

# Sunni and Shiite Political Thought of Islam-State Relationship: A Comparison between Abdurrahman Wahid of Indonesia and Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran

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## Abstract

*This paper discusses how the Indonesian Sunni Muslim leader Abdurrahman Wahid and the Iranian Shiite Muslim leader Ayatollah Khomeini responded to the debate about the relationship between Islam and the state. Their responses impacted on the struggle of Indonesian and Iranian Muslims in considering the ideological basis of Indonesian and Iranian states. On the one hand, Wahid with his educational and social background and Indonesian political context rejected the concept of an Islamic state. He did not agree with the formalization of Islamic sharia. To implement his idea, he promoted the idea of Pribumisasi Islam. For Wahid, islamization was not arabization. Khomeini, on the other hand, believed that Islam is a religion that has complete laws and way of life including social rules. According to Khomeini, to effectively implement these rules, Muslims need to have executive power. In Khomeini's view, when the Quran calls for Muslims to obey Allah, the messenger, and ulil amri, this means that Allah instructs Muslims to create an Islamic state. To realise his views, Khomeini proposed the doctrine of Velayat-e al Faqeeh. Thus, different religious-political contexts of these two leaders contributed to their different responses to the relationship between Islam and the state.*

## Keywords

*Islamic state, Sunni, Shi'ite, Pribumisasi, Velayat-e al Faqeeh*

## Intisari

*Artikel ini membahas bagaimana pemimpin Muslim Sunni dari Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid, dan pemimpin Muslim Syiah dari Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, merespon perdebatan tentang hubungan*

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antara Islam dan negara. Respon keduanya mempengaruhi upaya Muslim Indonesian dan Iran dalam membentuk basis ideologi negara Indonesia dan Iran. Pada satu sisi, Wahid dengan latar belakang pendidikannya dan konteks politik Indonesia menolak konsep negara Islam. Ia tidak setuju dengan formalisasi syariah. Untuk mewujudkan idenya, Wahid mempromosikan gagasan Pribumisasi Islam. Bagi Wahid, islamisasi bukanlah arabisasi. Khomeini, pada sisi lain, percaya bahwa Islam adalah agama yang memiliki hukum dan jalan hidup yang lengkap termasuk aturan sosial. Ia berpendapat bahwa untuk melaksanakan aturan-aturan Islam ini secara efektif, Muslim harus memiliki kekuasaan eksekutif. Ketika Quran menyeru Muslim untuk taat kepada Allah, nabi-Nya dan ulil amr, ini berarti perintah Allah kepada Muslim untuk menciptakan negara Islam. Untuk mewujudkan ini, Khomeini mengajukan gagasan institusi *Velayat-e al Faqeeh*. Jadi, konteks keagamaan dan politik yang berbeda membuat Wahid dan Khomeini memberikan respon yang berbeda terhadap persoalan hubungan antara Islam dan negara.

### **Katakunci**

*Negara Islam, Sunni, Syi'ah, Pribumisasi, Velayat-e al Faqeeh*

### **Introduction**

The relationship between state and religion has frequently been discussed by Muslim scholars. The roots of this debate relate to myriad interpretations of the main sources of Islam: the Quran and *Hadith*. As commonly known, differences among Muslim scholars which lead to different schools of thought have appeared not only in their responses to the relationship between and the state but also in several fields of Islamic teaching such as *Fiqh* (Islamic law). In the field of *Fiqh*, Muslims are familiar with schools of thought (*madhhab*) such as Malikites, Hambalites, Hanafites, and Shafiites.

Regarding the relationship between state and religion, Muslim scholars' views are divided into three categories of political thought. First, those who believe that religion and state cannot be separated. Second, those who argue that state and religion are related to each other and both have a mutual relationship. The last group who believes that relations between state and religion should be separated. These three different views have impacted on the extent to which Islamic law (*sharia*) should be implemented in Muslim countries. According to Mudzhar (1990:5), there are at least three types of countries as far as the role of *sharia* is concerned. First, countries that still regard the *sharia* as the fundamental law and apply it more or less in its entirety. Saudi Arabia is a case in point. Second, countries where *sharia* law has been abandoned completely and substituted by a wholly secular one. Turkey fits into this category. Third, countries that try to reach a compromise between the two domains of law by adopting secular law and

preserving the *sharia* at the same time. These include such countries as Egypt, Tunisia, Iraq, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

It is against the above background this paper tries to deal with questions about how Sunni and Shi'ites Muslim leaders respond to such debates. In doing so, it focused its analysis on the views of Abdurrahman of Sunni Indonesia and Ayatollah Khomeini of Shiite Iran. The paper describes how their different views occurred and impacted upon the struggle of Indonesian and Iranian Muslims in determining how the Indonesian and Iranian states should be based ideologically.

### **Indonesian and Iranian Contexts**

Before comparing the thoughts of Wahid and Khomeini on the Islam-state relationship, it is necessary to look at the context of their countries, Indonesia and Iran, where these two leaders promoted their ideas. Besides the fact that both Indonesia and Iran were countries where Islam is the dominant religion and a growing factor in mainstream political life, several additional reasons can be put forward to justify this comparison. Firstly, Indonesia and Iran are two examples where religious discourse has occurred that aims at the reconciliation of democratic and liberal values. Leading religious intellectuals and *ulama* in both countries have generated arguments that Islamic activities can be better applied in democratic environments that guard the freedom of speech, the freedom of association and the freedom of religion. However, when compared to the rest of the Muslim world including Iran, it is only in Indonesia that large sections of the public could be mobilized based on these arguments. Islamic civil society groups including Nahdhatul Ulama (Wahid was the former chairman of this organization) and Muhammadiyah, the two large Islamic organizations of the country, have been at the forefront of pro-democratic mobilization in Indonesia since their establishment until the present.

