The FIQH Paradigm and the Moderate Theory of Secularization: Abdurrahman Wahid on Islam, Democracy and the Republic of Indonesia

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Abstract

This paper examines Abdurrahman Wahid's thought on the interface of Islam and the Republic of Indonesia, culminating in his affirmation of the liberal democracy. It was to resolve antagonism between the followers of the secular and Islamic aspirations by persuading them to accept liberal democracy as the common issue to deal with. By so doing, he developed a political approach, concerned more with the democratic relationship between the ruler and the people, rather than with an Islamic state. Indeed, he has departed from a legal formal approach advocated by the followers of Islamic ideological paradigm and argues that democracy is a kind of quasi-norm which should be respected by both the regime and the people, namely Muslims. In this regard, he has developed the Fiqh paradigm adopted by *Nahdlatul ulama* (NU) which has justified the existence of the Republic of Indonesia. By doing so, he was able to provide a counter discourse to the monolithic interpretation of Pancasila by the autocratic Soeharto regime which had tried to marginalize the role of NU.

Key words: Abdurrahman Wahid, Islam, liberal democracy, quasi-norm, and Indonesia.

Introduction

Abdurrahman Wahid developed his religious political thought in the context of an autocratic Soeharto regime with the obsession of supporting the establishment of a democratic state in Indonesia, considered as the implementation of the principles of *syuro* (deliberation). As a traditionalist Muslim, he understood that the earlier traditionalist Muslim leaders such as from NU, Perti, and Jami'atul Wasyilah, had supported the establishment of the Republic of Indonesia as the political reality, and he evaluated that they had failed to halt the rise of autocratic regimes, namely the old and new order regimes, because they were not able to develop cooperation with the secular nationalists who tended to support the regimes because of ideological preference. It was not surprising that the traditionalist Muslims and the secular nationalists came from different knowledge systems. In this regard, Wahid, by means of the Fiqh paradigm, tried to incorporate a modern knowledge system in order to provide the traditionalist Muslims with the philosophical foundation of a modern political system. By so doing, the traditionalist Muslims would be able to develop cooperation with the secular nationalists for the purpose of controlling the regime in order to run the state democratically. In other words, Wahid's thought of liberal democracy was designed as a common ground which would resolve the ideological conflict between the secular nationalists and the traditionalist Muslims.

Wahid also introduced his thought of democracy to those who advocated the Islamic ideological paradigm, aspiring to the idea of an Islamic state. He tried to challenge their legal formal approach to the relationship between Islam and the state which considers the state is to implement the Shari'a (Islamic law) or, at least, to interpret the national ideology of Pancasila by the Shari'a. In line with the Fiqh paradigm, Wahid also considered the important role of the state for managing the public order, constituting the pre-requirement for religious order. However, the followers of the Fiqh paradigm do not consider the form of the state important, but only the function of the state. In line with this, the Muslim traditionalists justified the existence of the Netherland East Indies (NEI) and the Japanese Military Administration (*Gunseikan*) for the purpose of maintaining public order (Kamil & Bamualim, 2007, p. 97). Both governments also respected the rights of Muslims to practise Islam as the *sine qua non* for the acceptance of Muslims of the state. Moreover, both governments recognized the existing institutions for managing the internal affairs of the Muslims. They believed that it is not a religious duty to establish an Islamic state. In this regard, Wahid considers that secularization happens if the state is stronger than Islam (Abdurrahman Wahid, 1999a, p. 77). Accordingly, he is critical of the idea of an Islamic state such as advocated by the followers of the Islamic ideological paradigm as it tends to be manipulated by the ruler to protect his/her interest for power, not protect Islam. Accordingly, he was critical of the Soeharto regime's marriage of the convenience with the modernist Muslims (Abdurrahman Wahid, 1999b, p. 12), who, then, associated with ICMI (Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals).

