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MUSLIMS' APPROACHES TO DEMOCRACY: Islam and Democracy in Contemporary Indonesia

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Abstract: This article seeks to provide a theoretical account of how Indonesian Muslims have approached Islam and democracy. Historical analysis, combined with literary overview, is deployed to trace the empirical passage of Indonesian Muslims in developing discourses on democracy. This article argues that a widely-religion-based democracy is on the way of making. Following this process, discourses and counter-discourses on democracy are simply inevitable. The point of departure on which Muslims frequently disagree with each other is whether or not the type of Indonesian democracy should follow the path of Western secular democracy. Accordingly, three approaches following these lively discourses on democracy came into existence: First, the Huwaydian approach that claims the compatibility of Islam and democracy. Second, the Mawdudian approach that stands in an ambiguous position between rejecting and accepting democracy. Third, the Qutbian approach which argues that democracy is inimical to Islam by definition. Despite the risk of oversimplification and conceptual discrepancy, the three terms are utilized merely for the purpose of sociological categorization.

Key words: Mawdudian, Qutbian, Huwaydian, Islamism, democracy.

Introduction

Many believe that Indonesia's democracy is underway. The past presidential and parliamentary elections in 2004, followed by massive regional elections for the positions of governor, regent and mayor all over the country, prove to be a promising sign of nascent Indonesian democracy. More importantly, this achievement is attributed to the

unique yet, to some extent, successful combination of Islam and democracy. There are some important figures deserve to be mentioned with regard to successfulness of the so-called Islam-based democracy, such as Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, Amien Ra'is, and so forth. They are not only considered to be able to develop positive discourses on democracy but also able to manufacture it on practical bases. The questions, however, would be: to what extent Indonesia can be called as a democratic country? Is there any historical or theological precedence to the successfulness of Indonesian democracy? How Muslims generally approach to democracy?

In line with those questions, this article seeks to shed light on the conceptual definition of democracy in Indonesian context, followed by an overview of the empirical experience of democracy under both the New Order regime and the post-New Order one, and will be concluded by a brief discussion on Muslims' approaches to democracy. The core concept developed throughout this article is that despite "illiberal" in nature, Indonesian Muslims are on the process of crafting democracy of their own based on a multifaceted mixture of social, historical and political capitals.

Conceptualizing Democracy in Indonesian Context

Defining democracy in Indonesian context is an arduous task. This can be understood from the fact that Indonesia proves to have shown a huge and complex variety of idiosyncrasy throughout its historical encounters with many external elements of the "outer" world which might be comparatively different from the Western concept of democracy. This is not to suggest that in order to understand democracy in this country one should be engaged in exceptionalist scholarship about the cultural specificity of Indonesia, for culture may not be inhospitable to democracy or good governance. The extent to which Indonesia is more or less receptive to democracy is not solely attributed to cultural factor as such, since one should also take such other variables as global and national political constellation into account. For sure, a single monolithic theoretical perspective won't undoubtedly be of the advantage to fully understand the trajectory of democracy in this world's largest Muslim-majority country. This notion reminds us to what Ghassan Salamé has pointed out in his *Democracy without Democrats* that there may not be many democrats in the Muslim

world, but that does not render the idea of democracy irrelevant or indefensible.¹

At this point, one may assume that democracy in Indonesia is underway or in transition towards democracy, despite the winding and sinuous road this country will have to go through, a general route that most, if not all, countries travel during democratization process.² A transition approach thus might see the likelihood of Indonesia's democracy as just a matter of time, on the condition that this country can succeed in passing through several critical phases.³ Viewed from this perspective, it is widely believed that Indonesia is in a historic period of transition from authoritarian rule to democratic political governance. Apart from the destructive excesses democracy might bring about such as ethnic and religious conflicts and regional separatism, the transition to a more democratic order has opened up unprecedented freedom, giving the Indonesian people for the first time a choice to elect their own leaders and the liberty to organize themselves based on their own preferences.⁴

¹ Ghassan Salamé, "Introduction: Where are the Democrats?" in Ghassan Salamé (ed.), *Democracy without Democrats: The Renewal of Muslim Politics?* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), p. 3.

² See, for example, R.W. Liddle, "Indonesia's Democratic Transition: Playing by the Rules," in A. Reynolds (ed.), *The Architecture of Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 373-99; Damien Kingsbury and Arief Budiman (eds.), *Indonesia: the Uncertain Transition* (Adelaide: Crawford House Publishing, 2001); and Abubakar E. Hara, "The Difficult Journey of Democratization in Indonesia," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 23, No. 2 (Aug 2001), pp. 307-26.

³ According to Dankwart Rustow, there are four phases a given country should be engaged before a democracy comes into being in the first place. First, the phase of national unity at what time the concept of a state is being formed or revisited. Second, inconclusive political struggle which can sometimes be so intense that it could tear national unity apart or cause one group to become so powerful that it overwhelms the opposition, concludes the [inconclusive] political struggle, and closes off the route to democracy. Third, first transition or decision phase, a historical moment when the parties to the inconclusive political struggle decide to compromise and adopt democratic rules which gives each some share in the polity. Fourth, there is the second transition or habituation phase when a democratic regime may be said to be firmly established. For further discussion on this issue, see, Dankwart Rustow, "Transition to Democracy," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 2 (April 1970), pp. 337-63.

⁴ Baladas Ghoshal, "Democratic Transition and Political Development in Post-Soeharto Indonesia," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 26, No. 3 (2004), pp. 506-29.

It is clear that at one aspect, the collapse of the authoritarian regime of Suharto's New Order in May 1998 proves to have displayed a promising dawn for Indonesia's democracy. Many have predicated this political transition as the era of *reformasi* (reformation era), signifying a replacement of the old corporatist-centralized-authoritarian political system with a new democratic order.⁵ Liberalization of politics by means of free and fair general election which allows wider access of political participation of the grass-roots is one of the most evident features of the establishment of democracy institution in this country.

Viewed from the "minimalist" definition of [electoral] democracy, Indonesia may be categorized as a democratic country due to its ability to manage past two consecutive free and fair general elections in 1999 and 2004.⁶ In this context, it is not exaggerated that this democratic mechanism has led to the birth of Indonesia as the world's third largest democracy.⁷ Despite this successful story, many are less optimistic about the future of democracy in the country. The questions would be: what type of democracy is likely to take shape in the country? Does the ouster of Suharto's dictatorship regime of the New Order by design guarantee the anchoring of democratic elements and institutions? Or, would democracy be employed by predatory demagogues to launch and execute their megalomaniac political ambitions and agenda? As political and social changes in this country proved to be very slow in response to the global demands of democratization, the answers to these questions remain so far uncertain.

It is within those complex and uneasy issues such pessimism emerges at various degrees. A few but significant scholarly studies on the trajectory of democracy in Indonesia seem to share this pessimism. The replacement of the New Order regime with a more democratic order is often viewed cynically as pouring "new wine in the old

⁵ See, Arief Budiman, Barbara Hatley and Damien Kingsbury (eds.), *Reformasi: Crises and Change in Indonesia* (Melbourne: Monash Asia Institute, 1999).

⁶ The successful story of 2004 general election has been described a headline of respected newspaper of London, *The Economist*, as a "shining example" of Indonesia. See, "Leaders: Indonesia's Shining Example," *The Economist*, Vol. 372 (Jul 10, 2004), p. 10.