The second reason, the role of Islam in Indonesia and Iran is a result of the historically and socially constructed circumstances made and produced by the fundamental interaction with the state. Islam in both countries has been shaped in two different ways. It should be similar if there were something inherent about Islam, but in reality, however, they are extremely different. This difference demonstrates "that Islam cannot automatically produce a single cultural outcome" (Winter 2010:256). On the one hand, Islamization in Indonesia has been prompted by different actors and, according to Ufen (2009), the state apparatus only controlled and directed its dynamics with growing intensity from the mid-1980s until the fall of Suharto. Since the reformation era that started in 1998, there has been a blossoming of a diverse, yet mostly conservative, Islam across the society. However, in the party system, the Islamization of politics has been moderate. Indonesia is not an Islamic state because the 1945 constitution stipulates a 'state philosophy', the Pancasila (five pillars), that recognizes religions lived and adhered to by Indonesian people.

On the other hand, Iran has a long tradition of clerical involvement in common freedom movements, dating back to the Constitutional Revolution of

1906. Since the revolution, political reform has been supported by members of the clergy in Iran. This reached its peak when the Ayatullah Khomeini led the movement that toppled and ended Iran's monarchy under the Shah in 1979. Kar (2010) argues that the contemporary debates on the role of Islam in Iranian politics are informed by five major historical episodes: the Constitutional Revolution in 1906, the White Revolution in 1963, the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the Reform Movement in 1997, and the Green Movement that emerged in 2009. Kar (2010) further argues that much of the contemporary history of Iran is "a story" of clashes between aspirations for and obstacles to political participation. Two revolutions (the change from an autocratic system to a constitutional monarchy in 1906 and the Islamic Revolution of 1979) were the result of "conflict" between those who supported modernity and those who struggled to keep the tradition.

The third reason is that Indonesia and Iran represent two different kinds of Islam: Sunni and Shiite. The Sunni Muslim world consists of countries where the religious leaders (*ulama*) by and large oppose the establishment of a formal Islamic state. In contrast, Shii Islam is dominant in countries like Iran where clerical groups promote politicization of religion and take on leadership roles in movements and governments. As a Sunni state, Indonesia has struggled for decades over the place of Islam in its political systems. Indonesia has experienced authoritarianism with secular tendencies for significant portions of its recent history. Mainstream and non-violent Islamist movements have played influential roles in the country, and, by their political success, have effectively marginalized violent fringe groups. In contrast, the leader of the 1979 revolution in Iran, Khomeini denounced monarchy and proposed an unprecedented theory, *velayat-i faqeeh*, the governance of supreme jurist. The regime has established institutions to assure the compliance of all legislation with Islamic laws, even though there is no precedent in Islamic law for the Iranian constitution, which combines elements of the Western parliamentary system with Khomeini's theory of *velayat-i faqeeh* (Ayooob 2007:24-25).

Another striking difference between Indonesia and Iran is concerned with the extent of the politicization of religious issues within the party systems. In Indonesia during its under authoritarian rule, political parties simply did not have the opportunity to radically politicize Islam and mobilize supporters. In Iran, in contrast, political Islam is not as fragmented as in Indonesia.

The fourth reason is that a comparison of Islam in Indonesia, which is represented by Wahid's thought, and in Iran, which is represented by Khomeini, could challenge the common image of Islam as portrayed by the Western media. The media commonly offers a single version of Islam in place of an extremely diverse and pluralistic tradition. Redrawing the coverage of Islam to cover other aspects of the Muslim world other than the Middle East like Indonesia would help to decrease the cultural bias that has been created in the West by expanding the world understanding of Islam. Understanding the pluralistic and diverse nature of the Muslim world, such as comparing Indonesian and Iranian Islam, challenges the idea that Islam is monolithic. It also helps to show that religion generally, or

Islam in particular, is not the only source of identity for Muslim people. Instead, other social divisions often have a much greater influence on the decisions people make and the way they chose to live their lives as Muslims (Winter 2010:258).

Finally, the study of Wahid and Khomeini's thoughts on the Islam-state relationship is still suffering from a lack of scholarly attention. Although some attention has been given to Wahid and Khomeini by scholars who study Indonesian and Iranian politics, none have studied them in comparative ways.

### **Abdurrahman Wahid's Views of Islam-State Relationship**

#### *Wahid's Social and Educational Background*

Abdurrahman Wahid, popularly known as Wahid, was born in Jombang on 7 September 1940 (Yahya 2004:2). Gus is a short name taken from *Bagus* (good) and it is an honorific title given to a son of the leader of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) and Dur is a short name for Abdurrahman (Thorchia 2007:3-4). His father, K.H. Wahid Hasyim, was the chairman of the biggest Muslim organization in Indonesia, Nahdhatul Ulama (NU), and his grandfather, Hasyim Ashari, was the founder of NU. As a son of a kyai, Wahid studied Islamic studies in several *pesantrens* in East Java before he went to Egypt in 1962 to study at Al-Azhar University. He did not finish his bachelor's degree in Al-Azhar because he felt bored of studying Islamic teachings that he had already learned in *pesantren*. Thus, during his stay in Cairo, he spent most of his time in the American University Library, instead of attending lectures on campus (Barton 2002:5-10). He moved to Baghdad University in 1965.