He argued that the idea of an Islamic state advocated by the followers of the Islamic ideological paradigm was a kind of a counter discourse to the modern ideologies introduced by the colonialists (Abdurahman Wahid, 2006, p. 74), and he considered that this approach was no longer valid in the context of the Republic of Indonesia. He also believed that this ideological approach was not genuine in Islam, but rather adopting a foreign ideology to Islam. On contrary, he believed that foreign ideologies should be incorporated into Islam by means of the Fiqh paradigm which differentiates Islam from the political systems. By so doing, the followers of the Fiqh paradigm were aware of social forces playing in the social system and they did not try to change it by revolutionary method to suit the normative Islamic doctrines and teachings. This was due to the risk of the outbreak of anarchy, which would prevent the establishment of religious order (Abdurrahman Wahid, 1999b, pp. 165-171).

The FIQH paradigm and the mutual legitimacy between Islam and the state

Wahid believed in the Fiqh paradigm, based on his evaluation of the history of Islamic civilization. According to him, Islam came to the Indonesian archipelago by a means of peace, not military occupation, and the Muslim traditionalists justified the existing political orders, namely some non-Islamic kingdoms (Abdurrahman Wahid, 1999b, p. 167). This was due to their beliefs in the Fiqh paradigm. They persisted with the Fiqh paradigm when they were able to establish some Islamic kingdoms so that Islam and state were different identities, but both developed mutual legitimacy (Abdurrahman Wahid, 1999a, p. 54). These Islamic kingdoms

facilitated the creation of some institutions to implement Shari'a (Islamic law), and Sultans ruled the countries with the help of the clerics. However, this did not mean that the rulers were immune from any criticism as their responsibilities were worldly affairs, not religious affairs. Indeed, the clerics tended to support the status quo because they were afraid of the outbreak of anarchy which would cause the problem of establishing religious order. Moreover, the Muslims respected the judicature system by non-Muslim rulers of the Netherland East Indies and *Gunseikan*, as this judicature system is not an integral part of religious practices (*ibadah*), implying a secular affair, so that they did not insist on implementing the legacy of Islamic kingdoms.

The Muslims' quality support to the existing political system was dynamic, depending on the government's policies toward the Muslims. The Muslim traditionalists' support for the Netherland East Indies was weaker than for the Gunseikan and, furthermore later, the Republic of Indonesia. This was because the NEI's policies were less conducive to the development of Islam in Indonesia. These Muslim traditionalists did not challenge the existing political system directly and accepted the predominantly secular nature of political systems. Conversely, they tried to develop themselves in order to increase their bargaining power with the government.

In the early 20th century, Muslims were divided into three different paradigms that were the secular, the Islamic ideological, and the Fiqh paradigms. In this regard, the *Gunseikan* had an important role in developing communication and cooperation amongst leaders of different paradigms, in the governmental or semi-governmental institutions. By having a series of discussions at BPUPKI (*Badan Penyelidik Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia*), the leaders of different paradigms were able to reach a compromise and accepted the national ideology of Pancasila. This agreement was called the Jakarta Charter and signed on 22nd June, 1945. Traditional Muslim leaders supported the Jakarta Charter when it was signed. By so doing, they agreed to proclaim a state that was not secular and not Islamic. This nature of state was maintained when Indonesia proclaimed its independence, but the Constitution of the state was modified in 18 August 1945 by PPKI (*Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia*) to appease the demand of the Christians in eastern Indonesia, Kalimantan, and the Batak land as well as those "*abangan*" Muslims who did not want to comply with Shari'a (Islamic law) and dominated PPKI. These constitutional changes were about the task of the state in supporting the Muslims to implement Shari'a. Apart from the removal of the Jakarta Charter, the Muslim traditionalists, namely NU, Perti, and Jami'atul Wasyilah, based on the principles of the Fiqh paradigm, namely the main goal of establishing an independent state would not be nullified by the subsidiary goal for struggling an Islamic state, had justified the birth of the Republic of Indonesia so that they participated actively in the national political system. On the other hand, the modernist Muslims accepted this idea of a secular state because their representatives were in the minority both in BPUPKI and PPKI. Accordingly, they persisted in their efforts of establishing the idea of an Islamic state by

supporting the political party of Masyumi until 1960. In this regard, Wahid was convinced that the root of the NU exodus from Masyumi was due to this different paradigm.