⁷ Olle Törnquist, "Dynamics of Indonesian Democratisation," *Third World Quarterly* 21, No. 3 (2000), p. 406.

bottle”.⁸ The shift mentality in Indonesian politics seems to go nowhere from the old paradigm in a way that the replacement of the old regime does not nurture a fertile ground for democracy in its “liberal” sense. The emergence of democracy seeds in this country is undervalued by many as a new cleavage of the same essence. At this point, explicating the seemingly gloomy picture of democracy in the country should first of all be situated in ceaseless attempts at defining what sort of democracy will be viable in Indonesian context with all of its complexity.

One of the most obvious burdens for Indonesia in developing democracy concerns not only with the authoritarian image of the past which is not easy to eradicate, but also with such a stereotypical image of culturalist viewpoint that Indonesia is unlikely to achieve democracy simply because this country represents the largest Muslim community in the world. Volpi, for instance, basing himself on Diamond’s theoretical construct, sees the phenomenon of the emergence of democracy in the Muslim world as a “pseudo-democracy,” a salient political reality he describes as “a political order that tries to look like a liberal democracy without trying to becoming one.”⁹ The reason behind this phenomenon is that, he argues, “by mimicking democracy the powers-that-be are able to secure a domestic advantage that they could not obtain otherwise—i.e. by being either fully democratic or fully authoritarian.”¹⁰

Nevertheless, while acknowledging instrumental rationales contributing to the formation of pseudo-democracy such as the lack of democratic institutions and mechanisms, Volpi concludes that viewing democratization in the Muslim world solely from this perspective can quickly become counterproductive. This is in large part to the existence of a universal drive that favors essentialist definitions of democracy without necessarily trapped in Western liberal sense. In his definition, “pseudo-democracy” is not a down-graded form of liberal

⁸ For a succinct discussion on the legacy of the New Order in the transition era, see, for example, Vedi Hadiz, “Retrieving the past for the future? Indonesia and the New Order legacy,” *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2000), pp. 10-33.

⁹ Frédéric Volpi, “Pseudo-Democracy in the Muslim World,” *Third World Quarterly* 25, No. 6 (2004), pp. 1061-1078. For further discussion on Diamond’s “pseudo-democracy” theory, see, Larry Diamond, “Thinking about Hybrid Regimes,” *Journal of Democracy*, 13, No. 2 (2002), pp. 21-35.

¹⁰ Volpi, “Pseudo-Democracy in the Muslim World,” p. 1063.

democracy, but it should be appreciated as a stepping-stone towards the construction of a different kind of democracy –be it republican, theocratic or Islamic.¹¹ The theoretical description of the Indonesian pseudo-democracy coincides with what Larbi Sadiki refers to as “façade democracy,” a condition rampant in most of the Muslim world in which electoral democracy is not accompanied at the same time by civic engagement, law enforcement, alternation of power, freedom of press and organization.¹²

On the basis of comparative analysis of the Turkish and Indonesian cases, Volpi found that one of the contributing factors behind the slow movement towards democracy in the Muslim world is the internal constraint, in the sense that both the elites and the populace remain attracted to non-liberal democratic discourses and practices. In Indonesia, this paradigmatic stalemate could be clearly observed in the reluctance of pre-university students to turn their allegiance from the ideology of *Demokrasi Pancasila* to liberal democracy.¹³ As we might have noticed, *Demokrasi Pancasila* has been fossilized, mystified, and deployed as a full-fledged ideological justification of the authoritarian regime of Suharto’s New Order. Under this political order, opposition is considered unnecessary since decisions are made in consensus. The ruling government imposed a stringent ideological consciousness to the ruled by means of systematic political hegemony that unity and order is much more important than pluralism and accountability. The leader is supposed to be the paternal figure that maintains political order, economic prosperity, national stability and social harmony.¹⁴

The persistence of status-quo ideology and polity seems to suggest a glaring reluctance of Indonesia marching towards a new democracy. A close examination to the problems and complexities besieging two

¹¹ Ibid, p. 1075.

¹² Larbi Sadiki, “Political Liberalization in Bin Ali’s Tunisia: Façade Democracy,” *Democratization* 9, No. 4 (Winter 2002), pp. 122-141.

¹³ Mary Fearnley-Sander, et. al., “Political Learning during Reformasi,” *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 36, Vol. 2 (2001), pp. 325-346, as cited by Volpi, “Pseudo-Democracy in the Muslim World,” p. 1073.

¹⁴ For a helpful account on Demokrasi Pancasila, see, for instance, Hans Antlöv, “Demokrasi Pancasila and the Future of Ideology in Indonesia,” in Hans Antlöv and Tak-Wing Ngo (eds.), *The Cultural Construction of Politics in Asia* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000), pp. 203-22.

consecutive general elections of the 1999 and 2004 would justify this pessimism. Vedi Hadiz, for instance, on the basis of a close observation in two local cities of Indonesia, i.e. Yogyakarta and Medan, came to suggest that all types of problems of the general election such as money politics, vote buying, and the coalition of political gangster (*preman politik*) and black capital holders is not the price to liberal democracy, but the rationale of the existence of a “something else”—a non-liberal type of democracy driven by money politics and thuggery—that is already entrenched, and the variations of which can readily be found elsewhere.”¹⁵ He labeled the type of democracy having been developed in Indonesian polity as “illiberal democracy,” a sort of democracy in disguise, not democracy itself.¹⁶

Different from what the above-mentioned scholars’ viewpoint on Indonesia’s democracy, Vali Nasr argues that something called “Muslim Democracy” has been blossoming since the early 1990s in a number of Muslim-majority countries—all, interestingly, outside the Arab world—such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey.¹⁷ It should be noted that Nasr is of the proponent of the compatibility between Islam and democracy, although he does not provide an accurate measure of how and what type of democracy is likely to come into existence in the Muslim world. Nevertheless, he argues that Muslim Democracy is not particularly driven by an abstract, meticulously considerate theological and ideological accommodation between Islam and democracy, but rather by a pragmatic synthesis that is emerging in much of the Muslim world in response to the opportunities and demands produced by the ballot box. Parties have no choice except for making compromises and down-to-earth decisions in order to make the most of their own political performance be of advantageous in gaining their constituents’ interests under democratic rules of the game.¹⁸ In accordance with this pragmatic ideal, Nasr describes Muslim Democracy in Indonesian context as

¹⁵ Vedi R. Hadiz, “Reorganizing Political Power in Indonesia,” *The Pacific Review* 16, No. 4 (2003), p. 607.

¹⁶ Vedi R. Hadiz, “The Rise of neo-Third Worldism? The Indonesian Trajectory and Consolidation of Illiberal Democracy,” *Third World Quarterly* 25, No. 1 (2004), pp. 55-71.

¹⁷ Vali Nasr, “The Rise of ‘Muslim Democracy,’” *Journal of Democracy* 16, No. 2 (April 2005), pp. 13-27.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

“less a platform and more a space wherein a number of parties are struggling to strike the right balance between secular politics and Muslim values.”¹⁹

The rationale behind the success of Muslim Democracy, Nasr argues, can easily be found in regular competitive elections that have pushed Islamic parties toward pragmatism and pulled other parties into more hard-working attempts at epitomizing Muslim interests. The domino effect of such a contest is to reward moderation which is to win the middle ground. Democratic competition over the Muslim voters requires Muslim parties to incorporate all elements of the electorate, either those who vote based on Muslim values or those secular-minded voters, unified under broader platforms and wider coalitions which are more or less pragmatic in nature. This condition is what Nasr depicts as the “triumph of practice over theory and perhaps of the political over the Islamic.”²⁰ He adds that the future of Muslim politics seems to belong to those who can address to Muslim moral values, but within the framework of political platforms in democratic settings. Finally, it is believed that only Muslim Democracy can provide the Muslim world with the promise of moderation. Facing the dynamic of Muslim Democracy, Islamists will likely to find themselves caught up in a hard-rock of changing their ideological vision or suffering from marginalization.

