-in-waiting' have led PAS to search for new ways to be accepted beyond its traditional constituency. Therefore, the popisation approach is a logical step in the direction of presenting PAS as a fully Islamic law-defending but also mainstream modern Islamic party, in line with its new slogan, 'PAS for all'. Such reorientations are interconnected with wider social tendencies. PAS Youth Wing elites are evidently finding themselves caught in a paradox. On the one hand, they regard the 'purification of the struggle' to be of the highest priority, while on the other hand the requirements of *dakwah realpolitik* leave them little alternative but to become more flexible towards popular cultural elements that were previously condemned as deviating from 'pure' Islam. The PAS Young Turks of the 1980s apparently had a partly different understanding of purity than the young neo-conservatives of today. But nevertheless, as the examples of the short film for *hudud* and the singing young hardliner Ustaz Zulkifli Ahmad illustrate, there is no indication that the popisation approach will have a groundbreaking impact on the PAS Youth Wing's dogmatic insistence on the Islamist goals of state organisation, such as Islamic rule 'completely' based on *syariat Islam*, including *hudud*. Instead, although currently among senior party members an influential moderate faction (sometimes labelled 'Erdogans') is pledging to postpone these targets, the PAS Youth Wing elite is categorically opposing such post-Islamist tendencies.

And yet another variant of the peculiar battle between PAS and UMNO seems to be emerging: in a surprising twist, in 2012 several musicians joined UMNO, among them the previous pro-PAS musician Amy Search. The former 'fan of Nik Aziz', who stated in 2010 that 'Nik Aziz is my teacher' (Ar-Rifke 2010), now declared that 'UMNO also upholds Islam but not in an extreme way. UMNO also does not sideline *ulama* in the administration' (Malaysiakini 2012). Whatever the musicians' motivation may have been,[22] PAS-UMNO competition is apparently expanding towards a p o p i s a t i o n r a c e, in which both parties are battling over the most efficient exploitation of popular culture(s). Paradoxically, this race over popisation is happening simultaneously with both parties 'piety trumping' (Liow 2009:13). This simultaneity can be explained by the

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[22]   Sources within PAS gave different accounts of the singer's reasons for joining UMNO. Zakaria, a PAS Youth Wing activist close to its leadership, argued in some detail that Amy had joined UMNO because of financial problems (informal conversation, Kuala Lumpur, 20 December 2012). Yaakob, another PAS member, however, indicated that the singer may have become dissatisfied with PAS's political course (informal conversation, Kuala Lumpur, 20 December 2012). In any case, both sources agreed that in 2012 PAS and UMNO were competing heavily for the support from popular singers.

fact that, from a social movement theory perspective, a 'diversity of meanings leads to greater participation and a greater potential effect' (Munson 2007:130). To increase their organisational resources and serve different target groups, both parties are trying to 'aggregate multiple identities and multiple meanings' (Munson 2007:129).

For the same reason, it may be an advantage that there is no monolithic interpretation of signifiers such as 'Islamic struggle', 'Islamic state' and 'purity' among PAS supporters. While the senior party rhetorically reframes the goal of an 'Islamic state' as a 'welfare state' or a 'caring state' for election purposes (Malaysian Insider 2011), the PAS Youth Wing leadership, although not formally rejecting this policy, simultaneously proclaims the religious 'duty' of establishing an 'Islamic Caliphate' (Nasrudin 2010a). Such polysemy is a double-edged sword: although it allows the mobilisation of diverse clienteles, I assume that some supporters may feel increasingly alienated by what might be perveiced by them as a lack of consistency. In fact, a few young PAS members have even left the party and joined the supposedly more uncompromising Hizbut Tahrir Malaysia (HTM) movement.