The modernist Muslims struggled to establish an Islamic state constitutionally following the general election in 1955 which was intended to arrange a permanent Constitution for Indonesia, given that the Indonesian Constitution of 1945 was a temporary one. They did not attract enough supporters to support an Islamic state so that they reduced their stand point by supporting the NU proposal of reinstalment of the Jakarta Charter to the Constitution of 1945. The followers of the secular paradigm challenged this NU proposal so that the Constituent Assembly failed to fulfil its task of formulating the permanent Constitution of Indonesia. Accordingly, President Soekarno dissolved this Constituent Assembly and the parliament and, then, issued a decree to reinstall the Constitution of 1945 with the national ideology of Pancasila without the Jakarta Charter. The traditionalist Muslims did not persist with their proposal and were willing to put aside their ideas on the worldly affairs because they considered the concepts of not holding absolute truths, although the concepts were related to Islam. In this regard, NU did not pursue a clear-cut black and white attitude toward the social phenomena as Islamic or non-Islamic concepts (Haidar, 1998, p. 6). They had supported Soekarno's decree to reinstall the Constitution of 1945 without the Jakarta Charter because they found justification from the principle of the Fiqh paradigm that a decision for public affairs should be supported by the majority voice of the people (Abdurrahman Wahid, 2007b, p. 300), not from the texts of al-Qur'an and hadiths. However, they supported the autocratic Soekarno regime with the intention of countering the influence of PKI both in the government and Parliament. Conversely, the modernist Muslims did not want to join with the Soekarno regime as well as the appointed members of Parliament. They considered that the dissolution of the Parliament by Soekarno was contradiction to Islamic law as Parliament is the manifestation of the people's voice, so that Soekarno had robbed the voice of the people

Wahid argues that NU's proposal and its support for Masyumi's proposal of an Islamic state was likely fulfilling a compulsory task (*jalb al-masalih*) in worldly affairs, but NU carried out these tasks based on its capabilities in regard to some constraining factors. And NU discarded its concepts if they caused negative impacts which harmed NU itself or Indonesians in general: to cause political instability generally which would hinder the establishment of the religious order. From the above discussion, we understand that the traditionalist and modernist Muslims developed different approaches to the issue of Islam and the state, although both supported the Jakarta Charter in 1945 and 1959. The modernist Muslims advocated an Islamic ideological paradigm aspiring to an Islamic state. On the other hand, the traditionalist Muslims, namely NU, tried to reinstall the Jakarta Charter based on the idea of the supremacy of Shari'a, not the state, such as advocated by Ibn Taymiyah following the collapse of the caliphate. Indeed, the modernist Muslims claimed that the idea of an Islamic state was the advanced development of the idea of Ibn Taymiyah which would implement Shari'a into the state. They advocated the monolithic understanding of Shari'a for the

purposes of unifying the Muslims against the followers of modern ideologies. By so doing, they ignored the Islamic tradition which acknowledges the plural manifestations of Shari'a in the form of the Fiqh. It was not surprising that they were more obsessed with the modern idea of ideology for their own purposes of establishing an national Islamic state. In this regard, Wahid criticizes them in his article titled "*Jangan Paksakan Ideologi Asing pada Islam*" (Abdurrahman Wahid, 1999b, pp. 165-171) and argues that Muslims should understand worldly life based on Islamic cosmology, namely the Fiqh paradigm, which is neutral to any political system. In line with this Wahid supported the Republic of Indonesia based on the national ideology of Pancasila, but he was critical of Soeharto regime which did not rule based on the principles of liberal democracy.