Wahid was a fast language learner. He was fluent in several languages such as Arabic, English, Dutch, and read French and Germany (Harjanto 2003:15). His ability to read Arabic and other foreign languages led him to read both classical and modern sources and influenced intellectual development, and shaped his progressive and liberal thinkings.

Wahid's views of Islam and his intellectual journey are represented by his book entitled *Islamku, Islam Anda, Islam Kita* (My Islam, Your Islam and Our Islam) (Wahid 2006). He admitted that when he was young, around the 1950s, he followed the idea of *Ikhwan Al-Muslimun* and was actively involved in its activities in Jombang. Meanwhile during the 1960s, when he was a student at Al-Azhar University, Egypt and Baghdad University, Iraq, Wahid learned about and was interested in Arabian nationalism and socialism. But when he returned to Indonesia in the 1970s, he saw the development and dynamism of Islam in Indonesia which was different from that of the Middle Eastern Islam. He said that his intellectual journey resulted in two things: on the one hand, his personal experience would never be experienced by others, but on the other hand, his experience could be similar to other experiences. Thus, Wahid concluded that Islam that was thought and experienced by him was a unique and special Islam, which he called "my Islam" (*Islamku*). For Wahid, his Islam should be seen as personal experiences that are important to be known by others but cannot be enforced on others.

*Islam Anda* (Your Islam) is Wahid's appreciation and reflection on traditionalism and religious rituals that are "living" and existing in community. In this context, he appreciates religious tradition practiced by the people. *Islam Kita* (Our Islam) is Wahid's concern for the future of Islam which represents all Muslims. However, he admitted that it is difficult to formulate "Our Islam" because the experiences that formed "My Islam" were different from experiences that formed "Your Islam". It is hard to form "Our Islam" because sometimes there is a group who enforces the concept only according to their interpretation of Islam, but repudiates others' interpretation.

#### *Formalization of Islam and Islamic State*

Based on his intellectual journey and his views on Islam, Wahid rejected the idea of formalization and ideologization of Islam in the form of making Islam a state ideology). He believed that the greatness of Islam is seen in its ability to develop culturally. He did not agree with the formalization of Islamic *sharia*. This can be seen in his interpretation of Quranic verse *udkhulu fi al silmi kaffah*. Wahid interprets the word *al-silm* as "peacefulness", which is different from that of formalist-textualist scholars who interpret the word as "an Islamic system". These two diverse interpretations have wide implications. Those who believe in the formalization of Islamic *sharia* always struggle to create an Islamic system and neglect the reality of the plurality of Indonesian people (Wahid 2006:xv-xvii). As a result, those people would consider non-Muslim citizens to be second-class members of society in Indonesia. Thus, for Wahid, to become a committed practicing Muslim does not require creating an Islamic system or an Islamic state as long as a Muslim accepts the Islamic tenet, has faith in Islam, and spreads peace among people. As a consequence, to create an Islamic system or formalization of Islamic *sharia* is not a requirement for an Indonesian Muslim to be called a pious Muslim.

In the context of the formalization of Islamic *sharia*, Wahid also rejected the idea of the ideologization of Islam. To make Islam a state ideology is not compatible with the development of Indonesian Muslim society, which is known as "a home for moderate Muslims." For Wahid, the ideologization of Islam could pave the way for Indonesian Muslims to politicize religion and encourage Muslims to interpret religious texts textually and literally, which could lead to Islamic radicalism.

As a result, Wahid rejected the idea of an Islamic state. He did not agree with some Indonesian Muslims who proposed the idea of an Indonesian Islamic state. For Wahid, Islam as a way of life does not have a clear concept of an Islamic state. He claimed that during his life he had looked for *makhluk* (a creature) named "Islamic state", but he could not find any. Wahid (2006:81-82) said:

During my life, I have searched futilely for a creation named Islamic state. Up to today, I could not find one yet. Thus I have to conclude that Islam does not have a concept on how a state should be built and defended.

