Ulumuna
Vol. 28, No. 2, 2024, p. 881-910
Journal of Islamic Studies Published by State Islamic University Mataram
p-ISSN 1411-3457, e-ISSN 2355-7648, available online at https://ulumuna.or.id

RELIGION AND THE IDENTITY OF INDEPENDENT INDONESIA: A Study on Religious Narratives According to the Founding Fathers

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Abstract: This article analyzes the speeches, works, and views of some Founding Fathers of Indonesia - Supomo, Muhammad Yamin, and Sukarno - as well as other key figures like Mohammad Hatta, K.H. Wahid Hasyim, Johannes Latuharhary, and Hoesein Djajadiningrat. It will explore their perspectives on the role of religion in Indonesia's political and social spheres. In Indonesia, where religion has significantly shaped the country's politics and society, politicians and elites largely agreed that religion is crucial to forming national identity. The main difference between nationalist and Islamist leaders was the extent of religion's influence on the new nation-state, not whether it had a role at all. Some argued for integrating faith into state affairs, while others favored separating the two. The enduring debate reflects the ongoing negotiation of competing visions of Indonesian nationhood, wherein religion is a significant axis of political and cultural expression. Moreover, the "religious state" concept encapsulates Indonesian leaders' nuanced approach to navigating the diverse religious landscape while maintaining a sense of national unity.

Keywords: Indonesia, Founding Fathers, Nationalist, Islamist Leaders, Religion, and State

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v28i2.916

Introduction

DUE TO RELIGION'S SUBSTANTIAL and formative role in Indonesia's political and social realms, politicians and elites largely agreed that religion was vital to shaping national identity. However, they disagreed on whether nationalism or Islam should be the core pillar of the new state. This dispute centered on the extent to which religion should steer the fledgling nation, not whether it

was important. The key question was whether religion should be integrated into state politics or kept separate as the official basis of the state.

For many historians of Indonesia, the extended debate over the role of religion in the emerging state was evident during the late May to early June 1945 at the meetings of the *Badan Penyelidik Usaha-usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (BPUPKI) or Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence. Convened by the Japanese authorities, BPUPKI aimed to formulate the future Indonesian state's form, foundation, and governance structure.[1] During these meetings, debates, particularly over whether the state foundation should be religious or nationalist, intensified divisions between Muslim and nationalist groups. Despite political maneuvering and negotiation, most BPUPKI members appeared unsupportive of an Islamic state. According to Muhammad Yamin, 53 of 62 members voted for a republic over a monarchy in the first session. On the state foundation, 45 of 60 voting members preferred a nationalist rather than an Islamic basis.

Rather than continuing the discussion on the above issue, this article analyzes how the Founding Fathers of Indonesia—the individuals involved in BPUPK—perceived the importance of

[1]Abdoel Kahar, "Dakwah Islamiyah adalah Tugas Suci atas Tiap-Tiap Muslim." Pembukaan Akademi Tabligh Ulang Tahun Muhammadiyah ke-46, 1958; J.C.T. Simorangkir dan B. Mang Reng Say, *Tentang dan Sekitar Undang-Undang Dasar 1945* (Jakarta: Penerbit Bhratara, 1966); Harun Al Rasjid, *Sekitar Proklamasi, Konstitusi, dan Dekrit Presiden* (Jakarta: Pelita Ilmu, 1968); Mohammad Hatta, *Sekitar Proklamasi 17 Agustus 1945* (Jakarta: Tintamas, 1969); Prawoto Mangkusasmito, *Pertumbuhan Historis Rumus Dasar Negara dan Sebuah Projeksi* (Jakarta: Penerbit Hudaya, 1970); Soebagijo Ilham Notodidjojo, *K.H. Masjkur: Sebuah Biografi* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1982); Marsilam Simandjuntak, *Pandangan Negara Integralistik* (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1989); Tashadi. *Prof. K.H. Abdul Kahar Mudzakkir Riwayat Hidup dan Perjuangan* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Sejarah Nasional, 1986); Eka Darmaputera, *Pancasila and the Search for Identity and Modernity in Indonesian Society* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988); and, Goerge Mc Turnan Kahin, *Refleksi Pergumulan Lahirnya Republik: Nasionalis dan Revolusi di Indonesia* (Jakarta: UNS Press dan Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 1995).

religion in the state. This article will undertake a narrative analysis of texts by exploring primary sources that present original statements regarding the positioning of religion and the state by various representative elements, such as nationalist and religious groups (Muslims and non-Islamic groups), among the 67 members of BPUPKI, as preserved, for instance, in *Risalah Sidang BPUPKI* and memoirs by its members. This inquiry is key to comprehending the broader implications of the religion-state relationship in Indonesia's foundational political thought and its impact on shaping Indonesia's national identity through the recognition of religion.

This article is significant for its potential to contribute to the academic discourse on identity as a cultural construct, emerging from the acknowledgment of diversity within the context of the nation. As Francis Fukuyama underscores, the pursuit of identity and self-recognition is fundamental to modern politics and the evolution of social values.[2] By highlighting this pivotal historical intersection, this article provides a deeper and more nuanced perspective on the discourse surrounding democracy and identity politics in contemporary Indonesian politics. Furthermore, it offers a crucial contribution to the multifaceted understanding of how societal polarization shapes the formation of Indonesia's modern political identity, rich in discourse and in a democratic setting, as opposed to the political crises that lead to identity politics and politics of resentment or mob-driven politics.