Wahid and the sub-ordination of Shari'a into the national law

Wahid has departed from the classical Fiqh paradigm and embarks on the Fiqh-plus paradigm as he incorporates the developments of modern science into the Islamic tradition. He interprets Islamic tradition in the light of modern knowledge and argues that Islam supports liberal democracy. It is due to his political approach to the relationship between Islam and the state which requires the government to rule democratically. He no longer adopts a legal formal approach that the state is to implement Shari'a, rather, considers democracy as one of the substances of Shari'a. His thought on democracy is a kind of subordination of Shari'a into the national law and it is also a kind of quasi-norm which should be respected by government (Abdurrahman Wahid, 2007b, p. 303). This implies that he supports the Republic of Indonesia with its national ideology of Pancasila in the light of liberal democracy. In this regard, Wahid challenged the Soeharto regime which advocated theory of integralistic state to maintain his power (Pranarka, 1985, pp. 42-43).

Pluarlity of Shari'a

Muslims agree that they should live by the religious regulations, namely Shari'a (Islamic laws), however they differ in what they mean by Shari'a. Wahid challenged monolithic Shari'a advocated by the followers of Islamic ideological paradigm as the formulation of Shari'a is bound to the existing social system. It is due to the Qur'an, as the source of Shari'a, not regulating the details of human life so that the product of Shari'a, namely Fiqh, is contingent upon the prevailing social system. Accordingly, Shari'a is the reformulation of Islamic teachings from its sources, the Qur'an and *hadiths*, by the clerics. Most clerics agree upon the matters of ritual teachings (*ibadah*) that have been regulated completely by the Qur'an and *hadiths*, but they have different views concerning the role of Islam in social life, namely culture, including in matters of Islam and state. In this regard, there are three paradigms on the relationship of Islam and the state. Firstly, the secular paradigm believes in the separation of religion, namely Islam, from the state as better for both because it is to avoid the politicization of religion and the sacralisation of politics. Secondly, the Islamic ideological paradigm argues that Islam is superior to worldly systems, including the state, so that it does not agree with the secular nature of the state. That is why its supporters try to make use of the state to implement Shari'a (Islamic law). Thirdly, the Fiqh paradigm believes that Islam

and culture, including the state, are different identities, but both should develop mutual legitimacy (Abdurrahman Wahid, 1999a, p. 54).

Wahid advocated the third paradigm, the Fiqh paradigm: Islam makes use of the existing culture, including the state, as a means of implementing Islamic teachings. This paradigm acknowledges the different manifestations of Islam based on the different cultures with their various social systems so that its supporters believe in the plurality of Shari'a (Abdurrahman Wahid, 2007a, p. 20). In the case of Indonesia, Islam does not function as the foundation of the state, but just as social ethics to the run of the state. In line with this, he was critical of the secular regimes, especially the Soeharto regime, which tried to incorporate culture, including Islam, to the state. This was due to his belief that culture and Islam should function as critical forces to the state which naturally tends to be misused by the ruler.

The Fiqh paradigm considers the importance of the state based on its function not on its form as Islamic or not. This is in contradiction to the Islamic ideological paradigm which believes in the monolithic Shari'a which would unify the Muslims against other ideologies in the pursuit of an Islamic state. Wahid believes that the Fiqh paradigm expresses the true religious law as it defines what is lawful and unlawful in every aspect of human beings in the view of Islam. In other words, Fiqh is a kind of effort of adjusting culture to Islam through a mechanism of legitimacy: filtering and, then, supporting the culture. Accordingly, he believes that the manifestation of Islam in Indonesia is different from other countries or regions as they have different cultures. In line with this, Wahid did not agree with the legal formal Shari'a and argued for the substantial Shari'a as the Republic of Indonesia is based on the national ideology of Pancasila.