Wahid had two reasons why he rejected the idea of an Islamic state. First, according to Wahid (2006:84), Islam does not have a clear view of leadership succession. During the period of the first four caliphs, different methods were adopted for the appointment of the caliphs, and in all four cases, the appointment was confirmed by the Muslim community's oath of allegiance which was formally obtained. Abu Bakar was elected without planning or preparation because the Prophet, according to *Sunni*, did not leave any message or testament to guide the succession of the leader of the Muslim community. Umar bin Khattab was elected by the former caliph directly. Furthermore, Uthman bin Affan was chosen by a six-member election committee and Ali was elected only by three persons. However, according to Iqbal (1983:225), generally speaking, the methods adopted during this period had a common feature namely the selection of the best man followed by the oath of the Muslim community. This means that there is neither any standard procedure for electing a caliph in Islam nor any standard form of Islamic government. According to Ayubi (1991:6), the Quran does not stipulate a specific form of the state or the government, and the Prophet Muhammad did not appoint a successor for himself even though he knew his demise was imminent. Thus, some *ulama* argue that the caliphs can be elected, generally, in two ways: by an election committee or by the former caliph. Since the Quran and Hadith do not stipulate a specific form of the state or the Islamic government, Muslim scholars try to respond to questions such as what constitutes an Islamic government and to what extent an Islamic government is dependent upon the virtuous character of the caliph or the manner of his selection. This resulted in diverse views of 'an Islamic state' and no single one is universally adopted. For some, the true caliphate is restricted to the first four Rightly Guided Caliphs. But, for others like Ibnu Khaldun pragmatically accept the possible compatibility of caliphs with a kingdom as it is said that "Government and kingship are a caliphate of God amongst men, for the execution of his ordinance amongst them" (Gibb 1982:46). The jurist al-Mawardi, in his treatise *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyah* (The Ordinances of Government), which became a classic exposition on Islamic government, presented a theoretical, idealized view of the caliphate (Esposito 1998:20).

Second, Wahid rejected the idea of Islamic state because the extent to how big an Islamic state should be is not clear. When the Prophet Muhammad migrated to Madinah, Wahid, argued, that it was not clear what form of "Islamic government" he built – a nation-state or only a city-state.

According to Anwar (2006:4-5), Wahid belonged to the group of substantive-inclusive Muslims. There are two perspectives of Islamic political thought: legal-exclusive perspective and substantive-inclusive one. The first perspective refers to the idea that Islam is not only a religion but also a complete legal system, universal ideology, and a perfect system of guidance. The second perspective, in contrast, refers to the notion that Islam as a religion does not stipulate any theoretical concepts related to politics and the Quran only contains information about aspects of ethical or moral guidance for human life.

Hosen (2005) called these two groups as formal and substantive *sharia* groups respectively. There are at least four characteristics of a substantive-inclusive group. The first characteristic of this group believes that the Quran consists of ethical and general moral concepts for Muslims to follow but does not stipulate detailed explanations of how Muslims should solve all life's problems. Thus, according to this group, there was no single verse of the Quran which instructs Muslims to establish an Islamic state. Instead, the followers of this paradigm argue that the Quran consists of ethical and moral guidance on how political leaders should behave such as upholding justice, equality, democratic and other good characteristics. Second, the followers of the substantive-inclusive paradigm believe that the main mission of Prophet Muhammad was not creating a kingdom or a state but, like other prophets, Muhammad was sent by God to promote and spread Islamic values and wisdom. The third characteristic of this paradigm believes that sharia was not bounded to establishing an Islamic state. Last, the substantive-inclusive Muslim group believes that the struggle should be for the implementation of substantial Islamic values in their political activities rather than a struggle for symbolic Islam.

Esposito (1998:140) describes Wahid's political thoughts as follows:

Wahid believes that contemporary Muslims are at a critical crossroads. Two choices or paths confront them: to pursue a traditional, static legal-formalistic Islam or to reclaim and refashion a more dynamic cosmopolitan, universal, pluralistic worldview. In contrast to many "fundamentalists" today, he rejects the notion that Islam should form the basis for the nation-state's political or legal system, a nation he characterizes as a Middle Eastern tradition, alien to Indonesia. Indonesian Muslims should apply a moderate, tolerant brand of Islam to their daily lives in a society where "a Muslim and a non-Muslim are the same", a state in which religion and politics are separate. Rejecting legal-formalism or fundamentalism as an aberration and a major obstacle to Islamic reform and to Islam's response to global change, Wahid has spent his life promoting the development of a multifaceted Muslim identity and a dynamic Islamic tradition capable of responding to the realities of modern life. Its cornerstones are free will and the right of all Muslims, both laity and religious scholars (*ulama*) to "perpetual reinterpretation" (*ijtihad*) of the Quran and tradition of the Prophet in light of "ever-changing human stations".

### *Pribumisasi Islam*

Wahid popularised the term *Pribumisasi Islam* in the 1980s. The idea of *Pribumisasi Islam* seems to be part of his agenda of "*pembaharuan*" (renewal) of Islamic thought. The spirit of his renewal was against the idea of Islamic universalization (Abdullah 2014:68-69). *Pribumisasi Islam* gives a room for an Islamic "particularization" or local Islam. It is an unavoidable process when Islam meets a local culture. Islam is believed to be originated by God, while

culture is a product of human thinkings that continues to change. *Pribumisasi* is a transformation process of Islamic elements into local cultures. This means that *pribumisasi* is a continuous process of acculturation. If *pribumisasi* is placed in the context of Javanese culture, it can be understood as a process of an encounter between two cultures in which these two entities do not negate, but instead, enrich each other.