Anies Rasyid Baswedan, on the basis of a close examination on what he calls “Political Islam,” proposes a similar argument with that of Vali Nasr regarding the trajectory of Muslim polity in Indonesia. In his view, different from the political orientation of the 1950s era, since the collapse of the Suharto’s New Order “Muslims” [the inverted commas are his] have become more pragmatic in their politics by focusing more on the policy level than on the state’s philosophical foundation.²¹ Taking this notion into consideration, one would be misleading to assume that Islamic political parties in this country are persistently committed to incorporating the Islamic *Shari’ah* into the body of the state. The shift in agenda and vision among Islamic political parties from ideological-Islamic to substantial-pragmatic

¹⁹ Ibid, p.17.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 26.

²¹ Anies Rasyid Baswedan, “Political Islam in Indonesia: Present and Future Trajectory,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLIV, No. 5 (September /October 2004), pp. 669-690.

signifies the paradigmatic shift of Muslims' political orientation as a whole, albeit the obstinate outlooks of some Islamist fringes outside the sphere of politics.²²

Given some remarkable achievements in developing democracy, internationally speaking, Indonesia is considered as "semi-democracy," a category used by World Values Survey to describe forty-seven countries around the globe that have experienced democracy for less than twenty years and have current Freedom House rating of 3.5 to 5.5.²³ Freedom House describes them as "partly-free" (others use the terms "transitional" or consolidating" democracies), to indicate that the given countries do not fully subscribe to "full-fledged democracy."²⁴ Despite the fact that the survey findings are always subject to debate and criticism, it is indeed difficult to deny the slow movement of democratization in Indonesia due to its complex challenges and constraints. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the survey dealt with empirical analysis on the basis of measurable procedures and standards, not with religion in normative sense. As a result, the assumption that Islam, as a majority religion in Indonesia, should be responsible for the slow process of democratization is theoretically unfounded.

²² Such a paradigm shift has been acknowledged by R. William Liddle, "New Patterns of Islamic Politics in Democratic Indonesia," in Amy McCreedy (ed.), *Piety and Pragmatism: Trends in Indonesian Islamic Politics* (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center, Asia Special Report, no. 10, 2003).

²³ There are four categories used by Freedom House to measure the length of democratic stability all countries around the world. Under the first category, "older democracies," are thirty-nine countries with at least twenty years' continuous experience of democracy from 1980 to 2000 and have Freedom House rating of 5.5 to 7.0. The second countries are called "newer democracies" comprising forty-three countries with less than twenty years' experience of democracy which have the most recent Freedom House rating of 5.5 to 7.0. The third is "semi democracies" consisting of forty-seven countries with less than twenty years' experience of democracy which have the most recent Freedom House rating of 3.5 to 5.5. And the last, fourth, category is called "non-democracies," consisting of the remaining sixty-two countries, with the Freedom House rating in 1999-2000 from 1.0 to 3.0. Under this categories are military-backed dictatorships, authoritarian countries, elitist oligarchies, and absolute monarchies. See, Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 52.

²⁴ Societies are defined based on the annual ratings provided by the Freedom House since 1972. The level of freedom is classified according to the combined mean score for political rights and civil liberties in its annual survey, *Freedom in the World*. Its full report can be accessed at: www.freedomhouse.org.

Democracy under the New Order Regime

During Suharto's New Order, there is no further betterment of the qualitative efforts of democratization process in a substantial sense. Suharto has indeed fairly successful in bringing Indonesia from a severe economic crises inherited by his predecessor into a more stable country.²⁵ Nevertheless, Suharto is considered to have failed in building the infrastructures of democracy, and he even has abused democracy through his authoritarian power. He has masked his authoritarianism by means of what his regime called "Demokrasi Pancasila," assuming a full-fledged combination between democracy and Indonesian values as embedded in Pancasila principles.²⁶ Pancasila had been a single lethal mantra of this regime to crush any type of political resistance and opposition. Through this concept, Suharto introduced the principle of "mono-loyalty" (*asas mono-loyalitas*) among Indonesian citizens. Suharto has never hesitated to arrest those who showed unwillingness to fuse into his regime and send them into jail. He, systematically with his regime, would stigmatize all his political opponents as being anti-Pancasila or not *Pancasilais*. Demokrasi Pancasila had been abused to curtail true democratic values and throw them into a garbage bin. Suharto has failed to restore his previous rotten regime and he was even trapped in maintaining Sukarno's dictatorship.

Be that as it may, outside the power circle emerged a positive awareness towards democracy. As Hefner aptly noted, "there were always Muslim intellectuals who took a less pessimistic view of the New Order government."²⁷ Some Muslim intellectuals have tried to formulate a theological basis for democratic civility based on their normative roots. Amin Rais deserves special mention when he, for the first time, made an open statement that there is no such an Islamic state.²⁸ This blatant statement had been further buttressed by some

²⁵ See, for instance, Adam Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia's Search for Stability* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2000).

²⁶ For a helpful account the New Order's perception on Pancasila, see, among others, Michael Morfit, "Pancasila: The Indonesian State Ideology According to The New Order Government," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 21, No. 8 (August 1981), pp. 838-51.

²⁷ Robert W. Hefner, "Islamization and Democratization in Indonesia," in Robert W. Hefner (ed.), *Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), p. 79.

²⁸ See, Amin Rais, "Tidak Ada Negara Islam," *Panji Masyarakat*, no. 376/1982.

leading Muslim intellectuals such as Mohammad Roem and Nurcholish Madjid, when he was away in the US taking his PhD program, through a more confirmed statement that there is no Islamic state.²⁹ Rais' statement triggered a new awareness among young Muslims not to romanticize in an Islamic-Golden-Age-imagination of the past. In forging democratic discourse, Rais' initiation laid a crucial base for further positive discourse on democracy among his contemporaneous counterparts. Since that time, the ideas of democracy have flourished very rapidly among intellectual Muslims such as Abdurrahman Wahid, Johan Effendi, Ahmad Wahib, Dawam Rahardjo, Aswab Mahasin, and still many others.³⁰

During his power, Suharto tried to domesticate "political Islam" through the incorporation of Muslims into his political circle by sponsoring the establishment of ICMI (Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim se-Indonesia, Association of Muslim Intellectuals of Indonesia) which was formed in December 1990.³¹ ICMI has quickly become a full-railway coach filled by a huge flock of Muslim bureaucrats and technocrats, rather than intellectuals. Led by Habibie, a leading technocrat of Suharto's most trusted right hand person, ICMI had been one the main backbones of Suharto's centralized and corporatist regime, in addition to military and Golkar party. Due to this reason, the establishment of ICMI had been severely criticized by some leading intellectuals such as Deliar Noer, Ridwan Saidi, Djohan Effendi and Abdurrahman Wahid as being sectarian, exclusivist, elitist and abusive to noble values of Islam.³² Instead of pioneering the intensification of democratization process, in its further development, ICMI to a great extent proves to have contributed to exacerbating the decay of power morality. This situation led several leading intellectuals such as Amin Rais and Emha Ainun Najib withdrew from ICMI on

²⁹ Their *Tidak Ada Negara Islam* is basically a response to what Amin Rais has provoked previously that there is no Islamic state in Islam through a mutual correspondence between Roem and Madjid.