The followers of the Fiqh paradigm are likely to speak in terms of Fiqh rather than in those of Shari'a because of their denial of the monolithic Shari'a. For them, Shari'a should be contextual. Accordingly, Fiqh relativise the religious law in relation to the social system. In this regard, NU differentiates which is a religious practice (the rituals of Islam) and which is a non-religious practice (culture). In the view of the principles of Fiqh, in the matter of rituals, Islam follows the principle of "*al-aslu fil ibadah tahrimuha, illa idza al-dalilu 'ala tajwiziha*" (The origin of regulation for rituals of Islam is everything is unlawful, except there is specific regulation for the matter); meanwhile, in the matter of non-rituals, Islam follows the principle of "*al-aslu fil mu'amalah tajwiziha, illa idza dalla addalilu 'ala tahrimiha*" (The origin of regulation for non-religious practice is everything is lawful, except if there is specific regulation which bans the case). For NU, the religious guidance is not always from Qur'an and *hadiths*, but possible through other methods such as *ijma* (consensus), *qiyas* (analogy), and *urf* (local tradition). Regarding Islamic texts not mentioning a specific form of a state, NU did not consider establishing an Islamic state as a religious obligation so that it was willing to negotiate the form of state with other socio-political forces (Abdurrahman Wahid, 2007b, p. 300).

Wahid understands that the NU's support for the contemporary political system or regimes was different from one time to another. He argues that the NU's support for the

Netherland East Indies was in terms of country, not in terms of the state, because it did not participate in the management of the state. In this regard, NU justified the existence of the NEI because the latter facilitated an institution for managing internal Muslim affairs in a way acceptable to the NU. Meanwhile, in 1945 NU justified the Republic of Indonesia in terms of its acceptance of the form of the state with its national ideology. By doing so, NU leaders have participated in the governance of the state since 1945, both as officials and politicians. At last, in 1984 NU accepted the supremacy of the national ideology as it adopted Pancasila as the basis of its organization which implies the goals of Indonesian government is similar to those of NU (Abdurrahman Wahid, 1989, pp. 11-12). When the Soeharto regime tried systematically to marginalize the role of NU in national political life, some NU leaders responded creatively to assure the existence of NU without losing its critical stand towards the regime. NU was the first mass organization to accept Pancasila as the only basis for political party and mass organization. This flexibility is rooted in NU's Fiqh paradigm approach to the relationship between Islam and the state, recognizing Islam and the state as different entities, besides NU's understanding of the plurality of Shari'a. It was not easy for the followers of the Islamic ideological paradigm to accept Pancasila as the basis for their organizations because they believe in the monolithic Shari'a.

Apart from the modernist Muslims' adoption of Islamic ideological paradigm, the Soeharto regime developed more accommodation to them than to the traditionalist Muslims, especially NU, as the regime tried to make use of them to reduce the political role of the traditionalist Muslims. Consequently, in 1984 NU corrected its political preference to PPP (the United Development Party) and declared its neutrality to any political parties. As a result, the Soeharto regime became more favourable to the followers of NU, but it was not easy for him to co-opt Abdurrahman Wahid, the executive leader of NU. Accordingly, the regime continued developing close cooperation with the modernist Muslims within ICMI for the purpose of marriage of convenience: the regime made use of them to create a political balance to the military, meanwhile the modernist Muslims persuaded the regime to support their agenda for bureaucratization of Islam in the form of creating 'Islamic society' (*masyarakat Islam*) (Subianto, 2008, p. 176). In this regard, Wahid was critical of ICMI for its support of the autocratic regime as well as its agendas of bureaucratization of Islam, which he considers, would hinder the development of religious communities playing the role of civil society.

Sub-ordination of Shari'a into national law

Wahid admits that the Republic of Indonesia is a kind of a secular state and this has been justified by the NU, the traditional Muslim organization. Indeed, he continued the legacy of the NU and considered the previous NU leaders had pursued correct responses to the existing political system. Wahid argues that the theory of secularization has similarity with the Fiqh paradigm which recognizes Islam and the state as having different identities. It is not surprising that he already develops the idea of sub-ordination of the Shari'a to the national law in 1975. Indeed, the Fiqh paradigm is a theory of a moderate secularization as it provides a religious justification for the secular state.

Based on the Fiqh paradigm, Wahid does not agree with the authoritarian secular Soekarno and Soeharto regimes which tried to incorporate culture into the state bureaucratization in the guise of a theory of an integralistic state, firstly introduced by Prof. Mr. Soepomo. Wahid argued that culture should be independent of the state's intervention as the former functions as the sources of values as well as the standard of conduct of the state. As one of the value sources, Islam also should function to provide the standard of conduct of the state and accordingly, he challenged ICMI's efforts of subordinating Islam to the state in the form of bureaucratization of Islam to the state.