To implement his *pribumisasi* idea, Wahid argued that Muslims should not make Arabic language or Arabic culture a superior entity. He did not agree with replacing several local languages with Arabic. For example, he did not agree to replace the Indonesian term *ulang tahun* (birthday) with the Arabic *milad*, *sekolah* with *madrasah*, *Minggu* (Sunday) with *Ahad*, etc. For Wahid (1989:96), the most important thing is the meaning, not the symbol. However, his *pribumisasi* idea is different from *sinkretisasi* (syncretism). Thus, his *pribumisasi* idea should be implemented carefully to avoid a mixture of local culture and originality of fundamental Islamic teaching. For example, in the name of implementing the ideas of *pribumisasi Islam*, one should avoid replacing praying activities which are spoken in Arabic with Indonesian words. In the context of Wahid's *pribumisasi Islam*, Effendy (2003:76) notes that:

Wahid advocates the notions of (1) Islam as a complementary factor in Indonesia's socio-cultural and political life; (2) the need to accommodate the Indonesian-local and cultural context in implementing Islam in the archipelago; and (3) the need to struggle for democratic Indonesia in which Muslims should cooperate with other groups in its process.

Regarding the need to struggle for democratization in Indonesia, Wahid encourages Indonesian Muslims to be actively involved in struggling for a democratic Indonesia with fellow Indonesians from other religious beliefs. The discourse of democracy can integrate social-political groups in Indonesia which have previously been divided. By struggling for a democratic Indonesia, all socio-political groups in Indonesia will feel connected and it will lead to "communal maturity" to reach a common objective under the name democratic Indonesia. Wahid (1999:191) writes:

This issue of democratization can integrate all diverse powers of a state. This issue could change every scattered groups to the same directions that are maturity, development, and integrity of the state. If the Islamic movement could struggle for this process, this could contribute to a precious future of the state.

Wahid believed that Indonesian Muslims should have been actively involved and participated in struggling for a democratic Indonesia with other groups. By participating in the process for a democratic Indonesia, Muslims would have passed and departed from "the political imagination" in putting religion as an alternative ideology for the state. Wahid (1999:192) said:

Thus, the process of democratization could become a foothold of hope for those who reject a religious state. And at the same time, the process gave a place for religion, meaning that if a society was democratized, Islam got a guarantee to live.

From his statement above, it is clear that for Wahid, the discourse of democratization could become the place for the Muslims who rejected the ideas of integration between religion and state to play their role. And at the same time, in its democratic discourse, Islam would still have a public arena to develop dynamically in the name of the Indonesian democratization process.

Besides actively involved in disseminating *pribumisasi Islam* agenda, Wahid was also known as a political activist in Indonesia. Shortly after coming home in the early 1970s, he began to develop his political career. First, he established a reputation as a promising intellectual and a man of culture. He could talk on various subjects, from religion, philosophy, music, movies, sports, history, and literature to popular jokes. He was a prolific writer. He could write quickly about those subjects in every situation without losing the stylish quality of his writing. He spoke in different arenas, from village meetings to international conferences. He also began to involve himself in many non-governmental organizations as a supervisor, consultant or functionary. He was elected in 1983 and served from 1983 to 1986 as the chairman of the Jakarta Institute of Culture. Since the late 1970s, he had held the position of *Khatib Syuriah* (Secretary of the central advisory board) in NU. When NU was in danger of schism as rivalry between two camps heightened in the early 1980s, Wahid with several young NU scholars came to be a mediating force. At the historic NU congress at Situbondo in East Java in 1984, he was elected chairman of NU, after he advocated that NU as an organization should return to its initial commitment as a social-religious movement to prevent NU from becoming a supporting or opposing force of the authoritarian regime of Soeharto. His leadership in NU was deeply rooted and respected, as many influential figures at that time felt that Wahid was a ‘reincarnation’ of his grandfather, the founder of NU.

During Soeharto’s authoritarian periods, Wahid moved back and forth from proximity with the regime to criticism of it, making him a controversial and unpredictable figure. Besides abandoning an overtly political role for NU in 1984 with a “back to initial function” policy (*kembali ke khittah*); he endorsed the government when it moved to force all political parties and social organizations to adopt the state ideology Pancasila in the mid-1980s. But later, he stood against the Suharto’s efforts to harness Islam for the regime’s advantage, and he declined membership in the government-backed Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI) that was established in 1990. Rather, he set up the alternative organization called *Forum Demokrasi* (Democracy Forum) with many prominent nationalist figures in March 1992 to counter sectarian and primordial tendencies in Indonesian politics (Ramage 1997:58).

Despite his Islamic credentials, Wahid opposed the idea of making Indonesia an Islamic state, consistently arguing that if Islam is institutionalized in the state,

it will go against the plurality of Indonesian society and will marginalize many minorities which would lead inevitably to national disintegration. Wahid was also one of the few prominent Muslim leaders to speak up for Indonesia's economically influential, but politically weak Chinese community. In a gesture of reconciliation, he even claimed Chinese ancestry.

After a lengthy discussion of Wahid's idea about the relationship between Islam and state which clearly shows that he rejected the idea of an Indonesian Islamic state, it is important to look at the following paragraphs to determine how Imam Khomeini responded to the idea. Did Khomeini have the same response as Wahid?

### **Ayatollah Khomeini and His View of Islamic State**

#### *A Brief Biography*

Ayatollah Khomeini was born in a small town called Khomein in 1902. Khomeini is a town in the South-East of the Central Province of Iran. It is an old town, with some ninety surrounding villages (Qadiri 2008:61). His original name was Mustafa Musawi. He adopted the name Khomeini, for which he was popularly known, after his home town of Khomein. Khomeini came from a clerical family. He was the child of a family with a long tradition of religious scholarship. His ancestors, descendants of Imam Musa al-Kazim, the seventh Imam of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, had migrated towards the end of the eighteenth century from their original home in Nishapur to the Lucknow region of northern India and began devoting themselves to the religious instruction and guidance of the region's predominantly Shi'i population. From his early childhood, Khomeini learned Islamic studies, as his family had. When he was twenty years old, Khomeini went to the Iranian city of Qum. The city of Qum was, along with the Iraqi city of Najaf, the spiritual capital of Shia Islam and served as the primary educational center of Islamic jurisprudence at that time (Jonas 2009:25).