Another example of the PAS Youth Wing's popisation of *dakwah* is its campaign "The youth is our gang" ("Orang Muda, Geng Kita" [OMGK]), launched in 2010. The idea behind OMGK was to make PAS more attractive to young people who are not easily reached through the party's classical outreach methods, such as religious lectures (*kuliah*) and political speeches (*ceramah*). The intended message was that one does not need to wear a white robe, beard or turban to support PAS. Instead, a PAS Youth Wing member could look like a rocker, a hip hopper, or just an 'average Joe'. This was also expressed through OMGK's colourful logos, which were designed to look contemporary and stylish, so that 'average' young people could identify themselves with them and become attracted to PAS (Figure 1).

Figure 1: "The youth is our gang"

PAS MERCHANDISE

Consumer goods with PAS designs are nowadays a vital part of PAS's organisational culture. The sale and display of these products, which are most popular in the PAS Youth Wing, have become an integral element of PAS events. The 'symbolic acts' involved (Douglas 1995:62) and performative identity processes of political consumption serve to establish and concretise belonging and belief and have both inclusive and exclusive formative social capacities. By wearing PAS products, the young activists make use of the communicative dimension of clothing, which can be a tool for the outward expression of inward ideas. To some extent, mirroring PAS's competitor UMNO, the well-designed PAS products include shirts, jackets, shawls, headbands, umbrellas, pens, key-rings, stickers, stamps, wrist watches and wall clocks.

A particularly illustrative case is the PAS phone, which was launched at the 2010 PAS Muktamar by PAS President Abdul Hadi Awang and Secretary General Mustafa Ali (Figure 2). It contains Qur'anic verses, hadith collections,[23] prayer schedules, nasyid songs, 'Islamic videos', software that can locate the direction of prayer to Mecca, and a camera. It also carries information about PAS and its history, membership conditions and a list of PAS offices. At the 2010 PAS Muktamar, it was sold at a 'promotional rate'.

Figure 2: Mobile Islam: the PAS phone

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[23]   A hadith is a tradition, narrative or narrative ascribed to Prophet Muhammad and his companions.

'RE-BRANDING' THE ISLAMIC STRUGGLE?

PAS Youth Wing membership is restricted to m a l e members: young females belong to the Women's Wing. Although my fieldwork focussed on the PAS Youth Wing, I also met spirited female activists and conducted a group discussion with the leaders of PAS's female youth organisation, Nisa.[24] In 2005 Nisa, which currently advertises itself with the synonymous slogans 'Nisa – Connecting youth' and 'Pengubung Generasi Muda', went through a process of what was explained to me as 're-branding', 'like [a] commercial brand strategy'. During our group discussion the following conversation took place:

> Amirah: We study about brands, the power of brands – business to *dakwah*.
>
> Nurul: We see *dakwah* as marketing. [...] We have a very good product, Islam is a very good product, but our marketing agent is quite stiff.
>
> Amirah: Unacceptable [laughs].
>
> Nurul: So we want them [the *dakwah* or marketing approaches] to be as good as the product. The product is good, Islam is good for everybody. But somehow the marketing agent [...] [laughs]. So we want to change the marketing strategy because for us *dakwah* is like marketing. [...] The product is there. The product is from God. The product is not from us, just the strategies.[25]

Nisa's 'brand colour' is purple. When young female PAS members are active in what they consider to be 'political' matters such as Muslimat Muda, PAS's main female youth organisation, they will wear green headscarves, whereas for Nisa's programmes they wear a purple headscarf.[26] From the emic perspective, Nisa does not do 'political' work (*politik*), only 'apoliotical' *dakwah* – although, from an etic perspective, the claim that the missionary work of an Islamic political party does not have a political dimension may appear contradictory. In line with its 'purple' brand strategy, in 2010 it organised an 'Islamic entertainment' event, called "Carnival Purple Aura" ("Karnival Aura Ungu"). The celebrity Aishah performed her song "Heaven under the sole of mother's foot", and commercial sponsors were also brought on board.

In the case of the PAS Youth's welfare and security organisation Unit Amal, strategic changes were also explained to me as a 're-branding', with the aim of creating a 'new image' (*image baru*) and a 'smarter look' (*lebih smart*). However, Juhari Osman, the group's leader, added that such changes were 'only technical' and did not affect the ideological basis of their work.[27]

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[24]   In Arabic, the word 'an-Nisa' means 'women'. The organisation's name also refers to a Qur'anic verse, the Sura An-Nisa, in which the role of women is described.