Indonesian Founding Fathers and Religion

Many scholars of social sciences agree that the proper relationship model between the state and religion depends on various historical, philosophical, cultural, and political factors. These factors shape this relationship's different models and degrees, like separation, unification, or accommodation of

[2] Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018).

religious symbols in each country's political and legal systems.[3] Indonesia has debated for decades whether its future state should have a religious or secular foundation. For example, in the early 1940s, Muhammad Natsir, a prominent Muslim activist, and Sukarno, a leading nationalist, engaged in a polemic on this issue, which, according to Deliar Noer, their polemics not only continued but reached a climax of divergent opinions between the two groups throughout the colonial period.[4]

The debate over Indonesia's Constitution brings to light differing views, particularly on the role of Islam in the state. This was evident in the heated discussions regarding the Jakarta Charter, which proposed including seven controversial words: 'the obligation to practice Islamic law' *(dengan kewajiban menjalankan syariat Islam bagi pemeluknya)*. The charter's opponents succeeded in removing the controversial phrase from the draft constitution.[5] To bridge the divide between secular nationalists and Islamic proponents, the idiom *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* (Divine Omnipotence) was used instead. While commonly thought to denote monotheism, there was no consensus on its broader meaning. The idiom became entrenched in Indonesia's constitutions and as the first principle of Pancasila, the state ideology.

The founding principle of *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* embraced religious diversity and initially unified Indonesia's varied ethnic

[3]Russel Sandberg, *Law and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Bahtiar Effendy, "Islam and the State: The Transformation of Islamic Political Ideas and Practices in Indonesia" (Dissertation Ohio State University, 1994).

[4]Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900-1942* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973), 279-295.

[5]Nadirsyah Hosein, "Religion and the Indonesian Constitution: A Recent Debate." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 36, 3 (2005): 419-440; Endang Saefuddin Anshari, "The Jakarta Charter of June 1945: A History of the Gentlemen's Agreement Between the Islamic and the Secular Nationalists in Modern Indonesia" (MA Thesis McGill University, 1976); Deliar Noer, *Islam, Pancasila, dan Asas Tunggal* (Jakarta: Yayasan Perkhidmatan, 1983); Ahmad Syafii Maarif, *Islam dan Pancasila sebagai Dasar Negara: Studi tentang Perdebatan dalam Konstituante* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1996); Luthfi Assyaukanie, *Islam and the Secular State in Indonesia* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2009).

and religious groups. However, debates arose over whether to privilege Islam in the future state, conflicting with equal treatment for all faiths. To protect religious freedom, some founders advocated state neutrality towards religion by separating religion from governance. They proposed a 'religious state' where all groups could freely practice beliefs without state favoritism. For these thinkers, the idea of a religious state has long been significant in Indonesian politics, with roots in the country's history, philosophy, culture, and politics.

This model aimed to provide equal treatment regardless of religious affiliation, compromising between nationalist and religious factions. The idea of a religious state reflects Indonesia's complex history and diverse cultures. While it may not be a perfect solution, it is a step towards creating a society that respects the freedom of religious observance for all. Among these advocates were prominent figures like Supomo, Muhammad Yamin, Sukarno, Mohammad Hatta, K.H. Wahid Hasyim, Mr. Johannes Latuharhary, and Hoesein Djajadiningrat.

Supomo: Religious-Based Morality in the State System

Supomo (or Soepomo in old Indonesian spelling), born in 1903 in Sukoharjo, Central Java, came from a prominent family of high-ranking officials during Dutch colonial rule. After studying law at Leiden University under Cornelis van Vollenhoven and spending three years in the Netherlands, he earned his Ph.D. in 1927. Upon returning to Java, Supomo worked as a court employee in Yogyakarta before being promoted to the Department of Justice in Jakarta. While at the Department, he lectured part-time at a law institute and was active in the Batavia youth group Jong Java. Supomo died in 1958 in Surakarta, Central Java.

Supomo vocally advocated for nationalism rooted in Indonesian concepts of familyhood (*kekeluargaan)* and spirituality, rather than Islam, as the foundation for the future state. Supomo clarified that he firmly believed the idea of a unitary national state did not mean being anti-religion. He felt that noble values from religions would benefit Indonesia. In his view, the state would maintain noble humanistic values and hold onto the noble

religious aspirations of its people. Therefore, he argued that the state should and could have a moral foundation based on nobility, which he believed was taught by all religions, including Islam.[6]

In developing his argument, Supomo agreed with fellow nationalist Mohammad Hatta's proposed ideal model separating state and religion in a future unitary Indonesia. Moreover, Supomo claimed an Islamic state did not align with Islam's noble principles, which he outlined as loving one's homeland, sincerity and devotion in serving it and loving God by constantly remembering Him. In Supomo's view, an Islamic state would not be the sole option for Indonesia if the future state embodied these noble Islamic ideals. He emphasized that the phrase "Islamic state" did not have the same meaning as "a state founded on the virtuous principles of Islam." In any state called an "Islamic state," religion and governance were inextricably linked, according to Supomo.[7]

He saw that religion and state were inseparable in the Islamic state system, with Islamic law as a divine commandment that must be implemented. A key issue debated is whether Islamic law can be altered to accommodate international norms and contemporary thinking. Supomo argued that the mainstream view is that some change is permissible, but a minority holds that no modification is allowable. Supomo believed an Islamic state would immediately raise problems regarding minority and majority groups within society.

For Supomo, Indonesia was neither secular nor Islamic but a "religious state" where religious groups could freely practice their faiths. When arguing models for the future Indonesian state, Supomo endorsed a unitary national state that respected all groups equally rather than serving the majority group's interests. Supomo argued that in this model, every citizen would have the right to choose their religion freely. He supported the proposal to create a national unitary state that any single dominant group does not define but instead rises above all groups, respecting each

[6] Supomo, in Muhammad Yamin, *Pembahasan Undang-Undang Dasar Republik Indonesia* (Jakarta: Yayasan Prapantja, 1960), 117.