When he was thirty-four years old, Khomeini obtained the prestigious title as a *Hujjatul Islam*. He received this title after Khomeini completed his seminary education. Because of this title, Khomeini could officially conduct his classes and begin to have followers. Although a young Khomeini was popularly known for his admiration for the clergy who were brave enough to stand up to unjust rulers, he as a young cleric tried to avoid expressing publicly his opinion on political issues. According to Lewis (2010:29), there are two main reasons why Khomeini maintained a quietist stance on political issues. First, Khomeini's position as a junior in the clerical hierarchy made it difficult for him to adopt a politically activist stance out of step with those above him, both because it would marginalize him within the clerical establishment but also because he had great respect for those senior to him, particularly the sole *Marja-e Taqlid* at the time, Ayatollah Borujerdi. Secondly, Khomeini was still developing as a political thinker and, although confident that his voice and the voice of another clergy should be heard in the public sphere, he was not yet sure exactly what he wanted to say.

In the 1950s when he was in Qum, Khomeini was appointed Ayatullah. However, his initial step toward politics was the same as other mainstream Ulama's approach, a quiet stance toward political issues. This meant that Khomeini seemed to still support the legality of the monarchy saying that a bad government is still being better than no government. Despite several explosive critiques against perceived anti-Islamic policies of the then-ruling monarch, Khomeini adhered to the Ulama's reactionary yet accepting role towards the monarchy and non-Islamic governments.

After Khomeini received his title of Grand Ayatollah as well as *Marja-e Taqlid* at the beginning of the 1960s, he then changed his approach toward politics. Khomeini did not stand quietly as before but he becomes the most vocal clerical opposition towards the Shah, attacking him for being what Khomeini perceived as the "tool of the imperialist-Jewish conspiracy" or nothing more than an American puppet allowing western influences to dominate the public sphere in Iran.

Khomeini continued to criticize the authoritarian Shah during the 1963 uprising when he severely censured the Shah's regime for being secular and having anti-nationalist policies. Khomeini's confrontation with the Pahlavi regime paves the way for the regime to arrest and exile the Imam for fifteen years. Khomeini had by the time of his exile become a symbol of the resistance against the authoritarian Shah, which played a key role in the Iranian revolution and the consequential toppling of the monarch fifteen years later.

Although initially Khomeini was extradited to Turkey, he only stayed there for a short period and then moved to Najaf, spiritual capital of Iraq. According to Keddie (2003:192), Khomeini's decision to move to Najaf could be understood because he was reluctant to refrain from political activities. Thus, from this city of Najaf, Khomeini kept his oppositional campaign against the dominion of the Shah. His time in Najaf was one of fourteen years of teaching and agitation which had a significant impact on many Iranian students as well as Iranian people at large. During his period of residence in Iraq, Khomeini developed his concept of the Islamic State. In the early 1970s, he initiated a series of lectures attacking clerics, the Shah, and various political actors on the Iranian scene for being out of touch with the political realities of the time. In his critique, Khomeini says that the regime was "fundamentally opposed to Islam" and therefore to refuse to oppose it was essentially to accept the inevitable destruction of the clerical establishment and the decay of Iranian society (Khomeini 1981:181).

#### *Necessity for Islamic Government*

Khomeini's document or blueprint for the Islamic government was originally a collection of his lectures in the 1970s which was printed and published as a book entitled *Governance of the Jurist (Velayat-e Faqeeh)*. Like other books written by Khomeini, this book had been considered to be top of the list of prohibited books for publication during the Shah's regime. The main idea of an Islamic state according to Khomeini should be government led by the jurist. According to

Andersson, at the essence of Khomeini's doctrine stands the belief in an Islamic Government as the best temporary solution in the post-occultation era. Khomeini insisted that the Shia Muslims cannot wait for the return of their Imam; instead, they have to establish a just Islamic State under the banner of the Guardianship of the Jurist (Jonas 2009:27).

Khomeini (2002) divides his book of the Jurist (*Velayat-e Faqeeh*) into four sections: Introduction, the Necessity for Islamic Government, the form of Islamic Government, and Program for Establishment of an Islamic government. For the rest of this paper, we will base our explanation on Khomeini's political thoughts on this translated book.

The first two sections of the book discuss Iranian political context and evidence from the Muslim tradition that suggests why Muslims should establish an Islamic government. Khomeini believed that the Islamic government would be a means of solving Iran's social problems at that time by ridding the country of corrupting foreign influence. To support this, he pointed out the example of the Prophet Muhammad who not only established government but also designated a ruler to succeed him.