³⁰ Aswab Mahasin, *Menyemai Kultur Demokrasi* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2000).

³¹ On the background of ICMI establishment, see, Hefner, "Islamization and Democratization in Indonesia," especially pp. 94-102; cf. Robert W. Hefner, "Islam, State, and Civil Society: ICMI and The Struggle for The Indonesian Middle Class," *Indonesia*, no. 56 (1993), pp. 1-35.

³² Hefner, "Islamization and Democratization in Indonesia," p. 100.

the grounds that this organization had been mistreated as a means of maintaining Suharto's power and the interests of limited people.

Democracy under the Post New Order Regime

Indonesia in the post-Suharto era has witnessed the shattering of democratic seeds painstakingly developed by Muslim intellectuals throughout the New Order regime. The political situation following the ouster of Suharto has once been uncertain, filled up with zero-sum-game violent acts perpetrated by those powers-that-be presumably disillusioned with the unprecedented shift of power structure. The movement of democratization stalled for sometime with the outbreak of bitter factional squabbles among political elites and horizontal communal conflicts between Christians and Muslims in several parts of the country.³³ The elite factionalism and communal conflicts in this era had complex genealogies. Nevertheless, the more immediate assumption on these tensions was Suharto's mismanagement of the diversity and heterogeneity of society. According to some observers, one of which is Hefner, instead of building a consensus on the terms of citizenship, "Suharto's New Order regime kept contenders for power off balance by playing rival ethnic, religious, and ideological groups against each other."³⁴ As a result, there was an enormous gap in terms of primordial identity among the members of society which later on stimulated those horizontal tensions.³⁵

The two consecutive general elections (1999 and 2004) had been much hoped to provide a smart solution for multidimensional crises

³³ For a discussion on ethno-religious conflicts in some of the eastern parts of Indonesia, see, among others, Gerry van Klinken, "The Maluku Wars: Bringing Society Back In," *Indonesia* 71 (April 2001), pp. 1-26; cf. Jacques Bertrand, "Legacies of the authoritarian past: Religious violence in Indonesia's Moluccan Islands," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 75, Iss. 1 (Spring 2002), pp. 57-85.

³⁴ Robert W. Hefner, "Muslim Democrats and Islamist Violence in Post-Soeharto Indonesia," in Robert W. Hefner (ed.), *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation, Democratization* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 276.

³⁵ The institutionalist approach deployed by Jacques Bertrand is particularly useful to remap the anatomy of horizontal conflicts during and post-The New Order Regime. This study reveals that mass violence and horizontal conflicts during the New Order regime and following the ouster of Suharto is a state-sponsored crime. For further account on this, see, Jacques Bertrand, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia* (Port Melbourne and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

and a smooth embarking spot for democratization process. Despite low, there are positive changes in the landscape of politics. In this regard, Rasyid Anies Baswedan identifies four significant changes in the political environment of Indonesia especially since the 1999 election. First is greater political awareness of Muslim voters not to cast their vote on the basis of ideological preferences, but much pragmatic. Second is the impact of what he calls as “staggered elections.” This has to do with changes in the Electoral Law which allow the presidential and general elections to be held separately. Third is the effect of decentralization launched since 1999 that contributes to the shaping of local politics. And fourth is in relation to Muslim voters’ agreement with the general idea of Islamic government and *Shari’ah* which, on the basis of the 2002 PPIM nationwide survey, seems to reflect a degree of ambivalence of Muslim attitudes. On the one hand, the Muslim respondents conform on the general idea of adopting *Shari’ah* but at the same time dispute how it should be implemented.³⁶

In post-Suharto era, the political orientation of Political Islam is not merely represented by parties that support formalization of the *Shari’ah* in the structure of the state, but more strikingly, also by those that support a non-religion-based state but welcome the incorporation of Islamic values and “Muslim” aspirations into government policy.³⁷ Baswedan’s general depiction of the current Political Islam can be used as a token to estimate the potential, factuality and trajectory of democracy in Indonesia. This leads to a preliminary assumption that political pendulum might have swung to a different direction from that of the 19950s and the New Order regime. As we might have known, the concept of democracy in those two regimes subjected very much to the manipulation and construction of the ruling elites, giving no choice to the ruled except receiving whatever political decisions had been made by the first. Since the ouster of Suharto onwards, the situation has significantly changed into different direction. The face of Political Islam in Indonesia has been diversified. Political liberalization has not only resulted in free and fair general election, but also in freedom of expression and political participation in a broader context.

³⁶ Anies Rasyid Baswedan, “Political Islam in Indonesia,” p. 683.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 679.

Three Approaches to Democracy

The extent to which democracy is regarded a legitimate concept to adopt in Islam has been heatedly debated amongst Indonesian Muslims particularly since the independence day (1945). Muslims' view on democracy can be seen in their response to whether or not Indonesia should adopt an Islamic state or secular one. This means that to explain the Muslims' approaches to democracy means, among other things, to trace their views and understandings of the relationship between Islam and the state. For almost six decades, the relationship between Islam and the state has been a major prism through which observers portrayed Muslims' conception of democracy. Another variable which is not less important seems to be missing in their discussion: explaining democracy through the prism of public realm. In this regard, Hefner's *Civil Islam* must be appreciated as a spearheading study that tries to examine Indonesia's democracy through this prism given despite the fact that his main focus is the concept of civil society, and not democracy itself.

Since the independence of Indonesia, democracy has meant many things for Muslims. It is no wonder that we may find an enormous diversity of views among them regarding the concept of democracy. A large variety of Muslims' approach to democracy is caused by a large variety of their cultural and educational backgrounds. In general, there are three main views regarding the democracy; the first view may be called as Huwaydian approach which accommodates democracy in a wider room. This camp views democracy more liberally and substantially in the sense that Islam is in itself contains the very democratic elements. This camp is represented by some liberal thinkers such as Abdurrahman Wahid, Nurcholish Madjid, Munawir Syadzali, and so forth. The second approach may be called Mawdudian which stands in between. On the one hand they reject the concept of democracy on the grounds that it represents a non-Islamic origin. On the other hand, they want to base their government on democratic structures and principles. This view is called Mawdudian because it is mainly inspired by Mawdudi's concept of theocracy with its derivatives in Indonesia such as theo-democracy,³⁸ Islamo-democracy,³⁹ Theistic

³⁸ This is Mohammad Natsir's term to denote that Islam can be democratic in certain extent. This notion will be discussed later on in this article.

³⁹ Anas Urbaningrum, *Islamodemokrasi: Pemikiran Nurcholish Madjid* (Jakarta: Penerbit Republika, 2004).

Democracy (*Demokrasi Teistik*),⁴⁰ Religious Democracy,⁴¹ and so on. This view is represented by Masyumi with its leaders like Muhammad Natsir. It is reminiscent of totalitarian view of Mawdudi who was obsessed with giving the state the sense of the sacred or Islamic. The third approach is Qutbian in which democracy is considered as “alien” to Islam and, therefore, the proponents of this approach reject democracy with all of its sorts and derivatives. Their perception of democracy is totalistic, clear-cut, and black-and-white: it belongs to *kaafir* (unbelievers) system. This school of thought is represented by most of the Islamists, either in political wing or cultural one.