[7] Supomo, in Yamin, *Pembahasan Undang-Undang Dasar*, 116.

regardless of size and caring equally for all. Thus, large and small groups can feel at home in this inclusive national unitary state.[8]

From the outset, Supomo believed in the importance of religious characters in society and felt they should also be reflected in the state system. However, as a proponent of Javanese mysticism *(kejawen)*, he argued that these religious characters should draw primarily on local spirituality. For Supomo, inner life *(semangat kebatinan)* was the most essential character and unifying primordial identity of the Indonesian people. He posited that human life would achieve perfection by balancing the inner and outer aspects of the micro and macrocosms. According to Supomo, this balance represented the authentic expression of Indonesian life. In his words:

> Unity and familial orientation are very much in line with the pattern of Indonesian society. Thus, the spirit of spirituality as an Indonesian basic spiritual foundation will fit with the aspiration between the outside world and the world, between microcosm and macrocosm, and between the people and their leaders. Every human being, as a person, as part of a society and social class in every community in the world, is considered to have their place and obligation *(dharma)* according to the natural law, and all are based on the balance of outward and inward life.[9]

In his book *Bab-bab tentang Hukum Adat*, Supomo once claimed that misfortunes like illness, poor harvests, and sad events were signals of an imbalance between the micro and macrocosms. He believed that spiritual powers have always surrounded societies, so preserving these powers was necessary for people's happiness and prosperity.[10]

Muhammad Yamin: Religion and the Process of Democracy

Muhammad Yamin, another key founding father who recognized religious principles as vital to Indonesia's future, was also profoundly influential. Born in Sawahlunto, West Sumatra, Yamin was educated at the Aleene Middelbare School in

[8] Supomo, in Yamin, *Pembahasan Undang-Undang Dasar*, 117.

[9] Supomo, in Yamin, *Pembahasan Undang-Undang Dasar*, 114.

[10] Supomo, *Bab-bab tentang Hukum Adat* (Jakarta: Penerbitan Universitas, 1962), 42.

Yogyakarta, where he majored in history. After graduating in 1927, he studied law at the Rechtshogeschool in Batavia (now Jakarta), later the Faculty of Law at Universitas Indonesia, and earned his doctorate in 1932. From the early 1930s, Yamin worked as a journalist with Liem Koen Hian, Sanusi Pane, and Amir Sjarifuddin at *Panorama and Kebangoenan* newspapers while practicing law part-time in Jakarta until 1942. He was active in nationalist movements from an early age. In 1928, he helped lead the Second Congress of Indonesian Youth, which produced the influential Sumpah Pemuda (Youth Oath), espousing a unified Indonesian identity, culture, and language.

In his speech at the first plenary session of BPUPKI on May 29, 1945, Yamin clearly expressed his concern about how religiosity could form the foundation for the future Indonesian nation-state.[11] To address this, he proposed the 'Principle of Belief in God' *(Prinsip Ketuhanan)* as the Third Principle underlying the state, along with nationalism, humanitarianism, democracy, and social welfare. Yamin envisioned the future state as a national state (*nationale staat)* aligned with "our civilization and the world's family kinship *(susunan dunia sekeluarga)*" based on nationalism and belief in God. For him, the current nationalism and belief in God continued the Indonesian national state and represented the 'final evolution' of Indonesian religiosity that had existed for centuries. This distinguished Indonesia from any other country or nation globally.

Yamin argued that there were distinct differences between modern Indonesian nationalism and the efforts of Indonesians who established state structures during the Syailendra-Srivijaya Kingdom (600-1400 AD) and Majapahit Kingdom (1293-1525 AD). The Syailendra-Srivijaya Kingdom lasted centuries and was founded on royalty, ancient beliefs, and Mahayana Buddhism. In contrast, the Majapahit Kingdom was established under a lordship system based on a combination of Shivaism and Buddhism. Yamin opined that the current nationalist Indonesian state differs from

[11] Muhammad Yamin, *Proklamasi dan Konstitusi Republik Indonesia* (Jakarta: Penerbit Djambatan, 1953).

these previous kingdoms in its monotheistic faith and transformed ideologies, reflecting how religion, thought, and global structures have evolved.[12]

Moreover, therefore, for Yamin, in future Indonesia, in discussing the importance of the Third Principle of the state, he said that the Indonesian people who would gain an independent state are noble and civilized, acknowledging *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* (Belief in the One and Only God Almighty). He affirmed that the Free Indonesian Welfare State would be founded on God, who would protect Free Indonesia.[13]

In Yamin's view, democracy and religiosity defined one another, as he believed that faith in God was vital to the democratic process. When presenting his proposal for the Fourth Principle, the Democracy Principle, in the section on mutual deliberation *(permusyawatan)*, he stated: "A state that disregards mutual deliberation is ignorant of belief in God and contradicts the role of Indonesian civilization." Around fifteen years later, in conceptualizing the meaning of "*Tuhan* (God)," he devoted significant effort to establishing it as integral to "*agama* (religion)," on which the state was founded.

Yamin's thinking made it clear that *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* was not the sole basis of everything for him. Instead, recognizing *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* would provide the state's fundamental basis. Pancasila did not explicitly address whether recognizing God obliged citizens to do the same. More precisely, Yamin's Pancasila addressed God only regarding the state's recognition, leaving citizens entirely free to believe. This argument was feasible as long as the state and society remained structurally separate.[14]

Sukarno: Preserving Religious Freedom

Sukarno (or Soekarno) was the most prominent Indonesian political activist for Indonesian independence. Born in Surabaya, East Java, to a Javanese primary school teacher and a Hindu

[12] Yamin, *Pembahasan Undang-Undang Dasar*, 90.
[13] Yamin, *Pembahasan Undang-Undang Dasar*, 94.
[14] Yamin, *Pembahasan Undang-Undang Dasar*, 17.