Wahid developed the Fiqh paradigm into the Fiqh-plus paradigm as he incorporated the development of modern science into the Islamic tradition, namely the Fiqh paradigm. By so doing, he interprets Islamic tradition in the light of modern knowledge. In line with this, he understands liberal democracy as the modern implementation of *syuro*. Accordingly, he does not hesitate about justifying the Republic of Indonesia with Pancasila as its national ideology. Furthermore, he proposes to sub-ordinate Shari'a into the national law, as he no longer believes in legal formal Shari'a, but in the substantive Shari'a. By so doing, he argues that democracy is a kind of the substantive Shari'a which should be implemented in the societal system, including the political system. This is due to his scepticism about the idea of an Islamic state in which the rulers often rule autocratically. That is why he proposes democracy as a quasi-norm which should be respected by those who hold political authority. Wahid's thought on democracy was his response to the Soeharto autocratic regime which did not tolerate different ideologies. It was also to revitalize Islam from its marginal role in the Indonesian national political system as well as to resolve the existing conflict between secular and Islamic aspirations (Abdurrahman Wahid, 1999b, p. 101).

His thought on democracy was also a response to ICMI's sectarian understanding of democracy which pursued the dominant role for Islam (Leppenas, 1983, p. 34) and, moreover, to implement Islamic law (Shari'a) (Feener, 2007, p. 112). ICMI was established in the late 1990 and signified the success of the modernist Muslims in approaching the secular President Soeharto who had been searching for a way to balance or counter the rise in the power of the military. It was just possible for Soeharto to approach them following the acceptance of Pancasila as the only foundation for socio-mass organizations as well as political parties in 1985. It was likely that the hegemonic political power of Soeharto forced the modernist Muslims to adjust to the acceptable political system by the regime. In this regard, they did not pursue their political Islam via political parties, but by securing bureaucratic positions as well as empowering social economic activities. In fact, they did not develop a socio-cultural approach, but a structural approach from modern ideology, as they tried to change the political structure of the state in the long run. I agree with Benny Subianto that 'ICMI was obviously political in nature or had direct political implications' (Subianto, 2008, p. 176).

Democracy as quasi-norm

Wahid has persuaded Muslims to accept the prevailing social systems as the most appropriate and perhaps only medium for implementing universal Islamic values. He understands that Islam and the social system in Indonesia are not exclusive of, but interrelated with each other. This is in line with the holistic character of Islam that the fulfilment of the spiritual aspect requires efforts from the material aspect. In other words, the fulfilment of spiritual values is closely related to the material activities happening in the societies or in the environment. For example, it is impossible to establish justice or freedom outside the framework of social systems. In the case of Indonesia, he accepts the prevailing socio-political system, namely the Republic of Indonesia with its national ideology of Pancasila, and considers it as the final political aspiration of Muslims in Indonesia. In line with this, he affirms the modern concept of democracy as the foundation of nation state and considers it as the modern application of the principle of *syuro* (deliberation). Wahid argued for the substantive form of Shari'a in the form of democracy as a quasi-norm which would direct the course of the state (Abdurrahman Wahid, 2007b, p. 303). By so doing, Wahid tried to synchronize the mission of Islam and that of the national state. In other words, Wahid's adoption of democracy was a kind of subordination of Shari'a into the national law.