It is noteworthy that in the formative period (post-independent), almost all Muslims viewed democracy in the way mentioned above. This is because they were so obsessed with establishing an Islamic state, a state which was based on the Qur’an and Hadith.⁴² In its future development, they have been ramified into many branches and streams owing largely to the inclusive exposure and encounter of their younger generations’ with such Western concepts as democracy. The education they have gone through has given significant influence in the shift paradigm among Muslims. Their familiarity with such a Western concept have brought about a significant changes among the younger generations of Masyumi and NU which were previously conservative enough in responding the concept of democracy.

Huwaydian Approach

This approach is attributed to Fahmi Huwaydi’s liberal standpoints of democracy in Islam.⁴³ Nurcholish Madjid (Cak Nur) is of the vigorous proponent of the view that Islam is democratic in nature.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ A. M. Fatwa, *Demokrasi Teistik: Upaya Merangkai Integrasi Politik dan Agama Indonesia* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2001).

⁴¹ Idris Thaha, *Demokrasi Religius: Pemikiran Politik Nurcholish Madjid dan M. Amien Rais* (Jakarta: Teraju, 2004).

⁴² This fact is particularly interesting in relation to Boland’s evaluation of the Muslim representatives in the BPUPKI such as Wahid Hasyim and Ki Bagus Hadikusumo. It is of course quite surprising to see the fact that Wahid Hayim, Abdurrahman Wahid’s father, was seen by Boland as the most radical among Muslim representatives. See, Boland, *The Struggle of Islam*, p. 29.

⁴³ See, Fahmi Huwaydi, *Al-Islam wa al-Dimugrahyyah* (Cairo: Mu’assasa al-Ahram, 1993).

⁴⁴ Due to his progressive ideas on Islamic renewal, Madjid –together with Abdurrahman Wahid– is classified by many as a neo-modernist Muslim thinker. See, Fachry Ali and Bahtiar Effendy, *Merambah Jalan Baru Islam:Rekonstruksi Pemikiran Islam*

He has stood toe-to-toe in constructing a firm theological basis for the compatibility of Islam with democracy.⁴⁵ He views democracy not only in the level of state structure (i.e., democracy as a constitutional habit) but also in the level of public life (i.e., democracy as the habit of individual Muslim's heart). He maintains that democracy is the most invaluable inheritance of human being and there is no other alternative which is considered more superior than democracy.⁴⁶ At the level of state structure, Madjid proposes the application of democracy in its liberal sense, in which the mechanism of checks and balances is maintained to avoid the abuse of power among the rulers and to safeguard the right of minority. In this regard, democracy, in his view, necessitates a legal opposition in a positive sense: not only to oppose, but also to counterbalance and support the ruling government.⁴⁷ At cultural level, Madjid further argues, democracy is no longer a noun, but a verb, signifying a process of democratization. Most likely inspired by Robert N. Bellah's *Beyond Belief*, Madjid maintains that democracy must be put into practice as a habitual act of heart. In this sense, democracy is considered as a way of life of civilized citizens with several points as follows: the principle of heterogeneity awareness, public deliberation, means justifies ends, a honest agreement, economic fulfillment and accurate social plan, pure freedom, and the need for democratic education and education of democracy.⁴⁸

In formulating the theological construct of democracy, Madjid refers to the roots of textual sources of Islam, both normative and historical. One of Madjid's most often cited reference is Muhammad's exemplary model of Madinan covenant (*al-mithaq al-madinah*) to which

Masa Orde Baru (Bandung: Mizan, 1986), pp. 176-77; cf. Abdullah Saeed, "Ijtihad and Innovation in Neo-Modernist Islamic Thought in Indonesia," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1997), pp. 279-295.

⁴⁵ Nurcholish Madjid, "Kepemimpinan Demokrasi Lebih Dekat dengan Islam," *Tsaqafah*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2004): pp. 78-81.

⁴⁶ Nurcholish Madjid, "Demokrasi dan Demokratisasi di Indonesia: Beberapa Pandangan Dasar dan Prospek pelaksanaannya sebagai Kelanjutan Logis Pembangunan Nasional," in Elza Peldi Taher (ed.), *Demokratisasi Politik, Budaya, dan Ekonomi: Pengalaman Indonesia Masa Orde Baru* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1994), p. 217.

⁴⁷ Nurcholish Madjid, *Dialog Keterbukaan* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1998), pp. 5-59.

⁴⁸ Nurcholish Madjid, "Transisi ke Demokrasi," in Fatsoen *Tekad* No. 16/year 1 (15-21 February 1999); cf. Madjid, "Demokrasi Dinamis," in Fatsoen *Tekad* No. 2/year 1 (9-6 November 1999), as cited by Syukron Kamil, *Islam dan Demokrasi: Telaah Konseptual dan Historis* (Jakarta: Gaya Media Pratama, 2002), p. 83 (f. 39).

Robert N. Bellah refers to as too advanced for Muhammad's era.⁴⁹ That is why Arab people, initiated by Mu'awiyah, the first caliph of the Umayyad caliphate, ceased to subscribe on to this political ethics simply because it is highly sophisticated for them. This political practice is viewed as the highest manifestation of commitment in mass involvement and participation for all of the members of society and the inclusiveness of its leaders based on their achievements evaluated in universal standards. This is because Muhammad himself, as Ibn Taymiyyah argues, only *ma'sum* (infallible) in his position as God's messenger, and not as an individual which is manifested in the succession of his leadership on the basis of public deliberation, not family lineage.⁵⁰

This practice, Bellah argues, is not a-historical ideological fabrication, because its roots can be traced until today through the Qur'an, Hadith as well as the Madinan covenant. Bellah claims that the Madinan covenant is the first document throughout the history of human being which is said to have ever laid the foundations for pluralism and tolerance. In this covenant it is acknowledged that all citizens of Madinah were equal before the law regardless their difference in religion and race, united in one community tied by the same rights and responsibilities such as freedom of religion and the responsibility of defending the state. What Madjid means by pluralism is the principle of heterogeneity which he receives as a taken for granted fact (*sunnah Allah*, natural law) and has positive values as well as the necessity for the sake of human's safe (Q.S. 2:251). While what he means by tolerance is not only restricted to the inner tolerance, but also outer tolerance with its more positive outlooks towards the religious others as religion consisting of salvation mission (Q.S. 3: 113).⁵¹

⁴⁹ For further discussion on Bellah's view of Islam, see his book, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row, 1970), especially pp. 146-67.

⁵⁰ See, his doctoral thesis on Ibn Taymiyya, "Ibn Taymiyya on *Kalam* and *Falsafa* (A Problem of Reason and Revelation in Islam)," (Unpublished Dissertation, Chicago: The University Of Chicago, 1984).

⁵¹ Nurcholish Madjid, "Asas-asas Pluralisme dan Toleransi dalam Masyarakat Madani," a paper delivered at the seminar "Masyarakat Madani dalam Perspektif Agama dan Politik," Jakarta, 22 February 1999, as cited by Syukron Kamil, *Islam dan Demokrasi*, p. 83.