Balinese woman, Sukarno graduated from a local primary school in 1912. He then attended a Europeesche Lagere School in Mojokerto, East Java, followed by a Hogere Burgerschool in Surabaya. In 1921, Sukarno began studying civil engineering at the Technische Hoogeschool te Bandoeng, later known as Institut Teknologi Bandung, where he earned an engineering degree.[15] Along with Mohammad Hatta, Sukarno declared Indonesian independence on August 17, 1945, after which he served as the first Indonesian President until 1967.[16]

Regarding Sukarno's views on religion, his speech on 1 June 1945 notably demonstrated his attention to God and religion. In concluding remarks at this first plenary meeting, he proposed the Five Principles, or the Pancasila, as the new state's foundation that included Nationalism, Humanitarianism, Democracy, Social Justice, and Divine Omnipotence.[17] Later, Sukarno elaborated extensively on his stance toward religion in the future state.[18] He used varied phrasing like 'belief in God,' 'belief in one's own God *(bertuhan Tuhannya sendiri)*,' 'worshipping God freely *(menyembah Tuhan dengan cara leluasa)*,' 'civilized belief in God *(bertuhan secara kebudayaan* or *ketuhanan yang berkebudayaan)*,' 'noble faith in God

[15] Cindy Adams, *Sukarno an Autobiography as Told to Adams* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc, 1965; John D. Legge, *Sukarno, A Political Biography* (Landon: Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 1972); Deliar Noer, *Membincangkan Tokoh-Tokoh Bangsa* (Bandung: Mizan, 2001); Daniel Dhakidae, (ed.), *Soekarno, Membongkar Sisi-Sisi Hidup Putra Sang Fajar* (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2013); and Jonar T.H. Situmorang, M.A., *Bung Karno, Biografi Putra Sang Fajar* (Yogyakarta: Ar-Ruzz Media, 2015). For a contemporary debates on this issue for the Islamic law perspective, see Anthin Lathifah et al., "The Construction of Religious Freedom in Indonesian Legislation: A Perspective of Maqasid Hifz al-Din", Samarah Jurnal Hukum dan Hukum Keluarga Islam, vol 6, no. 1 (2022): 369-90, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v6i1.10957.

[16]Wawan Tunggul Alam, (ed.), *Demi Bangsaku: Pertentangan Sukarno vs Hatta* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2003).

[17] Soekarno, "Lahirnja Pantja Sila", In *Lahirnja Pantja Sila dan Undang-Undang Dasar 1945 Berikut Piagam Djakarta* (Jakarta, Bandung, Semarang: Tridaja, 1947); Wawan Tunggul Alam, (ed.), *Bung Karno: Menggali Pancasila (Kumpulan Pidato)* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2000).

[18] Ahmad Basarah, *Bung Karno, Islam, dan Pancasila* (Jakarta: Konpress, 2017).

(ketuhanan yang berbudi pekerti luhur),' and 'belief in God with mutual respect *(ketuhanan yang hormat-menghormati satu sama lain)*'.

He concluded that a strong connection existed between believing in God and civility, the nobility of character, respect towards others, and tolerance. Because of this, the future state should guarantee freedom of religion so that these noble qualities would flourish. According to Sukarno, this was the essence of being a religious person and part of a wider society. His speech on *Ketuhanan* is as follows:

> The Fifth Principle of Free Indonesia should be based on *Tuhan Yang Maha Esa. Prinsip Ketuhanan!* Not only should the Indonesian people believe in God, but everyone should believe in God, his own God. Christians would worship God according to Jesus' teaching, Muslims would worship their God according to Muhammad's teaching, and Buddhists would practice their religion according to their Holy Books. However, let all of us have God. The Indonesian state should be one where every citizen may worship God without restraint. All citizens should believe in God in a civilized manner *(secara kebudayaan)* without 'religious egoism' *(egoisme-agama)*. In this Independent Indonesia that we design, we declare that the fifth principle of the state shall be based on *Ketuhanan yang berkebudayaan, Ketuhanan yang berbudi pekerti yang luhur, Ketuhanan yang saling menghormati*. Within this Fifth Principle, my brothers and all religions in Indonesia will have their appropriate place. In this state, we do believe in God![19]

Sukarno's insertion of wording was neither accidental nor unintentional. In Sukarno's mind, religious principles were not the most important in Pancasila. According to Hasan Zaini Z.,[20] A leading Indonesian constitutional law expert, Sukarno viewed the five principles of Pancasila as equal in position and importance. Zaini explained that by placing nationalism at the first stage, Sukarno did not imply it was the most important. Similarly, placing Ketuhanan last did not mean it was least important.

Furthermore, Sukarno believed *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* represented a modest human achievement. Rhetorically, his view on *Ketuhanan* aimed to find common ground between religious and nationalist activists regarding the new state's foundations. The

[19] Yamin, *Pembahasan Undang-Undang Dasar*, 77-78.

[20] Hasan Zaini Z., *Pengantar Hukum Tatanegara Indonesia* (Bandung: Penerbit Alumni, 1971), 54-55.

state system appeared 'secular,' but pronouncing *Ketuhanan* outlined God as the normative basis steering the state and later the Constitution. In this sense, Sukarno's reassurance that the new state would not be secular received unanimous endorsement from participants.

Mohammad Hatta: Religion as the Tool of Unity

Mohammad Hatta, along with Sukarno, proclaimed Indonesia's independence and was a prominent political activist whose voice resonated with other Indonesian leaders. Born on 12 August 1902 in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, to Abdurrahman and Siti Soleha, Hatta received his early education at the Europeesche Lagere School until 1916. He then continued at Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs in Padang until 1919, followed by Prins Hendrik School in Batavia until 1921. Finally, he pursued higher education at the Nederlandsch Hendelschoogeschool in Rotterdam, Netherlands, until 1923.[21]

Hatta played a crucial role in amending the wording of the Jakarta Charter, which is enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution. He changed the phrase *'Ketuhanan dengan kewajiban menjalankan syariat Islam bagi pemeluk-pemeluknya'* (Belief in God with the obligation to implement Islamic sharia for its adherents) to '*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa'* (Belief in the One and Only God Almighty). This revision reflects Hatta's view of situating religion within the framework of the state. Notably, rather than grounding it in ideology or individual rights, Hatta saw equality of religion in the state as a tool for national unity. The slogan 'united we stand, divided we fall' influenced this change in wording.