Khomeini believed that when the Prophet Muhammad passed away, he had appointed a successor. He then posed the question of whether the role of successor was designed to expound the religious teachings or doctrines. He answered himself: of course not. Expounding religious precepts, according to Khomeini, does not have to be done by the Prophet's successor. Therefore the appointment had been for rulership and enforcement of laws and regulations. For Khomeini, it was logically necessary for the successor to be appointed for the sake of exercising the government. Law requires a person to execute it. If a system of law and government lacks executive power, it is deficient. Thus Islam, just as it established laws, also brought into being an executive power.

However, for Khomeini, there was still a further question on who was to hold the executive power. If the prophet had not appointed a successor to assume the executive power, he would have failed to complete his mission. It is for this reason, according to Khomeini, that the formation of a government and the establishment of the executive organs are necessary. Belief in the necessity of these is part of general belief in the Imamate. Khomeini (2002:16) said:

Whereas hostility toward you has led them to misrepresent Islam, it is necessary for you to present Islam and the doctrine of the Imamate correctly. You must tell people: We believe in the Imamate; we believe that the prophet appointed a successor to assume responsibility for the affairs of the Muslims, and that he did so in conformity with the divine will. Therefore, we must also believe in the necessity for the establishment of government, and we must strive to establish organs for the execution of law and the administration of affairs...Knows that it is your duty to establish an Islamic government.

In addition, Khomeini provided three reasons why Muslims should struggle to establish an Islamic government. First, the action taken by the Prophet to

establish the government was a reason why Muslims should follow the same step. The prophet himself, according to Khomeini, established a government. He engaged in the implementation of laws, the establishment of the ordinances of Islam, and the administration of society. The Prophet also sent out governors to different regions. He played a role as a judge, appointed judges and dispatched emissaries to foreign states and kings. Second, the Prophet designated a ruler to succeed him, in accordance with divine command. If God through the Prophet designated a man who was to rule over Muslim society after him, this is in itself an indication that the government remained a necessity after the Prophet passed away. Third, the nature and character of Islamic law and the divine ordinance of *sharia* furnish additional proof of the necessity for establishing a government, for they indicate that the laws were laid down to create a state and administer the political, economic and cultural affairs of society (Khomeini 2002:18-20).

### *Islamic Government and Leadership*

The third section of Khomeini's lectures, which were translated and compiled by Hamid Algar, is the Form of Islamic Government. Khomeini's vision of the Islamic government is based on the sole sovereignty of God – the legislative power and competence to establish laws belong exclusively to God Almighty. Khomeini understood *sharia* as a comprehensive set of laws designed to create a society in line with divine will. Thus, the highest goal of an Islamic government in his mind was to effectively implement *sharia*. Khomeini (2002:29) said:

The fundamental differences between Islamic government, on the one hand, and constitutional monarchies and republics, on the other is whereas the representatives of the people or the monarch in such regimes engage in legislation, in Islam the legislative power and competence to establish laws belongs exclusively to God Almighty. The Sacred Legislator of Islam is the sole legislative power.

In laying claim to *imamate*, Khomeini quoted Imam Ali who said that the most qualified among men for the caliphate is he who is most capable and knowledgeable of Allah's commands. Thus, the ruler must be the most learned person of the rest. In addition to the requirement for the ruler who is knowledgeable, Khomeini also proposed the idea of a special kind of Islamic State leadership called the Guardianship or the Governance of the Jurist (*Velayat-e Faqeeh*). According to Zubaida, as quoted by Jonas (2009:29), "the clerical elite of the Grand Ayatollahs would have the duty to appoint this ruling jurist, or primary guardian, who was supposed to fulfil the qualifications of total knowledge of the law and total justice in its execution." Jonas further states that Khomeini believed that because the Prophet and the Imams had cared for the functions of government throughout history, so would the ruling jurist. However, Khomeini argued that, of course, it is not necessary for all officials, provincial governors, and administrators to know all the laws of Islam and be *fuqoha*; it is enough that they should know the laws about their role's duties. Such was the case in the time of the Prophet. The highest

authority must possess these two qualities: comprehensive knowledge and justice, but his assistants, officials and those sent to the provinces need know only the laws relevant to their tasks; on other matters they must consult the ruler (Khomeini 2002:32). The two qualities of knowledge of the law and justice are present in countless *fuqoha* of the present age. If they come together, according to Khomeini, they could establish a government of universal justice in the world. If the worthy individual possessing these two qualities arises and establishes a government, he will possess the same authority as the Prophet in the administration of society, and it will be the duty of all people to obey him. Because the clergy are naturally the most learned and knowledgeable of divine law, Khomeini argued, it is only logical that the right to rule belongs to them. Khomeini (2002:33) said:

If the ruler adheres to Islam, he must necessarily submit to the *faqih*, asking him about the laws and ordinances of Islam in order to implement them. This being the case, the true rulers are the *fuqaha* themselves, and rulership ought officially to be theirs, to apply to them, not to those who are obliged to follow the guidance of the *fuqaha* on account of their own ignorance of law.

The fourth section of Khomeini's lectures on The Government of the Jurist deals with Programs for Establishment of an Islamic State. In this section, Khomeini called for the clerical establishment to renounce quietism and assume its rightful position of political leadership in the Muslim community. Drawing on primarily Shi'i traditions, he regarded those clerics who practice *taqiyya* to be more worried about their well-being than that of Islam and asserted that without clerical leadership any movement for an Islamic government is doomed to fail.