On the basis of Madinan covenant, Madjid is convinced that there is no need to establish an Islamic state, because the purpose of the state is to uphold justice by preserving the rights of individual and at the same time respecting the freedom of others.⁵² In his view, the crux of the participation concept lies in the notion that the sovereignty belongs to people. It is within this framework that participation contains the very meaning of freedom and liberty, as mandated by the Constitution 1945. The importance of people sovereignty indicates that it is only through the participation of people can the state's ideals be accomplished. Without people participation, all state's ideals will mean nothing. While the sovereignty of the state, Madjid argues, is the continuum of the sovereignty of the people, the sovereignty of the people is the continuum of the sovereignty of individual in fulfilling his/her own decisions in all aspects of life.⁵³

In supporting his arguments, Madjid refers to Ibn Taymiyyah's concept of justice that God endorses the just government albeit un-Islamic and does not endorse a corrupt government albeit Islamic. For Madjid, the most important thing to do with regard to upholding justice is its economic aspect, where each individual has the same proportion of wealth access. It seems that Madjid is of the proponent of a democratic welfare state.⁵⁴ Madjid also bases his arguments of democracy on the Qur'an 1:6 in which God says: "*Ihdina>al-s>ira> al-mustaqim*" (Show us the straight way). In his opinion, Islam considers Man as having a fundamentally positive and optimistic nature (*fi>rah*), while at the same time having potential shortcomings. The Qur'an and Hadith guide Man, but this is in general form, not in detailed matters; and these give no explanation of how to implement this guide. For the detailed and practical matters, Man is required to conduct *ijtihad* (independent reasoning). As a social mechanism, the *ijtihad* can produce democracy which certainly implies deliberation and arguments. Because of Man's limitation, the *ijtihad* must be conducted collectively and democratically, especially in matters pertaining to

⁵² Nurcholish Madjid-Mohamad Roem, *Tidak Ada Negara Islam: Surat-surat Politik Nurcholish Madjid-Mohamad Roem* (Jakarta: Penerbit Djambatan, 1997), especially pp. 12-43.

⁵³ Nurcholish Madjid, *Cita-cita Politik Islam Era Reformasi* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1999), p. 197.

⁵⁴ Syukron Kamil, *Islam dan Demokrasi*, p. 70.

public affairs, and by asking God to guide the participants to the “straight way.”⁵⁵

Abdurrahman Wahid, the fourth president of Indonesia, is another important Muslim figure who propagates the viability of Islam and democracy in its liberal sense.⁵⁶ His understanding on Islam often invites further controversies among Muslims and some would classify him as a neo-modernist thinker.⁵⁷ Wahid wishes to make non-Muslims as citizen whose rights and responsibilities are equal with those Muslims, including the right to become the president in a Muslim majority country such as Indonesia. He disagrees with those who use the Qur’an (Q.S. 3:38) as the basis of their rejection to non-Muslims as a head of state, because God says “*awliya*” in this verse, which means friend or protector, and not “*umara*” which means the ruling people. In this regard, he compares the situation of the Indonesian politics to that of the US, in which everybody, including the people of the color is treated equally as their right to become president, despite the fact that this has never happened in this country.⁵⁸

In gender perspective, Wahid maintains that men and women have equal position. This is why they have the same portion in the inheritance law on the grounds that the Qur’an (4:11) (*li al-dhakari mithlu haz* } *al-unthayayn*, to the male, a portion equal to that of two females) uses the word *haz* } which means destiny or fate indicating a qualitative meaning, and it does not use the word *nas* } whose meaning is quantitative such as one or two. The word *haz* } encompasses rights and duties, while the word *nas* } encompasses only quantitative share. With such an interpretation, Wahid would redefine the inheritance law in Islam which stipulates equality between men and women. He also reinterprets the Qur’an (4:3) (*fa’in kabifitum an la’ia’dilufawab* } *datan*, but if

⁵⁵ Masykuri Abdillah, *Responses of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals to the Concept of Democracy* (Hamburg: Abera Verlag Meyer & Co. KG, 1997), p. 73.

⁵⁶ For a succinct account of Abdurrahman Wahid’s political ideas and practices, see, *Mujiburrahman*, “Islam and Politics in Indonesia: The Political Thought of Abdurrahman Wahid,” *Islam and Christian Muslim Relations*, Vol. 10, Iss. 3 (Oct 1999), pp. 339-52; cf. Douglas Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); cf. Abdurrahman Wahid, *Bunga Rampai dari Pesantren* (Jakarta: Dharma Bakti, 1979).

⁵⁷ Fachry Ali and Bahtiar Effendy, *Merambah Jalan Baru Islam:Rekonstruksi Pemikiran Islam Masa Orde Baru* (Bandung: Mizan, 1986), pp. 176-77.

⁵⁸ Masykuri Abdillah, *Responses of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals*, p. 104.

ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly [with them], then only one) in which justice (*al-'adala*) must be decided upon in relation to the object which in this case is a woman, and the woman's view is not individual but a general one. Formerly women allowed their husbands to take another wife, but now, he believes, most of the women do not allow such a practice.⁵⁹

With regard to the relationship between Islam and state, Wahid argues that Islam should act as a complementary factor for developing socio-economic and political system, not as an alternative factor that could have a disintegrative impact on life of nation as a whole. He notes that the Muslim community has come to accept Pancasila, the state philosophy, while at the same time still maintaining its "Islamic" way of life in its local and individual variants. Wahid, therefore, does not agree to the idealization of Islam as a political system. Instead, he suggests a functional view for integrating the universal perception of Islam and the national perception of a certain state. He rejects formalization of Islam by the state, including religious activities initiated and sponsored by the government. He also suggests the application of secularization process, in which religion must be treated outside the state authority.⁶⁰

At the cultural level, Wahid proposes his notion of "*pribumisasi Islam*" (indigenizing Islam) which evoked criticism among the Muslim community, because he proposed replacing the Muslim greeting "*al-salamu 'alaykum*" (peace be upon you) by Indonesian greetings, such as "*selamat pagi*" (good morning) or "*selamat sore*" (good evening), and the like.⁶¹ This does not mean that the Muslim community does not have the right to fill the life of the nation-state. Instead, he proposes the local contexts as determining factors in understanding Islam. For Wahid, democracy is all about take-and-give practice in order to maintain the heterogeneity of Indonesia. He is concerned with the protection of minority. He is of the critics of the Suharto's New Order regime, and he severely criticized the ICMI (*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim*

⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 107-08.

⁶⁰ Ibid, pp. 195-96.

⁶¹ Abdurrahman Wahid, "Pribumisasi Islam," in Muntaha Azhari and Abdul Mun'im Saleh (eds.), *Islam Menatap Masa Depan* (Jakarta: P3M, 1989), p. 81.

se-Indonesia, Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals) as sectarian and perceived it as Suharto's trojan horse.⁶²

Wahid's real endeavor is obvious in developing an open discourse on democracy by establishing Fordem (*Forum Demokrasi*, Forum for Democracy).⁶³ This initiative was undertaken by Wahid as a response to the hegemony of ICMI in the state and public structures by arguing that "the struggle for democracy and justice must take precedence over less inclusive concerns, including those of the Muslim community."⁶⁴ Islam, he goes on to argue, should not be idealized so that it is regarded as the only ground for democracy, law, or economic justice. Rather, Islam should serve as an inspirational base for a national framework of a democratic society. Even though Forum Demokrasi was not banned, the government showed its displeasure with Wahid's initiative and ideas on democracy. As a consequence, the government refused to reappoint him to be an MPR (Majlis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, The People's Consultative Assembly) member on October 1992.⁶⁵

Mawdudian Approach

The Mawdudian approach understands and approaches the relationship between Islam and democracy in a somewhat ambiguous position: neither rejects nor accepts democracy. Mohammad Natsir, one of the most outstanding leaders of the Masyumi, may be classified into this camp.⁶⁶ It is very likely that the genealogy of Natsir's Mawdudian approach to democracy might be traced from the fact that both knew one another as a friend.⁶⁷ This close friendship lends, to

⁶² For further account on Wahid's argument in criticizing ICMI, see, Abdurrahman Wahid, "Intelektual di Tengah Eksklusifisme," in Nasrullah Ali-Fauzi (ed.), *ICMI: Antara Status Quo dan Demokratisasi* (Bandung: Mizan, 1995).