Hatta viewed religion as synonymous with unity, brotherhood, and peace, reinforced by the democratic attitude evident in Hatta's views on religion. Therefore, the position of religion in the state, which can potentially lead to disintegration,

[21] Mohammad Hatta, *Memoir* (Jakarta: Tintamas 1982); Deliar Noer, *Mohammad Hatta* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1991); and Yus Sudarso dan Meuthia Hatta Swasono, *Pribadi Manusia Jilid 1-12* (Jakarta: Yayasan Hatta, 2002).

can be compromised, and a middle ground should be sought accordingly.[22]

Wahid Hasyim: Religion and the State Wisdom

K.H. Wahid Hasyim, born on 1 June 1914 in Jombang, East Java, was a prominent Islamic leader who helped shape Indonesia's founding principles. As the son of renowned scholar K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari,[23] He was raised in a religious boarding school and received a traditional Islamic education from his father. Well-read and curious, Wahid Hasyim subscribed to Arabic, Malay, Dutch, and English publications in Surabaya, immersing himself in diverse subjects like history, philosophy, politics, economics, science, and the arts. After making a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1932 that deepened his spiritual knowledge, he returned home to train under his father's guidance, emerging as a young Islamic intellectual and reformer.[24]

As a leader of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), one of Indonesia's largest Islamic organizations, Hasyim often expressed views on religious and state issues.[25] For example, in a 4 April 1951 sermon, he explained that Indonesians should follow the principle of *'al-insan akhi al-insani, habba am kariha,'* meaning all humans are brothers and sisters, whether they like each other or not. Regarding governing the country, Hasyim believed no Indonesians should be considered enemies, and conflicts should be handled wisely.

[22] Saafroedin Bahar, Nannie Hudawati, Ananda B. Kusuma, eds., *Risalah Sidang Badan Penyelidik Usaha-Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (BPUPKI) Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (PPKI) 29 Mei 1945-19 Agustus 1945* (Jakarta: Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia, 1992).

[23] Heru Sukadri, *Kiai Haji Hasyim Asy'ari: Riwayat Hidup dan Pengabdiannya* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Sejarah Nasional, 1985).

[24] Aboebakar, *Sejarah Hidup K.H. A. Wahid Hasjim* (Bandung: Mizan, 2011); and Miftahuddin, *K.H. A. Wahid Hasyim: Peletak Dasar Islam Nusantara* (Bandung: Marja, 2017).

[25] Wahid Hasyim, *Mengapa Memilih NU? (Konsepsi tentang Agama, Pendidikan dan Politik)* (Jakarta: Inti Sarana Aksara, 1985) and M. Ali Haidar, *Nahdlatul Ulama dan Islam di Indonesia: Pendekatan Fikih dan Politik* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1994).

Wahid Hasyim believed religion should be the guiding spirit of state governance, not merely a political tool. He warned that using religion solely for pragmatic interests damages a country's leadership. In his thought-provoking writing, Wahid Hasyim demonstrated how exploiting religion for political gain, as in the Republic of South Maluku (RMS) movement, leads to destructive outcomes. In his words:

> This (the loss incurred by using religion solely for political interests) has been experienced by the movement called the RMS (Republic of South Maluku), which frightened the people in its territory by claiming that if the TNI (Indonesian National Army) were to come, they would forcefully convert people to Islam and perform circumcision by force. Eventually, the people's fear caused by their propaganda resulted in the RMS movement itself becoming fearful when the TNI approached their area. For the people of Indonesia, this should serve as a lesson that the reluctance to accept truth or sound ideas means succumbing to base desires over sound reason.[26]

In his 1951 article in *Mimbar Agama,* published on Indonesia's Independence Day, Wahid Hasyim clarified the relationship between religion and the state. He first deconstructed the colonial-era division between the religious 'golden child' and 'stepchild,' reflected in attitudes of intolerance. Rather than using divisive 'majority' and 'minority' labels, Hasyim emphasized inclusivity and tolerance.

> In general, the government's attitude towards Islam and its people during the colonial era was that of a 'stepchild.' Anything related to Islam was demeaned, reduced, and belittled; its opportunities were limited, and the country's spending on it was extraordinarily constrained to the point of suffocating Islam's breathing space. This all meant that religions other than Islam were considered the 'golden children' as its equals, while Islam was the "stepchild," meaning that they were given full opportunities. Not at all.
>
> In fact, in every colonial country, the colonialists must adopt a policy of weakening the majority group and only keeping the minority group alive (not strengthening them). This is so both parties continue to conflict. The majority group is oppressed, and the minority group is only supported

[26] K.H. Wahid Hasyim, "Beragamalah dengan Sungguh dan Ingatlah Kebesaran Tuhan", *Mimbar Agama,* No. 4, April 1951.

enough to face the majority group. Ultimately, both groups depend on the colonial government (Hasyim, 1951).[27]

Johannes Latuharhary: Adapting with Custom

Johannes Latuharhary was one of the elite national figures educated in the West.[28] Born on 6 July 1900 in Saparua City to Yan Latuharhary and Josefin, he began his education at the Dutch-taught Saparuasche School. He then continued at the Eerste Europesche Lagere School in Ambon City until 1917, a school specifically for the Dutch where he could enroll due to his father's teaching position. With religious, formal, and specialized education from Leihitu, Latuharhary pursued higher education, attending Hoogere Burgerschool (HBS) in Batavia and then earning his law degree from Leiden University in the Netherlands from 1923-1927, becoming the first Ambonese to obtain a meester in de rechten degree there. Under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Van Vollenhoven, a significant influence in the Dutch East Indies government, Latuharhary specialized in customary law. As independence approached, he became a member of the Investigating Body for the Preparation of Indonesian Independence (BPUPKI), advocating key pillars for the new nation in articles like his 9 May 1945 piece "Four Milestones for Building the Indonesian State," which called for unity, villages, schools, and religion as foundations, reflecting his view of religion's indispensable role in the philosophical basis of the state.

According to Latuharhary, like modern nationalist figures with strong religious backgrounds, unity should be considered when religion could potentially divide the nation. His perspective on this issue can be seen in the BPUPKI debates about the Constitution and legal Preamble. Regarding the state's form, Latuharhary proposed a bondstaat for Indonesia. For the Preamble, he opposed the translation of *Ketuhanan Yang Maha* Esa as the belief in the One and Only God's wording in the Pancasila

[27] Hasyim, "Beragamalah dengan Sungguh".