Khomeini further pointed out the importance of propagation and instructions. In his preface to Khomeini's translated book, Algar (2002) says that the necessity for the proper attention to instructions and propagations, moral and cultural reformation of seminaries, annihilation of the moral and cultural effects of imperialism, correction of pseudo-saints, purging the seminaries of the court *ulama*, and finally taking effective measures to overthrow the oppressive and tyrannical governments, are among the concluding discussions of the book.

### *Struggle for Implementing the Vision of an Islamic State*

After the Shah was removed from office and spent fifteen years in exile, Khomeini returned to Iran. The people of Iran at that time gave respect and had hope that Khomeini would lead them to a better future for Iran. Thus, it was reasonable that in the referendum held on April 1, 1979, almost 100% Iranian people voted for the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran led by Khomeini.

Of course, after the result of the Referendum were officially announced, Khomeini could, at last, be convinced that he was the leading figure to form a new Iranian government. Unfortunately, the realization of Khomeini's vision of an Iranian government based on *Velayat-e Faqeeh*, was not easy to complete. Before that vision could become a reality, Khomeini had to successfully respond to critiques and concerns about his government offered by various segments of

Iran's population. The people of Iran at that time sharply criticized the Khomeini government. Lewis (2010:46-47) described:

Firstly, Khomeini was criticized that the Constitution enshrined clerical rule in such a way that it rendered elected officials in the government potentially irrelevant. Secondly, Khomeini was criticized that the system of *Velayat-e Faqeeh* he proposed would lead to authoritarianism. And the last major critique leveled against the new Khomeini-inspired Iranian Constitution was that it created a state that was doomed to be deemed "backward" by the rest of the world.

Nevertheless, due to his charisma and leadership capabilities, Khomeini answered this criticism successfully. According to Viorst (1995), although not without criticism, Khomeini was quite successful in implementing his vision. It can be seen from the fact that the larger clerical class inside Iran had originally been rather indifferent toward Khomeini's proposal and propagandizing of an Islamic state in Iran. Wimelius (2003:13) applauded Khomeini's effort saying that Khomeini ensured an Islamic intellectual awakening among the Iranian population as he saw it, and he was thus able to turn around a revolution against the Shah into a revolution to establish an Islamic government.

From the above discussion, it is clear that Khomeini's version of the theory of the Guardianship of the Jurist became the steering principle of the Islamic Republic, as the clergy was to safeguard the Iranian nation and its population. Khomeini entered into the powerful clerical elite of Iran, which generated for him an outstanding and powerful position, as the clerics played a key role in the Iranian public sphere. Under the title of *Marja-e Taqlid*, Ayatollah Khomeini managed greater authority than ever before, which gave him a strong base of popular support in his campaign against the monarchy. Being among the highest religious authorities in Iran, his paradigmatic politicization of *Velayat-e Faqeeh* thus remained largely unchallenged by the public. His struggle to combine religion and politics and the call for clerical assumption of power was new in Islamic history, but the selective emphasis on the aspects of authoritative leadership and guidance of the people was relevant in Iran. By applying Islamic rhetoric, emphasizing the importance of martyrdom, revolution and the importance of an Islamic State, Khomeini was able to unify the dispersed revolutionary movements. Finally, as a consequence, the revolution due to Khomeini's powerful position brought about a major political transition. Finally, as Viorst (1995:67) said, "because it was Khomeini's revolution, it became Khomeini's government".

## **Conclusion**

There are contrasting opinions and implementations between Abdurrahman Wahid and Imam Khomeini on Islam and state relationship. While Wahid rejected the idea of an Indonesian Islamic state, Khomeini, on the other hand, believed that Islam is a way of life. For Khomeini, there is no separation between religion and politics. Khomeini pointed out that the misgivings suggested by the enemies of

Islam paved the way for the faulty notion of separation of religion from politics.

Khomeini, on the one hand, believed the establishment of an Islamic state is a must and obligatory for every Muslim. Wahid, on the other hand, believed that to become a practicing Muslim with a deep understanding of Islam does not require the creation of an Islamic system or an Islamic state as long as this Muslim accepts the Islamic tenet, the faith tenet, becomes proficient and spreads peace to people.

As a consequence, for Wahid, to create an Islamic system or formalization of Islamic sharia is not a requirement for an Indonesian Muslim to be called a pious Muslim. But, according to Khomeini, the only way to prevent the emergence of anarchy and disorder and to protect society from corruption is to form a government and thus impart order into all the affairs of the country. This means that the different political and historical contexts of Iran and Indonesia were influential factors that contributed to the different Khomeini and Wahid's views of Islam-state relationship.

Another reason why Khomeini and Wahid had different views of the establishment of an Islamic state was due to their difference in the idea of succession or *imamate*. On the one hand, Wahid argued that Islam does not have a clear view of leadership succession. According to Wahid, during the period of the first four caliphs, different methods were adopted for the appointment of the caliphs, and in all four cases, the appointment was confirmed by the Muslim community's oath of allegiance which was formally obtained. Khomeini, on the other hand, believed that before the Prophet passed away he designated the ruler to succeed him and this is an indication that establishing an Islamic state remains a necessity after the death of the Prophet. Wahid admitted this difference as well as the similarity between his Nahdlatul Ulama and Shiism. He said: "NU is Shi'ite minus Imamate or Shi'ite is NU plus Imamate."

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