⁶³ Adam Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting, Indonesia in the 1990s* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1994), especially pp. 186-193.

⁶⁴ Robert W. Hefner, "Islam and Democratization in Indonesia," in Robert W. Hefner and Patricia Horvath (eds.), *Islam in an Era of Nation-States: Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), pp. 100-01.

⁶⁵ Abdurrahman Wahid, "Indonesia's Muslim Middle Class: An Imperative or a Choice?," in Richard Tanter and Kenneth Young (eds.), *The Politics of Middle Class Indonesia* (Clayton: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990), p. 29.

⁶⁶ Yusril Ihza Mahendra, "Combining Activism and Intellectualism: the Biography of Mohammad Natsir (1908-1993)," *Studia Islamika*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1995), pp. 117-131.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 218.

large extent, a mutual take-and-give intellectual exchange between the two. In relation to the relationship between religion and state, for instance, Natsir's view is very much similar to that of Mawdudi: Islam must be referred to as the sole foundation of the state.⁶⁸ In dealing with public matters, Natsir suggests that the basic principle upon which Muslims must be relied is *shura* (public deliberation). The extent to which this principle should be implemented, Muslims should render to *ijtihad* (independent reasoning, intellectual endeavor), because Islam does not provide a stringent and definite blue-print for that.⁶⁹

Nevertheless, his view of democracy is ambiguous. On the one hand, he accepts democracy in the negative sense that Islam is anti-*istibdad* (despotism), anti-absolutism, and anti-authoritarian which conforms to the basic elements of democracy. On the other hand, he disagreed if Islam relies too heavily on democracy because it has many shortcomings as well. He said that "Islam is neither democracy 100 % nor autocracy 100 %, Islam is..... Islam."⁷⁰ This is mainly because politics is not subject to public deliberation in accord with majority vote in the parliament. Any political decision is not insurmountable by the *hudud* (constraints) revealed by God. Therefore, all definite matters in Islam cannot be rendered to political deliberation of majority vote (a-half-plus-one vote).⁷¹ Natsir's ambiguous position regarding democracy can be further seen in his argument that the status of democracy in Islam is vital as to give the people freedom of expression and criticism so as the power abuse by the government could be avoided. Democracy is also vital in that the Muslims have the opportunity to make a law which is in line with Islamic teachings.⁷² In an occasion he for example asserts that "..... as far as Islam is concerned, democracy is the first priority, because Islam is likely to succeed in a democratic system."⁷³

⁶⁸ See, for instance, Mohammad Natsir, *Islam sebagai Dasar Negara* (Bandung: Pimpinan Fraksi Masyumi dalam Konstituante, 1957).

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 273.

⁷⁰ Mohammad Natsir, *Capita Selecta* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1973), p. 452.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 452.

⁷² Ahmad Suhelmi, *Polemik Negara Islam* (Jakarta: Teraju, 2002), p. 128.

⁷³ Cited by Kahin, "Mohammad Natsir," in Yusuf Abdullah Puar (ed.), *Muhammad Natsir 70 Tahun: Kenang-kenangan dan Perjuangan* (Jakarta: Pustaka Antara, 1978), p. 333.

Not until in 1957, in his speech delivered in the Constituent Assembly, did Natsir introduce “Theistic Democracy” by which he meant as democracy based on divine values.⁷⁴ This notion was reminiscent of Mawdudi’s theory of “theo-democracy” which acknowledges only the sovereignty of God.⁷⁵ What makes Natsir different from Mawdudi is that the first has never claimed that democracy contains *shirk* (polytheism) as the latter had done.⁷⁶ In this system, the majority vote must be embarked upon religious values. Any public decision rendered to those values can be regarded as *ijmaʿ* (consensus) which is bound to Muslims in any particular time and place. Natsir came to the conclusion that the Islamic principle of *shura* was closer to the formula of modern democracy, with the implementation of *hynd* and religious ethics as its main reference in the process of public deliberation.

Jalaluddin Rakhmat, a vigorous propagator of *Shiʿah* Islam in Indonesia, is on the same boat as Natsir’s.⁷⁷ For Rakhmat, democracy is a system of politics which is based on two principles: political participation and human rights.⁷⁸ These principles allow citizens participate in public deliberation and protect human rights. This concept of democracy is not only identical to Islam, but also the highest representation of Islamic teachings in the life of nation-state. Nevertheless, Rakhmat argues, the system of politics in Islam is incomparable to democracy in the following two points: first, democracy is a secular political system which presumes the sovereignty

⁷⁴ Yusril Ihza Mahendra, “Modernisme Islam dan Demokrasi: Pandangan Politik Mohammad Natsir,” *Islamika*, No. 3 (1994), p. 79.

⁷⁵ Ahmad Syafii Maarif, *Studi tentang Percaturan dalam Konstituante: Islam dan Masalah Kenegaraan* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1985), p. 130.

⁷⁶ For more detailed information on Mawdudi, see among others, Charles J. Adams, “Mawdudi and the Islamic State,” in John L. Esposito (ed.), *Voices of Resurgent Islam* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 99-133; cf. Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁷⁷ M. Syafi’i Anwar classifies Rakhmat as a formalistic Muslim intellectual who seeks a stringent devotion to God’s law. See, M. Syafi’i Anwar, *Pemikiran dan Aksi Islam Indonesia: Sebuah Kajian Politik tentang Cendekiawan Muslim Orde Baru* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), pp. 144-55.

⁷⁸ Jalaluddin Rakhmat, “Islam dan Kekuasaan: Aktor atau Instrumen?,” in M. Imam Aziz, et. al. (eds.), *Agama, Demokrasi dan Keadilan* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1993), pp. 63-75.

of people, while Islam acknowledges the sovereignty of God only. It is just impossible for the majority vote to alter God's decision through Islamic *shari'ah*. Second, in practice the people's vote can be manipulated, either by means of intimidation or persuasion. Democracy's "*vox populi vox Dei*" is theologically unfounded in Islam. Islam is a unique system which develops the principle of *shura* and human rights at once.⁷⁹

According to Rakhmat, at first when encountering the modern world, Islam claims itself as democratic, in which democracy is deployed as a means of simplifying the struggle of Islam. This is the strategy used to deceive the modern world as if what the ideals of political ethics the West wishes is also justifiable in Islam. This strategy is particularly helpful for Muslims under the oppression of the West and they do not have freedom of expression. Nowadays, Rakhmat argues, the context is totally different. Democracy has widely been criticized for its shortcomings. Democracy is no longer a revered concept. Instead of relying on democracy, Muslims can trust the concept of *tawhid* (the Oneness of God) in overcoming their daily matters, since it encompasses more than democracy does. "In *tawhid*," Rakhmat goes on to argue, "there is freedom of humans, and each Muslim individual is not allowed to oppress one another."⁸⁰ Different from democracy, *tawhid* implies the sense of divine justice. More importantly, "the concept of democracy cannot be found in any *mu'tabar* (accepted) classical Islamic text-books."⁸¹ Thus, Rakhmat is of the proponent of democratic ideals, but democracy as a concept is considered unnecessary, since the concept of *tawhid* is all-encompassing and more authentic as it is derived from God.