[28] I.O. Nanulaitta, *Mr. Johanes Latuharhary: Hasil Karya dan Pengabdiannya* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Sejarah Nasional, 1982).

principles. Like Hatta's reasoning, Latuharhary believed these words had broad implications for non-Muslim religions. He argued that upholding this phrasing would undermine Indonesia's unity and cause division. As Latuharhary stated:

> I do not agree with everything, namely with the words about 'belief in God'... The consequences will be enormous, for example, towards other religions. Therefore, I hope that in the fundamental law, even though this applies temporarily, no seeds or possibilities that can be interpreted in many ways should be allowed in this case.[29]

Latuharhary earnestly requested that the Constitution be amended to include clear articles on this issue. He firmly rejected the idea of Islamic representatives who wished to establish an Islamic state. His rejection was that Christian regions such as Minahasa and Maluku would not be willing to merge into the concept of an Islamic state.[30]

Regarding religious views on the relationship with the state, Latuharhary paid serious attention to customary issues in line with his expertise in customary law. In the BPUPKI session, he explained why Islamic law was not in line with the noble nature of future Indonesia, given its heterogeneity.,

> "For example, in this case, '... imposing Islamic law on its adherents, namely, how to impose Islamic law on its adherents,' that is, how to enforce it? One member told me that concerning customs in Minangkabau, people who practice Islam must abandon their customs.
>
> Moreover, for example, in Maluku, land rights are entirely based on customs. Neither Islam nor Christianity can interfere in this matter. If adherents of Islam must implement Islamic law, this statement will undoubtedly be used against customs here, for example, against land rights. Land is not only inherited by children who are Muslims but also by those who are not, based on customs. Therefore, let us seek another method that will not have disruptive consequences for the people".[31]

[29] Bahar, Hudawati, and Kusuma, *Risalah Sidang Badan Penyelidik Usaha-Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia (BPUPKI)*.

[30] Bahar, Hudawati, and Kusuma.

[31] Bahar, Hudawati, and Kusuma.

Hoesein Djajadiningrat: Ceasing Fanaticism

Hosein Djajadiningrat was the first native scholar to obtain a doctoral degree from Leiden University.[32] Djajadiningrat was born on December 8, 1886, in Serang (now in the province of Banten) to noble parents Raden Bagoes Djajawinata and Ratu Salehah. He had adequate access to education. He received religious education from an early age, encouraged by his father Raden Bagoes, the Wedana of Kramat Watu, who later became the Regent of Serang, known for his religious devotion.

However, since elementary and secondary school, Djajadiningrat mostly followed Western-style education. After mastering Dutch under Ruselar, a police commander in Menes, Djajadiningrat was enrolled in the Europese Lagere School (ELS) in Serang. After graduating from ELS Serang, he moved to Batavia's Kok en van Digglen private boarding school. During his time in Batavia, he had a good relationship with Snouck Hurgronje. Djajadiningrat succeeded as the top student and passed the entrance exam for the HBS.

In 1905, Djajadinigrat was accepted at Leiden University in language and literature, studying Ancient Greek and Latin. Djajadinigrat graduated from Leiden with a doctoral degree in 1913 under the supervision of Dr. B.D. Eerdmans, the Rector of Leiden University. His career was quite successful; he began as a Language Officer and later became a state commissioner for Bumi Putera under the supervision of Dr. G.A.J. Hazen in Islamic affairs. In 1924, Djajadinigrat was appointed as a Professor at the Recths Hogeschool (Higher Judiciary School), teaching Islamic Law, Malay, Javanese, and Sundanese languages. He received high honors from Queen Wilhelmina in the form of the Knight of the Order of the Netherlands Lion.

His Western education influenced Djajadiningrat's thoughts on religion and religiosity in the state's conception. When he chaired the commission to review religious courts in Java and

[32] Sutopo Sutanto, *Prof. Mr. Hoesein Djajadiningrat: Karya dan Pengabdiannya* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Sejarah Nasional, 1984).

Madura, he presented a report based on his knowledge of Islamic studies (Islamology). His view in the report brought about changes for the council of ulama, which was later transformed into a judge's court. In 1939, due to his initiative, a special bureau for Islam was established in Batavia.[33] In this regard, Djajadiningrat placed religion in a structural position within the state. His views and attitudes remained consistent even during the Japanese occupation. The Japanese occupation government appointed him as the Head of the Office of Religious Affairs with the advisor K.H. Mas Mansoer.

Djajadiningrat's religious attitude towards the state was never confrontational. Instead of being critical of the relationship between religion and the state, he appeared more like a collaborating Muslim intellectual with the government. He took a moderate approach to avoid confrontation with the state while, at the same time, not distancing himself from Islamic affairs. His involvement in Islamic affairs always remained within the sub-government.

Therefore, it is understandable that Djajadiningrat was overly concerned about religious fanaticism. His religious views resemble those of Islamic thinkers during the Dutch colonial period, who were concerned about the resurgence of religious fanaticism in the state. During the BPUPKI session on the committee for drafting the Constitution, he reminded of the probability of the emergence of religious fanaticism in the wording "the obligation to practice Islamic law for its adherents." At that time, Mr. Wongsonegoro proposed not to change the wording and added the phrase "for adherents of other religions according to their own religion." However, Djajadiningrat immediately responded, showing his disagreement with the addition. He questioned: "Could this not lead to fanaticism, for example, forcing prayers, forcing salah, and so on."[34]

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[33] MPB Manus et al., *Tokoh-Tokoh Badan Penyelidik Usaha-Usaha Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Sejarah Nasional, 1993).

[34] Bahar, Hudawati, and Kusuma.

Djajadiningrat agreed more that the phrase obligating followers of religions to practice their religion should be removed so as not to give the impression that the state was forcing its citizens to practice religion. According to him, the discussion also had implications for the responsibilities delegated to him regarding the Declaration of Rights.