This subordination of Shari'a into the national law is the result of Wahid's adoption of the political approach to the relationship between Islam and the state : that he did not want to establish an Islamic state, but to control the ruler in order to rule by the principle of *syuro*. This is due his scepticism about the idea of an Islamic state in which rulers do not always rule by Shari'a. Accordingly, he focuses on the idea of democracy as the standard for developing a relationship between people and the rulers. Wahid argues that religion, namely Islam, should civilize the secular nature of politics, but should refrain from being an Islamic state. Moreover, he believes that secularization happens when the state is stronger than Islam as he considers that Islam puts emphasis on its teachings, not on its institutionalization (Bahar, 1999, p. 83). Spirituality plays a moral function in life, while in his approach secularity becomes a tool for experiencing spirituality. This is contrary to the modernist Muslims who try to Islamize the state so that it will not be a secular state, a strategy designed with the purpose of challenging world ideologies such liberalism and communism. Wahid considers this kind of thought as a legal formal approach that uses the state for implementing a legal formal Shari'a. Wahid also commits to Shari'a, but not in the form of legal formal; rather he believes that democracy is the manifestation of the substance of Shari'a. By so doing, he tries to avoid the confrontation between Islam and other ideologies.

Wahid does not want to treat Islam as a kind of ideology because this is contrary to the Islamic tradition, as embodied in the Fiqh paradigm. It is not surprising that Qur'an, as the core of Islamic teachings and doctrines, is not a book on politics and only provides some moral ethics in order for the state to run effectively. He also believes that the state is a worldly affair, such as other kinds of social systems. He is also sceptical of the ruler's ability to uphold democracy as one of the goals of Shari'a. Moreover, power tends to corrupt so that a ruler

prefers to maintain the status quo by all means. Accordingly, it is likely for the ruler to be oppressive of followers of different understandings of Islam. Last but not least, an Islamic state tends to lead the politicization of Islam as well as the sacralisation of politics so that it endangers a healthy political system.

Wahid tried to employ democracy as the criteria for public reasoning in political affairs. In this regard, religion, namely Islam, is to tame the nature of politics which tends to rest on hard power. This is carried out by either a personal involvement in political processes to direct the run of the state within Islamic principles or an inclusion of substantive Islamic values in the political sphere. In other words, Wahid tries to infuse substantive Islamic values into public spheres and accordingly, religion enters into the public sphere. It is not meant to implement Islamic law (Shari'a) into government regulations formally, but it is to introduce the substantial meaning of Islamic laws, namely, universal values with the ambition of halting the secular trend of the modern era. For that purpose, the clergy and Islamic scholars are challenged to keep track of the development of Western sciences, especially social sciences, so that they are able to find out the truth in the context of the modern era so that they can understand theology in the new perspective.

Wahid's thought on democracy could be considered as a theology of Islamic democracy as he developed his thought based on the Fiqh paradigm which considers worldly life from a religious point of view. Wahid considers Fiqh as not just the practical religious law, but also the philosophical foundation of the religious law, in line with Imam Abu Hanifah and Imam Syafi'i, the founding fathers of the school of Islamic jurisprudence. For that purpose, he turned to modern science and philosophy in order to revitalize Islam in the modern era. What Wahid had done with his concept of democracy was his effort of accommodating the culture ('adah) into Islamic norms. Wahid was able to formulate a theology of democracy because he studied modern sciences and philosophy alongside his mastery of Islamic civilization.

Religious communities to play the role of civil society

As early as 1973, Wahid was critical of the Soeharto autocratic regime which did not try to create the mechanism of checks and balance within the society as the precondition for the development of democracy. Wahid's criticism of President Soeharto was not in the form of challenging the legitimacy of the regime, but expressed by advocating pesantren to play a role in civil society. This was likely Wahid's counter discourse to President Soeharto's understanding of modernization, namely the project of development. This move was to divert the marginalization of the pesantrens, considered inaccurately by the regime as the bastion of political Islam. It was not surprising that the pesantrens' followers had been the supporters of the NU party, but they recognized Islam and the state as different identities because they were the supporters of the Fiqh paradigm. Indeed, President Soeharto did not feel comfortable with any independent socio-political forces, such as the NU party (Subianto, 2008, p. 170).