Qutbian Approach

The last approach, we might call it Qutbian, has a firm resistance to democracy on the grounds that it is derived from the unbelievers' (*kafir*) system which is, therefore, not allowed (*haram*) to be adopted by Muslims. This approach assumes that a truly Islamic society can only be established on the basis of the tenets of the *shari'ah* which alone can guarantee freedom and justice to all believers. The *shari'ah* is not

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 65.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

restricted to legal injunctions or to principles of government. The *shari'ah* of God, in line with Qutb's definition, means everything that God has decreed to organize all aspects of human life such as the principle of faith, the principle of justice, the principles of morality and human behavior, the principles of knowledge, the principles of ethics and aesthetics.⁸² In Indonesia, this standpoint is well-represented by some radical Islamists both individually and organizationally such as MMI (*Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia*, Indonesian Council of Muslim Holy Warriors Indonesia) and HTI (*Hizbut Tabrir Indonesia*, Indonesian Islamic Party of Liberation). This camp perceives democracy as in itself contradictory to Islam, either at general level or at details. The contradiction between Islam and democracy can be obviously seen in the source of its naissance, its theology that delivers its birth, the principle upon which it is based, as well as its ideas and rules it produces.⁸³ Democracy is a secular-Western coined term used to denote a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. People are therefore considered as the absolute ruler and the owner of the sovereignty. The right to govern is vested in people themselves and they do not account their duties but for themselves. All these notions are, according to this camp, in conflict with the idea that the sovereignty belongs to God alone which they believe absolutely true.

According to the proponents of this approach, it is indeed of truism that there does exist the principle of *shura* (public deliberation/consultation) in Islam. In many verses of the Qur'an and Muhammad's sayings Muslims are recommended to conduct *shura* in dealing with their daily affairs. Likewise, *shura* can also be found in democracy. Nevertheless, they strongly believe that it is fatally erroneous to assume that Islam can be equated with democracy only because both contain *shura*. Democracy and Islam are extremely different to each other. While the first is a system of life revealed by God which assumes the sovereignty of God, the latter is human-made entity which assumes the sovereignty of people. Democracy represents the revolt against God in terms of the process of law making. Due to

⁸² For a helpful discussion on Qutb's principle of *hakimiyyah*, see for example, Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Sayyid Qutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival," in John L. Esposito (ed.), *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, especially pp. 89-90.

⁸³ "Islam, Demokrasi, dan Modernisasi?," available at: (http://www.hidayatulislam.net/comments.php?id=P591_0_1_0_C), accessed on 27 July 2005.

this reason, they believe that democracy and Islam will never be able to coexist in the hearts of “true” Muslims.⁸⁴ In short, the attitude of this camp towards democracy is as clear as crystal: no compromise with democracy, because democracy will only reduce the level of Muslims’ faith to Allah.

In post-New Order Indonesia, democracy has been under serious attacks by some Islamists. One severe criticism is from Farid Wajdi, one of the respected belligerent activists of HTI. In one of his articles he criticizes democracy as being lack of its very undemocratic nature. The freedom guaranteed by democracy is more a myth than a reality. In his view, there is no real freedom as such in democracy. The system of democracy will allow freedom so long as it does not contradict the core values of secularism that can threaten the democracy itself. In this regard, Wajdi refers to the contemporary case of the ban of religious symbols and signs in public places such as the controversies of the ban of *jilbab* (women headscarf) for Muslim school girls and ladies in French.⁸⁵

Muhammad Shiddiq Al-Jawi is another fervent rejecter of democracy. He confronts democracy with his faith in Islam, because faith must be used as the standard in approaching everything in this world.⁸⁶ He compares democracy with Islamic faith in light of the following five points. First, while democracy is a man-made entity and a creation of human intellect, in Islam it is the *shari’ah*, not intellect, that must be used as the single reference in rendering final judgment or examination. Al-Jawi cites a verse of the Qur’an: “*al-hukmiyya* (the right to make a law) belongs to Allah alone” (*la-hukma illa-li Allah*) (Q.S. 6: 57). Second, democracy separates religion from the state, while in Islam both are inseparable and all duties must be conducted based on Allah’s rules. Men do not have right to rule themselves. Third, while democracy means the sovereignty belongs to the people, in Islam the sovereignty belongs to *shara’* (Allah is the law maker), not people.

⁸⁴ Azhari, “Kebebasan yang Merusak,” available at: (http://www.hidayatulislam.net/-comments.php?id=P591_0_1_0_C), accessed on 27 July 2005.

⁸⁵ Farid Wajdi, “Larangan Jilbab dan Mitos Demokrasi,” *Harian Pikiran Rakyat*, Senin, January, 19, 2004.

⁸⁶ Muhammad Shiddiq Al-Jawi, “Haruskah Islam Menerima Demokrasi?,” an unpublished paper written in the end of 1994 or the beginning of 1995, as cited by Franz Magnis-Suseno SJ, *Mencari Sosok Demokrasi: Sebuah Telaah Filosofis* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1995), pp. 30-31.

Fourth, while in democracy the principle of majority vote is paramount, in Islam this principle is only applicable in technical matters in which specific expertise is unnecessary. Fifth, the four types of freedom specific to democracy (freedom of faith, expression, possession and behavior) are in themselves contradictory to the concept of freedom in Islam. Al-Jawi comes to the conclusion that “it is fatally erroneous to assert that democracy is a part of Islam.... Democracy is not *shari‘ah* law; it is human’s invention which is just susceptible.”⁸⁷

Conclusion

The extent to which Indonesia has been democratic has become one of the most difficult questions to answer. To this question, there are a large variety of answers provided by some scientists. If the minimum standard is used, i.e. the existence of general election, one may categorize Indonesia as a democratic country. By and large, Indonesian Islam proves to be compatible with democracy. It is a matter of fact that general election has been used as a regular mechanism of electing the country’s leaders. Despite the fact that Indonesia may be considered as an emerging force among the democratic countries, many argued that the country seems to suffer from the lack of democratic values. This can be seen from the outbreak of horizontal conflicts and socio-political chaos following the ouster of Suharto in May 1998. Nevertheless, the point-of-no-return movement towards democracy seems to carry on albeit some constraints and political resistance.

In general, there are three different approaches of Indonesian Muslims to democracy. The First is Huwaydian approach where Muslims view democracy as an intrinsic part of Islam. This approach is attributed to Fahmi Huwaydi’s liberal standpoints of democracy that Islam and democracy can be considered as two sides of a same coin. Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid and Amien Ra’is are of the representation of this approach. Second, Mawdudian approach in which Muslims understand the relationship between Islam and democracy in a somewhat ambiguous position: neither rejects nor accepts democracy. They introduce a middle ground concept of “Islamic democracy” or “Islamic theo-democracy” on the basis of

⁸⁷ Muhammad Shiddiq Al-Jawi, “Haruskah Islam Menerima Demokrasi?,” pp. 4-6.

Mawdudi's well-known concept of Islamic theocracy. Mohammad Natsir and Jalauddin Rakhmat are the protagonists of this approach. The last approach, the so-called Qutbian, rejects democracy and whatever derived from it. Some Islamist groups, be it organizationally or individually, might be categorized under this camp, such as MMI and HTI.

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