Djajadiningrat also took a cautious approach when discussing the placement of the word "bismillah" in the body of the Constitution. According to Djajadiningrat, this wording could provoke reactions from Christians. However, fundamentally, he did not see it as a problem.

Wahid Hasyim also proposed two important points from the Small Committee's discussion in that meeting. First, the proposal is to add the phrase "who are Muslims" in Article 4, paragraph 2, for the President of Indonesia—second, changing Article 29 to "The state religion is Islam" while guaranteeing the freedom of those of other religions. Djajadiningrat opposed Wahid Hasyim's opinion. According to him, it is certain that the President of Indonesia is a Muslim, considering that Islam is the majority religion in Indonesia. For the second proposal by Wahid Hasyim, Djajadinigrat was very worried about the implications of the wording and asked the forum if the wording would have consequences.[35] Oto Iskandardinata supported this opinion, and the proposal to remove the requirement for the President of Indonesia to be a Muslim was accepted by the Chairman of the Small Committee.

Recognizing God: the Pursuit of Modern Indonesian Identity

Indonesian Founding Fathers have contributed unique insights and approaches to the complex relationship between religion and governance in Indonesia during the colonial and post-independence eras. Each tried to reconcile the interplay of religion, nationalism, and statehood for modern Indonesia. Supomo, for instance, advocated for a nationalist ideology grounded in Indonesian familial and spiritual values rather than Islam,

[35] Bahar, Hudawati, and Kusuma.

demonstrating a nuanced understanding of nation-building that transcended religious boundaries. He emphasized noble religious values as foundational to the state, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity and pluralism. Supomo's perspective on spirituality, influenced by Javanese mysticism, further enriched his vision for Indonesian society.

On the other hand, Yamin highlighted religiosity as a central element in shaping Indonesia's national identity. His emphasis on integrating religiosity and nationalism reflected a deep appreciation for Indonesia's religious heritage and its role in shaping the nation's character.

Despite their diverse backgrounds, the recognition of religion has become an integral component of Indonesian national identity. While Islam has played a dominant role in shaping the religious identity of the nation, every religion and worldview has contributed in its way to the trajectory of Indonesia's history. Studies suggest identity is part of an ongoing quest for dignity and self-recognition. For the nation's founders, the recognition of religion and individual belief—whether Islam, Christianity, or other faiths—was seen as a manifestation of respect for the dignity of each citizen. In the context of Indonesia's pluralism, this recognition became a critical foundation for the nation's unity.

In their efforts to construct this identity, all the Founding Fathers, with varying degrees of emphasis, acknowledged and respected the position of religion. Thus, the divide does not lie in relative deprivation but rather in differing interpretations, all within an egalitarian framework. This recognition of religion serves as a safeguard, protecting society from the politics of resentment that often give rise to feelings of deprivation.[36] As Tajfel posits, the process of identity formation is facilitated through social groups.[37] In this context, the narrative accounts of

[36] Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018).

[37] Henri Tajfel, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (Reissue Edition; European Studies in Social Psychology, Series Number 7; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

the Founding Fathers bind these disparate groups into a collective national identity.

As Mohammad Hatta articulated, it played a pivotal role in shaping Indonesia's religious framework, advocating for a middle ground that balanced religious inclusion with national unity. His pragmatic approach to governance reflected a deep commitment to fostering religious harmony while safeguarding against division and extremism. His significant role in shaping the religious framework of the Indonesian state was mainly in his pivotal contribution to amending the wording of the Jakarta Charter. Hatta's amendment of the Jakarta Charter, replacing the phrase emphasizing the obligation to implement Islamic Sharia with the more inclusive "Belief in the One and Only God Almighty," reflected his nuanced approach to religion within the state. Rather than grounding religion solely in ideology or individual rights, Hatta saw it as a unifying force essential for national cohesion.

In line with Hatta, Sukarno's articulation of the Pancasila as the guiding philosophy for the Indonesian state underscored the importance of religion in fostering societal harmony and unity. By including *Ketuhanan* (the belief in God) as one of his five principles, Sukarno sought to bridge the gap between religious and nationalist activists, recognizing the significance of religiosity in Indonesia's cultural and historical context.

On many occasions, he also elaborated extensively on the concept of *Ketuhanan*, using various phrases to convey the importance of religiosity and its connection to civility, respect, and tolerance within society. Sukarno advocated for a state that guarantees freedom of religion, allowing individuals to worship according to their beliefs without restraint, thus fostering the flourishing of noble qualities in society. Moreover, Sukarno's deliberate insertion of *Ketuhanan* as the fifth principle of Pancasila reflects his nuanced approach to the balance of nationalism and religiosity. Contrary to viewing nationalism as superior or *Ketuhanan* as least important, Sukarno emphasized the equality of the five principles, positioning each as integral to the foundation of the state. His rhetorical strategy aimed to bridge the gap

between religious and nationalist activists, finding common ground in defining the state's foundations.

The recognition of religion as a unifying force in Indonesia was a matter of political pragmatism and a reflection of the country's unique historical and cultural circumstances. As a post-colonial nation-state, Indonesia faced the challenge of integrating its diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious groups into a cohesive national identity. As Benedict Anderson suggested, nation-building requires creating a sense of shared identity among individuals who may never meet but feel connected through the idea of a nation.[38] In Indonesia's case, religion played a central role in shaping this community's identity, where the belief in a higher power became the ideological glue that could unite the nation's plurality.

Although religion was highly influential, the Founding Fathers did not elevate Islam to the status of the state's foundational doctrine. Johannes Latuharhary's remarks, which hold substantial sway, offer insight into the depth of his influence. Latuharhary underscored the importance of considering religious diversity and local customs in forming Indonesia's legal framework. His advocacy for a unitary national state that respected religious pluralism reflected a commitment to fostering unity while accommodating diverse religious beliefs. Latuharhary emphasized the importance of considering customary law in forming Indonesia's legal framework. He highlighted the potential conflicts between Islamic law and local customs, particularly in regions like Minangkabau and Maluku, where land rights and inheritance are deeply rooted in customary practices. Latuharhary advocated for a nuanced approach to governance that respected Indonesia's religious and cultural diversity, seeking solutions that did not undermine local customs or create divisions within society.