The state was the prime mover of modernization, but the Western countries ignored this reality as the Soeharto regime committed to combat the influence of communism and Islamism. By modernization, Soeharto tried to centralize the power, not create strong civil society, and, then, was successful in co-opting political parties and some elements of civil society. Wahid tried to protect pesantrens from the cooptation of the regime so that he tried to empower pesantren communities in order to have awareness about their rights. By so doing, pesantrens were not only playing a supplementary role to the regime, but also a complementary role: participating actively in the course of modernization. He did not want pesantren just to be used by the government to legitimize the development programs, but rather held they should play a complementary role: pesantrens should be involved in the formulation of the goals of the developmental programs, their methods, and their targets (Abdurrahman Wahid, 1981, pp. 5-9).

In line with a true socio-cultural approach, Wahid's adoption of a structural approach was not to change the political structure of the state, but just political culture. In other words, this structural approach simply aimed to empower societies for having the role of civil society within the context of the Pancasila political system. In this regard, he does not agree with Marxists' revolutionary methods to change the national political system, because he believes that this revolutionary method violates humanism, respecting the life of the individual. Wahid calls these structural changes by means of evolutionary methods a simultaneous freedom which happens when all people develop following their own desires. By these methods, people should find comrades or allies in the prevailing structure in order to avoid the formation of a new tyranny in the name of people. Wahid believes that a true freedom movement is a freedom without any ideological justification, except the interest of human beings (Abdurrahman Wahid, 1999b, pp. 169-170). In this regard, Wahid views that, in the course of social changes, religion functions as supplementary, providing a medium for social transformation, not, conversely, a driver of social change. This is due to worldly affairs developing following its natural law, and religion influencing the course of it only as long as it is open to to receiving the influence of religion. This implies that Wahid does not want to make Islam an alternative tool for power, which would be a transplantation of an alien paradigm into religion (Abdurrahman Wahid, 1999b, p. 167).

Wahid's thought on the theology of Islamic democracy is a further elaboration of the theology of the social pillar. This theology of social pillar was his efforts of providing a philosophical framework for the manifestation of Islam in public life. By so doing, he argues that it is misleading to contrast Islam and liberalism, as in Islamists campaigning. Islamists repudiated a liberal state as it gives freedom to individuals. Indeed, they tended to control the individuals as were the cases in some Islamic states, such as in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Wahid analysed that the cause of this misleading perception was due to the Muslims' neglect of the social pillar as the midway between the pillars of faith (*Rukun Iman*), which are naturally individual, and those of Islam (*Rukun Islam*), which are implying the public goods. Wahid argued that the Qur'an 2: 177 also informs about this intermediary pillars, but most Muslims

understand *ihsan* in terms of personal life. On contrary, Wahid understands *ihsan* as public goods which would absorb the antagonistic natures of the individual and social life. In line with this, he believes that public goods are not aimed directly to both the Muslims and the God, but to all people, apart from their religious background. (Abdurrahman Wahid, 2001, p. 149).

Wahid's theology of social pillar was also to respond to Soeharto's adoption of Soepomo's integralistic theory, arguing for centralizing power. In line with this, Indonesian culture was respectful to the leader and this implied that people would give more power to the leader, namely the president. In this regard, President Soeharto followed the previous regime of Soekarno (Nasution, 1992, pp. 90-103). Through theology of social pillars, Islam respects the rights of the individual, such as the Islamic concept of *khulliyatul khams* (the five objectives of Shari'a), which is similar to the Universal Declaration of human rights.

In line with the political approach, Wahid tried to develop religious communities, namely pesantren communities of the NU, to play a role in civil society, providing checks and balance to the state, as the crucial element for the efficacy of the democratic institution. For that purpose, he tried to empower pesantren as the agents of community development. By so doing, he developed the social economic basis of pesantren which would support their civil society role. Moreover, Wahid provided the theological base so that their role was broader than that of the Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), and this included the theology of social pillars as well as a theology of Islamic democracy. This theological base enables pesantren to develop a mutual understanding amongst the followers of different religions as the backbone for the existence of civil society. Accordingly, Wahid tried to develop a series of dialogues to strengthen the mutual understanding. By so doing, the religious followers did not conflict with each other and accordingly, unified in an effort of controlling the cause of the state. These all came under his goal of developing a democratic culture in Indonesia.

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