[25]   Group discussion with Nisa members, Kuala Lumpur, 15 January 2010

[26]   However, the same individuals may be involved, switching roles (and headscarf colours) in different contexts.

[27]   Interview with Juhari Osman, Melaka, 27 January 2010

The marketisation of Nisa and Unit Amal indicates a significant organisational cultural transformation pioneered by PAS's younger generations. Apparently the market has become the new paradigm, along with a shift to the vocabulary of entrepreneurialism that has been transformatively appropriated into an Islamist context.

These developments in the marketisation of PAS are connected with new self-conceptualisations within PAS. Repeatedly, the PAS Youth Wing's role was explained as a 'factory' (*kilang*) to produce 'human resources', despite occasional anti-capitalist polemics. From the emic point of view, PAS's marketisation in no way contradicts the condemnation of man-made principles like capitalism (Nasrudin 2010b), the condemnation of the intrusion of 'Western' culture or the proclaimed defence of Islamic purity vis-à-vis the 'hypocrital' Islamic commercial activities of UMNO. Although the PAS Youth Wing seeks to 'purify the struggle', some instruments to do so are taken from the 'impure' world – or 'jahiliyah moden'.[28] However, from the actors' point of view these instruments are being 'Islamically' transformed into 'tools of purification' that are considered useful promoting the core principles of the 'pure struggle' under contemporary conditions.

'BUY IT! IT WILL DEFINITELY BE SOLD OUT!'

The marketisation of PAS has also conquered Pusat Asuhan Tunas Islam (PASTI),[29] a PAS youth organisation which runs kindergartens across Malaysia. Since 2010, PASTI's activities have no longer been limited to pre-school education. At the PAS Youth Muktamar in 2010, a commercial PASTI brand called Koperasi Pendidikan dan Kebajikan Anak Soleh Tunas Islam Malaysia Berhad (KOPASTI) was launched.[30] The KOPASTI products include tea, chocolate biscuits, a malt-chocolate drink and toothpaste. KO-PASTI also sells pilgrimage travel packages, in cooperation with a PAS-friendly travel company, while prominent PAS Youth Wing leaders serve as 'trusting' faces on its advertising banners.[31] The targets behind the sale of these 'commodities of the struggle' are both organisational fundraising and enabling morally unquestionable, partisan consumption.

Such marketing has even entered the centre stage of PAS events. KOPASTI product lines were presented during the PAS Youth Muktamar in 2010 by the PAS Youth Chief, with political, religious, and commercial advertising merging into each other. A

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28   Literally meaning 'ignorance' or 'barbarism', the term 'jahiliyah' connotes a negative evaluation of pre-Islamic culture. In PAS discourse, it also refers to contemporary 'un-Islamic' realities. It is in this sense that PAS Youth leader Nasrudin speaks of 'modern jahiliyah' ('jahiliyah moden') (2010b).

29   'Pusat Asuhan Tunas Islam' translates as 'Centre of the upbringing of Islamic sprouts' or 'children'.

30   'Koperasi Pendidikan dan Kebajikan Anak Soleh Tunas Islam Malaysia Berhad' translates as 'Corporation for the education and welfare of pious sprouts' or 'children'.

31   Three PAS Youth leaders were depicted on an advertising banner of Al-Quds Travel in 2011.

smiling Ustaz Tantawi stood on the stage as several products were ceremonially handed to him, until he was almost unable to hold them. He also promoted other products, including the perfumes "Caliph Mecca" and "Medina". The Muktamar's moderator commented that, although they did not contain alcohol, customers should not drink them (followed by laughter among the audience). In order to advertise books written by PAS Youth Wing members, the moderator jokingly imitated a market crier: 'Buy it! It will definitely be sold out!' Indeed, many participants left the event not only with the experience of an intense religio-political ritual, but also with several of these products.