[38] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983)

The Narrative Account of Religiosity Shapes Indonesia's Religious Heritage

The narrative account of religiosity plays a crucial role in shaping Indonesia's religious heritage, reflecting the diverse and dynamic interplay of spiritual beliefs. It is not merely a passive reflection of religious practices but an active process of negotiation and synthesis in which religious and cultural identities are continually forged and redefined. The religious narrative serves as a foundation for national unity, providing a framework through which different religious communities find common ground. The narrative of religiosity is not confined to doctrinal purity or theological boundaries; instead, it emphasizes how spiritual beliefs interact with political, social, and cultural forces.

How religion is woven into the fabric of Indonesian society influences everything from statecraft and policy-making to social interactions and communal life. Scholars such as Hefner have noted that religion in Indonesia is not merely a private affair but a vital component of public life, shaping individual and collective identities.[39]

This religious heritage is compatible with democratic values emphasizing respect for diversity. Democracy, founded on the principles of freedom and equality, values the importance of pluralism in matters of belief, culture, and worldview. Religious traditions that prioritize mutual respect and tolerance have the potential to strengthen social solidarity within diverse societies. As John Rawls has observed, a democratic society must balance individual rights and social obligations to uphold mutual respect for differences.[40]

K.H. Wahid Hasyim, for instance, as a prominent Islamic leader, emphasized principles of brotherhood and tolerance, cautioning against the exploitation of religion for political gain.

[39] Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*. 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020).

[40] John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999)

His advocacy for wise conflict resolution and inclusive governance reflected a commitment to social cohesion and justice. As a leader of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), one of Indonesia's largest Islamic organizations, Hasyim frequently expressed his views on religious and state issues by emphasizing principles of brotherhood and tolerance, advocating for wise conflict resolution, and rejecting the notion of enemies among Indonesians. Hasyim believed religion should serve as the guiding spirit of state governance, cautioning against its exploitation for political gain, as demonstrated in the case of the Republic of South Maluku (RMS) movement.

Hasyim's writings and sermons elucidated the complex relationship between religion and the state in Indonesia. He critiqued the colonial-era division that marginalized Islam as a "stepchild" compared to other religions, highlighting the policy of weakening the majority group to perpetuate conflict and dependency on colonial authorities. Hasyim sought to challenge entrenched attitudes and foster unity among Indonesians by deconstructing divisive labels and advocating for inclusivity and tolerance. Hasyim's insights into the intersection of religion and politics underscored his commitment to promoting social cohesion, justice, and ethical governance in Indonesia. His writings and sermons continue to resonate as a call for inclusive leadership and the recognition of religion's role as a unifying force in shaping the nation's identity and future trajectory.

Meanwhile, Hosein Djajadiningrat's cautious approach to religion-state relations highlighted the complexities of navigating religious diversity in governance. His advocacy for a balanced approach that respected Islamic principles while safeguarding against religious fanaticism reflected a pragmatic understanding of the challenges inherent in governing a diverse society. Throughout his career, Djajadiningrat maintained a collaborative approach with the government, particularly in matters related to Islamic affairs. His moderate stance aimed to avoid confrontation while ensuring Islamic principles were respected and integrated into state governance.

One significant aspect of Djajadiningrat's contributions was his cautious approach to issues related to religious fanaticism and

the relationship between religion and the state. He voiced concerns about wording in the Constitution that could potentially provoke religious tensions or lead to the imposition of religious practices on citizens. Djajadiningrat's legacy lies in his efforts to navigate the intersection of religion and governance in Indonesia, advocating for a balanced approach that respects religious diversity while safeguarding against religious extremism and fanaticism. His contributions continue to inform discussions on religion and the state in contemporary Indonesian society.

In their narrative accounts, the Founding Fathers explicitly warn against religious polarization, a significant concern in the functioning of democracy. By opposing the politicization of religion for societal division and stressing the need for tolerance and dialogue across groups, Indonesia's founders sought to strengthen the democratic principles and norms that underpinned the nation. By firmly opposing the instrumentalization of religion for political gain, they sought to ensure that religion would remain a source of unity, rather than a source of conflict. They emphasized fostering tolerance, respect, and constructive dialogue among religious and cultural communities. This was particularly crucial in the early years of Indonesia's independence, as the nation was still establishing its national identity and democratic institutions. The Founding Fathers envisioned a society where all groups, regardless of their religious beliefs, could coexist peacefully and engage in dialogue without fear of discrimination or marginalization.

Conclusion

This article has provided a multifaceted exploration of the intricate interplay between religion, nationalism, and statehood within the context of Indonesia. The perspectives presented by various scholars and analysts contribute to a nuanced understanding of how these factors have shaped Indonesia's cultural and political landscape. Their diverse insights have left an enduring imprint on Indonesian society, fostering ongoing discussions about the role of religion in governance.

Since Indonesia declared independence on August 17, 1945, a contentious debate has persisted regarding the foundational principles of the new state. Specifically, there has been a significant discourse surrounding whether Indonesia should be established as a religious or secular entity. Despite this ongoing deliberation, political figures from both nationalist and Islamist backgrounds have concurred on the importance of religion in the process of nation-building and the formation of political identity. These factions have consistently framed their arguments within religious frameworks, emphasizing the necessity for the state to uphold religious rights, accommodate diverse faiths, and respect various forms of worship. Notably, the vision of Indonesia's Founding Fathers did not align strictly with either a secular or Islamic state model. Instead, they advocated for establishing a "religious state" that prioritized safeguarding religious freedom for all religious communities.

The discourse surrounding the relationship between religion, nationalism, and statehood in Indonesia underscores the complexity of identity formation and governance in a diverse and pluralistic society. This ongoing dialogue continues to shape Indonesia's political and social fabric, highlighting the importance of understanding the interplay between religion and governance in contemporary Indonesian society.

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