THE PAS-UMNO MARKETISATION RACE

The massive sale and consumption of the PAS goods is a vital site for the social realisation of PAS's corporate identity. Notwithstanding its specific local conditions, it resembles commercial phenomena across the globe. Nevertheless, a marketised PAS and its commodified Islam are not merely responses to transnational trends; they must also be understood in their relational dimension vis-à-vis the party's l o c a l environment, most notably the to some extent UMNO-sponsored rise of Islamic markets (Fischer 2008), a policy that the Mahathir administration had first initiated in the 1980s and that has since then massively expanded. Indicating the wider tendency, Michael Peletz has noted the symbols of 'corporate', business-style culture that have recently emerged among the increasingly modernised Syariah Court civil service (2011:143).

   PAS's marketisation is also an obvious response to UMNO-style politicking and political marketing. In addition to its policies of 'Islamic' economic development, UMNO has for decades produced corporate clothes and dressed its members in matching outfits. Clearly, this style is now omnipresent in Malaysian politics. While showcasing PAS logo items symbolically d i s t i n g u i s h e s their wearers from UMNO members and strengthens their social in-group relations, the appearance of PAS products could also be read as a commentary on UMNO's 'corporate' brand. Therefore, it can be argued that one aspect of the PAS-UMNO Islamisation race is a m a r k e t i s a t i o n r a c e. In this dynamic, PAS is attempting to out-marketise UMNO and its commercial activities, which are themselves presented as serving Islamic purposes. In order to counter UMNO's strategy of portraying itself as a champion of Islamic economic development, PAS is seeking to authenticate itself as the r e a l champion of Islamic marketisation.

POST-ISLAMISM OR POP-ISLAMISM?

In sum, the narrative of a transnational post-Islamist turn, the result of an allegedly general disillusionment with the state-political orientation of classical Islamism since

the 1990s, does not apply to the contemporary PAS Youth Wing. PAS Youth elites consensually uphold the goals of state-oriented political Islamism and are even doing so with renewed passion and in opposition to the tendencies towards political pragmatism that are emerging among parts of the senior party. The current PAS Youth Wing's dogmatists are highly ambitious in bringing the goals of an Islamic State and a 'fully' organised Islamic law back on to PAS's agenda, claiming to prioritise 'quality votes' (*undi kualiti* [Nik 2008:130]) over quantitative support arising from opportunistic behaviour. Therefore, if a 'post-Islamist society' is characterised by the absence of 'renewed calls for an Islamic State' (Boubekeur and Roy 2012:13) among the media-savy younger generation, the PAS Youth Wing's present calls for an Islamic caliphate make claims of a post-Islamist turn in Malaysia appear highly doubtful, even though these renewed calls for an Islamic state are increasingly being expressed through modern channels of communication and consumerist Islam, such as YouTube, Facebook, celebrity advertising and pop music.

In contrast to the assumption that Islamic marketisation and the 'post-Islamist turn' are part of the same process, one in which a focus on individual Islamic lifestyles and modern consumption patterns are replacing the state-political orientation of Islamism, the PAS Youth Wing has appropriated the rise of Islamic consumer culture since the 1990s and subordinated it to a classical Islamist agenda for state organisation. Marketisation and the younger generation's enthusiasm for Islamic consumption are being strategically used as mobilisation resources in order to realise these goals.

One crucial reason for the absence of a post-Islamist turn seems to be that the ongoing pervasive tendency towards social, political and legal Islamisation in Malaysia since the 1980s, as well as the locally specific process of 'out-Islamisation' between PAS, UMNO and various other Islamist civil-society actors, do not provide a framework that is conducive for such tendencies. Instead, the discursive climate seems rather to be giving rise to a p o p - I s l a m i s t t u r n, as indicated by the cultural popisation of the PAS Youth Wing.

In the light of the example of the PAS Youth Wing, it may be advisable to reassess the hypothesis of a 'post-Islamist turn' in other regional and organisational contexts as well, especially by examining the mico-level discursive practices of youth activists in contemporary political Islamic movements.

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